

TRAFFIC SIGNS



TRIVIA EN ROUTE

What does a diamond-shaped sign mean?

Answer on the last page

While traveling on freeways, you see a lot of signs. You may think you know most of them, but some might cause confusion. And, given the high speeds and rapid decisions required on freeways, understanding and knowing how to read all the signs will help you travel more safely; since you'll know in advance what to expect.

Common Traffic and Pedestrian Signals

Regulatory Signs



Warning Signs



Motorist Information Signs



Guide Signs



Signs used at pedestrian, bicycle, and school crossings have a new color. Look for it. It's called fluorescent strong yellow- green and it's easier to see than the yellow signs you are familiar with, especially in twilight or overcast conditions. That's why this special color of paint has been chosen for signs in areas where pedestrians and bicyclists are most at risk.

When you are driving and you see this unique strong yellow- green color on any crossing sign, be especially cautious. Watch carefully for pedestrians, school children, bicyclists, and others who may be trying to cross the road.

Less Well-Known Freeway Signs

Left Exit

Most freeway exits are on the right, but occasionally there will be a left exit. Exiting from the left calls for extra caution; because the left lane is the lane where vehicles travel at higher speeds. That's why it helps to have plenty of advance warning of the occasional left exit.

Most of the time a special yellow EXIT ONLY panel will be added to the bottom of the freeway guide sign. But there's also another clue that's often used. It's in the way the exit number panel is positioned above the freeway guide sign. Look up to see where the small green exit number panel is positioned. Most are on the right side. But if the exit number panel is on the left, then the exit will also be on the left.

Knowing how to read the position of the panel gives you extra time to move safely into the left lane to exit; or, if you are not exiting, to be alert for vehicles that are and to make way for them so they can change lanes safely.

Exit Only

A yellow exit only panel below a green freeway guide sign means that the lane under this panel becomes the exit ramp. If you remain in that lane, you can only exit the freeway. This forced exit situation becomes very dangerous if drivers make erratic moves to avoid it. Keep the following points in mind about exit only lanes.

- Exiting may be permitted from more than one lane, but only the lane(s) under the sign will be exit only.
- Exit only does not mean that there is no return entrance ramp at this interchange.

TIP: If you find yourself in an exit only lane when you don't want to exit, do so anyway! It's much safer to exit and return to the freeway than to stop or back up or swerve into oncoming traffic - all of which maneuvers are extremely dangerous!

Merge and Lane Added

While exit only means that a lane is being "dropped" from the freeway, other signs tell you that traffic is entering the freeway and a lane is being added.

This MERGE warning sign tells you that traffic entering the freeway has to merge with freeway traffic.

- If you are on the entrance ramp, be cautious and aware that you will have to merge safely with freeway traffic.
- If you are on the freeway, be alert and prepare to allow vehicles to merge safely.

This LANE ADDED sign and situation may look like the merge warning at first glance, but there is a very important difference. Take a second look to catch the difference. The lane added sign tells you that traffic entering the freeway does NOT have to merge because the ramp becomes an added freeway lane.

- If you are on the entrance ramp, accelerate in the added lane to safe freeway driving speed. You do not have to merge with freeway traffic.
- If you are on the freeway, be aware that traffic may still try to merge because some drivers are not familiar with the lane added situation.

Chevron Signs - Curve Ahead

Chevron signs warn of a sharp curve in the road. Because these chevron signs are a fairly new addition to the American road, some drivers may not know exactly what message they're communicating.

Chevrons mean that you should adopt a safe speed to take a sharp curve in the direction in which they are pointing. Watch for advisory signs with suggested safe speed limits.



TRIVIA EN ROUTE ANSWER

A diamond-shaped sign always means warning!

Source: US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration website
<http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/media/ryr.htm>