

Skid avoidance and controls

A driver needs to be constantly aware of changing road conditions and adjust his/her driving as necessary to avoid skidding. A skid happens when the tires lose their grip on the road, which can be caused one of four ways:

- Driving too fast for road conditions.
- Braking too hard and locking the wheels.
- Turning the wheels too sharply.
- Supplying too much power to the drive wheels, causing them to spin.

Road conditions affect traction

The type of road surface and its condition affect the ability of the vehicle to maintain traction.

- Because it contains petroleum, asphalt is more slippery than concrete immediately after it rains.
- Concrete tends to be less slippery than asphalt in rain and light snow.
- Ice forms more slowly on a gravel road than on asphalt or concrete.
- Dry sand reduces traction and can cause the vehicle to slide or skid.
- Wet leaves and standing water on the road surface can severely reduce traction.

When driving in potentially slippery conditions, drivers should also watch road contours such as a high crown or crest, the banking on the road, curves in the road, soft shoulders or road edges, and potholes or frost heaves. The grade (steepness) of the road makes every slippery situation worse. This is true whether you are driving uphill or downhill.

Going uphill in slippery conditions:

- If driving a manual transmission, downshift before you get to the grade. Climb the entire grade in the same gear. Downshifting may cause you to lose traction. Use a low gear.
- Keep moving at a slow and steady pace. Maintain your momentum.
- Make sure you have adequate snow tires and/or chains.

Going downhill in slippery conditions:

- Slow down as you approach the grade.
- If driving a manual transmission, downshift before you start down the grade.
- Brake carefully, using the appropriate method for the kind of brakes you have (ABS or non-ABS).

To correct a rear-wheel skid:

- Stop braking—this will let the rear wheels roll again, and keep them from sliding any further. If on ice, push in the clutch on a standard-shift equipped vehicle to let the wheels turn freely.
- Steer quickly—when a vehicle begins to slide sideways, quickly steer in the direction you want the vehicle to go. As a vehicle turns back on course, be ready, as the vehicle will have a tendency to keep right on turning. Unless you turn the steering wheel back the other way, you may find yourself skidding in the opposite direction.

To correct a front-wheel skid:

Driving too fast for conditions causes most front-wheel skids. Other causes include lack of tread on the front tires and not enough weight on the front axle. In a front-wheel skid, the front end tends to travel in a straight line, regardless of how much you turn the steering wheel. On a very slippery surface, you may not be able to steer around a curve or turn. When a front-wheel skid occurs, the only way to stop the skid is to let the vehicle slow down.

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