

Do's and Don'ts for Driving Safety

1. **Don't ever remove the bridle and reins from an equine while it is still hitched to a vehicle!!!** This is probably the #1 preventable cause of runaways.
2. Do fasten your traces first and undo them last when hitching to and unhitching from a vehicle. If the animal is startled, you don't want the cart attached by a wrap strap with the traces undone; this can cause an awful wreck.
3. Don't make assumptions about your equine's ability to handle new experiences. Just because he's broke to ride doesn't mean he's broke to drive; being steady in the ring doesn't necessarily mean he'll be steady on the road or trail.
4. Do take the time to gradually and systematically train your equine and get him used to new equipment, locations, and activities.
5. Don't ever leave an equine unattended while it is hitched to a vehicle. Experienced whips sometimes tie a horse briefly while hitching and unhitching if they are alone, but it is better to unhitch the animal before it is tied.
6. Do make sure that your vehicle and harness fit and are suitable for your equine, and are properly adjusted. This is a matter of safety as well as comfort.
7. Don't ever let passengers enter the vehicle, or allow them to remain in it, unless the driver is seated and ready to go. The driver is always the first and last person on the vehicle.
8. Do double-check your turnout before moving off, to see that everything is fastened and adjusted correctly.
9. Don't hitch or drive an animal alone unless you and your equine are both very experienced. Be sure that your helper is capable of helping.
10. Do wear a helmet, especially while training, driving out, competing in timed events, or any other time that your brain seems valuable.
11. Don't forget your spares when driving away from home.
12. Do keep your harness and vehicle in good repair. Having a rein, trace, girth, or wheel break while you are driving can be disastrous.
13. Don't hesitate to listen to your own common sense. You know your equine best; if something seems off, wrong, or unsafe, pay attention.
14. Do learn with a gentle, trained equine, if you are new to driving. The old adage, "green and green equals black and blue" is as true for driving as it is for riding.
15. Don't allow non-horsemen and children to pat your equine while it is in harness. It's too easy for them to either scare the horse or get run over if something else spooks it.
16. Do carry a whip at all times. It doesn't do any good in an emergency if it is in the socket or back at the trailer.
17. Don't take on passengers, particularly children, unless you are sure that both they and your animal will be obedient. Passengers should wear helmets, too.
18. Do seek out information and help when you need it. The only dumb question is the one that you didn't ask, that the answer to would have kept you out of trouble!