



Be Careful... Truck passing can be Challenging!

By: Mary "Trooper" Kirkpatrick, Senior Road Captain
July, 2025

Passing a truck on a motorcycle requires extra caution and a systematic approach due to the truck's size, limited visibility, and potential for wind turbulence. Take some time to survey the options that you have in planning to pass. On the expressway with multi-lane options, this can be a fairly easy piece as you can see ahead as well as behind and evaluate the

best plan before you make your move. On backroads, these following items become more important and there is less visibility to know what could be ahead. Take your time. Be sure. And in a group, remember... ride your own ride. Make your own decision on when to make the pass.



This list is an AI generated list, but follows what we all know to be important. Also, there is a piece below from a trucker site that offers drivers some guidance on how to 'read' motorcycle riders on the road. All are valuable comments.... Bring your additions to our next meeting, and we can update this list!

Here's a breakdown of how to safely pass a truck on a motorcycle:

1. Preparation:

- Assess the situation: Determine if passing is necessary and if it's safe to do so. **Consider the speed differential, traffic conditions, road conditions, and visibility. Each of these is important...**
- Check mirrors and blind spots: Use your mirrors and turn your head to check for any vehicles attempting to pass you from behind.
- Position yourself: Position yourself in a lane position that allows you to see the truck's mirrors and the road ahead.
- Maintain a safe following distance: Maintain at least a 4-second following distance behind the truck to allow for better visibility and reaction time.

2. Execution:

- Signal your intention: Clearly signal your intention to pass using your turn signals.
- Accelerate smoothly and decisively: Initiate the pass while accelerating smoothly, minimizing the time spent alongside the truck.
- Maintain a safe buffer: Maintain a safe distance from the truck as you pass to account for wind turbulence and unexpected movements.
- **Be aware of wind buffeting:** Be prepared for wind turbulence, especially at the **front of the truck** and when returning to your lane.
- Look for the driver in the mirror: Before returning to your lane, ensure you can see the truck driver in the mirror.
- Signal and merge back: Once you have sufficient space, signal your intention to return to your original lane and merge back smoothly.
- Decelerate to the desired speed: Once in your lane, decelerate to the desired speed.
- **In a group, keep on the throttle** until there is enough room for the entire group to make their lane changes and return to the original lane position behind you.

3. Additional tips:

- Avoid lingering: Don't linger alongside the truck; pass quickly and efficiently.
- Be aware of blind spots: Trucks have large blind spots; avoid riding in them.
- Be prepared for crosswinds: Strong crosswinds can affect stability, especially when passing large vehicles.
- Don't cut in front of the truck: Trucks take a long time to stop; ensure you have enough space before returning to your lane.
- Pass on the left when possible: Generally, it is safer to pass on the left.

By following these guidelines and exercising caution, you can safely pass a truck on a motorcycle and minimize the risks involved.

Here is what Truckers are told about driving near motorcycles: Website: [STR_Motorcycles_Brochure 2021.pdf](#)

Guidelines for Professional Drivers:

- Professional drivers should provide motorcyclists with as much room as possible. By leaving a space cushion between the truck and the motorcycle, drivers can safely maneuver if necessary.
- It is important to keep track of motorcycles as they can easily disappear in a truck's blind spot.
- If there is more than one rider in the group, try to count the headlights and keep track of how many pass the truck.
- Be mindful of weather, especially if there is a cross-wind present. Passing a large truck requires skill and attention for the motorcyclist. This is why it is so important to provide a space cushion for both vehicles to maneuver.
- At highway speeds, motorcycles receive a lot of turbulent air toward the front of a large truck when passing. It is always safest for the professional driver to back off the throttle to help the motorcycle rider get past as quickly as possible.
- Motorcyclists often slow down by downshifting or rolling off the throttle, not always activating the brake light. Allow more following distance and realize the motorcyclist may slow without visual warning, especially at inter sections or when turning.

We get a great deal of practice riding near trucks these days as there are many on the road ~ both highway and backroads. With all of us more aware of how to maneuver these situations, we can make decisions that will keep us all safer as we move down the road!