



Ross Bentley's High Performance Driving Tips - #17

SMOOTHNESS IS EVERYTHING

Is driving smoothly really all that important, and why? And if so, how do I become smoother?

Yes, yes, yes.... It really is that important! The most obvious reason for driving smoothly is so that your passengers feel comfortable and relaxed. I'm sure you've ridden drivers who are very jerky (their driving, I'm talking about!). Did you feel confident with their driving skills? I've said it before - the best compliment a driver can ever receive is to have your passengers sit completely relaxed in the seat next to you, fully confident of your driving skills.

However, the most important reason for driving smoothly is to maximise your traction. The smoother you drive, the more in-control you will be.

Each tire has a specific, limited amount of traction. If you exceed that traction limit, the car will begin to skid or slide. The smoother you drive, the easier it will be to stay within those traction limits. A tire achieves a higher traction limit if it is gradually built up to that limit. In other words, if you enter a corner and quickly jerk the steering wheel into the turn, or jab at the brake pedal when trying to panic stop, you haven't given the tires a chance to gradually build up their traction forces, and they will not be able to hold on - a skid or slide will result.

Think of the tire's traction limit like the force it takes to snap a piece of string. If you gradually and gently pull two ends of the string, it requires a lot of force to break it. However, if you quickly jerk the string apart, it snaps with much less force - just like a tire's traction limit.

So, everything you do behind the wheel must be done smoothly. When turning into a corner, turn the steering wheel as gently and *slowly* as possible - this will make the turn smooth!

When braking, *squeeze* the brake pedal, don't jab at it. Believe me, if you squeeze the brakes on, you will stop faster and with more control than if you very quickly jabbed at the pedal. So, always think "squeeze" when applying the brakes - or the gas pedal. Progressively squeezing the gas pedal down will give more controlled acceleration - even when trying to accelerate in a hurry!

Once again, the slower and smoother you move behind the controls, the safer, quicker, more in-control you will be - and the more comfortable and confident your passengers will be.

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