

Driving Anxiety

Cheat Sheet



Eight moves for nervous drivers: what to set up before you turn the key, what to do at the wheel, and the rule that keeps one bad drive from undoing your progress.

1 READ IT BEFORE YOU DRIVE

2 PICK ONE MOVE PER TRIP

3 REPEAT UNTIL IT FEELS BORING

ZONE 1 • BEFORE YOU DRIVE

Most of a calm drive is arranged before the engine starts.

1 Rehearse the route once

Preview the drive on a map before you go: where you will turn, where you could stop, where the exits are. Anxiety feeds on the unknown, and a road you have already seen is a much smaller unknown.

TRY Street-view the one intersection you dread so it already looks familiar when you arrive.

2 Climb the ladder, one rung at a time

Practice at the easiest level that still counts as practice. Stay on a rung until it turns boring, then step up. Boring is the goal: it means your brain has re-filed that road as safe.



REPEAT A RUNG UNTIL BORING, THEN MOVE UP

3 Make the car yours

Seat, mirrors, temperature, music: all set before you move. Thirty seconds of setup tells your body this is your space, and it is one less thing competing for attention at the first intersection.

TRY A calm playlist queued before you move, phone mounted, directions speaking so you never glance down.

ZONE 2 • WHILE DRIVING

Small moves that fit inside real traffic, eyes on the road the whole time.

4 The wheel is your anchor

Feel the texture under your palms: warm or cool, smooth or stitched. Your hands are on the wheel, in this car, on this road, right now. That is grounding you can do without taking your eyes off anything.

5 The pull-over permission

You are always allowed to signal and pull over somewhere safe. You will almost never use it, but knowing the exit exists is exactly what lowers the need for it. Permission first, calm second.

SAY "I can stop at the next safe spot if I need to. I probably will not need to."

6 Red-light reset

Every red light is a built-in pause: one long, slow exhale, shoulders down away from your ears, grip loosened a notch. The light does the timing for you, and the reset is done before it turns green.

7 Narrate the road out loud

When panic starts whispering what-ifs, describe what you actually see: "green light, blue car, left turn coming." Say it out loud. Naming the real road crowds out the imagined one.

TRY Feeling silly saying it out loud? Silly and present beats quiet and spiraling, every time.



8 The Setback Rule

A bad drive is one data point, not a verdict. It does not reset the ladder, and it does not erase the good drives before it. Drive again soon, even a short loop around the block - the gap between drives is where fear does its growing.

MINI-CARD

Highway, specifically

- The right lane is a legal, respectable choice. You can live there.
- Exits come every few minutes. You are never trapped, only between exits.
- You never have to pass anyone. Ever.