

# Pedestrian Safety and the Law

What every driver and pedestrian should know about pedestrian laws – and safe behaviors – in Austin



Help Austin reach zero traffic deaths

The information contained in this brochure is provided for informational and educational purposes only and is not intended to provide or be a substitute for legal advice. Please consult an attorney for guidance and advice specific to your particular fact situation.

## 1

## What is a crosswalk?

- Unless signed otherwise, crosswalks exist across all legs of a four-way intersection, even when they are not painted. Unpainted crosswalks are referred to as “unmarked” or “implied” crosswalks.
- Crosswalks also exist at non-intersection locations—or “mid-block”—where a crosswalk is painted.



**Safety Tip:** When stopping, vehicles should not block the crosswalk to avoid forcing pedestrians to walk into the intersection. It's the law!

**Blocking the crosswalk creates a dangerous and uncomfortable environment for pedestrians.**

Sources: Texas Transportation Code, Sec. 541.302. TRAFFIC AREAS

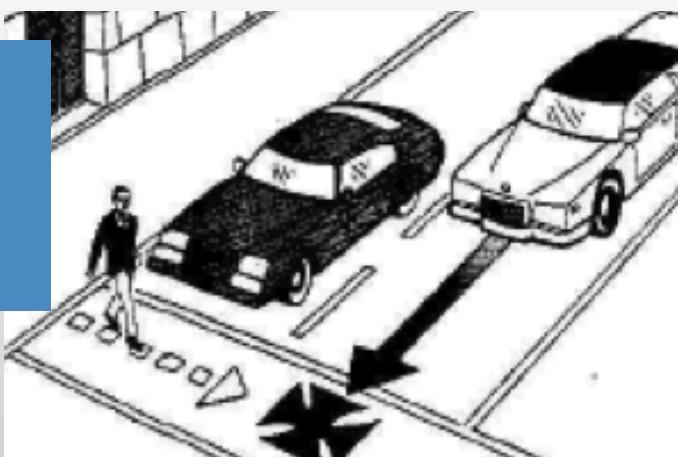
## 2

## When should drivers yield to pedestrians?

- Drivers must yield to pedestrians who are crossing in a crosswalk, even when the driver is permitted to make a left or right turn.
- Drivers must yield to pedestrians when pulling out of or into an driveway or alley.
- Drivers are not allowed to pass another vehicle that has stopped for a pedestrian crossing the street.

**Safety Tip:** When driving, be mindful that a vehicle stopped ahead may be yielding for a pedestrian crossing the street. Do your part to prevent these dangerous “multiple threat” crashes by being extra cautious when approaching a stopped vehicle.

**Example of a “multiple threat” situation.**



pedbikeinfo.org/pbcat\_us/ped\_images.cfm

Sources: Texas Transportation Code, Sec. 552.003. PEDESTRIAN RIGHT-OF-WAY AT CROSSWALK; Texas Transportation Code, Sec. 552.006. USE OF SIDEWALK

### 3

## When should pedestrians yield to vehicles?

- Pedestrians must yield to vehicles when crossing away from a crosswalk.
- Just like vehicles, pedestrians must always follow traffic controls such as signage and signals when crossing the street.

**Safety Tip:** Even if they have the right of way, pedestrians should always exercise due care when crossing the street. Never dart out into the street. Try to make eye contact with approaching drivers to make sure they slow down for you.

Source: Texas Transportation Code, Sec. 552.005. CROSSING AT POINT OTHER THAN CROSSWALK

### 4

## Where are pedestrians NOT allowed to cross the street?

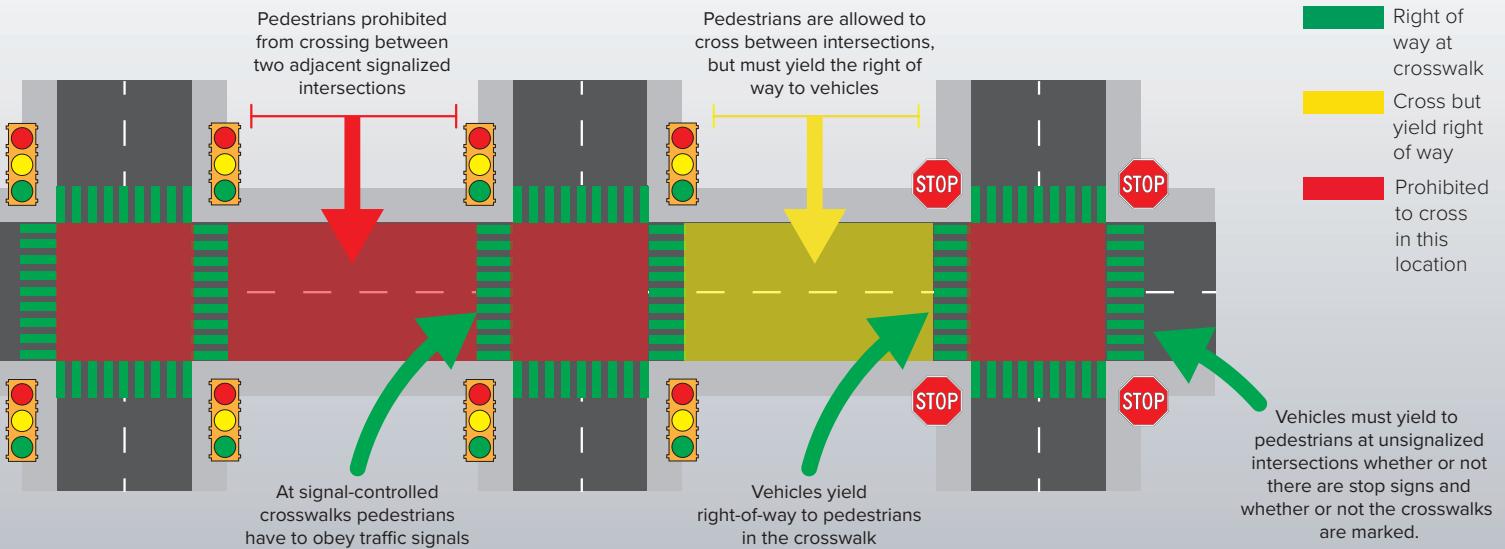
- Pedestrians are not allowed to cross diagonally across an intersection unless specifically authorized to do so by traffic controls.
- Pedestrians cannot legally cross the street between two adjacent signalized intersections (i.e. a traffic light) unless there is a marked mid-block crosswalk.
- Per city ordinance, pedestrians are specifically prohibited from crossing the following high-speed roadways except at an overpass or underpass:
  - IH-35
  - State Loop 1 (MoPac Expressway)
  - U.S. Highway 290 (East) from IH-35 to the east city limits
  - U.S. Highway 183 (Ed Bluestein Boulevard) from U.S. Highway 290 (East) to Farm Road 969 (Webberville Road)

**Safety Tip:** Pedestrians should attempt—but are not always required—to cross the street at crosswalks, as these are the most predictable and visible locations to cross.

**Safety Tip:** A substantial number of pedestrian fatalities each year in Austin occur on access-controlled highways. The high vehicular speeds on these roadways are simply too dangerous for pedestrians to cross away from designated crossing locations – don't risk it!

Sources: Texas Transportation Code, Sec. 552.005. CROSSING AT POINT OTHER THAN CROSSWALK; City of Austin Code of Ordinances, §12-1-26 PEDESTRIANS ON

## Reading the Street: Where to Cross Safely and Legally



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## Are people required to use sidewalks? Where should pedestrians go if there are no sidewalks?

- Pedestrians must use sidewalks if they are available and accessible.
- If no sidewalk is available or accessible, pedestrians should walk as far to the left as possible on the side of the street facing traffic.

**Safety Tip:** Pedestrians are allowed to use the bike lane if it is the only option.

Sources: Texas Transportation Code, Sec. 552.006. USE OF SIDEWALK.

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## What behavior is required at a traffic signal?

- At a traffic signal, the indication of a person walking means it is OK to cross. The raised upright hand means do not cross. A flashing hand indicates that any pedestrian who is already crossing should finish soon and that others should not begin to enter the crosswalk.
- For pedestrians crossing at a Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (PHB), vehicles must stop when given a solid red light and can proceed with caution with a flashing red light. See figures below for more information on how drivers and pedestrians should behave at PHBs.

### CROSSING

#### How to Cross at a Traffic Signal or PHB



**Push  
Button  
to Cross**



**WAIT**



**Keep  
Waiting**



**Start  
Crossing**



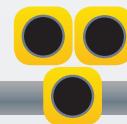
**Finish  
Crossing**  
Do not start crossing during countdown



**Push  
Button  
to Cross**

### DRIVING

#### How to Use a Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon



#### Proceed with Caution



#### Slow Down

Someone activated the signal with the push button



#### Be Prepared to Stop



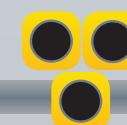
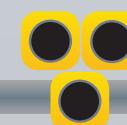
#### Stop

Someone is crossing



#### Stop

Proceed with Caution When Clear



#### Proceed with Caution