

## Word of the Day: Yield

It's a noun, it's a verb. As a verb, it's a very commonplace word to describe the act of deferring to



someone or something else; from dictionary, “to surrender or submit to a superior force”... The word Yield is most familiar in the traffic setting – we yield for emergency vehicles, for pedestrians, we yield at on- and off-ramps, we yield at crosswalks and four-way stops.

Yet as simple and familiar “yield” is, the application of the word is as rare as the word is common. At least on Los Altos roadways.

In a recent review of the past three years of traffic incidents involving bicyclists and pedestrians (data provided by the Los Altos Police Department; discussed at the March 23<sup>rd</sup> Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission meeting), one thing stood out: the majority of incidents involved a failure to yield. And most often, it was the motor vehicle operator who neglected this simple, yet powerful act. So here are some tips and a few reminders – whether you're behind the wheel, riding two wheels, or traveling by foot – all courtesy of the Department of Motor Vehicles<sup>1</sup>:

- **Respect** the right-of-way of pedestrians. Always stop for any pedestrian crossing at corners or other crosswalks, even if the crosswalk is in the middle of the block, at corners with or without traffic signal lights, whether or not the crosswalks are marked by painted lines.
- Do not pass a vehicle stopped at a crosswalk. A pedestrian you cannot see may be crossing the street. Stop and proceed when all pedestrians have crossed the street.
- Do not drive on a sidewalk, except to cross it to enter or exit a driveway or alley. When crossing, yield to all pedestrians.
- Do not stop in a crosswalk. You will place pedestrians in danger.
- Remember, if a pedestrian makes eye contact with you, he or she is ready to cross the street. Yield to the pedestrian.
- Allow older pedestrians, disabled pedestrians, and pedestrians with young children sufficient time to cross the street.
- Pedestrians – be aware of your surroundings and walk/cross defensively. You may have the right of way, but a fast moving car or inattentive driver wins every time. Don't step off the curb or into the sidewalk until you're absolutely sure it's safe.

Want to know more? You can review the California Vehicle Code on Yielding Right of Way (sections 21800-21809) for the nitty gritty details. Or, you can just slow down, look around and yield. It really won't take that much time out of your day.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv/detail/pubs/hdbk/right\\_of\\_way](https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv/detail/pubs/hdbk/right_of_way)