

## **Carpooling Basics**

Congratulations on trying carpooling as your commute option. Carpooling can be set up to be as structured or as flexible as you and your fellow carpoolers want. To work well, it does require some coordination, cooperation and flexibility from those participating.

Below are a few questions people often have when they're just starting out. Keep in mind that it can take some time to create a good, functioning carpool. Be patient with it. If your carpool is brand new, everyone should agree to try it out on a trial basis for a few days. If you decide it's not for you, you are under no obligation to continue.

### **How will carpooling benefit me?**

There are many benefits to carpooling. If you are currently driving every day, you're going to save money on your commute costs by carpooling. In some cases, depending on the length of your commute and the number of days you don't drive, the savings can be significant. You'll also enjoy less wear and tear on your vehicle because you'll be driving it less. You'll endure less stress on your commute. Finally, by driving less you'll be helping to keep the air clean.

### **How do I know if carpooling is right for me?**

You really won't know if it's a good long-term solution for you until you try it. But, going in, you should be willing to do two things. First, you should be willing to work out a schedule that is convenient for you and the others in the carpool. Second, you should be willing to compromise a bit on conditions in the carpool, if necessary. For example, if everyone likes to listen to a different radio station, the car radio may not be tuned to your favorite station every day.

### **How do I find other carpoolers?**

You can find carpoolers in a number of ways. You can create an account using RideshareOnline.com, our statewide free ridematching tool, to search for people in your area who are interested in carpooling. You can put the word out at work (contact your Employee Transportation Coordinator, if you have one) that you'd like to carpool, either by sending out an e-mail or posting a notice. You can also advertise through your neighborhood association, your local supermarket, coffee shop or your place of worship.

Carpool members can include work or school associates you already know, or people who live near you and work at a nearby employer. Occasionally carpooling ends up helping commuters meet their neighbors by matching people who work at the same company, live near each other but have never met.

### **I've just found some matches using RideshareOnline.com. What should I do now?**

You can send an e-mail to any of your matches through RideshareOnline.com, and you don't even have to write the message; just send the pre-written one if you prefer.

Once you've made the initial contact and the match has responded, we suggest you set up a time and place in public to meet in person to talk about possible carpool arrangements. Some good topics to address at this first meeting include:

- How often you would like to carpool, at least initially.
- Who wants to drive, and how often.
- Meetup/pickup time and place for both ends of the commute.
- If driving isn't split 50/50, how will the passenger reimburse the driver for costs?

If it looks like everyone wants to try carpooling, you should:

- Choose a date to start.
- Exchange cell phone numbers and e-mail addresses.
- Make sure drivers have valid licenses and auto insurance.

### **Is carpooling safe?**

Statistics show carpooling is very safe. However, you must keep your personal safety in mind. If you are considering carpooling with people you do not know, you should meet with them in person beforehand. This meeting will serve two purposes: first, you'll have a chance to discuss your ideas on setting up a carpool without obligating yourself to do it. Second, you'll be able to assess your comfort level with the people. Ask questions and trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable about someone, don't carpool with that person. You can simply say that you've decided carpooling won't work for you.

### **Are carpoolers supposed to take turns driving?**

They can, but it's not a requirement. In fact, a carpool may include people who will not drive at all. In these cases the "riders" should plan to pay the driver an agreed-upon amount to help out with driving costs. (See below for tips on determining a fair cost for non-drivers.)

If a carpool does switch drivers, this can be done on a daily basis, a weekly basis or longer, depending on the carpoolers' preferences. This may change over time as new people join the carpool.

### **Do I have to carpool every day?**

No. Carpooling is flexible enough so you can choose the number of days you'd like to share the ride. If you have occasional before- or after-work commitments, just let your carpoolers know that you won't be available those days.

### **What if I have an emergency?**

Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) will provide you with up to 65 miles of free taxi service (one-way) to take from your work to your home. Don't worry if you need to stop at daycare or the pharmacy; you're allowed to make one pre-approved stop along the way. Check with your Employee Transportation Coordinator to see if GRH is provided.

### **What are some ways to organize picking up and dropping off people on carpool days?**

There are a number of different ways to organize the logistics. If carpool members live close to each other, then the driver can simply come by each person's house to pick them up. If that's not feasible, then carpoolers can meet at one of the members' houses or a centrally-located public place.

On the other end of the commute, carpoolers can plan to meet at a centrally-located spot for the driver to pick them up if they don't work at the same company.

### **Are there any insurance or liability issues I need to be aware of?**

Insurance policies vary, and it is a good idea to check your policy — primarily the Exceptions/Exclusions portions. General liability insurance covers passengers, and most policies would not exclude carpool members, but it is worth checking. Another good reason to put in a call to your agent is to see if you qualify for a carpooling discount.

## **How much should carpool passengers pay?**

This is perhaps one of the key questions asked by potential carpoolers and, unfortunately, there is no simple answer. It will vary depending on the carpool. In carpools where driving is shared equally, no money usually changes hands as each member is using their personal vehicle an equal amount of time. When only one person does the driving, or when there is an unequal split of driving responsibilities, the cost-sharing arrangement must be discussed by those in the carpool.

The carpool members can base the costs on whatever they choose. However, some guidelines to consider include how much the driver spends on gas and wear and tear. [The Federal Standard Mileage Rates](#) are a good place to start.

## **What if I have an appointment or errands to run before, during or after work?**

If you have an appointment or errands before or after work and need your car, don't plan to carpool that day. If your appointment is during work, then plan to drive the carpool that day so you'll have your car.

If you currently are in the habit of using your car to do errands, go to lunch or go to appointments during the work day, it's a good idea to ease yourself into carpooling by doing it just once a week initially. Then, find ways to reduce your dependence on driving so you can carpool more often: bring your lunch to work, bundle your errands or take care of them online if possible.

## **Is there such a thing as good carpool etiquette?**

Of course! Every carpool is unique, but good etiquette is essential to keep it running smoothly. Good etiquette takes into account communication, courtesy and the safety of everyone in the carpool. See this list of do's and don'ts for carpoolers:

### **DO:**

- Communicate with your fellow carpoolers. If you're running a few minutes late, call or text them and let them know. If you can't carpool on a particular day due to a schedule conflict, give your carpool partners ample notice so they can make other arrangements.
- Drive safely at all times.
- Keep your vehicle clean and in good condition.
- Respect any other restrictions the carpool has agreed upon, such as smoking, eating, or drinking.

### **DON'T:**

- Make a habit of being late.
- Ask your carpoolers to make extra stops along the way so you can take care of personal errands. The carpool is meant to help everyone with their commutes, period.
- Bring up controversial topics like religion or politics unless you know your fellow carpoolers well. While some people enjoy debating issues, others may prefer a quieter commute.
- Have lengthy cell phone conversations while you're in the carpool.