



TRANSMISSION INFORMATION FOR DRIVING IN HILLY AREAS

Going Down Steep Hills - **Please don't destroy the brakes!**

When approaching a steep downgrade, it is a good idea to shift to a lower gear. Which is especially true on slippery roads. [Check Out Our Helpful Video](#)

Why Should You Use a Low Gear?

Selecting a lower gear before you reach a long downhill slope will help to control your speed. It will also save your brakes. Using your brakes on a long downgrade can overheat them. In some cases, this can lead to brake failure. By switching to low gear and allowing the engine to brake for you, you let the engine absorb some of the force and slow your vehicle. Most of the time you will still need to use the brakes, but you will need less brake pressure.



But My Car Has Automatic Transmission!

If your vehicle has automatic transmission, it knows when to shift. Every time you accelerate to pass another vehicle, go uphill or downhill, the appropriate gear kicks in. This is fully automatic and many drivers never give it a second thought. You can, however, still have some **control over when your transmission shifts**. With more knowledge and by shifting to low gears during appropriate times, you can increase the power and efficiency of your driving. This will make you a much smarter driver.



How to Shift to a Lower Gear with an Automatic

Here is how you force your automatic transmission to downshift into a lower gear when you approach a downgrade or to upshift back to D for automatic drive:

- 1) To downshift, first, ease off the gas pedal and brake a little. As the vehicle slows, you will allow the transmission to shift to a lower gear. Now, keep this speed to maintain the lower gear as long as it is necessary.
- 2) **To downshift with the “-” (minus) which is seen at the bottom of your gear shifter: slide the shifter down and to the left “-” (minus) symbol and you will go into lower gear. It can go down 2 or 3 gears. To upshift, slide the shifter to the right “+” (plus) symbol to move into a higher gear 2 to 3 times to get back to “D” for automatic Drive.** Mostly our vans will show which gear you are in on the dash, labeled with “D, 1, 2, 3 or L” (*low*). The system will usually prevent shifting to a lower gear range if you are going too fast and unless it is safe, so make sure you **first slow down to an appropriate speed**.

When You Want to Use Lower Gear

Going down steep hills and long downgrades are probably the most common use for lower gear. Some also use lower gear when going uphill to get a faster response from the engine. A steady, low gear can also be useful for very slow driving on icy roads, where you want to cut the speed to a crawl without hitting your brakes. To get a feel for how lower gears work on your vehicle, you should always try them under good road conditions. Learn how to use them before you actually need them. Remember, the system may not be the same on all vehicles.