

WHAT YELLOW MEANS

Intersections are one of the most common locations for traffic accidents. The most serious accidents usually happen when vehicles collide from different directions. Others happen when vehicles going in the same direction hit each other because the one in front stops and the other doesn't, or the one following starts up and the other doesn't.

While it's pretty clear what a "Stop" sign means, a "Yield" sign doesn't seem as clear. And while green lights and red lights are understood, it often seems that people aren't sure what a yellow light is telling them.

STOP.

STOP if you can, GO if you must.

STOP if you can; GO only if you must to be safe.

That's right; it's telling you to stop. It's telling you that the light is going to turn red and you will need to stop, but that you may have a few seconds before it turns red so if you are already too close to the intersection to stop safely, you can proceed through it. But you should stop -- if you are not yet at the intersection, and if you have time to put the brakes on and stop safely.

A yellow light is not saying "proceed with caution." It is saying "stop," and it is adding that you may proceed cautiously *if* you cannot stop safely.

Stopping safely, of course, requires that you make a judgment about whether to stop or to proceed. That is a judgment that must be based on what you know of the traffic around you. You need to know what's happening in the intersection and what is approaching the intersection from other directions, and you need to know what is beside you and behind you. And you'll only know those things if you are always scanning the traffic scene around you.

Y means *Yield*

E means *Erase* any idea you have of speeding up to beat the change to red.

L is *Like* it or not you should stop.

L means *Lower* your speed and let others go.

O is *Obey* the signal.

W says *Watch* out, other traffic may be getting a chance to move too.