

Carpooling

Carpooling can be a great way to save money on long commutes and even on short ones. It is clearly more economically sound, especially with rising gas costs. It also minimizes environmental impact.

Successful carpooling works when all carpoolers agree to a set of rules. This can help reduce frustration, streamline reimbursement for gas or vehicle expenses, and set up emergency procedures if a driver is not present for a day or two, as due to illness or emergency.

People who plan to practice carpooling together should have a meeting and establish several rules prior to all transportation. First, the group should determine which cars will be used. Some people use a service like vanpool, where they rent a van together. Others use their personal vehicles.

If one person provides the vehicle, it is important to establish reimbursement for wear and tear on the car. Obviously that person will be racking up more mileage on their car than others, so a reasonable fee for providing the car should be considered.

Some people like to carpool but hate driving. People who will not be designated drivers might pay a small additional fee for having others drive. This amount should be determined before carpooling begins.

One should also take the opportunity during the carpooling meeting to decide how and when each person will be reimbursed for gas expenses or things like tolls. Setting specific dates for reimbursement can help avoid problems later. As well, agreeing on the consequences of not paying should be made.

People have different driving habits. Some like to turn up the music or smoke nonstop while driving a car. All should agree on a few courtesy rules. Decide whether carpooling groups may eat in the car, smoke, use cell phones or listen to music. Since musical tastes differ, those carpooling might establish a headphones only rule, for example.

Conversation tastes can differ as well. Some people like to chat a lot during commutes, while others might want to catch a bit more sleep. Establishing rules about conversation can help avoid future hassles.

Driving safety should also be discussed prior to carpooling. Some people seem to disregard issues like speeding. Others feel concerned when someone does not observe the rules of the road. The carpooling team should define what they consider safe driving practices to avoid problems in the future.

Decisions should also be made regarding contact if a driver cannot make it. One way to solve the driver problem is to appoint a backup for each driver. This way, if a person is ill, he or she can call the back-up driver.

Establishing a few carpooling rules can help keep a carpool successful. Most who make rules prior to carpooling find they appreciate saving money, and come to enjoy the people with whom they carpool.

Tips For Successful Carpooling

- Determine your route and schedule. Establish the morning pickup point(s) and designate a place(s) to meet for the trip home.
- Draw up a schedule for driving responsibilities.
- Establish a method for reimbursing driving expenses. If all members of your carpool do not share the driving equally, come to an understanding of how the costs will be shared and agree on payment dates.
- Be punctual. Decide how long the driver is expected to wait. When home pickups are utilized, do not disturb everyone in the neighborhood by honking if a rider is running a few minutes late.
- Establish policies. Smoking or nonsmoking; music and volume; food and drinks. Your carpool will have a better chance of success if possible irritants are discussed initially.
- Establish a chain of communication. If a driver is ill, an alternate driver should be notified to ensure that other members of the carpool will have a ride. If a member is ill or will not be traveling, the driver must be contacted as soon as possible.
- Drive carefully and keep the vehicle in good repair. This includes keeping the vehicle clean and safe. There are others involved. There should be no excuse for excessive speed, use of alcohol, or reckless maneuvers. All Drivers must have a valid state drivers license, valid vehicle insurance, and valid vehicle registration.
- Respect your fellow carpooler's wishes. Especially in the morning when some people like quiet time.

Mileage Reimbursement Rates

Annually, the IRS announces standard mileage reimbursement rates. Visit www.irs.gov for updated rates.