Are you game day ready? Your tailgating safety tips playbook.



You see your team colors around you, the food is on the grill, you hear cheers and excitement in the air. It can only mean one thing … it's game day. The only thing better than gathering with friends to cheer on your favorite team is the pre-game tailgate. To ensure a safer event, we have some ideas to add to your playbook. So, cheer hard, be smart, and follow our nine tailgating safety tips all season long.

1. **Park in a safe spot.** See if the team has a designated tailgating area, like a closed-off parking lot or grassy park. This is preferred, since vehicles won't actively be driving after they get settled. If you can't park in a no-traffic zone, use barriers, like tables or trash cans, to create a perimeter around your party and make your setup more noticeable to vehicles.

2. **Be a smart griller.** If you're packing a grill for the event, grill safety is a top priority. Don't enclose the grill in a tent or awning … ensure it has plenty of ventilation to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. Set up on a flat, stable surface under a clear sky (no branches, wires, or décor overhead). Establish a safe zone so no kids or crowds get too close and risk being burned or knocking over the grill. And always keep a fire extinguisher on hand for any disasters.

3. **Use proper refrigeration.** When it comes to tailgates, elaborate food spreads can get just as competitive as the game itself. Keep meat products in a separate cooler from your other foods, packed directly on top of a layer of ice. Don't let any food sit out longer than two hours, or one hour if the temperature is above 90 degrees Fahrenheit. Avoid overpacking, as it's not safe to bring home leftovers, including meat, dairy, and other refrigerated products.

4. **Stock up on extra supplies.** Think: Paper plates, napkins, water, trash bags, wipes, a first-aid kit, sunscreen, jackets, and portable phone chargers. Since tailgating can start early in the morning and run well into the evening, being overly prepared with all the items for eating, weather, and emergencies is always a good idea.

5. **Watch the weather.** Check the forecast the night before the game and in the morning. If heat, rain, or flurries are in the forecast, pack accordingly. If severe storms or wind are expected, consider changing your plans. It's better to skip this week's tailgate to avoid being caught outdoors with your family in dangerous conditions.

6. **Be a respectful fan.** A good rivalry can bring the competitiveness out of anyone. To avoid the temptation of heckling or tensions getting high, see if you can park next to a friend or someone from your home team. Avoid spilling over into your neighbor's area or turning the music up too high. Remember: No matter who you're playing or how the game ends, we all win when everyone stays kind and in control.

7. **Elect a designated driver.** Don't assume alcohol will wear off during game time and you'll be safe to drive home. Agree on a designated driver the evening before the event. That person should refrain from drinking the entire day.

8. **Don't overload your vehicle.** You'll want to keep your mirrors and windows clear so you can see out of all angles of your vehicle. Stack your gear securely so it doesn't topple or break free while you drive or turn. Ensure all passengers have clear, open seats and individual seat belts.

9. **Keep your head on a swivel.** When navigating into or out of a tailgating zone, be on high alert. Running children, footballs, people, vehicles, and gear could unexpectedly cross your path. Make sure your designated driver is experienced and feels comfortable navigating these zones, even if it's dark. Be a helpful passenger by minimizing distractions and offering a second set of eyes.

We love a good matchup with a tailgate to kick it off, but we like it even more when these tailgating safety tips are kept in mind. Looking for more safety and peace of mind? Find it when you talk to a local, independent agent today.

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