



### How to Navigate Across America Using Highways

Even in our age of smartphones and GPS systems, being prepared to navigate without a map is an important skill. As the grid system of Manhattan demonstrates, a well-ordered navigation system can be very helpful once users understand its logic. By learning and applying a few simple rules about America's two major highway systems, you can identify roughly where you are in the United States and then head onward towards any destination of your choosing.

Highways in the United States are divided into two major categories:



**Interstate Highways:** Established in 1956 by President Eisenhower, these roads are always at least two lanes per direction and have a divided median.



**Federal Highways** (aka U.S. Routes): Officially designated in 1926, the quality of these roads runs the gamut from shoddy one-lane passages to well-maintained, multi-lane behemoths with divided medians.

#### Quick Guide to Identifying a Highway

	<b>East-West Roads:</b>	<b>North-South Roads:</b>	<b>Numbers get larger as they go further:</b>	<b>Major Roads end in:</b>
<b>Interstate Highways:</b>	Even Numbers	Odd Numbers	East or North	0 or 5
<b>Federal Highway System:</b>	Even Numbers	Odd Numbers	West or South	0 or 1

Interstate exits: On Interstate Highways, the exit numbers follow the same pattern as the numbers for the routes themselves; they become larger as you are going east or north.

### **Applications in Context**

- A. You know you are somewhere in Colorado on Interstate 70. As you travel down the road, you notice a sign that Denver is approaching ahead. You also the exit numbers are getting smaller. You are trying to get to Colorado Springs, which you know to be due south of Denver. As you near Denver, you see upcoming exit signs for three roads: Federal Highway 6, Interstate 25, and Interstate 270.
1. Which direction were you heading initially?
  2. Which of the three roads would take you in the correct direction towards Colorado Springs (south)?
- B. You find yourself on Interstate 15 in Utah. As you travel, you notice that the exit numbers are getting larger. As you approach the outskirts of Salt Lake City, you are forced on a detour due to a massive sinkhole on the interstate. You are rerouted onto Federal Highway 89.
1. Will Federal Highway 89 take you in the same direction as Interstate 15? If so, which direction should you head?
  2. Your ultimate destination is San Francisco (on the west coast). As you proceed on your way, you see a sign announcing upcoming junctions. These roads include Interstate 15, Interstate 215, and Interstate 80. Which of these roads will help you go in the direction of San Francisco (west)?
- C. After a relaxing vacation upstate in Lake Placid, you are returning home to the city and unfortunately find you have forgotten your map. Luckily, you stumble upon Federal Highway 9, which you know can take you south. Outside of Albany, you see a sign notifying you of upcoming junctions. The roads listed include: Federal Highway 9W, Federal Highway 20, Interstate 87, and Interstate 90.
1. To reach NYC (which you know to be south of you) should you stay on Federal Highway 9 or take one of these other routes?
  2. If you decide to take one of these other routes, which one should you take?

*I hope you enjoyed the lesson! Safe and happy travels!*