

# HOW TO SURVIVE WHEN STUCK ON AN OPENING DRAWBRIDGE

## **1** Draw attention to yourself.

Two-leaf bascule drawbridges—those with two movable sections of roadway that swing from horizontal to vertical—will have a bridge “tender” (operator) in the control house who should be able to stop the opening. Flash your headlights and honk your horn repeatedly to attract his attention so he will lower the drawbridge. If the bridge tender cannot see you (his view may be blocked by one of the open spans) or is not paying attention, you will have to proceed on your own.

## **2** Back up.

Drawbridges take several minutes to open fully. If the opening span is still relatively horizontal, back up off the bridge (or at least as far back as you can).

## **3** Get out.

Place your car in gear (or in park if it has an automatic transmission) and apply the emergency brake. Get out of the car and move away: Even with the brake on, the vehicle will begin sliding backward by the time the roadway opens about 30 degrees.

## **4** Hold on.

The bridge should have some type of railing and/or a grated road surface that offers hand- and footholds. If a railing is present, grab one of the vertical (fast becoming horizontal) railing supports. Wrap both your arms around the section and grasp your belt, if you’re wearing one. If the road surface is grated, face it, place your hands in the grate, and hold on. Drawbridges typically take several minutes to open completely, giving you time to brace yourself.

## **5** Wait.

Depending on the height of the vessel moving under the bridge, the span may not move to a completely vertical position. Even in its fully open condition, however, the span will not move beyond 90 degrees, so you will not be hanging upside down. Wait until the ship passes and the bridge span lowers, then walk off the bridge. Your car will have slid down the open span and crashed into the joint where it meets the horizontal section of the roadway.

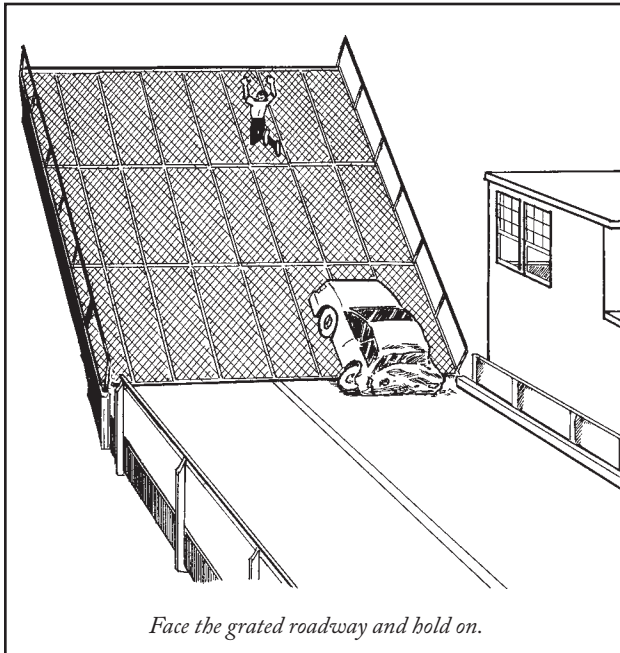
## **6** If you begin to lose your grip or cannot find a handhold, jump.

Though any high fall into water should be considered only as a last resort, you stand a better chance of avoiding major injury when landing in water than landing on the road surface. Because the bridge is over a shipping channel, the water below you should be deep enough for you to avoid hitting the bottom. Look down to make sure the ship is not directly

below the bridge, then jump as soon as you can, before the opening span adds elevation to your leap and before the ship is so close that you cannot get out of its way. Keep your legs and feet together, point your toes, and place your arms straight above your head.

**7** After breaking the surface, open your arms and legs wide to slow your descent.

**8** Head for shore.  
Immediately swim up and away from the path of the approaching ship as fast as you can.



*Face the grated roadway and hold on.*

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