

**Wheels:** Dale B. says, “I learned to drive in the 1950's on a standard shift and my father would use down-shifting as a brake assist and apparently it didn't hurt the transmission or clutch, while it did prolong the life of the brake linings.

My question: Does down-shifting an automatic transmission, as a braking device, harm the transmission? I do it frequently but often wonder if what I'm saving on brake pads might be offset by possible damage to the transmission. What is your opinion?”

**Halderman:** Using the brakes to slow the vehicle is the recommended procedure because of several reasons, including:

- Brakes are easier and less expensive to replace than the automatic transmission.
- Using the brakes gives the driver complete control, whereas when using the automatic transmission, downshifting can occur, affecting vehicle handling.
- When the gear selector is placed in a lower gear ratio on an automatic transmission, the hydraulic pressure is increased to help keep the internal clutch applied. This increased pressure could cause extra wear, as well as long term wear to the pump and all hydraulic circuits.

What is my opinion? Use the brakes to slow the vehicle and keep the gear selector in drive for the best overall performance, fuel economy, and vehicle life.

