

## Distracted Driving

**Defensive driving is a set of safe responses to potential hazards, including other drivers, damaged road surfaces, debris, inclement weather, and more. Getting behind the wheel isn't risk-free, and employing defensive driving techniques can help keep you and other drivers safe.**

### How does one become a good defensive driver?

To improve as a defensive driver, continue to refine your skills, stay updated on road safety practices, and make safe driving your priority. Follow the following tips and consider taking a defensive driving course where you can learn advanced techniques, road safety, and hazard awareness.

### Defensive driving tips and techniques

Consider following these defensive driving tips to become a safer driver:

- 1. Take your time.** Speeding is the most common aggressive driving behavior. According to the National Safety Council's analysis of 2019 data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), speeding was a factor in 26% of accidents that resulted in deaths. No matter how late you are to your destination, resist the urge to speed. It could save your life.
- 2. Stay sober.** Drugs, alcohol, or medication are a factor in 10% of fatal crashes each year, according to the NHTSA as reported by the Insurance Information Institute. Stay sober if you're getting behind the wheel to help ensure you'll be able to make sound driving decisions.
- 3. Be on the lookout.** Circumstances can change quickly on the road. Defensive driving requires you to scan everything in your line of vision, not just what's right in front of you. A van that's two lanes over and 10 car lengths ahead may not seem like a threat, but if that van swerves into your lane to avoid hitting a deer, you'll need to be ready to respond.
- 4. Keep a safe following distance.** Forty percent of accidents that occur each year are rear-end collisions, according to the NHTSA as reported by the National Safety Commission. Tailgating can increase your likelihood of getting into a crash. Maintain a safe following distance in case the car in front of you brakes suddenly. Learn more city driving tips.
- 5. Take note of road hazards.** Road debris, potholes, and cargo in the bed of a truck can quickly turn ideal conditions dangerous. Avoid road hazards by safely switching lanes or using your hazard lights and coming to a safe stop when necessary.

**6. Avoid distractions.** In 2018, distracted driving was a factor in 2,841 accident-related deaths and 400,000 accident-related injuries, according to the NHTSA. When you're behind the wheel, focus only on the road.

**7. Pass with care.** If you need to pass another driver, make sure there's enough space so you don't cut them off or get too close to another vehicle. A common rule of thumb is to wait three seconds to merge in front of a car you've passed.

**8. Stay calm.** A minor irritation can quickly turn into road rage, which should always be avoided. Keeping your cool no matter what another driver does can help prevent a frustration from escalating into a serious incident.

**9. Let speeders pass.** If someone is driving over the speed limit, don't feel like you need to pick up your pace to keep up with them. Continue driving the speed limit, and safely move over to let them pass. Remember, slower traffic should stay to the right, and faster traffic should pass on the left when there are multiple lanes, unless signs say otherwise. Learn more about what to do if someone tailgates you, and tips for safe highway driving.

### What is an example of defensive driving?

A good example of defensive driving is paying attention. It seems simple, but it's the foundation of safe driving. Checking your mirrors periodically, scanning the road ahead, and remaining aware as road hazards and weather conditions change, are all functions of paying attention and avoiding distractions while driving.

If you have too many accidents or other moving violations, your insurer may even drop your coverage. Some states have approved defensive driving courses that drivers can take and apply to have points removed from their record. Learn how speeding tickets and car accidents impact car insurance.

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