

# Aggressive Driving: Help Get the Word Out

Most of us see it every day -- the road racer, the distracter, the tailgater, the frequent lane changer, the red light runner. The atmosphere created by aggressive drivers is scary.

## Aggressive Driving is All Around Us

We have all seen aggressive drivers who carelessly:

- **Express frustration.** Drivers climb into the anonymity of an automobile and take out their frustrations on anybody at any time. Their emotions are high and the concern for fellow motorists is low.
- **Lack attention to driving.** Distractions from driving is a major cause of roadway crashes. Motorists are often seen eating, drinking, primping -- yes, even shaving -- as they drive. Some drivers make their automobiles a "home away from home," with fax machines and laptop computers.
- **Tailgate.** Tailgating creates a serious hazard. It is a major cause of crashes that can result in serious injuries.
- **Make frequent, unnecessary lane changes.** Drivers who whip in and out of lanes merely to advance one car length ahead are a danger to other motorists.
- **Rubberneck.** Slowing down to look at an incident is a natural human reaction. But this behavior slows traffic, causes congestion, and may lead to another car crash.
- **Run red lights.** Disregarding traffic controls is a leading cause of urban crashes.
- **Speed.** Going faster than the posted speed limit, being a "road racer," going too fast for conditions, and weaving in and out of traffic are some examples of speeding.

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## Help Get the Word Out to Others

Discuss aggressive driving with members of your family, friends, individuals and community groups. This is how you can help:

**Give everyone an opportunity to take the test.** We all need to look at ourselves to see if we are contributors to the atmosphere. Ask about driving habits everyone is doing well and others that need to be worked on.

**Realize that traffic crashes are caused by the way we drive.** Motor vehicle crashes are not inevitable, they are avoidable.

**Reduce your stress when you drive.** Allow plenty of time for the trip, listen to soothing music, improve the comfort in your vehicle and understand that you cannot control the traffic, only your reaction to it. In the end, we may very well discover that personal frustration, anger, and impatience may be the most dangerous "drugs" on the highway.

**Assume other drivers' mistakes are not personal.** Be polite and courteous, even if the other driver is not. Avoid all conflict if possible. If another driver challenges you, take a deep breath and get out of the way. Never underestimate the other driver's capacity for mayhem.

**Report aggressive drivers.** Some states have a cellular telephone number that motorists can use to report dangerous driving to the appropriate law enforcement agency. If you have a cellular telephone in your vehicle, keep the number handy. Then, when you see a driver operating a vehicle in a threatening manner, stop your vehicle and make the call. Make sure you get a vehicle description, license number, the location, and direction of travel. You could prevent a tragedy.

**Be a courteous driver yourself.** Everyone has the power to set an example, and this will help make our roadways safer. Use that power.

## We All Need to Take the Test

What about your own driving? Take a minute to evaluate yourself to see if you may have developed some habits that could be adding to the aggressive driving atmosphere.

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## Are you an Aggressive Driver or a Smooth Operator? Do you...

Y e s	N o	
		Overtake other vehicles only on the left
		Avoid blocking passing lanes
		Yield to faster traffic by moving to the right
		Keep to the right as much as possible on narrow streets and at intersections
		Maintain appropriate distance when following other vehicles, bicyclists, motorcyclists, etc.
		Provide appropriate distance when cutting in after passing vehicles
		Use headlights in cloudy, raining, low light conditions
		Yield to pedestrians
		Come to a complete stop at stop signs, before right turn on red, etc.
		Stop for red traffic lights
		Approach intersections and pedestrians at slow speeds to show your intention and ability to stop
		Follow right-of-way rules at four-way stops
		Drive below posted speed limits when conditions warrant
		Drive at slower speeds in construction zones
		Maintain speeds appropriate for conditions
		Use vehicle turn signals for turns and lane changes
		Make eye contact and signal intentions where needed
		Acknowledge intentions of others
		Use your horn sparingly around pedestrians, at night, around hospitals, etc.
		Avoid unnecessary use of high beam headlights
		Yield and move to the right for emergency vehicles
		Refrain from flashing headlights to signal a desire to pass
		Drive trucks at posted speeds, in the proper lanes, using non-aggressive lane changing
		Make slow, deliberate U-turns
		Maintain proper speeds around roadway crashes
		Avoid returning inappropriate gestures
		Avoid challenging other drivers
		Try to get out of the way of aggressive drivers
		Refrain from momentarily using High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes to pass vehicles
		Focus on driving and avoid distracting activities (e.g., smoking, use of a car telephone, reading, shaving)
		Avoid driving when drowsy
		Avoid blocking the right-hand turn lane
		Avoid taking more than one parking space
		Avoid parking in a disabled space (if you are not disabled)
		Avoid letting your door hit the car parked next to you
		Avoid using the car telephone while driving
		Avoid stopping in the road to talk with a pedestrian or other driver
		Avoid inflicting loud music on neighboring cars

### Score yourself:

Number of "No" Answers

1-3	Excellent
4-7	Good
8-11	Fair
12 (or more)	Poor