

## Drive Safely Hints & Tips

**1.3 million people are killed in public road accidents every year. Don't become a statistic.**



Unless immediate and effective action is taken, road traffic injuries are predicted to become the 5<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death worldwide.

Take control, and don't let yourself become part of that statistic. The most simple safety precautions, such as those detailed below, are often those that will save your life.

### Preparing your car

- Pre-driving checks for your seat and viewing abilities should be carried out before every journey, particularly if you are using a hire car, share your car with other drivers, or have not used your car in a while.
  - Your seat should allow for comfortable use of foot controls and steering; a useful measure is whether you can compress the clutch pedal to the floor without feeling that you're stretching.
  - You should be able to see clearly in your rear-view and side mirrors with minimal head movement, and they should be angled to work together in reducing 'blind spots'. Avoid directly touching the mirror glass when making position adjustments as finger mark smudges can obscure your view.
  - For maximum visibility, keep your windscreen and side windows clean at all times.
  - Ensure that your vision is not obscured by items in the car; as the image depicts, this is most commonly caused by bags piled high in the boot.
- Ensuring that your car is in safe condition is a vital aspect of preparing for any journey. Regular professional servicing and personal maintenance will give you piece of mind that your car is mechanically sound.



## Buckle up



- 4 out of 5 driving fatalities occur on short journeys at speeds less than 50 mph; get into the habit of not starting your car unless your seatbelt is on, even if you are setting out on a short or familiar journey.
- It is your legal responsibility as the driver to ensure that all passengers are wearing seatbelts whilst in your car.
- Correctly used seatbelts reduce the risk of death in a crash by over 60 percent; make sure that your seatbelt is being used properly with the straps running across your lap and chest at all times.

## 'Under the influence?'

- It is **your** responsibility to ensure that you are in a fit state to get behind the wheel.
- The legal alcohol limit for UK drivers is 80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood but as alcohol levels are dependant on factors such as weight, metabolism, age and stress levels, it is difficult to calculate how much you can drink before you exceed the limit. The best practice, therefore, is to steer clear of any alcohol if you know you may be driving.
- It is not just illegal drugs that can impair your driving abilities, but prescription and over the counter medicines can also be a cause for concern. Always check medication labels and if you are unsure of the affect your medication may have on your fitness to drive, consult your GP, pharmacist or other healthcare professional immediately.
- Research suggests that almost 20 percent of accidents on major roads are fatigue-related. Always pull over for a rest stop if you're feeling tired to re-fuel, and plan your longer journeys to include a 15 minute break every 2 hours.



## In-car distractions



- Whilst hands-free systems are legal in the UK, a study by the Allianz Centre for Technology has found that their use remains a significant distraction to drivers; pull over to a safe location before using your mobile phone or, better yet, turn it off whilst in your car.
- If using a satellite navigation system, mount it in a place which does not obscure your vision and set the unit to 'talk' to you to prevent having to take your eyes off the road.
- The Allianz Centre for Technology has determined that whilst drivers tend to slow down whilst consuming food, they are also almost twice as likely to be in an accident; stop to eat or drink in a service station or rest point.
- Loud music can prevent you from hearing the external environment and take your mind off the road; use your common sense when listening to music, and keep it at a reasonable audio level.

## On the road



- Though you must always adhere to the maximum speed limit, it is also important to remember that it is not a target; use your judgment and adjust your speed according to the limits set by the conditions and your comfort level.
- Understand the capability of your car for factors such as braking and accelerating, and drive sensibly within its limits.
- Crowding the car ahead of you increases the risk of collision should they suddenly break. The best practice is to heed the three second rule; when the car ahead passes a fixed object, such as a tree or telephone pole, slowly count to three. If you reach the object before completing the count, then you are following too closely. Double your following distances to six seconds in poor weather conditions.
- Maintaining situational awareness will reduce the likelihood of you having to jam on the brakes or make sudden steering changes to avoid problems; use your mirrors frequently to scan the road environment.

## Sharing the road

- Make sure that you are particularly alert to pedestrians, cyclists or motorcyclists around you.
- Practice responsibility and courtesy by yielding to pedestrians at crossings, and be particularly cautious when driving near children or elderly pedestrians who may not immediately see or hear you.
- Junctions are hot spots for motorbike collisions; make a conscious effort to look carefully for bikes before pulling out of a junction, and remember they may be approaching faster than they seem.



- Always anticipate a cyclist swerving to avoid a pothole or other obstruction, and allow plenty of space when overtaking.
- Look out for cyclists particularly when turning left as they may have approached from behind as you were waiting to turn.
- Failing to signal your intentions to other road users is always dangerous - as well as discourteous - but it is particularly important for the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists who are more likely to be in your 'blind spots' and to suffer most should you strike them.

## Developing your skills

- If you have the desire to become a more skilled driver and learn how to better handle emergency situations such as panic braking and loss of vehicle control, consider taking an advanced driving course. Programmes like this are specifically designed for drivers who have passed their test and have road experience, but want to gain more confidence behind the wheel.