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Drive alert Arrive alive

A driver's guide
from Alphabet



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Top 10 tips for drivers

Driving is by far the most dangerous activity you do. You are 400 times more likely to die on the roads than you are to win the National Lottery jackpot. If you drive on business, your risk of dying at work is higher than if you mine coal for a living.

1. Give yourself a head start.

In an ideal world we would all be able to allow ourselves an extra five, 10 or 15 minutes for every road journey. If we did we would be less stressed, more in control and far less likely to be involved in a crash. In fact, a lot of drivers do plan their driving time this way and they are happier and safer as a result. Good time management and punctuality are always attributes of successful individuals, so planning your journeys and sticking to start-times could help you become wealthier as well as healthier!

2. Check for damage and relax.

It takes just 20 seconds to walk round your car before getting in to check for any damage to wheels, tyres or lights that could turn a mishap on the roads into a crash. When you get behind the wheel wait 10 seconds before turning the ignition key. If you are tense, ease your muscles. Tune out worries and distractions and switch your mind to driving mode. Statistics show that a high proportion of crashes happen within 10 miles of drivers' homes. Taking just a few moments to get relaxed and alert makes for a safer, more enjoyable journey.

3. Belt up in the back.

You're wearing your seatbelt and protected by front and side airbags – but an adult rear seat passenger who doesn't buckle up could turn a survivable accident into a fatal one by crushing you from behind. It's not always easy to insist that passengers belt up in the back, especially if they are senior colleagues, but you should always do so.

4. Stop so that you can see the tyres of the vehicle in front.

When you come to a stop in a line of traffic, make sure you can still see the tyres and rear axle of the vehicle ahead. If the car ahead breaks down, you will always have room to pull out and drive past them. Perhaps more importantly, if the person following you fails to stop and hits you, they are less likely to push you into the vehicle ahead. Always apply your handbrake when stopped in a line of traffic.

5. Motorway safety.

When you are joining or overtaking on a motorway or dual carriageway, use a life saving glance over your right shoulder if you are not 100% certain of the position of following traffic. There may be a vehicle in your blind spot not revealed by your mirrors. Likewise, when you are in heavy traffic don't sit in another driver's blind spot. If they move to overtake, at least part of the blame is yours. Avoid creating a 'motorway sandwich' of three vehicles travelling in line abreast with no escape route if something goes wrong.

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6. Wheels ahead when turning right.

If you are turning right off a road and have to wait for oncoming traffic, keep your wheels pointing straight ahead. If you are hit from behind, you won't be steered into the oncoming traffic. Another safety tip at junctions, where you are more likely to be hit from the front, is to be particularly careful not to cross your arms while turning the steering wheel. If a collision sets off the airbag while your arms are crossed, it is likely to punch your wrists and hands into your face.

7. Your right of way.

Sometimes it is better to be prepared to give up your right of way rather than risk being hurt. On roundabouts, be ready to react to drivers coming from the left who shoot out in front of you because they've misjudged their speed or taken a chance. Hold back when following large goods vehicles into roundabouts or junctions until you are sure of the line the driver is taking so that you do not get trapped between the trailer and the island or kerb.

8. Scan the environment around you.

You should never have to say 'the other driver suddenly...'. Genuinely unpredictable crashes are very rare and almost all collisions can be avoided effectively by scanning the environment and using the information to anticipate hazards. For instance, if you are driving at 30mph and someone drives out into your path 30 yards ahead, spotting the danger just half a second sooner will give you time to stop without hitting them.

9. Follow the two second rule.

Two seconds is the minimum gap you need to leave between you and the vehicle in front to have time to react to something happening unexpectedly ahead. Remember, two seconds is the bare minimum in daylight and good weather. Double the gap to four seconds if it is dark, wet or foggy. If another driver is tailgating you and you can't move over to let them pass, increase your distance from the vehicle ahead. You won't have to stop suddenly and the driver behind is less likely to hit you.

10. Read the road as far ahead as you can.

Position yourself so you have the best possible view ahead, 'read' the road for advance warning of hazards and always drive at a speed that means you can stop within the distance you can see. For the best view ahead on a left hand bend, position yourself close to the centre line. On a right-hand bend, be closer to the kerb. If you are following a large vehicle, keep back so that it does not completely block your view ahead and never forget that if you can't see the mirrors of a truck in front of you its driver can't see you.

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More information

The following websites offer a wide range of tips, advice and information on driving safety and keeping within the law. For further information click on the links below...

→ Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents: www.rospa.org.uk

→ Think! Road safety campaign (UK Department for Transport): www.think.gov.uk

→ BRAKE: www.brake.org.uk

→ Driving Standards Agency: www.dsa.gov.uk

→ Department for Transport: www.dft.gov.uk

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