



## Safe Driving Basics

Nine basic actions that can help minimize the number of crashes:

Inexperienced, as well as experienced, drivers can prevent crashes by avoiding distractions and maintaining control of their vehicles. The following basics will help drivers with all levels of experience perform safely behind the wheel. But before you do anything - buckle-up. And, be sure all of your passengers are buckled up.

### SAFE DRIVING BASICS

PARENT/TEEN DRIVING AGREEMENT

DISTRACTED, DRUNK & DRUGGED DRIVING

YOVASO ACTIVITIES

LINKS

1. Keep your eyes on the road and your hands on the wheel!

Driver distraction is reaching epidemic proportions in drivers of all ages, but especially in young, inexperienced drivers. Consider all the things in a vehicle that can occupy a driver's attention: cell phones, radios and CD players, sophisticated vehicle controls, fast food and other drive-through conveniences, laptop computers and onboard navigation devices, as well as passengers, children, and pets.

In today's communities, more people spend more time in vehicles and on the road. Thus, they often try to maximize driving time by combining it with other activities, often with tragic consequences. Driving is not a multi-functional task. It requires the driver's full attention.

2. Set or adjust the controls on the vehicle and other devices as soon as you get in the car.

Fasten your safety belt and adjust your mirrors, the radio or CD player, and the climate control settings. Make sure everyone else in your vehicle is buckled up and that all objects are securely stowed.

3. Keep your body alert.

Sit straight, but relaxed. Place your left hand between the 7 and 9 o'clock positions on the steering wheel and your right hand between the 3 and 5 o'clock positions on the wheel. Hold the wheel with your fingers and thumbs. Avoid gripping it tightly because your palms are not as sensitive as your fingers. Look in the direction that you want to go.

4. Drivers ages 15, 16, and 17 are prohibited from talking, sending text messages, or snapping photos with a phone while driving on Virginia roads.

The ban also applies to hands-free devices. However, teens are allowed to use a phone during an emergency, such as if someone thinks he or she is being followed.

5. Anticipate the traffic and the environment around you.

- Maintain space around your car. Use the three second rule to keep space between you and the vehicle ahead. Don't cut in front of other vehicles.
- Don't drive parallel with another vehicle. If something blocks your path ahead, you'll need the room on either side of your vehicle to escape the obstacle in front of you.
- If someone tailgates you, move into another lane and let the tailgater pass. Or, pull off the road so the person can pass.
- Avoid speeding up or slowing down.
- As you drive, look four or five vehicles ahead. This helps you anticipate stops, slowdowns, curves or other changes in the traffic or roadway.
- Check your rearview mirrors approximately every ten seconds. This helps you anticipate hazards approaching from behind.

6. Know the type of braking system that your vehicle uses.

- If your vehicle uses an anti-locking braking system (ABS), keep your foot firmly on the pedal if you stop suddenly. Do not pump the brakes in an emergency situation. This will provide false information to your braking system, preventing it from operating correctly.
- If your vehicle is not equipped with anti-lock brakes, press the brake pedal firmly, just short of locking the wheels. If your wheels lock, indicating a skid, let up slightly on the brake pressure. Then, reapply pressure to the brake. Continue this squeezing action until the vehicle stops.

7. In bad weather, reduce your speed and increase your following distance.

Slow down in bad weather or other poor driving conditions, such as rain, fog, snow, ice, and heavy traffic. If you are uncomfortable with the speed limit, for whatever reason, slow down.

8. Drive the speed limit.

Speeding will not get you to your destination faster. Speed influences a crash in four ways:

- It increases the distance your vehicle travels from the time you recognize an emergency until you can react.
- It increases the distance it takes to stop your vehicle. The faster you go, the more distance it takes to stop your vehicle.
- Crash severity increases incrementally with speed. For example, if your speed increases from 40 to 60 miles an hour, your speed increases 50 percent while the energy released in a crash more than doubles.

- Higher speeds reduce the ability of vehicles, safety belts, air bags, guardrails, and barriers to protect vehicle occupants in a crash.

9. Avoid sudden moves or over-correction.

A sudden response or over-correction, such as jerking the steering wheel to the right or left, or slamming on the brakes can cause the vehicle to skid, swerve into oncoming traffic, or veer off the roadway. You can avoid sudden surprises that lead to reactive moves by watching the traffic and roadway ahead, behind, and around you.



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