

ISSUE 12

Distractions at the Wheel

Maybe there was a time, long ago, when driving was a carefree activity. There was no traffic except a few horses and cattle-drawn wagons. The car was so slow that people had plenty of time to get out of the way as you approached. There were no roads, so you could drive wherever you wanted, and there were no traffic rules. The biggest worries were if the automobile would start and where to find gasoline. But times have changed.

These days, there are millions of fast, heavy vehicles on the roads. Not all drivers are particularly careful, and many drive too fast and do not pay much attention to their common sense, let alone the laws. So a really good driver in today's world must not only pay attention to his own business, but he has to also keep track of the goings-on of everybody else on the road as well.

What is the most common distraction for drivers?

- (1) Not keeping their eyes on the road (Looking at something else)
- (2) Fiddling with radio, TV, CD, or video controls
- (3) Talking to passengers
- (4) Using cell phones
- (5) Drinking or eating something
- (6) Not paying attention
- (7) Being too tired
- (8) Getting lost
- (9) Being confused by the road signs
- (10) Becoming angry or impatient in traffic jams



Sample Answers

(A) The most dangerous device for the modern driver is the cell phone. To use it, one must take one's hands off the wheel, one's eyes off the road, and one's mind off the task of driving. It is no wonder that many countries have *banned* the use of cell phones by drivers.

(B) Driving in *metropolitan* traffic is a full-time job. It requires complete concentration and a clear mind. A driver must be able to react instantly to avoid an accident or to deal with some unexpected road condition. Even excellent drivers are *handicapped* behind the wheel if they are tired or preoccupied with other matters. To drive well, people absolutely must be *alert*; *by definition*, tired people are not attentive enough and not quick enough to deal with the ever-changing situation on high-speed highways.

Speak Your Mind

1. Are you confident of your driving skills?
2. Who do you think are the best drivers, men or women?
3. Do you obey all the traffic rules?
4. Have you ever *dozed* at the wheel?
5. Did you ever drive drunk?
6. Do you always *buckle up*? What do you think about the legal requirement to use seat belts?
7. Have you ever been involved in a traffic accident? Tell what happened.
8. Would you ride in a car with a friend who has been drinking?
9. Are you ever willing to lend your car to a friend or coworker?
10. What is the traffic rule people break most often?

-ban : prohibit (sb/sth) by law, decree, or rule; forbid

-metropolitan : relating to a very large city

-handicapped : not able fully to use part of one's body or mind

-alert : paying complete attention; wide awake

-by definition : as a part of the basic nature of (sth)

-doze : sleep for a short time

-buckle up : fasten your seat belt in a car, airplane, etc.

10. What is the traffic rule people break most often?

F : Don't drive so fast!

M : I'm not going any faster than anyone else. I'm only keeping up with the flow of traffic.

F : But you're still over the speed limit. Slow down.

M : If I'm too slow I run the risk of being *rear-ended* by a fast car behind me. It's better to go the same speed as everyone else.

F : I'm not in any hurry to get where we're going. There's no *degree of being late* that can compare to being dead! I'd rather be alive and a little late than never to get there at all.

M : Don't worry. Everything is fine. The weather is good, the car is operating perfectly, and I'm in complete control of the situation.

F : If you're not going to slow down, let me out. I refuse to ride with an *outlaw*.

M : An outlaw?

F : Yes, absolutely. you know what the speed limit is and you refuse to *abide by* it. That is deliberately breaking the law! Let me out, you criminal!

M : OK, OK, you win. I'll slow down. Now, are you satisfied?

F : Just keep at the speed limit or below and I'll be happy.

M : At least I don't race the other cars. I don't feel like my *manhood* is threatened just because someone passes me.

F : No, I didn't say you were a terrible driver. But sometimes you're too fast. I don't want to get a ticket and I don't want to take risks.

M : OK, I promise to try to do better. But I think you worry too much.

