

# DEFENSIVE DRIVING



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## Topics:

- Definition of Defensive Driving.
- The style of life theory of driving.
- The characteristics of a good driver.
- The Smith System of defensive driving.
- Basic driving skills which can reduce traffic collisions.



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Defensive driving is the ability to operate your vehicle in a manner to avoid involvement in a preventable accident regardless of **the road and weather conditions.**



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Defensive driving is a philosophy we have been exposed to since the beginning of our driving experience.



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# KEYS TO DEFENSIVE DRIVING:

- When behind the wheel, make DRIVING your FIRST priority.
- Anticipate a driver's next move. Don't be surprised by it.



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# CRASH FACTS:



- The leading cause of death of Americans age 16-24 is motor vehicle crashes.
- The comprehensive cost of crashes exceeds \$830 billion annually.
- 147 teens were killed in crashes in Michigan in 2016.
- You are 50% more likely to die in a crash if you are not buckled up.
- Males are twice as likely to be killed in a vehicle crash compared to females.



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- 312,172 traffic crashes were reported in Michigan in 2016, with 79,724 people being injured, 5,634 seriously injured.
- 1,064 people died in motor vehicle crashes in Michigan in 2016, up from 963 in 2015.
- **One in five** 16 year old licensed drivers will become involved in a traffic crash.
- Over 1 million drivers are arrested each year for driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics.
- 30 people die in the U.S. every day because of an alcohol related crash.



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The majority of drivers **CAN** drive safely. Those who are more likely to receive traffic citations and become involved in traffic crashes are:

- Aggressive and intolerant of others.
- Have an exaggerated opinion of their importance as well as their driving abilities or the capabilities of their vehicle.
- Lack responsibility and/or respect for others.
- Often act impulsively.



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# THE STYLE OF LIFE THEORY OF DRIVING

When behind the wheel, individuals are most likely to demonstrate the traits, behaviors, or personality characteristics evident in non-driving time. We drive as we live.



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If we  
are:

- Over-aggressive
- Non-conforming
- Egotistical
- Domineering
- Combative
- Impulsive
- Impatient
- Impolite
- Intolerant
- Irrational
- Hot-headed

Then we are likely to display these same characteristics while driving.



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# SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF AGGRESSIVE DRIVERS

- Excessive speed
- Tailgating
- Flashes their headlights
- Weaving in and out of traffic without using turn signals
- Passing on the right
- Passing on shoulder or unpaved portions of highway
- Running stop signs and red lights
- Honking the horn and screaming out the window
- Hand and facial gestures



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## Other qualities and behaviors of aggressive drivers include:

- Those who take out their frustrations on anyone, at anytime.
- When their frustration levels are high, concern for fellow motorists is low.
- They leer at and/or threaten (verbally or through gestures) motorists who are thoughtless enough to keep them from getting where they are going.



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# WHAT TO DO WHEN CONFRONTED WITH DANGEROUS, AGGRESSIVE DRIVERS:

- First and foremost, make every attempt to get out of their way.
- Do not challenge them by speeding up or holding your own travel lane.
- Avoid eye contact.
- Ignore gestures and refuse to return them.
- If you have a cell phone and can do so safely, call 911.



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# CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD DRIVER

## DRIVER

- The most important characteristic a driver can possess is ***MATURITY.***
- They also need to possess the following qualities:



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- The ability to remain cool, calm, and collected in stressful driving situations.
- An accurate perception of their driving abilities and the performance capabilities of their vehicle.
- The ability to successfully apply their actual driving skills to specific situations in the driving environment.
- Respect for other drivers.



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# SMITH SYSTEM OF DEFENSIVE DRIVING

Five point system established by Dr. Harold Smith in 1948.

**The Smith 5 Keys™**

- Key 1. Aim High In Steering»
- Key 2. Get The Big Picture»**
- Key 3. Keep Your Eyes Moving»
- Key 4. Leave Yourself An Out»
- Key 5. Make Sure They See You»

*Fewer mistakes are made when you have the complete traffic picture.*

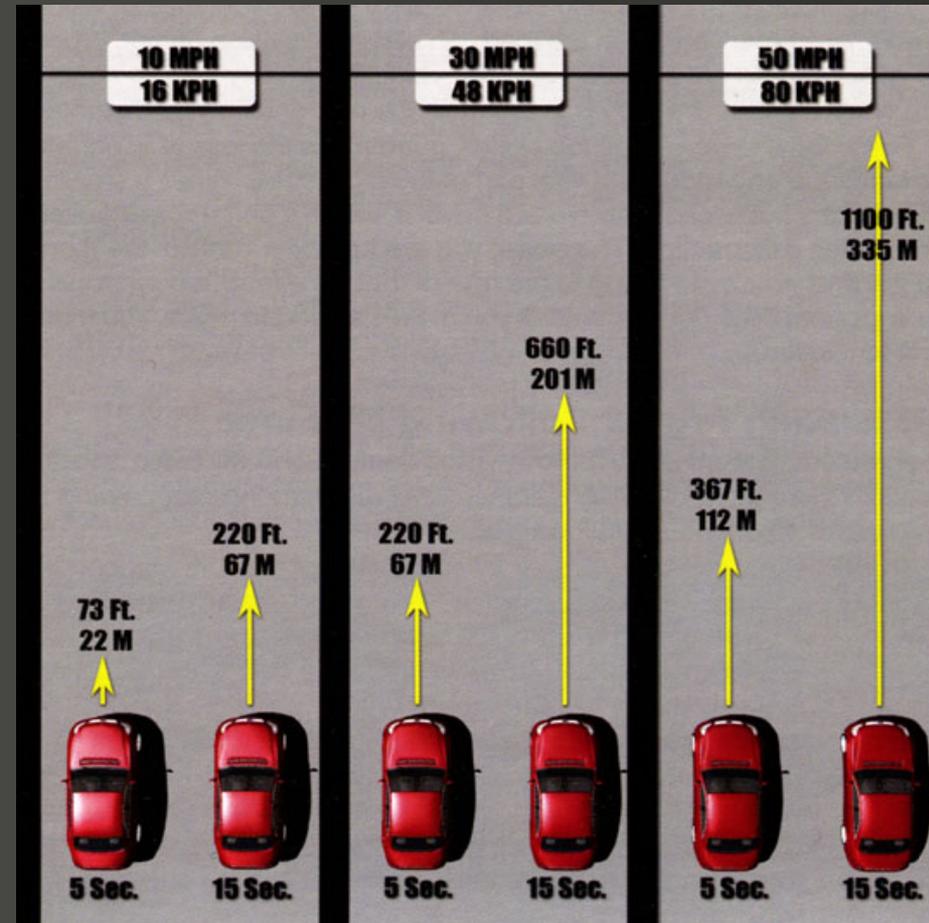


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# AIM HIGH IN STEERING

- Having your focus too close to the front of the vehicle will cause difficulty in keeping your car positioned in the lane.
- In urban areas focus 1-2 blocks ahead.
- In rural areas look a half mile ahead or more.



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# KEEP YOUR EYES MOVING

Visually scanning everything in front and behind you produces the following benefits:

- Enhances peripheral vision
- Prevents highway hypnosis
- Reduces over concentrating
- Reduces physical and mental fatigue
- Increases powers of observation



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# GET THE BIG PICTURE



- Detecting everything on the front, on the sides, and to the rear of your vehicle.
- Double checking intersections.
- Watching out for pedestrians, especially children.
- Watching other drivers to predict their next move.



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# LEAVE YOURSELF AN OUT

- Look for areas of potential conflict.
- Establish a “space cushion”.
- Plan an evasive maneuver.
- Time and execute the evasive maneuver properly.

**A safe following distance is one car length for every 10 mph you are traveling.**

You are not getting anywhere any sooner by tailgating. You are only distracting the driver ahead of you.



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# MAKE SURE THEY SEE YOU

- Establish eye contact with the other driver.
- Signal intentions well before execution.
- Use horn and lights appropriately.
- **SEE AND BE SEEN:** Drive with your headlights on ALL the time.
- Avoid other driver's blind spots.
- Head check for your own blind spots.
  - Don't just rely on your vehicle's blind spot monitors.



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# MICHIGAN'S GRADUATED DRIVER LICENSING

Laws designed to help teens gradually and safely build their skills.

GDL Level 1:

Teen may only drive with a licensed parent/guardian or designated licensed adult age 21 or older.



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# MICHIGAN'S GRADUATED DRIVER LICENSING

GDL Level 2:

Teen shall not drive 10p-5a except:

- In the course of employment
- When driving to or from an authorized activity
- When accompanied by (same as GDL 1)

Teen shall not drive at any time with more than 1 passenger except:

- When additional passengers are immediate family members
- When driving to or from an authorized activity
- When accompanied by (same as GDL 1)



For more information visit [www.michigan.gov/teendriver](http://www.michigan.gov/teendriver)



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# SAFELY NEGOTIATING INTERSECTIONS

1. Reduce your speed on approach.
2. Covering your brake when approaching.
3. Establish eye contact.
4. Just because you have the right of way does not mean you are going to get through the intersection safely.
5. Watching out for right turns on red.
6. When entering a roadway, look left right left.
7. Never speed up to “beat the light”.
8. Always wait 1-2 seconds before going through the green light
9. Never enter an intersection at a speed faster than would permit a safe stop.



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# EXECUTING TURNING MOVEMENTS

Next to intersections, the left turn is rated second as having the most potential for conflict.

- Use the proper lane when making the turn.
- Reduce speed.
- Watch out for pedestrians in the crosswalk.
- Remember: It is difficult to judge the speed of oncoming traffic during left turns, allow plenty of space.



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# LANE POSITION

- Aim high in your steering to help stay in your lane.
- Use care when changing lanes
  - Check your rear and side mirrors
  - Signal early
  - Physically check your blind spot
  - Check your mirrors again
  - Execute lane change if safe to do so
- Only drive in the left lane of a multiple lane highway when you are actively passing. This includes non freeway areas. IT'S THE LAW.



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# BRAKING

- As your speed increases so does your braking distance.
- If your speed doubles, your braking distance quadruples.
- The most efficient type of braking is straight line, threshold braking (maximum braking just prior to the wheels locking up or going in to ABS).
- Nearly as efficient is utilizing your vehicle's antilock braking system (ABS).
  - ABS allows you to brake hard and still be able to steer.

**REMINDER:** A safe following distance is one car length for every 10 mph you are traveling.



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# DISTRACTED DRIVING

- Driver inattention is a major contributor to highway crashes.
- 25% of drivers involved in crashes admit to having been distracted.
- 68% of rear end crashes are a result of inattention.



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- Three Types of Distracted Driving
  - **Visual** (taking your eyes off the road)
  - **Manual** (taking your hands off the wheel)
  - **Cognitive** (taking your mind off what you are doing)



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# TEXTING WHILE DRIVING

- A Form of Distracted Driving
  - Texting while driving is 6 times more likely to result in a crash than driving while intoxicated.
  - A driver who is texting will spend 4.6 seconds with their eyes off the road for every 6 seconds of driving.
  - ILLEGAL IN MICHIGAN



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# HOW TO AVOID BEING DISTRACTED

- Keep **BOTH** hands on the wheel
- Limit talking while driving
- Avoid taking your eyes off the road
- **FOCUS ON THE TASK AT HAND - DRIVING**



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# ENVIRONMENT

This area we have no control over; however, we can educate ourselves about the environment we live and work in.

Knowledge of forecasts, roadways, traffic and light conditions, may help you avoid a potential conflict.



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# ROAD CONDITIONS



- Curves, turns, hills, etc., hazard recognition is reduced.
- Road surfaces-may vary from one to the next.



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# WEATHER CONDITIONS

- Affects your ability to see and be seen.
- Severe weather may obscure traffic control devices.
- You may be able to see better with low-beam headlights than high-beams.



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# LIGHT CONDITIONS

- Day vs. night are obvious factors
- Overcast skies, fog, smog, and glare factors



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# SKID RECOVERY

- The first thing, and most important, is to recognize the start of the skid. At that point do NOT use the brakes! Steering only.

**ALWAYS LOOK AND STEER IN THE DIRECTION YOU WANT TO GO!**

- When the rear tires are sliding during a turn, you are experiencing OVERSTEER.
  - To correct you must reduce your throttle input while looking and steering in the direction you wish to go.
- When the front tires are sliding during a turn you are experiencing an UNDERSTEER. This happens when you enter a curve or turn at too great a speed.
  - To correct you must release the accelerator while unwinding some steering until you regain rolling friction. DO NOT USE THE BRAKES. Always look and steer in the directions you want to do.



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# VEHICLE

- Of all the conditions that exist while driving, we only have control over two:
  - Driver
  - Vehicle
- It is **YOUR** responsibility to make sure your vehicle is in proper working condition.
- The best way to ensure the reliability and safety of the vehicle is through proper care and maintenance.



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# TIRES

- REMEMBER-Your car only contacts the road in four places, your tires. These are called contact patches. They provide traction which is necessary for accelerating, braking, and turning.
- Don't assume your tire pressure is fine just because the tires don't look flat. Underinflation is the number one cause of tire failure. YOU need to check, or have them checked regularly.



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# SAFETY DEVICES

- Airbags (supplemental restraint system-SRS)
  - Deploy at 175-200 mph after the sensor is activated.
  - Designed to work with your seat belts, NOT instead of them!
  - Don't reach through your steering wheel. If your airbag deploys what is going to hit you in the face at 200mph? Your hand.



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# WHAT TO DO WHEN...

When you see lights flashing behind you it could be a police car, fire truck, or ambulance

- Do NOT panic.
- Activate your RIGHT turn signal.
- Slowly pull to the RIGHT shoulder and stop.
- If the vehicle passes you before you stop then check your blind spot and safely merge back into traffic.



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# WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU GET PULLED OVER

- Don't panic.
- Pull to the right shoulder and stop.
- Keep your hands on the steering wheel.
- If it is dark outside, turn your dome light on.
- DO NOT open your glove compartment or center console until the officer requests your paperwork.



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# CONCLUSION:

- Don't fall into one of the negative style of life theory categories.
- Adhere to the characteristics of a good driver.
- Remember the Smith System of defensive driving.
- Always wear your seat belt.
- YOU are responsible for the passengers in your vehicle.
- Get where you are going SAFELY.



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