

## DEFENSIVE DRIVING BASICS WHICH DRIVER ARE YOU?

Are you the shy, cautious type? Or the aggressive, “in your face” kind? Many of us reveal our personalities in the way we drive. Others take on an entirely different personality when driving. Knowing what personality is at work when we hit the road helps make us better drivers. Which of the following driving styles most closely describes your driving?

- **The Distracted.** Distracted drivers spend their driving time planning their day, rehashing yesterday’s meeting, or worrying if they forgot something at the store. Distracted drivers may think of the daily commute as a time to shave, have a snack, catch up on business details or chat on the phone. They are so busy with these activities they may not always be alert to road and traffic conditions. If you spend your time behind the wheel thinking about anything but your driving, try setting aside driving time to just enjoy the ride. You’ll probably arrive at work in a more refreshed state of mind, ready to tackle all those distracting chores.
- **The Timid Driver.** Timid drivers often drive so slowly that they tie up traffic and cause other drivers to have to brake suddenly. Speed and traffic makes them nervous and causes them to make poor and unexpected driving choices. If you are a timid driver, learning defensive driving techniques might be the way to boost your confidence.
- **The Aggressor.** These people are easy to spot. They are habitual tailgaters and they do not hesitate to cut in front of other drivers. Their message is clear: Get out of my way if you know what’s good for you. Unconsciously, they may think of driving as a contest to be won at all costs. If you find yourself slipping into this personality when you drive, take a minute to think of the other drivers on the road as real people with needs just as important as yours. By cooperating, we can all get where we’re going safely and with no feelings hurt.
- **The Speeder.** Some speeders just like to drive fast. Others drive that way because they’re a little behind schedule. They’d like to drive more carefully, but they just don’t have time. Yet for most trips, they save only a few minutes by driving 65 mph instead of 55 mph. If you speed because of poor time management, get into the habit now of adding 10 minutes onto your estimated trip time. And don’t forget to allow extra time for finding a parking place or locating an unfamiliar address.
- **The Sleepy Driver.** Some people are lulled into a drowsy state by the sound of the car engine and the monotony of the road. It’s difficult to be alert when you are sleepy. If you get drowsy when driving, stop, get out and take a breath of fresh air. Take a coffee break or stop for a nap on long trips. Stopping to rest will not delay your trip nearly as long as falling asleep at the wheel will.
- **The Indecisive Driver.** Should I change lanes or not? Do I want to turn here? Should I speed up? Slow down? Indecisive drivers never quite seem to know what they’re going to do next. Unfortunately, neither do the other drivers around them. If you are indecisive, try mapping your trip in advance and deciding what you are going to do before you get in the car. Pull over if you get confused. Learning defensive driving techniques can also help you make better driving decisions. Signal your intentions to other drivers by using turn signals.
- **The Automatic.** These drivers are the picture of calm: eyes fixed on the road ahead, while inside they are a million miles away. Nothing ruffles them because they don’t notice anything outside of the narrow focus of the road ahead. They are totally unprepared for the unexpected. If you find yourself driving “on automatic”, make yourself look around and observe what’s going on all sides of your vehicle. Check conditions ahead of the car in front of you. Notice the scenery, anything to get back to the present.
- **The Good Driver.** All of us have some of the above personality traits. The good driver tries to be aware of these tendencies and balance them with extra caution and common sense. Though good drivers often would prefer to be somewhere else than on the road, they maintain their focus in the here and now, pay attention to what’s going on around them, and practice courteous, defensive driving.