

## Defensive Driving Saves Lives

Thousands of people are killed or seriously injured in road

accidents in the UK every year and in many of these accidents, the main contributing factor is driver error. This can be attributed to the skill level of the driver, the attitude, lack of judgement, lack of knowledge of vehicle characteristics. Defensive driving is all about developing the right attitude and approach, brushing up on general driving skills, learning about the handling characteristics of your vehicle and various other factors which we will discuss a little further.

Responsibility, concentration, anticipation, patience and confidence are the qualities which contribute towards driver attitude and it is the driver's attitude which influences his behaviour on the road. In defensive driving, a responsible driver is always concerned with the safety of his vehicle and the safety of all other road users around him. A defensive driver is always tolerant of the mistakes of other road users and is aware that everyone is entitled to use the road as much as him.

Due to the volume of traffic on our roads, concentration is the key to defensive driving. You should avoid driving if you are feeling unwell, upset or annoyed or suffering from any kind of stress. You should never let your passengers distract you from the task at hand, make phone calls (even hands free phones can be quite distracting), eat or drink, read road maps or even tune your radio whilst on the move. Avoiding just the few of the things mentioned above will help to improve your concentration immensely.

Anticipation in defensive driving is the art of planning well ahead. Recognising hazards well before they develop and taking the most appropriate action to deal with the developing hazards. In defensive driving, if you plan ahead and anticipate the actions of other road users, you can avoid being taken by surprise, take evasive action and be in control of the developing situation. Be patient of other road users, especially the more vulnerable like young children, the elderly and people with young children or animals. With defensive driving you will show patience by avoiding hostile or aggressive behaviour, making obscene gestures or abusive language. If you are the recipient of such behaviour, you should try and ignore it, never retaliate, keep calm and concentrate on your driving. Even though it can be very hard but you are more likely to make a mistake if you lose your cool or get upset and this can have very dangerous consequences.

Nobody can claim to be the perfect driver, no matter how long you have been driving there's always something new to learn. You can brush up on your driving skills by doing a few refresher driving lessons with a qualified driving instructor. If you would like to improve your defensive driving even further, you can take one of the advanced driving tests. You can contact any of the driving associations and they will be able to help with the tests and also put you in touch with a driving instructor who teaches advanced driving. This will help to improve the things you already know and teach you a few new skills as well. It will also help in your driving if you can read up on your vehicle's manual and try to learn how it handles corners and how effective the brakes are.

It is very difficult to cover every thing associated with defensive driving but by following a few of the things mentioned here you can improve your defensive driving and stay safe on today's roads.

Observation is crucial to defensive driving. You should look in your mirrors regularly but just looking in your mirrors is not enough, you must act sensibly on what you see. At junctions look, assess, decide on the safest course of action before you act and this is what effective observation is all about. You should also make sure that you can see and be seen by others which means you should keep your windscreens and windows clean, make sure your headlights, tail lights, brake lights and indicators are clean and in good working order.

You should always drive at a speed so that you can stop safely in the distance you can see to be clear. Always keep the two second gap between you and the vehicle in front. Tailgating is one of the major factors in road accidents and it can also irritate the driver in front or make them very nervous if they are new or lack confidence.

Use signals correctly and safely. You should use signals to warn other road users of your intentions. In defensive driving you should always signal if others can benefit from that signal.

Recognise hazards early and then check your mirrors so you can deal with the developing hazard correctly. A hazard is any situation in the road that can make you change your speed or direction.

As I mentioned earlier it is impossible to cover every topic associated with defensive driving but by following the above mentioned topics and gathering more information on driving, you can have many hours of pleasurable driving and make the roads safer for yourself and other road users.

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## About the Author

This article is written by Nirmal Orakh. Nirmal is writer and a professional Driving Instructor. He has over five years experience in driving instruction. Nirmal also has a Diploma in Driving Instruction. [For further information on defensive driving please visit: www.routes2.co.uk](http://www.routes2.co.uk)