

# “Survival of the Calmest”

## Statistics and Information

Ninety percent of crashes are caused by driver error; of these two-thirds of fatality crashes and one-third of injury crashes are at least partially caused by aggressive driving.



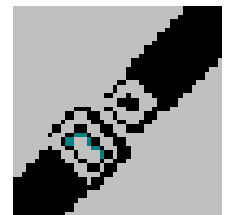
Traffic congestion is one condition associated with aggressive driving. Since 1987, the number of miles of roadways in the United States has increased by only 1 percent while the number of vehicle miles traveled has increased by 35 percent.

Work zones contribute to traffic congestion and associated driver aggression. Every day, two deaths associated with work zone crashes occur in the United States.



Speeding is frequently a significant aspect of aggressive driving. In 1995, speeding was a factor in 31% of all fatal highway crashes, at a cost to society and the economy of more than \$29 billion.

Seat belts are the best defense against aggressive driving. A person is twice as likely to die or sustain a serious injury in a crash if unbelted.



# “Survival of the Calmest”

## What causes aggressive driving?

- \* Crowded roads
- \* Road work
- \* Stress from other areas of life
- \* Dangerous driving attitudes
- \* Being in a hurry



## Ways to be a calm driver...

1. Don't drive alone.
2. Use your horn sparingly.
3. Don't block the passing lane.
4. Do not tailgate.
5. Use your signals to indicate a turn.
6. Avoid unnecessary use of high beam headlights.

## How to handle an aggressive driver...

1. Get out of the way and let them pass.
2. Avoid direct eye contact.
3. Never try to teach a lesson to another driver.
4. Do not react to provocation.
5. If you are followed, go to a safe, public place.



### How to avoid aggressive driving....

- \* Plan journeys to avoid rush hours.
- \* Don't drive when you are angry.
- \* Listen to soothing music when you drive.
- \* Allow plenty of time to get to your destination.
- \* Listen to traffic and weather reports to learn of potential delays and hazards.

*"The most effective weapon against losing your cool behind the wheel is counting to ten. "*

*-Auto News, 1997*

### How to handle an aggressive driver...

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*"Driving stress or fear has become the number one problem people mention on their list of daily hassles. "*

*-Dr. Leon James ("Dr. Driving")  
University of Hawaii, 1997*

### For further information, please contact:

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The Institute of Public Policy

George Mason University

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Fairfax, VA 22030-4444

(703) 993-3697 FAX (703) 993-3763

Check out our safety web site at:

[www.safety.gmu.edu](http://www.safety.gmu.edu)

### For local information, please contact:

Your local Police Department  
or Sheriff's Office

*Northern Virginia:*

Bob Weakley

Community Traffic Safety Programs

6308 Grovedale Drive

Alexandria, VA 22310

(703) 313-9443

*Shenandoah Valley:*

Doug Stader

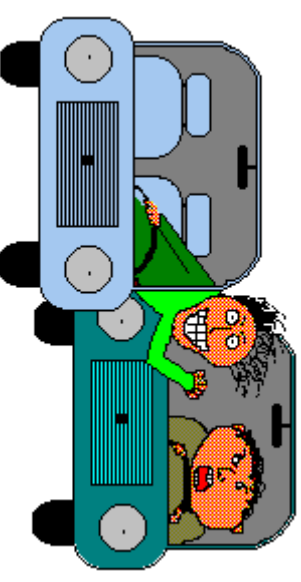
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### Survival of the Calmest



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**Aggressive Driving**

According to *U.S. News*, fear of aggressive driving has grown so much that in a 1996 poll, residents of Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Virginia listed it as a bigger concern than drunk driving. “**Survival of the Calmest**” is designed to remind citizens to slow down and drive calmly on the roadways. Developed in cooperation with local law enforcement agencies, “**Survival of the Calmest**” provides attention to this important issue with information, statistics, public service announcements, and flyers.

### What is aggressive driving?

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) defines aggressive driving as “*driving behavior that endangers or is likely to endanger people or property.*” This includes a broad range of driving behaviors, such as:

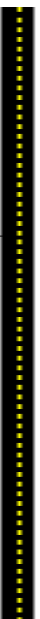
- \* tailgating
  - \* cutting off other drivers
  - \* running red lights
  - \* flashing headlights

Aggressive driving can lead to road rage which includes obscene gestures, horn beeping and sometimes violent attacks. In approximately 44 percent of violent traffic altercations, the perpetrator used a weapon such as a firearm, knife, club or tire iron. In 35 percent of the cases, the vehicle itself was used as a weapon.

### The 5 types of aggressive drivers:

1. The **speeder**, who wants to get from point A to point B as quickly as possible and will become enraged if forced to slow down.
2. The **competitor**, who sees the speeder coming and decides to race.
3. The **passive aggressor**, who blocks other drivers and does not let them pass or cut in.
4. The **narcissist**, who takes a dislike to another driver because of race, sex or type of car.
5. The **vigilante**, who is going to make a violator of the rules pay.

(From “Steering Clear of Highway Madness”, Dr. John Larson, 1997)



### How to report aggressive drivers...

If you are traveling on the interstate and notice someone driving in an aggressive manner, dial #77 on your cellular phone. Be sure to get a description of the vehicle, a license number, and the location and direction of travel when you call. You could prevent a tragedy.

Check with your local police department or sheriff’s office to determine if they have a local number to call to report aggressive drivers.

### Statistics and Information

(From the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)

- \* Since 1990, reports of violent traffic incidents have increased nearly 7 percent per year.
- \* In 1996, 41,907 people died and over 3 million more were injured in police reported crashes. Approximately one-third of these crashes and two-thirds of the resulting fatalities can be attributed to behavior associated with aggressive driving.
- \* 82% of drivers get angry when someone cuts them off.
- \* 70% of drivers get angry at slow drivers.
- \* Violent incidents recorded by police have increased 51% over 5 years.

“Driving is a cooperative venture, not a competitive sport.”  
 -Dr. Ricardo Martinez  
 Administrator, NHTSA



# Are you an aggressive driver?

**Take this quiz and find out!**

This quiz was developed by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to help people examine their individual driving behaviors. Take the quiz and examine your own driving attitudes.

**YES**

**NO**

**DO YOU...**

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Overtake other vehicles only on the left

Avoid blocking passing lanes

Yield to faster traffic by moving to the right

Keep to the right as much as possible on narrow streets and at intersections

Maintain appropriate distance when following other vehicles, bicyclists, motorcyclists, etc.

Provide appropriate distance when cutting in after passing vehicles

Use headlights in cloudy, raining, low light conditions

Yield to pedestrians

Come to a complete stop at stop signs, before right turn on red, etc.

Stop for red traffic lights

Approach intersections and pedestrians at slow speeds to show your intention and ability to stop

Follow right-of-way rules at four-way stops

Drive below posted speed limits when conditions warrant

Drive at slower speeds in construction zones

Maintain speeds appropriate for conditions

Use vehicle turn signals for turns and lane changes

Make eye contact and signal intention where needed

Acknowledge intentions of others

Use your horn sparingly around pedestrians, at night, around hospitals, etc.

Avoid unnecessary use of high beam headlights

Yield and move to the right for emergency vehicles

Refrain from flashing headlights to signal a desire to pass

Drive trucks at posted speeds, in the proper lanes, using non-aggressive lane changing

Make slow, deliberate U-turns

Maintain proper speeds around roadway crashes

Avoid returning inappropriate gestures  
Avoid challenging other drivers  
Try to get out of the way of aggressive drivers  
Refrain from momentarily using High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes to pass vehicles  
Focus on driving and avoid distracting activities (e.g. smoking, use of a car telephone, reading, shaving)  
Avoid driving when drowsy  
Avoid blocking the right-hand turn lane  
Avoid taking more than one parking space  
Avoid parking in a disabled space (if you are not disabled)  
Avoid letting your door hit the car parked next to you  
Avoid using the car telephone while driving  
Avoid stopping in the road to talk with a pedestrian or other driver  
Avoid inflicting loud music on neighboring cars

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**Score yourself:**

Number of "No" Answers

1 – 3 Excellent

4 – 7 Good

8 – 11 Fair

12 (or more) Poor