

Road Rage

More and more drivers have started to act out their anger when they get behind the wheel. After they've been cut off, tailgated, or slowed down by a vehicle in front of them, these angry drivers can commit incredible acts of violence-including assault and murder. How can you avoid being the victim of an aggressive driver? While there are no sure techniques, three basic guiding principles can help.

DON'T OFFEND

A few specific behaviors seem unusually likely to enrage other drivers. You can protect yourself by avoiding them.

Cutting Off

When you merge, make sure you have plenty of room. Use your turn signal to show your intentions before making a move.

Driving Slowly in the Fast Lane

If you are in the left lane and someone wants to pass, move over and let them by.

Tailgating

Drivers get angry when they are followed too closely. Allow at least a two-second space between you and the car ahead.

Gestures

Almost nothing makes another driver angrier than an obscene gesture. Keep your hands on the wheel.

DON'T ENGAGE

Steer Clear

Give angry drivers lots of room. A driver you may have offended can snap and become truly dangerous. If another driver tries to pick a fight, put as much distance as possible between your vehicle and the other car and then get away as quickly as possible.

Avoid Eye Contact

If another driver is acting angry with you, don't make eye contact. Looking or staring at another driver can turn an impersonal encounter between two vehicles into a personal duel.

Get Help

If you believe the other driver is following you or is trying to start a fight, get help. If you have a cellular phone call the police, if not then go to a place where there are people around, honk your horn to get attention, this will usually discourage the aggressor.

ADJUST YOUR ATTITUDE

The most important actions you can take to avoid aggressive driving take place inside your head. By changing your approach to driving you can make every trip more pleasant. Try these ideas for a pleasant change.

Forget Winning.

For many motorists, driving becomes a contest. Do not let this happen to you. Allow yourself ample time to get to your destination, this will keep you from getting angry at someone that slows you down.

Put yourself in the other driver's shoes.

Instead of judging the other driver, try to imagine why he or she is driving that way. Stay cool and don't take the other driver's actions personally.

If you think you have a problem, ask for help.

Courses in anger management can help angry drivers. Drivers who successfully reinvent their approach to the road report dramatic changes in attitude and behavior. Self help books on stress reduction and anger management can also be helpful.

Violent aggressive driving is clearly on the rise. You can avoid becoming a victim by using these tips. In the process you may find that driving has become a completely new and enjoyable experience.

*Exerts taken from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety brochure
"Road Rage How to Avoid Aggressive Driving"-1997*