



It Takes 2 Seconds

The average brain can process what is seen in **1.6 seconds**. If you are driving and encounter a problem you have very little time to react. If you are driving while distracted, not only can you not react but you could very well be the cause of an **accident**. It only takes 2 seconds to change your life forever. Choose not to drive distracted!

There are three main categories of distraction including anything that takes your:

Eyes off the road (visual)

Mind off the road (cognitive)

Hands off the steering wheel (manual)

Avoid Distractions
While Driving

Cell Phone Use

Cell phone use while driving has increased so significantly within the last few years that at any typical moment, as many as 10% of drivers are using either a hand-held or hands-free phone. Studies show that driving performance is exponentially lowered and distraction is raised for those engaged in cell phone use. Hands-free devices do not lower distraction levels... drivers look but don't see, because they're still distracted. Dialing, texting, talking, listening... each is a distraction. It has been said that a 20-year-old driver's normally quick reaction time reduces to that of a 70-year-old, when using a cell phone while driving.

Make and finish your cell phone calls and texting before you start your vehicle and drive. If your phone rings while you are driving, let your voice mail pick up the call. If you must answer the phone, pull over to a safe location and park.

From a legal perspective, each state and some local communities set the laws regarding what can and can't be done with a cell phone while driving. Currently, 19 states ban text messaging, 6 states ban all handheld phone operation, and 21 states ban all cell use for novice drivers. The Governors Highway Safety Association message to all drivers is: "Don't use cell phones or other electronic devices while driving, regardless of the current law." Nationwide data shows distractions by cell phones cause accidents and loss of life.

Eating and Driving

If you are eating in your vehicle while driving, you are focusing on your food and not on driving. You are not only chewing and swallowing; you are also opening packages, unwrapping and re-wrapping food, reaching, leaning, spilling, wiping, and cleaning yourself or the vehicle. These add up to a whole lot of distractions. You are safer when you stop to eat or drink. Allow time to stop, rest, and enjoy your meal.

Other Occupants

Teach children that driving is an important job and that you must concentrate when you are behind the wheel. Buckle up your children properly and give them books, games, and appropriate toys to occupy their time. If you need to attend to children, pull over to a safe place. Don't try to handle children while you are driving.

A carload of friends or co-workers can be distracting with casual talking, serious conversations, business discussions, or even arguing. Serious conversations should be held in a safe, appropriate place, not while driving.

A loose pet in a moving vehicle can be very dangerous. Properly secure your pet in a carrier, portable kennel, or specially designed pet harness. Never allow your pet to sit in your lap while you are driving.

Electronics

Making destination entries on a navigation system, radio surfing, inserting a DVD for your passenger's movie watching, or adjusting your vehicle's climate controls are distracting activities that can put you in danger of a vehicle crash. Perform these tasks as well as checking e-mail, voice mail, and any other portable devices before you begin driving.

Adjust the vehicle's controls (climate controls, mirrors, radio, seat, etc.) before you begin to drive. Take advantage of normal stops (i.e. red light) to adjust controls, or ask a passenger to adjust the radio, climate control, navigation system, DVD player, or other devices.

Looks Can Kill

Looking out your window at what you are passing, instead of the road ahead, can be a major distraction. If you are concentrating on getting a good look at an accident, a vehicle pulled over by law enforcement, construction work, a billboard advertisement, a scenic view, or even street names and addresses, then you are not focused on driving.

Other Deadly Distractions

In this age of multi-tasking, it is common to do more than one task at the same time. You already multi-task when driving; your mind and body are working simultaneously to drive your vehicle. Don't add another task on top of what you already need to do to drive safely. These tasks should never be done while you are driving:

- Reading a newspaper, a book, or a map
- Personal grooming, such as hair grooming, shaving, or applying makeup.
- Smoking and dealing with lighting up, putting out cigarettes, or falling ashes
- Working in your car: typing on a laptop, making business calls, and writing notes or reports

Willingness to Be Distracted

Whether the distraction is inside or outside of your vehicle, your willingness to be distracted will influence how successful you are in freeing yourself of driving distractions. Your personality and driving experience are both factors in how easily you keep or lose focus. Perhaps the most important and first step to driving without distraction is to take control of what happens inside of your vehicle. For example, you can make a decision to establish a pre-trip routine to set your radio buttons, mirrors, and seat before you drive. You can also decide not to eat in the car, answer the cell phone, or play with electronics. You set rules for your passengers. Reducing the distractions inside your vehicle can prevent an accident and make you a more responsive defensive driver.

Choose to focus on the road and driving. This simple choice could save your life and the lives of others.