

MODULE I

# Defensive Driving Awareness

This course will provide a brief overview of Defensive Driving, including hazard recognition scenarios and defensive driving techniques to change risky driving behaviours and avoid accidents and traffic violations. The course is expected to run for about 60 minutes. Upon completing this online course, a certificate will be available to download and print.

START COURSE →





# Course Overview

After completion of this course, you should be able to :

Acknowledge unsafe driving behaviours and conditions that can lead to accidents.

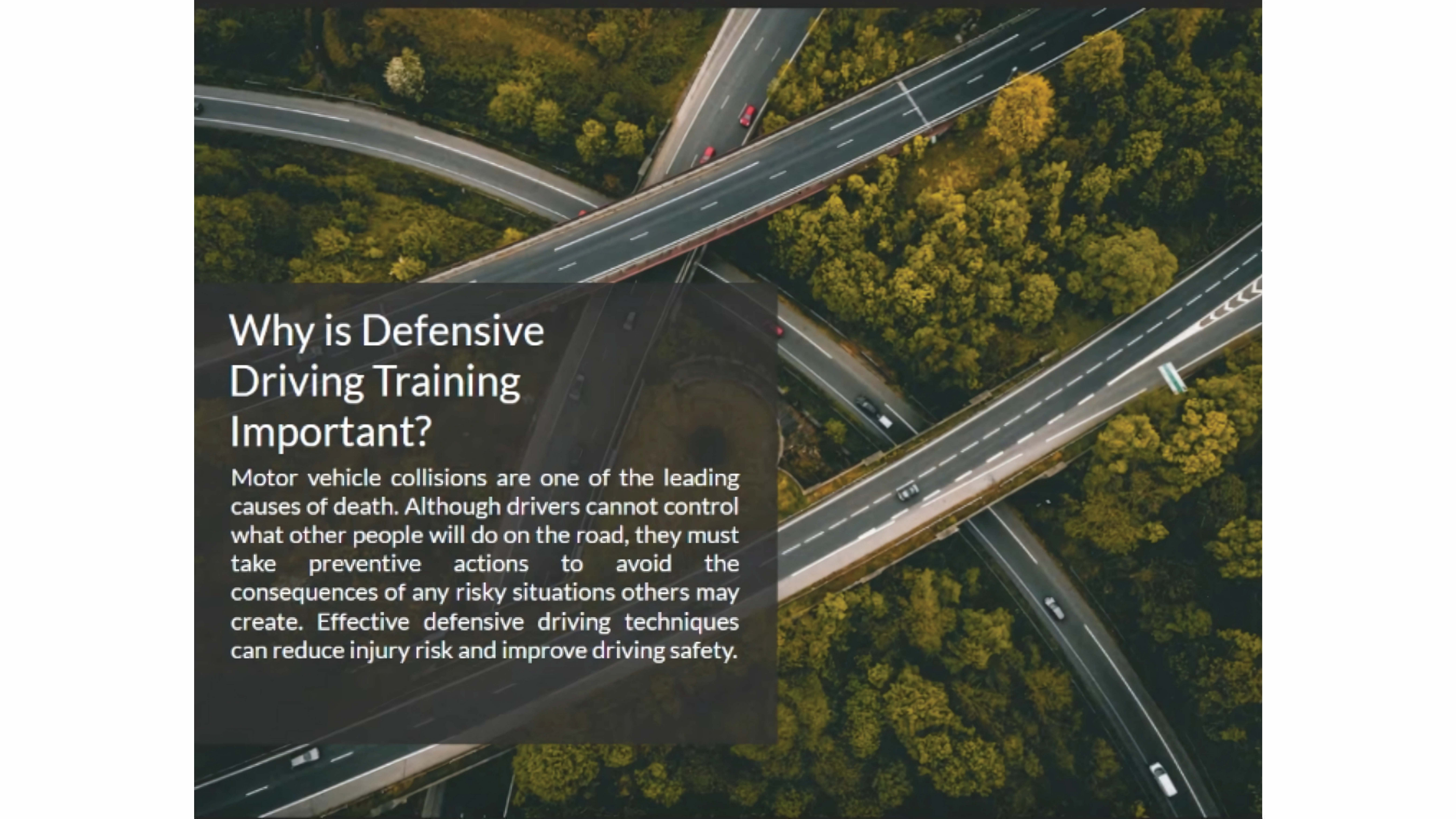
Explain how distractions interfere with safe driving.

Describe several defensive driving techniques, as well as preventive measures for winter driving.

Acknowledge the role of preventive maintenance and pre-driving checks in defensive driving.







# Why is Defensive Driving Training Important?

Motor vehicle collisions are one of the leading causes of death. Although drivers cannot control what other people will do on the road, they must take preventive actions to avoid the consequences of any risky situations others may create. Effective defensive driving techniques can reduce injury risk and improve driving safety.



# Introduction

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Each year, around 1.3 million people worldwide are killed in motor vehicle collisions, and about 50 million more are seriously injured in these accidents.

For employees who drive either a company vehicle or their own vehicle for work, safe driving is crucial for their occupational safety.





# Defensive Driving Definition

Defensive driving describes the practice of drivers who reduce the dangers of driving by recognizing hazardous situations in advance.

Defensive Driving techniques can reduce the likelihood of a collision and even save vehicle maintenance and fuel consumption costs.

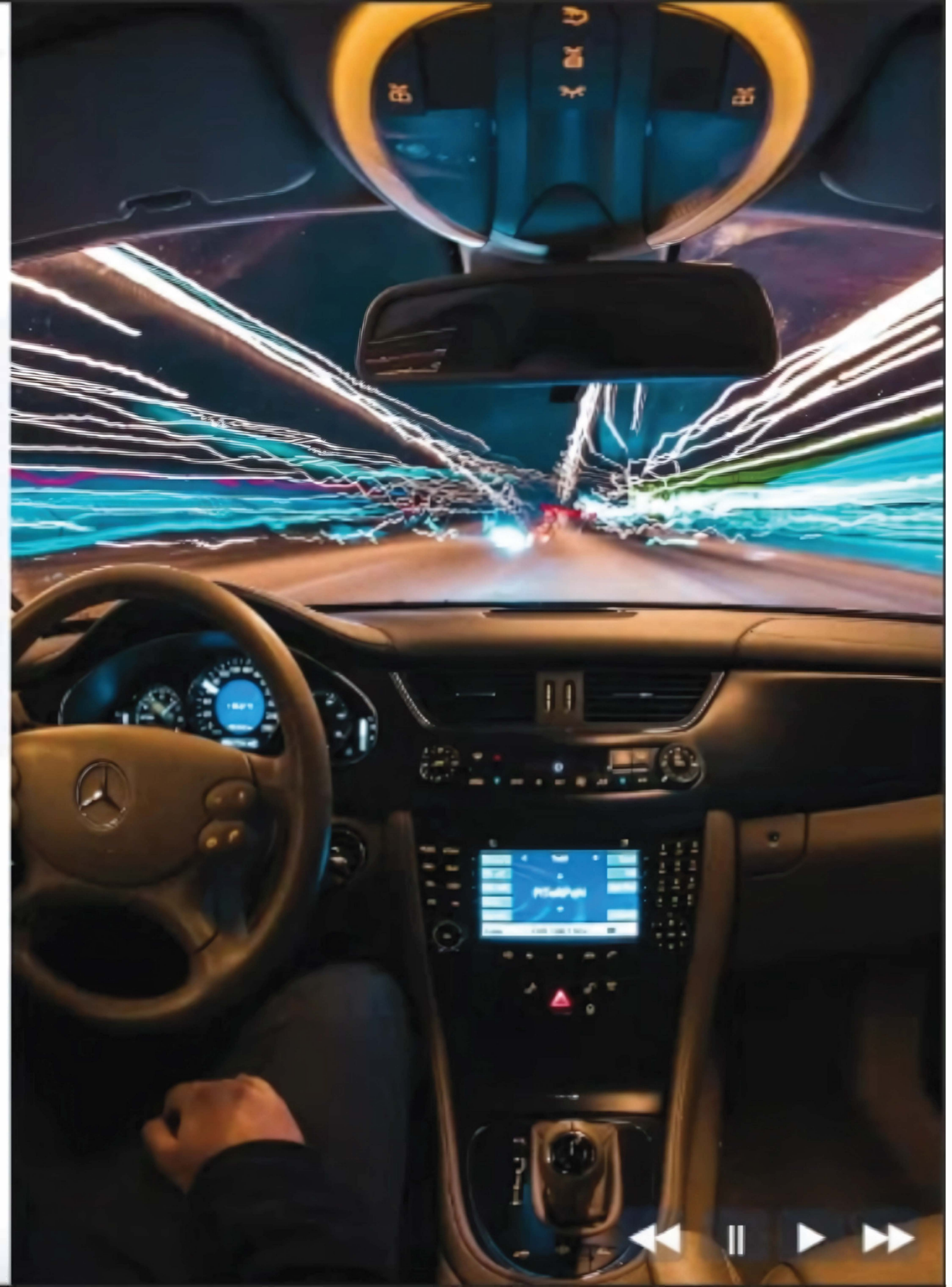


# Defensive Driving

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Driving defensively requires constant attention, always looking for possible hazards. Having a complete view of everything happening around you, not only in the front, can also help you get a better picture of the overall traffic situation.

The sooner you see a potential danger, the more time you have to acknowledge it, decide what to do, and proceed.







# Types of Hazards

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For drivers to identify hazards, they must first understand the types of hazards that can cause collisions. The hazards drivers face are due to:

Errors in human behaviour  
(unsafe driving) or

Hazardous conditions.





A woman in a light blue shirt and jeans is talking on a white smartphone. A man in a light blue shirt and dark pants is looking down at a document or map. They are standing next to a silver car with its trunk open. The background shows a street with a traffic light and some trees.

# Human Errors

It's in our nature to make mistakes from time to time. Human error is a factor in over 95 percent of vehicle collisions. Although unintentional, mistakes can create dangerous situations on the road.

This is why it is essential to look out for other drivers. Never assume that other drivers know what they are doing and that they will avoid hitting you.







# Human Errors

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Distracted, aggressive driving, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, fatigue, and just plain lousy driving are all human behaviours that can cause dangerous situations.

These behaviours will be later explained in our course.



# Human Errors

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The following tips can help you avoid accidents due to human errors while driving:



Always keep some distance from other drivers. The closer you are, the harder it will be to avoid a collision. Keep out of the way of vehicles that seem to have lost control.



Paying attention to your surroundings is very important in defensive driving. Keep your eyes moving; look ahead and to the sides. Check your mirrors frequently and expect the unexpected.



# Hazardous Conditions

Some of the most common dangerous conditions that you can encounter while driving include:

Bad weather,

Heavy traffic,

Limited visibility at night,  
blind spots

Glare,

Road conditions,

Animals and other  
obstacles.



# Bad Weather

Bad weather conditions, such as rain, fog, wind, snow, or ice, can make driving treacherous and dangerous.

For instance, winter driving has special hazards that require different driving skills. On slippery roads, the keys to safe driving are slower speeds, gentler stops and turns, and increased distances between cars.



# Heavy Traffic

Driving in heavy traffic requires the correct mindset and safe driving techniques. Many horrific crashes in heavy traffic happen when impatient drivers overtake recklessly.

During those situations, you should be patient, use your mirrors to monitor the areas around your car and communicate your driving intentions clearly.



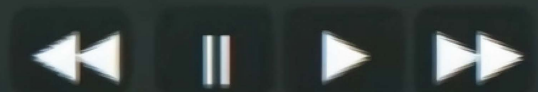
# Limited Visibility

Even though mirrors let you see what's happening around you, there are some areas you can't see in the mirrors.

These areas are called blind spots. Blind spots can easily hide a cyclist or another vehicle. So, always pay attention to everything around you.

Approach zone

Blind spot





# Driver Performance

As you have probably noticed by now, driving is a complex task that requires the full attention and focus of the driver.

Drivers need to be able to see, hear, think, and act in order to do everything that driving requires.

ABILITY	EXAMPELS
Seeing	Watching the road, using mirrors, checking dashboard gauges.
Hearing	Sirens, horns, vehicle sounds, passengers.
Thinking	Planning, deciding how to respond to difficult situations, anticipating movements, and assessing potential hazards.
Acting	Turning the steering wheel, using brakes, and responding to unexpected events.





# Emotions

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Emotions can easily affect our behaviour, thus our driving. Our feelings can interfere with our ability to see, hear, think, and act while driving.

Defensive drivers learn how to manage their emotions and stay focused so their driving is unaffected.





# Problematic Driver Behaviours

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Certain behaviours can have a negative effect on the driving experience, resulting in car accidents.

Distracted driving means driving while doing something else that takes attention away from safely operating the vehicle. Following are some of the most common driving distractions:



Eating, drinking, smoking,



Looking on your phone, reading, moving objects while driving,



Applying makeup, shaving, looking in the mirror,



Using GPS, adjusting the heat, controlling the radio,



Looking at other passengers or watching events outside the car



# Driver Behaviours

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Drivers who are distracted are less likely to anticipate dangerous situations. A second or two of not paying attention can result in a fatal collision.

Defensive drivers also have to make allowances for their deficiencies. For instance, a hearing-impaired driver can use their eyes to detect what they cannot hear. Defensive drivers keep off the road after dark if they can't see well at night.





# Texting while Driving

Did you know that drivers using mobile phones are approximately four times more likely to be involved in a crash than drivers not using a mobile phone?

When drivers use their phones, they take their eyes off the road for more than a few seconds, their mind off driving, and their hands off the wheel. This is extremely dangerous. As a result, all ten provinces in Canada have some form of cell phone/distracted driving legislation in place.



A background image showing a group of people at a social gathering, possibly a party or dinner. Several hands are visible holding wine glasses, some of which contain a golden liquid. The scene is dimly lit, with a warm, brownish tint. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# Drugs and Alcohol

While under drugs or alcohol, your body reacts more slowly, and your judgment becomes impaired. Certain prescription medications, even if prescribed for you, can have the same effect, so you should always check if you can drive after taking certain medications.

Never drive if you are impaired, and try your best to protect yourself from the dangerous actions of impaired drivers. Do not drive if you have been drinking or have taken recreational drugs or medications that can cause drowsiness.



# Signs of Impaired Driving

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The following signs might indicate that someone is under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or just impaired to drive:

- **Driving very slowly,**
- **Driving off the road,**
- **Driving on the wrong side of the road,**
- **Signalling that doesn't make sense, unnecessary braking,**
- **Abrupt turning and changes in speed,**
- **Drifting points to a driver who is not in control of the vehicle.**



Try your best to keep your distance from vehicles that show signs of impaired driving.

Call the police if you think there's a serious danger.



A person with long dark hair is sleeping in a car, with their head resting on the steering wheel. The image is dimly lit, suggesting a dark interior or nighttime. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# Fatigue

Just like drugs and alcohol, fatigue can decrease one's awareness. Always get some rest before a long trip. While on a trip, take a 10-minute exercise break once every two hours.

If you find yourself yawning or closing your eyes, even if it is “just for a second,” it’s time to take a break or even a nap.



# Aggressive Driving

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Aggressive Driving refers to operating a motor vehicle without considering the safety of other road users, putting them in danger.

Signs of aggressive Driving could be:

tailgating,

speeding,

hostile words or gestures,

weaving in and out of traffic,

leaning on the horn,

any other unsafe driving practice

These are all aggressive driving behaviours that you should keep away from.



A man with dark hair, wearing a blue and white striped shirt, is sitting in the driver's seat of a dark-colored car. He has a frustrated or angry expression on his face, with his mouth wide open as if shouting or yelling. His right hand is raised, with fingers spread, against the car window. The background is slightly blurred, showing some greenery outside the car.

# Frustration and Anger

Frustration and anger usually turn people into aggressive drivers. If you ever find yourself in a situation that makes you angry, pay attention to your driving behaviour to ensure you are not driving aggressively.

Protect yourself from aggressive drivers by getting out of their way and focusing on your driving. Don't provoke other drivers, and don't react to aggression. Always keep your emotions in check and stay calm. Call the police if you feel threatened.



# When to Stay off the Road?

Even if you are an experienced driver, there may be situations in which personal considerations may distract you from focusing on your driving.

Defensive driving techniques will not prevent accidents if you are unfit to drive. Do not drive if you are:

too tired, upset, mad,

taking medication that makes you drowsy,

using recreational drugs,

drinking alcohol,

feeling ill,

or if you can't focus because of any other reason.