

## **Safe and Unsafe Drivers**

Classification schemes provide a useful means of organizing a collection of things that then make certain other tasks easier. This is done according to certain criteria that are devised beforehand. This essay attempts to categorize drivers on the basis of safety on the road, and includes descriptions of the behaviors of each type of driver. One purpose of such a classification could be to identify types of unsafe drivers and devise policies targeted at improving safety specifically at those types of drivers. Furthermore, knowledge of the behavioral characteristics of a safe and unsafe driver could help students prepare for what they will encounter on the road in today's world. The classification categories devised to help identify types of safe and unsafe drivers are given in the appendix.

We first describe the most dangerous type of unsafe driver (1a). This would be a driver which abuses drugs and alcohol and is chemically impaired. He makes the conscious decision to get behind the wheel and put his own life and also of others in danger. This type of driver has no regard for anyone. He does not think rationally or clearly about the consequences of what might happen when getting behind the wheel. He thinks he can drive safely and that his motor skills are not impaired whereas he may have some physical or mental disorder. This is clearly one of the most dangerous types of driver around.

Even a driver who has a general understanding of safety (2c) will know his limitation when it comes to drinking and driving: if he is intoxicated in any way, he could be putting his life and that of others in danger. This person would not drive and he would call a cab, or a friend to take him home in such circumstances. He would think first about the ramifications of his driving and how this impaired driving could effect his life and the lives of other people.

Another characteristic of an unsafe driver is someone who is distracted and very busy while driving (1b). This could be someone who is talking or texting on his cell phone while he is driving. Recently in the news, we have seen a rise in public transportation accidents. Even drivers who outwardly seem professional have been caught texting on their cell phones and not paying due attention to the road while driving. Their carelessness causes accidents and injures many people because even a moment of distraction could put the car off course or the driver may be unaware of a potential danger ahead. Texting and talking on the phone can cause a driver to tailgate, sway off the road, speed or even cross a red light without noticing it. Unfortunately, the driver does not realize what has happened until it is too late and he has already crashed and caused an accident. Reading a paper, applying makeup or eating while driving is equally distracting. A hungry driver, who is concentrating on trying to drink or eat, might be fiddling around with utensils, napkins, or containers, and he is not fully focused or concentrating on his driving. This could cause him to spill something on himself or on the car seat, which could also be very distracting. He might end up having to take his hands off the wheel and his eyes off the road to try and clean up the mess, and that could cause an accident. Distraction does not necessarily involve handling another object, as daydreaming for example is a mental distraction as is listening to loud music.

Moderately safe drivers who have a greater awareness of safety issues while driving (2b) will know that even if they are good at driving, a moment of distraction of any kind could make a huge difference on the road while the car is running.

Control of emotions is another distinguishing characteristic of the behavior of drivers that can make them either safe or unsafe. A safe driver knows the importance of keeping emotions under control whereas an unsafe driver (1c) uses his car as an extension of his emotions and an

opportunity to burst out. Road rage is a perfect example of such a lack of emotional control.

These drivers have no control over their emotions and are quick in expressing their anger at other drivers even if it is their own fault. They typically rant, rave, scream, and curse. Drivers who have expressed road rage have been known to get out of their cars, hit other drivers, or even pull out a weapon. Drivers that road rage, use their cars to muscle their way into lanes wherever they want to go. They often do not obey the traffic laws and cause accidents by being impatient and in a hurry. Even if they are normally able to keep their emotions under control, it may be that something has upset them, they may have been fired, or are experiencing emotional problems. This may be a temporary emotional state but it still makes them susceptible to taking out their anger or frustration on others and therefore being unsafe on the road.

All safe drivers, or at least those who are moderately safe (2a-b) are aware of the importance of being considerate and courteous of other drivers and take the initiative in giving way and letting other drivers go ahead instead of trying to speed up and cut them off. They are calm and try not to drive if they know that they are upset or emotionally distraught. They signal when they want to get in front of another car instead of impatiently pushing their way through.

The last category of unsafe drivers is of those that may even think they can drive well and are mostly conscious of safety but lack in certain observational skills that make them unsafe (1d). They may not have had sufficient training or they may be unaware of changes in signs, road conditions or laws, or been unable to renew their insurance in time. In contrast, the safest of drivers are those who take issues of safety to the highest degree and exhibit perfection in their driving (2a).

Driving can be a wonderful experience. It can give you the freedom to come and go, and go wherever you want quickly and conveniently. Abusing your driving privileges and being an

unsafe driver can result in senseless accidents hurting yourself as well as others on the road.

Knowing the different types of behavioral characteristics of unsafe and safe drivers on the road can help you assess what drivers to stay away from. It can also help you decide how best to handle certain situations on the road. It can help you make a conscious decision about what type of driver you want to become after comparing with others. Do you wish to be a driver who is known to be courteous, emotionally stable and not physically impaired or a driver that is rude, has road rage, and drinks before he gets into a car? The choice is up to you.

### **Appendix: Summary of Classification Scheme**

The original list of characteristics of safe and unsafe drivers:

<p>The safe driver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Obeys the speed limit</li><li>• Obeys the traffic laws</li><li>• Uses signals</li><li>• Does not tail gate</li><li>• Does not drink</li><li>• Does not smoke</li><li>• Does not text</li><li>• Does not use cell phone</li><li>• Keeps Maintenance up on the car</li><li>• Keeps insurance current</li></ul>	<p>The unsafe driver usually:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Speeds</li><li>• Drinks alcohol</li><li>• Uses drugs</li><li>• Tail gates</li><li>• Smokes</li><li>• Talk on cell phone</li><li>• Texts</li><li>• Is emotional</li><li>• Expresses road rage</li><li>• Is upset</li><li>• Is angry</li><li>• Eats</li><li>• Drinks</li><li>• Is chemically impaired</li><li>• Applies makeup</li><li>• Has medical disorders</li><li>• Reads a newspaper</li><li>• Day dreams</li><li>• Is tired</li></ul>
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This then led to the following classification scheme:

- 1) Unsafe drivers

- a) Most dangerous – Abuse drugs and alcohol and put lives in danger (exhibit total lack of care).
  - b) Easily distracted – Carelessly use phones/eat while driving (exhibit busyness).
  - c) Emotionally tempered – Have little or no control over their emotions (exhibit impatience).
  - d) Generally careless – Lack in observational skills (exhibit minor lapses).
- 2) Safe drivers
- a) Extremely observant and cautious – Take issues of safety to the highest degree (exhibit perfection)
  - b) Moderately safe – Have a more in-depth understanding of what is considered to be safe.
  - c) Generally safe – Have a good general understanding of what is considered to be safe.