

THE FATAL FIVE DISTRACTIONS



The number one cause of car crashes is driver distraction, and is it any wonder when there are so many things just waiting to grab your attention?

Even if you're used to multi-tasking, trying to juggle all the aspects of driving with something such as checking your texts or drinking a coffee is just asking for trouble - never mind all the stuff that's going on outside your car.

Other common distractions include sat-navs and passengers; carrying friends can make a huge difference to how a car is driven, even if it's a sub-conscious change. Setting a sat-nav

on the move is also common, but there's no need to do this while driving as everything can (and should) be set up before setting off.

The biggest distraction among young drivers is mobile phone use, whether that's texting, calling or using social media. At 70mph a car travels the length of six double-decker buses every two seconds. If someone told you to close your eyes at that speed for that length of time you'd think they were crazy - yet drivers are doing effectively the same thing by taking their eyes off the road to look at phones.

DEALING WITH DISTRACTION

- » If you need to do something distracting, find a safe place to pull over.
- » Recognise what makes you distracted, then work out whether or not you really need to do it.
- » Concentrate on your driving; sometimes easier said than done, especially in uninteresting environments.
- » Make sure you're ready to drive before setting off. After an emotional event you might need time to calm down.
- » Even a conversation with a passenger could distract you at a crucial moment, so if the road is really busy you need to focus on what's happening outside rather than chatting.



- » Use technology sensibly - or think about not using it at all.
- » Plan your route in advance, so you're not having to work out your route or program the sat-nav as you go along.
- » Switch your phone off altogether. If you're using it for navigation don't be tempted to check messages or answer any calls if the engine is running.
- » Don't eat or drink as you drive. It's distracting and if you start spilling it all over the place you'll only be distracted even more.
- » Don't smoke when driving. If you've got children in the car this is banned anyway; if you're caught you'll be fined £50.





THE PENALTIES



Get caught using a mobile while driving and it's an automatic six points plus a £200 fine, which means your licence will be revoked if you've passed your test within the past two years. The penalty is the same if you're driving badly while using a hands-free. Cause an accident while using a mobile and the penalties can be far more severe.

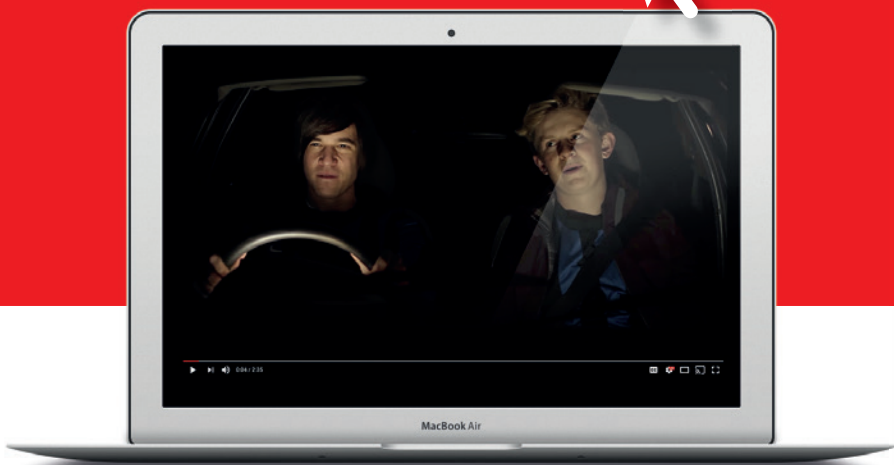
If you're convicted of careless driving or driving without due care and attention, you can be fined up to £5000 and get 3-9 points. Kill somebody and you can be imprisoned for up to 14 years and given an unlimited fine. You'll automatically be banned for two years as well.

WATCH THE VIDEO



One of the most imaginative films on phoney driving is Amey's *TwoSecondMistake*; the short film is brilliantly done, while there are separate interviews too.

You can see it at tinyurl.com/hyh4jbw



THE MOST COMMON DISTRACTIONS (IN ORDER)



SMS

Texting



Children in the car



WHEN YOU HOME

GISH...

Talking on phone



Chatting to a passenger



Changing radio/CD/MP3



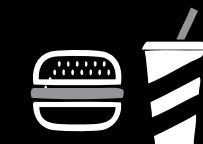
Road rage



Staring at an accident



Having an argument




Eating or drinking



Lighting a cigarette



THE FATAL FIVE DRINK DRIVING



Despite high-profile anti-drink drive campaigns, around 240 people die each year through drink driving, while around 100,000 drivers lose their licence. Many drivers are caught out the morning after, as it's easy to think that a few hours' sleep will make all that alcohol in your system disappear, but it doesn't.

How quickly your body gets rid of the alcohol depends on your gender, weight, how much alcohol

you've consumed, how much and what you've eaten – and more. Some drivers have been caught out by just moving their car while others have lost their licence by sleeping in their car while drunk, so it's very easy to get caught out. And if you are, the penalties are severe.

If there's one key thing to remember it's this: being legal doesn't mean you're safe and being safe doesn't mean you're legal, so stay off the booze altogether.

THE LIMITS



The drink drive limit in England and Wales is 80mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood, or 35 microgrammes of alcohol in 100 millilitres of breath. In Scotland it's much lower at just 50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood or 22 micrograms of alcohol per 100 millilitres of breath, which is in line with most European countries.

Alcohol affects us all differently so there are no set rules as to what you can drink before driving, to stay legal. As a rule of thumb, if you drink a pint of strong lager it'll be up to three hours before you should get behind the wheel; a couple of large glasses of wine and you might need to leave it for as much as eight hours.

THE PENALTIES



If you're caught driving or attempting to drive, while affected by drink or drugs, or with excess drink in your system, you'll be banned from driving for at least 12 months. Get caught twice within 10 years and that minimum ban becomes three years. Job losses often result, along with relationship breakdowns and financial problems.

As if that's not enough you can also be jailed for six months, fined up to £5000 – or both if you've really been stupid.

And to cap things off you'll get 3-11 points on your licence. Kill someone due to drink driving and you face 14 years behind bars and an unlimited fine.

You can't dodge the law by refusing to give a breath sample, either. Unless there's medical proof that you can't provide a sample, refuse to do so and the penalties are the same as if you fail a breath test – and you can get an extra six months on your driving ban for being unco-operative.

MYTH BUSTER

Lots of people reckon they can beat the breathalyser. If you thought the following are facts, think again – they're all fiction.

- » Strong coffee sobers you up: Alcohol needs time to dissipate and you can't speed things up. Also, the coffee's caffeine can't keep you alert or restore your judgment.
- » Bigger people handle their alcohol better: Your size can affect the rate of alcohol absorption, but your metabolism, when you last ate and how much rest you've had matter too.
- » Eat a mint: Your breath will smell nice, but a breathalyser measures the alcohol in the air in your lungs, so this one's a non-starter.
- » Drink lots of water: As above; it won't affect the level of alcohol in the air in your lungs.

HOW TO AVOID DRINK DRIVING



Don't try to calculate if you've consumed enough to tip you over the drink-drive limit.



If you drive to a party and drink more than you expected to, don't risk it. Book yourself a taxi or arrange for a friend or family member to collect you.



Drinks poured at home are usually larger than pub measures - don't underestimate how much you've had.



A drinking session the night before can easily put you over the legal limit the following morning. Organise alternative travel plans for the next day.



If you know someone has been drinking, don't let them drive - and definitely don't let them give you a lift home.



Harrison cheated death - but his ordeal will continue for years



If you thought Harrison was in a bad state after the crash...

HARRISON'S STORY

It was an unexceptional day for 17-year old Harrison King. Or so he thought; he didn't know his life was about to change forever. Says Harrison: "The last thing I remember is having my tea at 8pm, but my mates tell me we'd gone to the pub for some drinks before going to a local nightclub, which we left at 3am".

Harrison chose to drive home, although he was over the drink-drive limit. The result was carnage; he hit some railings and a house at speed, and when the police turned up they started looking for the bodies. Incredibly Harrison survived, but he had to be put into a coma for several days while his

operations and treatment lasted for months.

Harrison adds: "I broke my cheekbone, suffered major nerve damage, bleeding from my ear and for a while I struggled to walk. Now I can't play rugby, I have trouble sleeping and I've got problems with my jaw. A year after my crash, I'm still feeling the effects - and I will for a while yet".

As if all this isn't enough, Harrison was banned from driving for 12 months, was handed a £100 bill for court costs, plus he received a referral order and had to undertake community service. If only he'd taken a taxi...

"I broke my cheekbone, suffered major nerve damage, bleeding from my ear and for a while I struggled to walk."

AND THERE'S MORE

If you want to know more about anything covered here, check out some of the online resources that'll guide you through drink driving law, breathalysers, and drug driving law too:

» drinkaware.co.uk
(drinkaware.co.uk)

» Alcohol unit calculator
(tinyurl.com/bpfzaez)

» Think! Drink driving campaign
(tinyurl.com/85ssezp)

» drinkdriving.org
(drinkdriving.org)

» 50 years of drink drive campaign films
(tinyurl.com/grsqc26)

THE FATAL FIVE

DRUG DRIVING



Many drivers take drugs because they think they can't be caught. But the police can easily tell when you're on a high, and the penalties are exactly the same as if you get caught over the alcohol limit.

If a driver is stopped because they're suspected of having drugs in their system, they can be subjected to roadside tests which will quickly establish if they're high.

Regardless of what those roadside tests show, a driver can still be subjected to breath and blood tests at the local police station. However, even without these it's possible for the police

to prosecute - and for a driving licence to be lost - on the strength of the roadside tests.

If you crash your car while high on illegal drugs, and you're seriously injured, the first thing a paramedic will need to do is put prescription drugs into your system. They don't have time to test for any illegal drugs in your bloodstream, so those life-saving drugs are ineffective - or even cause more problems than they solve. So take drugs and you're more likely to crash your car. Then, when the ambulance turns up, those same drugs could prevent the crew from saving your life.

THE LAW



It's an offence to drive with any one of 17 legal or illegal drugs above a specified level in your blood. These include cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy and ketamine. The limits for all illegal drugs are seriously low - taking a tiny amount of an illegal drug will probably put you over the limit.

The new offence works alongside the existing offence of driving whilst impaired through drink or drugs, which means the consequences of being caught are just the same. And the consequences can be very serious...



BARELY LEGAL



The problem with legal highs is that they're not controlled, so you never know what you're putting into your body when you take that Clockwork Orange or Mary Jane. But even if your mind or body aren't destroyed by swallowing these chemicals, your driving can be wrecked. And that's when you'll feel the full force of the law, because if you take any drug you can be nicked for driving whilst impaired through drink or drugs.



WEB WATCH

thesite.org/drinkanddrugs

Want to know more about drugs and their effects?
Then check out these sites:

drugscope.org.uk

talktofrank.com



THE KEY DRUGS



Crystal meth: A powerful stimulant that can be effective for 2-20 hours.

Ecstasy: Made up of a mixture of drugs; different tablets contain different amounts of the active ingredient MDMA, which has a huge influence on the nature and strength of the effects.

Ketamine: An anaesthetic with painkilling and hallucinogenic properties which is intended to be used by vets as a sedative and anaesthetic.

Cannabis: A relaxant; just a bit of this with a small amount of alcohol will magnify the effects. The most intense effects last at least 2-4 hours.

Cocaine: A stimulant of the mind which may make you feel very alert for about an hour. During this time you may react inappropriately, then as the effect wears off the danger of falling asleep is high. Combining cocaine with alcohol or other drugs can produce unexpected and dangerous effects.



DON'T GET CAUGHT

- » The easiest way to not get caught is to not take drugs. But if you're going to take illegal drugs, don't get behind the wheel for at least a couple of days. The more you take the longer you need to wait until you drive.
- » It's not just about illegal drugs though; if you take prescription medication it can affect your driving. Read the instructions that come with your medica-

tion and if in doubt don't drive until at least a day has elapsed.

- » If you drive to a party and take drugs, don't risk it. Book yourself a taxi or arrange for a friend or family member to collect you.
- » If you know someone has taken drugs, don't let them drive - and definitely don't let them give you a lift home.








ILLEGAL PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

- Clonazepam
- Diazepam
- Flunitrazepam
- Lorazepam
- Methadone
- Morphine or opiate and opioid-based drugs, eg codeine, tramadol or fentanyl
- Oxazepam
- Temazepam



HOW DRUGS CAN AFFECT YOU:

-  Slower reaction times
-  Poor concentration
-  Sleepiness/fatigue
-  Confused thinking
-  Distorted perception
-  Over-confidence



THE FATAL FIVE SEATBELTS



If you run as fast as you can, into a wall, it'll hurt. It's the same when the front of your car hits something at just 15mph. The car stops in the first tenth of a second, but you keep moving forward at the same rate the car had been moving - until something stops you. Like the steering wheel, dashboard or windscreen. This is at 15mph; crank that up to 30mph and the impact is four times as hard. It's the same impact you'd feel if you fell three stories. Ouch. This is why it's so important to belt up before you set off. Fail to do so and you could end up disabled for the rest of your life - or worse.

THE PENALTIES



Get caught driving while not wearing a belt and your licence stays clean - but you'll be fined. As the driver, you're responsible for wearing your own belt plus ensuring your passengers have theirs on too. That's unless they're over 14 - then they're responsible for themselves. You can be fined up to £500, although a £30 fixed penalty fine is more usual. There are a few exemptions, but the only one likely to apply is if you're reversing your car. For more on the topic check out lawontheweb.co.uk/seatbelts



KILLER FACTS

- » You're twice as likely to die in a crash if you're not wearing a seat belt.
- » Those aged 17-34 are the least likely to bother belting up - but the most likely to crash.

IT'S A CULTURAL THING



Elsewhere in this website we cover how being a positive role model for your child can make a big difference. One way of doing this is to always wear a seatbelt, but in some communities there's a culture of not doing this, because it's seen as unnecessary. But belting up is absolutely necessary; many people die unnecessarily each year because they haven't bothered to do so.

After a friend was badly injured in a crash, Jasvir always wears a seatbelt now

TAKING A BACK SEAT

Most people will put on their seatbelt when travelling in the front seats, but many don't bother when travelling in the back. You're risking serious injury or even killing the people sitting in front of you. For good reasons, it's a legal requirement to wear a seat belt, if one is fitted, when travelling in either the front or the back of a car.



KILLER FACTS

- » If you think you don't need to wear a seatbelt because your car has airbags, think again. The proper term for an airbag is a Supplementary Restraint System (SRS) - supplementary meaning 'in addition to'. That's in addition to the seatbelt!

DO IT RIGHT

- » Make sure it's not twisted.
- » Position it so the lap belt sits as low as possible over your hips and doesn't ride up over your stomach; heavy clothing can push the belt up too high.
- » The shoulder belt should lie across your chest - over your shoulder away from your neck. If the car has a seat belt with an adjustable top mounting point, adjust it so the belt sits comfortably across your chest.
- » Don't put the shoulder belt under your arm. In a crash, this could lead to a very serious injury.
- » Make sure there's no slack in the belt. It can only work properly if it's snug across your body at the start of an
- crash. Rear lap belts (and other non-automatic belts) should be adjusted to fit close and low over your hips.
- » Never put an adult seat belt around two people; it could lead to serious injuries, with the two people crushed together.
- » It's okay to tilt your seat slightly backwards but don't recline it too far. In a crash, it's possible for the driver or passenger to slide forward and under the belt, if the seat leans too far back.





THE FATAL FIVE SPEEDING

Speed does not kill. Necessarily. Drag racers, Formula One drivers and land speed record heroes are testament to this fact. But while speed on its own rarely kills, combine it with something else and you've potentially got a surefire recipe for disaster.

For example, it might be perfectly safe to drive at 60mph on a fast rural road with good visibility, but how do you know you've got good visibility?

- » You might think you can work out a safe speed for the conditions, but hazards often lurk that you might not know about. Can you guarantee that something won't come out of that gate from the field, that there isn't a pedestrian just out of view or some diesel hasn't been spilled on the bend you're approaching?
 - » Then there are the things within your control. Load your car up with mates and the handling - plus the stopping distances - will be adversely affected. Reach for the radio or get involved in a conversation at just the wrong moment, and it could be curtains. The same goes if your tyres are under-inflated or low on tread.
 - » Throw a few of these factors into the mix and just an extra few miles an hour can make the difference between life and death. So while speed on its own isn't guaran-
- teed to harm anyone, add the word 'inappropriate' to the mix and it changes things radically. That's why we have speed limits; you might think you can work out a safe speed for the conditions, but hazards often lurk that you might not know about - and which mean you need to take it carefully.
 - » The problem with speed limits is that they're often seen as a target rather than a maximum; falling into that trap can prove fatal. Also, while we're all taught to obey speed limits, some drivers assume they only have to ensure they don't exceed the number on the sign and they'll be safe. That's not the case though; a skilled driver will take into account a stack of other factors, such as the weather conditions and whether or not there are other road users around.



THE PENALTIES



If you're not driving like a complete idiot, but you're caught driving over the speed limit, you'll be fined £100 and given three points. Two of those and if you've passed your test within the last two years, you'll have to retake your theory and practical tests to get back on the road.

You might be offered a speed awareness course instead, but without the points. Such courses aren't available everywhere, not everybody gets the option, and you can attend one of these courses only once every three years.

HOW TO AVOID SPEEDING

DOING THE FOLLOWING WILL HELP MAKE SURE YOU **DON'T FALL VICTIM** OF SPEEDING:



Give yourself plenty of time for your journey, so you're not in a rush.



If your car has a speed limiter fitted (normally in conjunction with cruise control) – use it.



If you have telematics insurance, log on to your portal regularly to see if you've been speeding without knowing it.



Don't chat to your passengers if it means you can't focus on your driving. Being distracted at the wrong moment could lead to a speeding ticket – or a crash.

LAME EXCUSES



Camera partnerships have **heard them all**; don't try to wriggle out of a fine by trying any of these:

“ I picked up a hitchhiker who commented that they liked my car so I let 'this person' drive the vehicle. I don't have their name or address. ”

“ I was in the airport's flight path and I believe the camera was triggered by a jet overhead, not my car. ”

“ My car was stolen overnight and returned to the same point. I didn't report it, as the first thing I knew was when a summons for speeding turned up. ”

DID YOU KNOW?



At 70mph you cover 31.5 metres every second. That's **almost three times the length** of a double-decker bus. Add on your thinking distance plus your braking distance and you need the length of a football pitch (105 metres) to come to a stop.