



Get the Facts: Anger Behind the Wheel

In a Nutshell

Driving can be stressful but getting angry when behind the wheel can lead to aggressive driving or “road rage,” distracted driving or even an accident.

Road rage roots

Here are some common factors that often contribute to road rage incidents or aggressive driving behavior.

- Traffic delays: Heavy traffic, sitting at stoplights, looking for a parking space or even waiting for passengers can increase a driver’s anger level.
- Running late: Being behind for a meeting or appointment can cause drivers to be impatient.
- Anonymity: If drivers feel that they probably won’t see other drivers again, they may be more apt to engage in risky driving behaviors like tailgating, cutting people off, excessive honking or making rude gestures.
- Disregard for others and the law: Some drivers may think the rules don’t apply to them.
- Habitual or learned behavior: For some drivers, aggressive driving may be the norm.

One survey found nearly 80% percent of drivers expressed significant behind-the-wheel anger or aggression at least once in the past year.

Another analysis found aggressive driving played a role in 56% of fatal crashes over a five-year period.

Avoiding road rage

- Before you get behind the wheel
 - Don’t rush. Give yourself time to get where you’re going; you’re less likely to become impatient and take unnecessary risks.
 - Cool off. If you’re upset, take time to calm down.
- When driving
 - Give other drivers a break. If someone is driving slowly, keep in mind they might be lost.
 - Use hand gestures wisely. Keep gestures positive like waving to a driver who lets you merge.
 - Don’t tailgate. Keep a safe distance from the car in front, no matter how slowly they drive.





- Lay off the horn. Honking out of frustration won't solve any problems; it will just increase the stress level for everyone on the road.
- Don't stop to confront another driver. Stopping could lead to a dangerous situation for everyone.
- If another driver acts aggressively
 - Stay away. Safely change lanes, gradually slow down or even exit the highway to keep a safe distance from the aggressive driver.
 - Don't reciprocate. Ignore the temptation to respond to the other driver; it could cause the situation to escalate. Don't make eye contact.
 - Don't stop. Stopping could lead to a person-to-person confrontation, which could be dangerous.
 - Watch your back. If you're worried that the other driver is following you, keep your doors locked and drive to the nearest police station.
 - Taking a defensive driving course could help you stay safer on the road; it could also qualify you for a discount on car insurance.

Sources: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
AAA Foundation For Traffic Safety
Insurance Information Institute
GEICO

