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EC65-1008 Are You a Good Driver?

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ARE YOU A GOOD DRIVER?*

If you're like the average driver, you consider yourself better than average.

But in reality, probably none of us is quite as good behind the wheel as we like to think we are. When we first start driving, we're very careful to obey all traffic rules and exercise great caution to keep out of accident situations. But, as time goes by and we acquire confidence, we tend to lose a bit of our caution and our driving habits slip a little.

We'd all be better in the driver's seat if we reviewed our driving habits every once in awhile. This lesson will help you do that, although not completely. Several of the more common traffic situations are described. Read each situation, decide what you'd do if you were the driver, then circle the number of the answer describing the action you would take.

The correct answers are listed at the end. If you miss on more than three of the choices, it'll be to your advantage to take a refresher course.

Situation A: You plan to make a left turn at a 4-lane intersection. Facing you is another car whose driver also plans to turn left. Traffic is moving on the outside lanes. You will:

1. Start your turn in front of the other car, wait for a break in oncoming traffic, then complete your turn.
2. Drive forward until you can make a left turn around the rear of the other car in the intersection, look for the first opening, then finish your turn.
3. Turn either in front or in back of the other car, then edge your way out and trust to oncoming traffic to stop and let you through.

Situation B: The evening is dark and wet and you're in a hurry to get home. Rain is coming down heavily, but you're driving down an open highway with little traffic in sight. Signs have told you that the speed limit is 40 miles per hour. You will:

1. Take advantage of the uncongested road by driving at 45 miles an hour in order to get home more quickly.
2. Drive at a steady 40 miles an hour--the posted speed limit.
3. Slow down about ten or fifteen miles below the speed limit and be prepared to go even slower.

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EXTENSION SERVICE, UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS AND
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COOPERATING
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Situation C: You've been halted at a railroad crossing by a long freight train. The crossing has a warning sign, but no crossing gates. There's also another car waiting on the other side of the tracks. When the train has finally cleared the crossing, you will:

1. Drive on over the railroad tracks and continue on your way.
2. Wait long enough to make sure that there isn't another train coming on the second track, a train that might be hidden by the one that has just passed.
3. Let oncoming car cross the tracks before you do.

Situation D: You're approaching an intersection when you see another car approaching from your left. There are no stop signs on either road, but you remember that, as a general rule, the car on the right has the right-of-way and you are on the right. The other car has begun to enter the intersection by the time you get there. You will:

1. Sound your horn to warn the other driver, then continue through the intersection.
2. Stop and let the other driver have the right-of-way.
3. Let the other car have the right-of-way, but blow your horn to express your opinion of his behavior.

Situation E: You're driving on a very crowded highway. You've tried to allow a little room between your car and the car ahead. But every time you drop back a little, a car from another lane switches lanes to fill up the gap in front of your car. You will:

1. Close up the gap so no other car can slip in.
2. Try to maintain a gap between you and the car ahead, even though you may have to drop back when another car moves in.
3. Leave the gap open, but be ready to close it rapidly if another driver tries to sneak in.

Situation F: You're driving down an open highway on a dark night. Coming toward you is another car with his bright headlight flaring. You've flicked your lights up and down several times to caution him to lower his headlight beams, but he hasn't done so. You will:

1. Wait until he is very close, then switch your bright headlights on to teach him what it is like to be blinded by glare.
2. Pull off on the shoulder of the road until he is past and you can see the road clearly again.
3. Continue driving, but direct your gaze downward to the right. Guide by the right edge of the highway until the other driver is past and you can look up without being blinded.

Situation G: You're driving down a two-lane highway behind a large, slow-moving truck. You'd like to pass the truck in order to avoid being delayed. You will:

1. Close up behind the truck so that you can swing around him quickly when you think it is safe.
2. Drop back a bit until you can see a clear, straight stretch of highway beyond the truck, check your rear view mirror, then start to pass.
3. Sound your horn to let the truck driver know you want to pass, then wait for him to signal that it is all right for you to pass him.

Here are the answers you should have selected for your actions in the situations described. Check them against your own selections to determine if you are a good driver.

Situation A: Number 1 is the correct choice of action. In making a left turn, cross in front of the other driver making a left turn in the opposite direction. Then wait for a break in the traffic before finishing your turn. Attempting to turn behind the opposing car may result in neither of you being able to move and traffic being tied up in both directions.

Situation B: Number 3 is the correct answer. Even though 40 miles per hour may be the posted speed, this speed is all right only for good driving conditions, not for bad driving conditions. When the weather turns bad, or in darkness, make it a point to slow down at least ten miles below the speed at which you'd drive in clear weather.

Situation C: Number 2 is the correct answer. Many drivers have been killed or injured because they tried to cross railroad tracks as soon as a train had passed. They didn't see another train because of the first train, and so were struck. Always make sure the tracks are clear before crossing.

Situation D: Number 2 is correct. The general rule at intersections is that the car approaching from the right has the right-of-way. But always yield, even when you believe you have the right-of-way, as your insistence might cause an accident.

Situation E: Number 2 is the best choice. It may be annoying to have to continually give way in order to maintain distance between you and the car ahead, but at least you'll have stopping room if the car ahead stops suddenly. Bumper to bumper driving can cause multiple rear-end collisions if one car stops suddenly.

Situation F: Number 3 is your best choice here. By watching the right edge of the road you can continue to drive without being blinded by oncoming headlights. Don't flash your lights into the other driver's face. One blinded driver is bad enough, two are disastrous.

Situation G: Number 2 is preferable. Give yourself plenty of running room for passing and make sure before you swing out that nobody is trying to pass you. It's always best to rely on what you can see yourself rather than a signal from somebody else.

These seven situations are only a few of the hundreds which motorists encounter daily. While they do not represent a complete test of driving skill, they cover important fundamentals which all good drivers should know and practice regularly.

Adapted From Leaflet L173 of the Allstate Insurance Company.