



Are You A Smart Risk Driver?

Driving - and almost everything else you do - involves risk and in every situation you make conscious and unconscious choices regarding risk that affect your behavior. Inappropriate choices made about risk can result in injury or death.

In any given situation, there is a line of choice that separates smart risk from stupid risk. In drawing that line you are challenged to distinguish and choose between what you consider to be acceptable and unacceptable levels of risk.

You Can Practice Smart Risk Behavior By:

- **RECOGNIZING** that there is risk involved in every situation.
- **ASSESSING** the level or risk involved - it's unique in every situation and is determined by circumstances and how prepared you are for the risk.
- **CHOOSING** appropriate behavior to manage, avoid or minimize the risk and your potential for injury.

Take some time to assess your driving behavior - you may be taking more risks than you think. Among other considerations, do you always leave enough space between your car and the one in front to make an unexpected stop? Is your speed always appropriate for the road and conditions? Are you equally attentive whether you are driving on the highway or just around the block? Do you always obey traffic signals and signs? By considering the potential outcomes of the actions you take behind the wheel, you may decide to make a few changes to your driving behavior.

SMARTRISK Foundation, a national non-profit organization dedicated to reducing the number of injuries in Canada, has identified the following five choices that you can incorporate into your lifestyle to reduce your likelihood of being injured. While these choices are relevant in many areas of your life, they are described here within the context of driving.

PLEASE CHOOSE TO BE A SMART RISK DRIVER!

- **BUCKLE UP:** Seat belts save lives. In a collision, if you're not wearing your seat belt, you are 18 times more likely to be killed and seven times more likely to be hospitalized than if you were wearing your seat belt.*

**Based on the 1993 Ontario Road Safety Annual Report estimates for drivers and passengers involved in fatal and personal injury collisions.*

- **DRIVE SOBER:** Driving sober means more than being drug and alcohol free. It means you are in complete control, fit to drive and ready to handle the unexpected. As a driver, you must pay 100 per cent attention, 100 per cent of the time. If you're tired, preoccupied or distracted, don't get behind the wheel of a car.
- **LOOK FIRST:** Being observant and looking first can prevent injury. As a driver you need to be constantly aware of the position of your vehicle in relation to other vehicles, the movements of the vehicles around you and any changes in road or weather conditions. The proper positioning and use of your vehicles mirrors can increase your ability to be aware.
- **WEAR THE GEAR:** We can't say it often enough - your seat belt can save your life - but only if you wear it!
- **GET TRAINED:** To learn to drive and obtain your driver's license, you had to complete some form of training - either an organized course or through informal instruction. As a licensed driver, you may think that experience is the best teacher to help you improve your driving abilities. Unfortunately, experience also helps to develop bad driving habits and can make you feel immune to the risks you face every time you get behind the wheel. To make sure you are the best driver you can be, consider driver training for licensed drivers. Whether you want to upgrade your driving abilities, learn new skills to better prepare you for emergency situations, or increase your confidence as a driver, there is a licensed driver training program for you.

Information from the [SMARTRISK Foundation](#).