



Top 10 Tips To Prevent Road Rage

Reprinted from Edmunds.com, as a reminder to eliminate road rage from the power sweeping industry — and all industries.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration ([NHTSA](#)) states that road rage "involves a criminal act of violence, whereas aggressive driving can range from tailgating to speeding to running red lights." The number of deaths related to road rage is difficult to track, but NHTSA estimates that aggressive driving accounts for about one-third of all crashes and about two-thirds of the resulting fatalities.

Increasingly congested roadways are a growing source of driver frustration, but studies suggest the real root of aggressive driving lies within each of us. Drivers can cope by taking an honest look at their driving behavior and attempting to reduce their stress level behind the wheel.

We suggest you use this Top Ten list as part of a safety meeting to remind all of your employees that road rage is an epidemic that needs to be stopped and, by utilizing the following ideas, can be.

1. Get enough sleep.

A national epidemic of sleepiness is a contributing factor to road rage, according to the National Sleep Foundation. We all know how cranky we get without enough sleep. It makes us prone to feelings of annoyance, resentment and even anger. Eight hours is still the recommended daily dose of sleep for adults.

2. Plan ahead.

Do you regularly whiz through your morning routine in a whirlwind of chaos, trying to make up time while on the road? Do you allow *just enough* time to drive to an appointment? Then you're probably also more prone to a lead foot and a lost temper. If you add 10 minutes to your expected travel time, you'll have time to stop for gas, safely navigate those snowy roads or detour around road construction. Also, try preparing clothing, briefcases, children's school bags and lunches the night before to minimize your morning rush. Extra time equals calmer driving.

3. Your car is not a therapist.

Many of us love and identify with our cars but sometimes you can take the "car as extension of self" idea too seriously. If your boss or your spouse left you steaming, take care not to use driving as a way to blow off steam. Competitive types (you know who you are) shouldn't try to prove themselves on heavily traveled thoroughfares — save that enthusiasm for weekend romps on your favorite back roads. No matter how much power you've got under the hood, your vehicle is first and foremost a mode of transportation, not a weapon.



4. Turn down the bass.

Without getting into the argument over "aggressive music makes people aggressive," it makes sense that listening to relaxing music — or even a comedy channel on satellite radio — will make you less pumped up for action than a driving bass line. Try tuning in to classical or jazz to reduce stress. Or listen to an audiobook. (Here are our [Top 10 Audiobooks](#) to get you started.) Either way will also help drown out stressful traffic noise.

5. Loosen up, then breathe:

If you notice yourself clenching the steering wheel in a death grip, try flexing your fingers and loosening your hold — you'll find that you can control the car just as well. If your right foot is cramped, set the cruise control if traffic allows. If you're on a prolonged road trip, try not to exceed three hours of travel time without a break where you get out and stretch. Struggling to see through a dirty windshield is also an unnecessary stress factor, so fill up with washer fluid before you go. Periodically roll down the window and breathe deeply and slowly.

6. It's not about you.

Perhaps another driver cut you off. Or the car in front of you is braking erratically. Before you assume the driver is getting off on your rising anger levels, realize that you, as an individual, are not the target. Perhaps the driver simply made a mistake or was just being oblivious. Maybe there's a screaming baby, a loose pet or a crazed bee in the car. Maybe he was on a cell phone. The point is, don't take things so personally.

7. Hostility is toxic. And risky.

People most prone to anger are almost three times more likely to have a heart attack than those with low anger, according to the American Psychological Association. Other health risks seen in those who display hostility include obesity, depression and stroke. Wow, who knew? Safe driving promotes healthy hearts! Not only will giving into anger not resolve an irritating situation, it can increase the risk of retaliation. Think to yourself, "Is making my point worth endangering my life?" If all else fails, do a mental 180 and try to laugh it off.

8. Use restaurant etiquette.

While it's upsetting when a stranger is rude or cuts in line in a restaurant or store, most folks wouldn't lose their cool and become abusive as a result. It isn't only because they have good manners. Driving a car makes people feel more isolated and protected, allowing them to act in ways they would normally find embarrassing. So when another driver acts like a jerk, respond as though you're in a restaurant. And we don't mean Chuck E. Cheese's.



9. Take the self-test.

Classes designed to help curb aggressive driving often have participants tape record themselves while driving. Hearing themselves swear or rant on tape is enough of a wake-up call for them to recognize and reduce dangerous behavior. So, try analyzing your driving. Do any of the following statements sound like you?

- I regularly exceed the speed limit in order to get to work on time.
- I tailgate other drivers, especially those who sit in the left lane.
- I flash my lights and honk my horn to let drivers know when they annoy me.
- I verbally abuse other drivers whether they can hear me or not.
- I frequently weave in and out of traffic to get ahead.
- I feel the need to set bad drivers straight.

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, your driving may qualify as aggressive. The American Institute for Public Safety (AIPS) has a more detailed [RoadRageous Test](#) that determines if your driving habits fall under the "aggressive zone," "hostile zone" or — worse yet — "war zone."

10. Practice kindness:

Dr. Leon James, a.k.a. "[Dr. Driving](#)" and author of [Road Rage and Aggressive Driving](#), says that remembering simple courtesies, like allowing someone to merge or apologizing when we make a mistake, can go a long way in making the driving experience positive for ourselves and others. His basic motto is the old "do unto others" rule: Treat fellow drivers how you would like to be treated. As additional incentive, reducing your aggressiveness on the road can also keep you out of serious trouble: Several states have created special law enforcement teams to seek out and cite aggressive drivers. Depending on the frequency of offenses, violators may be fined, lose their license temporarily or even face jail time. Often, they are required to take a behavior-modification class as well.

We're all bound to lose our cool at some point, but by planning ahead and keeping things in perspective, we can prevent our emotions from getting the best of us. Putting aggressive driving in park will help to ensure your own safety, as well as the safety of everyone around you.

Provided to the power sweeping industry in the interest of promoting safety by the World Sweeping Association, <http://www.WorldSweepingPros.org>.