

GOOD DRIVING IS GOOD MANNERS!

by Carolann Philips

While there is really no best place for rude behavior, roads are the worst place to display it. Cars are so much a part of everyday life that they are taken for granted and it is usually forgotten that driving manners cannot be separated from safety. Driving has become an insular experience, as the windows stay wound up and the air conditioning and stereo envelop the car's occupants. Behind the wheel, encased in metal armour, people act and behave in a way they never would if they were at a friendly gathering. At the very least, manner less drivers cause frustration and anxiety; at worst, they cause road rage or even accidents. Drivers who are guilty of bad driving manners almost always also break the traffic rules. Proper driving etiquette not only ensures safety on the roads, it also helps save money by reducing car maintenance cost and improving fuel efficiency. What exactly is driving etiquette and how should we be acting while on the road? Here are a few guidelines:

- The far left lane is there to use to pass drivers who are going slower. If the speed limit is 80kmph and I am driving at 80kmph, it does not give us reason to remain in the left lane indefinitely.
- Tailgating is rude and no one appreciates it. It is like walking extremely close behind a stranger on an empty street! Many drivers seem to think that if they tailgate another driver, the other driver will speed up or switch lanes. Instead, tailgating causes most drivers to slow down, makes them nervous and increases

the risk of accidents. Rather than push them out of the way, we should slow down a little and pass when we have a safe and legal opportunity to do so.

- We must know that the other drivers around us are totally clueless about where we are going. We therefore use indicators whenever we turn or change lanes giving others plenty of warning time ahead of doing so. Flicking the indicator as an after thought just as we're changing lanes serves no purpose!
- It really won't delay our journey by more than a minute if we allow one or two cars to get into the line. Besides, good manners are contagious. Giving way to someone will probably prompt them to do the same for us down the road. And when someone allows us in to the traffic flow, we should politely acknowledge their kindness, perhaps with a friendly wave. Similarly, if we've done something wrong, raising a hand apologetically is enough to say 'I'm sorry'. Both gestures will be appreciated.
- If there has been an accident, we either stop at the side to help or drive on. We should not slow down to see what's happening. Even if it's for as short as 30 seconds, it's enough to cause traffic build-up on a busy road and the people involved in the accident can do better without the attention of onlookers anyway!
- A car horn is meant to act as a warning to unsafe conditions, not as a stress reliever. We should not start honking dementedly if the driver in front slows down for some reason or does not zoom off as soon as the traffic light turns green.
- We should resist the temptation to flash the headlights in anger or yell verbal or gesticulatory abuse at errant drivers as we zoom past. Just take a deep breath and drive on!

- We should slow down at zebra crossings to allow pedestrians to cross, appropriately using hazard signal when doing so. If caught in stop-start traffic, we should not stop on pedestrian crossings or in the middle of intersections. Our progress might have come to a standstill, but that doesn't mean we should stop others from moving.
- We never zoom past others and try to merge in at the last second. This is what makes the traffic move so slow at a bottleneck in the first place.

Consideration of others and of oneself should always be a priority for drivers. A considerate driver is a safer, as well as a more appreciated, driver.

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Carolann has had the pleasure of delivering programs to a diverse clientele; from major airlines, leading banks, embassies, and reputed business houses to the modeling & fashion industry and royalty within the GCC. She is also a columnist for the 'Thursday' magazine, a local publication.