

# Break bad driving habits

You might know all the basic road rules but are you following them?  
Get ready for a road-rule recap

You follow all the basic road rules, right? Well, with an annual death toll of more than 14 000, according to [www.arivealive.co.za](http://www.arivealive.co.za), it would appear South Africans are still road-rule breakers. Here are four pointers you know – but may still not be applying. It's time to suck it up and be safe.

## Belt up

According to stats on [www.arivealive.co.za](http://www.arivealive.co.za), wearing a seat belt reduces the risk of a fatality among front-seat passengers by up to 50% and among rear-seat passengers by up to 75%. 'When your vehicle is travelling at 60km/h and comes to a sudden stop, and you're not wearing a seat belt, your body will continue travelling at 60km/h until something stops it,' says Howard Dembovsky, the national chairman of Justice Project South Africa, which educates the public on issues of road safety.

Most new cars continue to beep until you put on your seat belt. If yours doesn't, stick your own seat-belt reminder on the dashboard.



## Turn it off

Being inseparable from your phone is fine ... as long as you shut it off or don't answer it when you're driving. 'The reason for not using it in the car is simple: it distracts your attention from the road,' says Dembovsky. 'Texting, BBM, Twitter and e-mailing are particularly dangerous as you take your hands off the wheel and your eyes off the road.'

A 2008 US study by the Transport Research Laboratory showed that

drivers who were distracted by texting had a 35% slower reaction time. To put that into perspective, drivers who had smoked marijuana had a 21% slower reaction time.

While hands-free kits are in use, Dembovsky doesn't recommend them. 'They still distract you, so rather make your car a no-phone zone.'

### IN DESPERATE TIMES:

If you must be in touch, try [DriveSafe.ly](http://DriveSafe.ly). This app reads texts and mails aloud in real time and responds, hands-free. Visit [www.drivesafe.ly](http://www.drivesafe.ly).

## ANGER MANAGEMENT

You may have had a bad day and only intended to let off steam, but you can never anticipate the reactions of other drivers. Although there are no reliable statistics on the incidence of road rage in South Africa, it's best to be alert – and polite. 'The only way to conquer this is to be aware and keep calm at all times,' says Johan Jonck of [www.arivealive.co.za](http://www.arivealive.co.za).

## Road-rage tips:

- ➔ Always lock your doors and never leave your car, even when provoked.
- ➔ Breathe deeply and count to 10. Avoid hooting or swearing at other drivers, no matter how upset you are.
- ➔ Take down the licence-plate number of any driver who threatens you and report it to the Road Traffic Management Corporation on ☎ 0861 400 800.

## Bottoms up

Still drinking and driving? The legal alcohol limit for drivers is 0,05g per 100ml of blood. For some people, even one drink can push them over this limit. According to Dembovsky, alcohol accounts for at least 60% of fatal crashes in South Africa. He says at least 8 400 of the 14 000 people who die in car accidents annually do so because of drinking and driving. Drunk drivers also run the risk of being arrested, facing jail time and getting a criminal record.

'There's no new advice on drinking and driving,' says Jonck. 'Don't do it – it ruins lives.'

## Give up the car keys

If you are out and have had a few drinks, it's best to hand over the car keys – and not to another drunk driver.

**GOOD FELLAS** operates a service that will fetch you and your car from locations in major centres countrywide, if you subscribe.

[www.gfellas.co.za](http://www.gfellas.co.za)

**NITE OWLS** also operates in Jo'burg, Cape Town and Durban.

[www.niteowl.co.za](http://www.niteowl.co.za)

**CABS FOR WOMEN** is a taxi service in Gauteng with only female drivers.

☎ 0861 777 778 ✂