

New Book Aims to Curb Bad Driving Habits

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(Deep South)

Everyone feels that the drivers in their city are the worst. But when observed more objectively, certain trends in driving habits can be observed. For instance, the farther west you go—particularly the Midwest and Pacific Northwest—the more polite motorists seem to be. Particularly, pedestrians are given the right of way, and drivers generally are less impatient. This could be due to a number of factors such as enforcement of motor vehicle regulations by local law officers, and possibly reduced congestion on roadways.

Conversely, the northeast seems to subscribe to the pedestrian and driver beware edict, maybe because there are more people with less time. But the South, with its *laissez faire* attitude, offers quite a different environment. Indeed, although the South has the distinction of being known for moving (and driving) more slowly—probably because of the heat—it also has some of the most expensive automobile insurance rates in the country. One viewpoint, however, is that southerners are not necessarily less educated in the rules of the road or that crime is so bad that enforcement of driving laws take a back seat. Instead, like anywhere, drivers simply forget what they learned when they first began driving. Another problem may be that once in the driver's seat, motorists are not fully concentrating on driving because of the stress of everyday life such as raising a

family while working multiple jobs, employment or economic concerns, or numerous personal problems.

For these reasons, a new book was developed to try and make a difference by bringing to the attention of drivers some of the little (and not so little) nuances of being polite while driving. *The Complete Guide to Driving Etiquette. Taking the Rules of the Road a Step Further* focuses on the dos and don'ts of driving in a number of different environments: urban, suburban/residential, rural, interstate, and off road. The impetus behind this book is not to teach drivers how to drive but rather to remind them of a few rules, such as the "running a red light or completing a left turn" conundrum, while encouraging the practice of common courtesy once behind the wheel. Moreover, it is of paramount importance to remember that not following sensible driving decorum also can initiate the dangerous occurrence of road rage.

Although *Driving Etiquette* focuses on courteous driving, a number of statistics are included to help illustrate the number, type, and cause of automobile accidents. Also, other data were just too important to omit such as the comparison of the number of drivers killed annually versus the number of passengers killed in airline crashes, as well as the frequency of food objects thrown in fits of rage from vehicles at other vehicles.

Driving Etiquette is divided into three parts: The Art of Polite Driving, Driving Environments, and

Road Rage. Part 1 begins with a definition of etiquette and justification for having good manners while driving. Although you do not have to be Emily Post to be courteous, similar rules of etiquette for everyday situations often apply for motorists. For instance, if you turn a corner in a hallway in your office building and nearly bump into someone, you say "excuse me" and go around them—usually to the right. Similarly, if you turn a corner in your car and end up nose-to-nose with another vehicle, you should smile, wave, and go around them as opposed to grimacing and honking your horn while displaying a vulgar hand gesture.

The first chapter in Part 1 gives four good reasons why one should even bother with practicing politeness on the road while Chapter 2 offers suggestions on how drivers can take formal driving requirements a step further by showing common courtesy and patience, especially with older drivers. This chapter also addresses other ways to be gracious while driving by recognizing the need for personal space and by practicing spontaneous kindness. Chapters 3 through 7 present in-depth discussions on the five main driving environments, and these chapters suggest appropriate responses to a variety of driving situations.

The last two chapters provide information and statistical data on the phenomenon of driver aggression to include findings from case studies regarding the cause and implications of dangerous driving. This chapter also profiles specific behavior of the aggressive driver,

what triggers such behavior, and how to avoid these situations by using standard avoidance techniques to neutralize potentially volatile situations. Tips are offered on how to remain calm and reject your own impulses to instigate acts of aggression while driving.

Two appendices provide information on sleep deprivation and using cellular telephones, as well as data on activities dangerous to pedestrians. The "References, Suggested Reading/Viewing, and Contacts" section at the end of the book shows the sources used in the research of *Driving Etiquette*, and also gives numerous resources for additional information on driving statistics, driving instruction, and various points of contact.

There is a school of thought that the driver human actually is not inherently uninformed, negligent, or even aggressive. Instead, motorists today simply may be the product of an increasingly hectic lifestyle where more and more travelers are opting not for the efficient and environmentally friendly car pool of the 1980s but for the individual privacy and comfort provided by single-car commutes.

Although the title of this book may convey an air of levity, the text is a serious look at bad habits, and often the first step to correcting such habits is to admit their presence. Hopefully, this book can become a valuable tool for drivers education instructors in training new drivers. And maybe even experienced adult motorists will be motivated to

practice driving etiquette to help ensure their own safety and that of others with whom they share the road.

These excerpts were taken from *The Complete Guide to Driving Etiquette* (ISBN 0-9658380-1-3) available from Chatgris Press, P.O. Box 15092, New Orleans, LA 70175-5092, from online booksellers, and from Borders Books and Music in New Orleans. For more information, call 504-895-5219 or email gsmith@comm.net.

A Final Note From the Editor:

Many of you have noticed this newsletter is considerably shorter than previous editions. *News of the South* is a compilation of articles and reports submitted by members of the Southern District. You are encouraged to submit articles, reports and/or pictures to the newsletter. The more submissions we have the more information we can share- hint, hint.

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