

This set of notes was sent to me as a few very useful tips when I was taking on a driving job with [Unicorn Courtesy Cars](#), based in Weymouth.

# ROAD RAGE

## A SURVIVOR'S GUIDE TO ROAD RAGE

Hostile aggressive drivers are a growing problem on our roads.

They make their presence felt by speeding, driving too close, flashing headlights, cutting up the driver and using offensive language and gestures.

A recent A.A. survey of 526 motorists in one month found that, over the previous year, 90% had been on the receiving end of 'road rage' with 62% experiencing 'tail gating'.

- Tail Gating is where a motorist drives aggressively close behind.
- Only 1% said they had been violently attacked by another driver.
- It is thought that the national figures of 200,000 to 300,000 physical assaults happen per year.

Motoring organisations and the police attribute the growth of road rage to more traffic and the increasing tendency of drivers to give vent to their frustration as they compete for congested road space. Mr Frank McKenna, Professor of Psychology, at the University of Reading adds "inside the car, we are cocooned from the outside world; drivers show a level of aggression that they wouldn't dream of demonstrating if they were simply walking along the pavement."

Other Psychologists note that drivers display classic traits of territorial behaviour. Behaviour analyst Matthew Joint, Assistance Head of Road Safety for the A.A. points out that someone who cuts up or drives too close is seen to be invading our personal space. Responding by aggressively tailgating the offender equates to the way animals chase an attacker off their patch.

## TAILGATING

Habitual close followers fall into 2 categories, says Professor McKenna. One type deliberately tries to unnerve the driver in front to make him pull over.

The second is simply unaware that driving too close is intimidating. This can be identified by using [the two second rule](#). This is where the driver of the car assesses the safe gap between themselves and the vehicle to the front, by watching the vehicle in front, wait for it to pass an obvious point ie. Bridge, Road signs, Marker posts etc. And then says slowly to himself "only a fool breaks the two second rule" this needs to be said before the vehicle you are in passes the same point. This then means you are able to stop within the distance you see to be clear. (DOUBLE the distance in wet weather.)

To deal safely with a tailgater you need to give yourself a good distance from the vehicle in front. This allows room for the tailgater when they decide to pass you.

Next, maintain a steady pace to encourage the offending car to overtake. If the offender still maintains his position you may be able to change lanes or leave the carriageway for a short time. It is advised you use filling stations and stop by the entrance to the kiosk. There are two reasons for this:-

1. They are nearly always occupied.
2. They have security cameras to observe the forecourts.

Alternatively by selecting a roundabout you can travel twice round it, placing yourself behind the offending motorist. Do not become part of the game by "top hatting the brake". This is where the driver applies pressure to the brake pedal enough to illuminate the stopping lights.

## **LANE WEAVER**

If you spot a car moving erratically from lane to lane behind you, keep left to allow it to overtake. Always remember to leave a good gap from the car in front as you will need to anticipate the offending car's intentions. Check your mirrors regularly to track the offender's progress. Do not interfere with his plan. Always give good warning by indication of your intentions.

Remember, that your passenger's safety is paramount, this also includes yourself.

## **MOTORIST SPOILING FOR A FIGHT**

Your risk of injury is lower if you maintain a non-competitive calm attitude, for instance, if another driver accelerates first as you are trying to overtake him. Play safe, drop back, avoid eye contact and never get into a contest. You never know who you are dealing with. The other driver could be drunk or on drugs. He could be uninsured or stolen the vehicle, in which case they think nothing of colliding with you, at worst they might be armed.

Drivers who behave like stern parents – blocking the impatient driver from proceeding to teach them a lesson, are asking for trouble.

In the event of a persistent offending car driver, you must try to remain calm and think clearly. Look for a public place such as a service station or police station; failing that, stay with a group of vehicles. Their presence may scare them off. If you are on a motorway try to pull in front of a coach or lorry, where the driver can see what is taking place.

If you are forced to stop, make sure you have room to pull around the leading vehicle. Lock all doors and windows if approached then sound the horn and flash the lights to attract attention. Try to take the other's vehicle registration number and call the police as soon as possible. **If you have a mobile phone, use it; dialling 999 works the same.**