

Head On

Head-on collisions are the most dangerous kind of collision. In a recent year, over 5,200 people died as a result of head-on collisions. The majority of these collisions could have been prevented using defensive driving techniques.

A WRONG DECISION

A young mother was on an Arizona highway, with her sister and her child. She had great visibility. In front of her was smooth, dry pavement, wide shoulders and straight road. A snake slithered out. Rather than hit the snake, she went left of center, right into the grill of a semi. All three were killed instantly in a collision that equaled running into a solid wall at over 120 miles per hour. When emergency crews arrived, the truck driver was wandering around, telling anyone who'd listen that he was so close when she swerved, he hadn't had time to turn his wheel and take his rig into the ditch to save them. He couldn't understand why she would hit a truck head on, instead of a snake. Here's why: First, she wasn't paying attention. Second, she reacted without thinking, in a fraction of a second, and she made the WRONG decision.

REDUCE THE RISK

What would you do if you were suddenly faced with a highway head-on? You've got only a few seconds to react, the closing speed is 200 feet per second and maybe more. At this speed you cover each mile of pavement in 26 seconds.

If you think about it ahead of time and often, so it becomes second-nature to you, you are more likely to make the right move if you ever face a head-on. By following a few safe driving tips, you can increase your chances of avoiding a collision and save your life:

- **Only drive when you are alert and sober.** If you aren't distracted, you're likely to see the vehicle coming long before there's a problem.
- **Scan the road ahead for hazards.** Look as far as the next hill or curve, or the next two corners in cities. This way, you have more time to get out of the way of an approaching hazard.
- **Watch for erratic behavior.** Use your headlights in daylight -- it makes the other driver THINK about you -- Why does he have his lights on?

➤ DON'T HUG THE CENTERLINE.

Stay well centered in your lane, where oncoming traffic is less likely to stray, and where you can get to the shoulder

or side of the road more quickly. On multi-lane roads, the right lane is the safest lane.

- **Obey speed limits.** You will have more time to react to a hazard, and should a collision occur, it will be much less damaging at a lower speed.



WHEN A COLLISION IS INEVITABLE

Once you get into a collision situation, the options are few and dangerous. Remember these principles in case you need to make split-second decisions to avoid a head-on collision:

- First, slow down as quickly as you can without losing control; this will reduce the forces if there is an impact.
- Always drive to the right to get out of the way. Remember that driving into a ditch is far less dangerous than driving into a head-on collision. If the other driver keeps coming in your lane, go off the road to the RIGHT, NOT LEFT, since the driver of the other vehicle is likely to move back into his or her lane after recovering control.
- Maintain speed and keep two wheels on the pavement for stability. Only drive with all four wheels on the shoulder if absolutely necessary to avoid a collision.
- If the choice is between a head-on and hitting a fixed object such as a tree or utility pole, it's always safer to hit the fixed object, which has no momentum of its own. When going off-road to the right, if you cannot avoid hitting something solid, don't hit it square, but off center, on a side if possible, with a glancing blow. You are better off having a one-car crash off the right side of the road, than you'd be in a head-on crash at highway speed.

More than 40,000 people die in traffic accidents every year. Despite your best efforts, you could someday face a head-on. Take the time to learn and practice defensive driving, and always wear your safety belt. If you are involved in a head-on collision, you may get hurt but you are far less likely to be killed. Think about it NOW. Slow quickly, drive right, off the road if necessary, live to see tomorrow.

March, 2018
The Shield
Head On
Quiz



Driver Name: _____ Date: _____
Please Print

Driver Signature: _____

Please circle one correct answer for each question.

1. If you think about it _____, so it becomes second-nature to you, you are more likely to make the right move if you ever face a head-on.
 - a. occasionally
 - b. once
 - c. ahead of time and often
 - d. none of the above
2. You are more likely to avoid an approaching hazard if _____.
 - a. you aren't distracted
 - b. you scan the road ahead
 - c. you watch for erratic behavior
 - d. all of the above
3. On multi-lane roads, the left lane is the safest lane.
 - a. True
 - b. False
4. If the other driver keeps coming in your lane, go off the road to _____.
 - a. the right, not left
 - b. the left, not right
 - c. either the left or right, whichever seems safer
 - d. none of the above
5. You are better off having _____, than you'd be in a head-on crash at highway speed.
 - a. a rollover
 - b. a heart attack
 - c. a one-car crash off the right side of the road
 - d. all of the above

