

## GUHL'S RULES

Rules of good habits for safer driving, particularly geared to new drivers. I do brain injury work.  
You don't want to be one of my patients. It ain't pretty and it's not where you want to be.

### RULES

1. **There are idiots on the road**, In my practice I have seen them and I became a defensive driver. Many are distracted, angry, impaired, or half blind. Assume they aren't looking out for you, maybe even gunning for you. Protect yourself from them.
2. **You will be an idiot sometimes.** try not to be one.
3. **You wouldn't carelessly handle a loaded gun.** Cars are a thousand times more lethal than bullets, watch where you point it.
4. **Situational awareness** Be aware of what is around you. See Rule #1.
  - a. Keep your eyes on the road, and your mirrors, and out your side windows. Always quickly scan to monitor what is going on around you. Imagine others have a target on you and expect then to do unexpected movements. Plan your safe out as an ongoing dynamic habit and know if you need to reflexively swerve to the left or to the right?
  - b. When you stop, leave enough space in front of you to see the wheels of the car ahead of you, then use your rear-view mirror. Is the car behind you going to stop or do you have to bail, and is that to the right or left? That spacing allows you to maneuver. A 3 MPH bump from behind puts 4 tons of force on your brain which can paralyze you.
5. **Observe the 12/6/3 Protocol.** Constantly assess and scan around you.  
(Count the number of seconds from the time a car passes a landmark until you arrive at it.)
  - a. **12 seconds: Be AWARE** of what is 12 seconds ahead. Is there an issue, change in traffic flow, or an exit/entrance?
  - b. **6 seconds. Be ATTENTIVE** and plan your actions and anticipate those of others.
  - c. **3 seconds. Take ACTION**, respond to the traffic around you and execute your movements  
If you are following by only two seconds you have to hyperfocus and lose peripheral awareness. It is a minimum needed for quick response but you will lose situational awareness of what is around you. This becomes dangerous. Following at one second and the vehicle in front of you stops suddenly or hits something, you **will** hit them. Your reaction time is slower than this. This is often the cause of chain reaction accidents.
6. **Use other vehicles to assist you.**
  - a. Maintain a **line of sight** to the vehicles in front of the one that is directly in front of you for additional anticipation & reaction time. Avoid being behind vehicles if you can't view around them or through their windows. Conversely stay within their line of sight and out of other drivers' **blind spots**,
  - b. **Use the sweep of the headlights from the car that is in front of you** at night to light the road beyond the reach of your headlights and to monitor the shoulder of the road and roadway for obstacles ahead.
  - c. **Use the lights of oncoming cars** to look for things of interest far ahead that get illuminated or that block the light. But don't look directly into their headlights, Duh.
7. **Look both ways.** When you walk across a street you know to look both ways right? It doesn't change just because you are driving. Other cars may not yield for red lights, stop signs or when they are pulling out of driveways. Protect yourself from them by scanning as you travel, particularly though intersections and stop lights. Watch for lane changers. See Rule #1.
8. **Buckle up.** Would you like to face plant from a third story window? Of course not. Use of a seatbelt protects against that equivalent amount of force in a 25 mph crash. Your arms aren't going to protect you from face planting into a steering wheel, windshield, or being ejected. It gets ugly, and so would you.
9. **Don't kill your friends.** When you put a car in drive you are liable for the consequences, no excuses. When driving others your job is to keep them safe, not to entertain or to show off. Do you like your house and like having a future? A lawsuit will take them both from you and your family. Don't get distracted, you are the driver-be responsible. See Rule #2.
10. **Road Rage happens.** So they cut you off, let it go. See Rule #1. Don't trade a few seconds of additional travel time for years as someone's jail plaything. And don't provoke it, Anticipate and signal your intentions. See Rule #2.
11. **Keep the car in good repair**, in safe driving condition, with clean windows & clear of objects that can become missiles in a crash. Maintenance is expensive, but accidents, medical bills, fines, lawyers, jail time & high insurance premiums are worse.
12. **Follow the law** and all the other rules you hear of; don't speed, use blinkers and signal intent, don't drive distracted by texting, playing music, or conversing and certainly after drinking, or when you are in anyway impaired. See Rule #2 again.
13. **Keep your guard up.** Remember these rules, and enjoy the privilege.