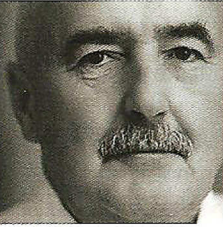


**GERRY
BUCKLEY**



Driving is a part of everyday life. From the time we get up in the morning until we retire at night. Our attitudinal behaviour towards driving influences our good and bad driving habits.

In the morning you take time to wash, shower coupled with shaving or applying make up can take up to 20 minutes. But how many minutes does anyone prepare before driving a car? Few check that all the necessary items (oil, water, tyres, lights) are all working properly. More than likely the only thing being checked is the fuel gauge, to ensure enough fuel for the journey ahead, and everything else is rushed. Rushing to get to work, rushing to get the children to school. I won't go on.

I recently saw something disturbing and highly dangerous, a young male driver with his female passenger holding a young child roughly 12 months old on her lap. The disturbing point being that both parents had their seat belts on. The consequences to the child if they had a collision would be akin to falling off a three-storey building if they were to hit a stationary solid object at 50km/h. Hitting another vehicle travelling at the same speed would multiply the damage.

I have spent a significant part of my career wondering how we have developed such poor driving habits. Not everyone has good driving habits. A large majority of people have absolutely awful driving habits, either out of laziness or picked up from parents. Instilled from early age; 'monkey see, monkey do'. While this may seem a cruel analogy, it's true.

What kind of bad habits have we picked up over time? Some of the more common ones include:

- Texting while driving
- Driving with one hand on the steering wheel.
- Constantly tailgating the vehicle in front.
- Being impatient in heavy traffic.
- Honking the horn excessively.
- Lane hopping to save extra seconds.
- Driving with fog lights when not required.

Some have developed some of driving good habits:

- In town driving always leaving a space so that you can always see where the wheels of the vehicle in front touch the road (TT, tarmac and tyre).



Reflection on driving habits

Our driving habits. Our driving skills. Good habits or bad habits? Asks Gerry Buckley

- On open roads apply the 'two second rule'. This gives better vision and allows better planning for overtaking and for safety.
- Do you drive with a high visual horizon? That is the ability to watch and see the whole field for 10 or more car lengths ahead of you and what's going on all around you with frequent mirror checks. If you do you won't be surprised by sudden stops. Avoiding the domino effect and not driving with the pack.
- Paying full attention, thinking ahead.
- Driving at the appropriate speeds for road, weather and traffic conditions.
- Not letting bad drivers get the better of you.
- Having patience with less experienced drivers; such as learner drivers.
- Having a good driving attitude.

Most people drive long journeys safely but when nearly home they have a tendency to fall into a

comfort zone. Statistics state that most accidents happen within five minutes of home. You should always drive your whole journey with 100% concentration, check mirrors frequently, watch out for blind spots, drive within the speed limits, and use indicators sensibly. A car is a deadly weapon; riving is a privilege and not a right.

Whether you have been driving for a few months or for 40 years, everyone has room for improvement, no matter how good a driver we may think we are, we all have committed some infringement to the Rules of the Road, they may only be minor ones and rarely done deliberately or anything serious. We all can improve.

By observing how someone performs a particular task, you can make out his complete personality and this is especially true when it comes to driving. If a person has a good personality to life and work; likewise they will have a good attitude to driving style and habits and be good, safe, responsible drivers. ■

Gerry Buckley is a retired Garda Driving Instructor from the Garda College, Templemore and qualified as a Class 1 Police Driving Instructor at the Scottish Police College.