

# Distracted Driving

## Pre-Reading

### A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Do you use your mobile phone while driving?  
If so, what do you use it for?
2. Which is more dangerous to do while driving:  
eat, take a phone call, or respond to a text?
3. In what ways do passengers distract drivers?



### B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| _____ 1. distracted       | a) related to the use of one's mind                                      |
| _____ 2. visual           | b) driving, being the driver of a vehicle                                |
| _____ 3. manual           | c) not focused on something  |
| _____ 4. cognitive        | d) related to the use of one's eyes                                      |
| _____ 5. behind the wheel | e) to touch and play with something for a while                          |
| _____ 6. driver error     | f) related to the use of one's hands, not automatic                      |
| _____ 7. GPS              | g) to consider carefully   |
| _____ 8. fiddle           | h) a very short time   |
| _____ 9. think twice      | i) a mistake that is the driver's fault                                  |
| _____ 10. split second    | j) Global Positioning System, a program or device for finding a location |

## Reading

### DISTRACTED DRIVING

*Keep your eyes on the road*

1. **Distracted** driving is the number one cause of motor vehicle accidents on today's roads. Distracted drivers miss traffic signals, hit pedestrians, and swerve into wrong lanes. Failing to notice that traffic has come to a stop is one of the most deadly mistakes they make.
2. You may think of distracted driving as a **visual** impairment since you're taking your eyes off the road. However, there are other types of distractions for drivers, including **manual** distractions, where you take your hands off the wheel, and **cognitive** distractions, where you take your mind off the road. Putting on makeup while driving is an example of a manual distraction. Verbally breaking up a fight between your kids is a cognitive one.
3. Texting while driving is one of the most dangerous distractions because it requires drivers to take their eyes, hands, and minds away from the road for an average of five seconds. Since texting is a form of immediate communication, many people feel the need to respond instantly even when they are **behind the wheel**.
4. In over 30 countries, it is illegal to use a hand-held electronic device while driving. However, even hands-free devices, such as Bluetooth technology, are associated with **driver error**. In fact, some studies suggest that hands-free driving can be as dangerous as drinking (alcohol) and driving. In Japan, Portugal, and New Delhi, the use of any mobile device, including hands-free technology, is illegal for drivers.
5. Are car manufacturers partly to blame for distracted driving? Many vehicles on the market have high-tech, built-in gadgets like **GPS** units. Drivers can't help **fiddling** with this technology while driving. Gone are the days where you simply turned a dial to find a radio station. Drivers can now play movies, search for playlists, and even surf the Internet. Some drivers even boast that they are good at multitasking.
6. While many drivers swear they would never text and drive or drink and drive, they don't **think twice** about eating or drinking non-alcoholic beverages while driving. Though it only takes a **split second** to remove a cap from a water bottle, it also requires two hands that should both be on the wheel.

*"Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for 5 seconds. At 55 mph, that's like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed."*

—National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (US)

## Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs, and write the answers below.

1. What are the three types of distractions while driving?

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2. Why is texting considered one of the most dangerous forms of distracted driving?

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3. What is paragraph 4 mainly about?

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4. If someone was programming a GPS while driving, what kind of distraction would this be?

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5. Why does the reading mention a water bottle?

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## Vocabulary Review

### A. Complete the Sentences

Complete the sentences using vocabulary from page 1.  
You may need to change the word forms.

1. I went through a red light because I was \_\_\_\_\_ by the kids.
2. Will \_\_\_\_\_ still be the main cause of accidents when we have driverless vehicles?
3. I was \_\_\_\_\_ around with the radio when I swerved into another lane.
4. Set up your \_\_\_\_\_ before you go on your road trip.
5. Never drink alcohol before you get \_\_\_\_\_.

### B. Recognizing Vocabulary

Which word from page 1 is described in each sentence?  
Use each word only once.

#	Sentence	Word
1	It happened so quickly, I didn't have time to react.	
2	I find that audio books take my mind off the road.	
3	I have trouble seeing the lines on the road in the dark.	
4	I have a bad habit of petting my dog while I'm driving.	
5	The accident was all my fault. I didn't check my side mirror.	
6	He hates being a passenger. He always wants to drive.	
7	I don't know how to get to the university. My phone will find it.	
8	You really should consider getting a bus pass. This road is so dangerous.	

## Grammar Review

### EVEN

#### A. Reference

The English word *even* has a few different uses and meanings:

Part of Speech	Meaning / Use	Example
adjective	equal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In some studies, the results are <b>even</b>. Hands-free devices are just as dangerous as hand-held devices.</li> </ul>
	flat or smooth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>She was so busy texting that she didn't notice that the road wasn't <b>even</b> through the construction zone.</li> </ul>
adverb	used for emphasis, often used before <i>if / though / when</i> *	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teenagers who text and drive face <b>even</b> tougher penalties.</li> <li><b>Even</b> though your eyes are on the road, your mind is at the office.</li> </ul>

#### \*Note:

As an adverb, *even* can be removed without a change in meaning.

#### B. Practice

Insert "even" where it belongs in these sentences. Place a star beside the examples where the addition is possible but not necessary.

1. She hadn't left the driveway when she started texting her boyfriend.
2. Though it's not illegal to eat and drive, you can still be charged with careless driving.
3. The drivers' fines were. They both paid \$500.
4. I don't know how she survived. She was so distracted that she hit five cars.
5. That patch of highway is not very. You would have noticed it if you weren't on your phone.

## Discussion

1. Should hands-free electronic devices be banned for drivers?
2. How does lack of enforcement contribute to distracted driving accidents?
3. Should pets be allowed to move freely in a moving vehicle? Why or why not?
4. What should the penalties be for distracted drivers? Should young drivers face greater penalties than experienced drivers?

## Critical Thinking

### IN PAIRS OR SMALL GROUPS

Distractions are not only on the rise on the roads, but also in our homes, schools, and workplaces. How did we become a distracted society? What changes can individuals, families, schools, and workplaces make to reduce distractions and become more focused on what really matters?

## Listening

Fill in the blanks as you listen to the recording.

### **DISTRACTED DRIVING**

*Keep your eyes on the road*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ driving is the number one cause of motor vehicle accidents on today's roads. Distracted drivers miss traffic signals, hit pedestrians, and swerve into wrong lanes. Failing to notice that \_\_\_\_\_ has come to a stop is one of the most deadly mistakes they make.
2. You may think of distracted driving as a \_\_\_\_\_ impairment since you're taking your eyes off the road. However, there are other types of distractions for drivers, including \_\_\_\_\_ distractions, where you take your hands off the wheel, and \_\_\_\_\_ distractions, where you take your mind off the road. Putting on makeup while driving is an example of a manual distraction. Verbally breaking up a fight between your kids is a cognitive one.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ while driving is one of the most dangerous distractions because it requires drivers to take their eyes, hands, and minds away from the road for an average of five seconds. Since texting is a form of immediate communication, many people feel the need to respond instantly even when they are \_\_\_\_\_.
4. In over 30 countries, it is illegal to use a hand-held electronic device while driving. However, even hands-free devices, such as Bluetooth technology, are associated with \_\_\_\_\_. In fact, some studies suggest that hands-free driving can be as dangerous as drinking (alcohol) and driving. In Japan, Portugal, and New Delhi, the use of any \_\_\_\_\_ device, including hands-free technology, is illegal for drivers.
5. Are car manufacturers partly to blame for distracted driving? Many vehicles on the market have high-tech, built-in gadgets like \_\_\_\_\_ units. Drivers can't help \_\_\_\_\_ with this technology while driving. Gone are the days where you simply turned a dial to find a radio station. Drivers can now play movies, search for playlists, and even surf the Internet. Some drivers even boast that they are good at multitasking.
6. While many drivers swear they would never text and drive or drink and drive, they don't \_\_\_\_\_ about eating or drinking non-alcoholic beverages while driving. Though it only takes a \_\_\_\_\_ to remove a cap from a water bottle, it also requires two hands that should both be on the wheel.

# Answer Key

### LESSON DESCRIPTION:

Students read about the different types of distractions drivers have, including texting, playing music, and even eating while driving. They practice related vocabulary and discuss hands-free devices.

### TEACHING TIPS:

See Discussion Starters Teaching Guide (<https://esllibrary.com/courses/72/lessons/>) for a variety of ways to use the reading.

**LEVEL:** Int – High Int

**TIME:** 1.5–2 hours

**TAGS:** discussion, driving, distracted driving, technology, cars, GPS, mobile devices, road safety

## Pre-Reading

### A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Have students work in small groups or as a class. Answers will vary.

### B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- |      |      |      |      |       |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. c | 3. f | 5. b | 7. j | 9. g  |
| 2. d | 4. a | 6. i | 8. e | 10. h |

## Reading (and/or Listening)

Read individually, in small groups, or as a class. Discuss the quote. You can also play the listening as your students read along. A gap-fill version of the reading is available on page 7. Help your students with vocabulary and expressions that they are unfamiliar with.

## Comprehension

- The three types of distractions are visual, manual, and cognitive.
- Texting is considered one of the most dangerous distractions while driving because it involves all three types of distractions.
- Paragraph 4 is mainly about hands-free devices, such as Bluetooth technology.
- Programming a GPS while driving would be considered a visual, manual, and cognitive distraction.
- The reading mentions a water bottle to show that a distraction may be something simple that we do every day without thinking about it. However, opening a water bottle can take a bit of strength and often requires the use of both hands, which should really be on the wheel.

## Vocabulary Review

### A. COMPLETE THE SENTENCES

- |                 |             |               |
|-----------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1. distracted   | 3. fiddling | 5. behind the |
| 2. driver error | 4. GPS      | wheel         |

### B. RECOGNIZING VOCABULARY

Answers may vary. You could also challenge your students to rewrite the sentence using the vocabulary.

- |                         |                     |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. split second         | 5. driver error     |
| 2. cognitive            | 6. behind the wheel |
| 3. visual (distraction) | 7. GPS              |
| 4. manual (distraction) | 8. think twice      |

(continued on the next page...)



## Answer Key cont.

### Grammar Review

#### A. REFERENCE

Go over the different word forms and uses for the word “even.”  
Challenge your students to find this word in the text and identify the word form. Can your students also find anywhere in the reading on page 2 where “even” could be added for emphasis? (E.g., paragraph 6, last sentence.)

#### B. PRACTICE

1. She hadn't **even\*** left the driveway when she started texting her boyfriend.
2. **Even\*** though it's not illegal to eat and drive, you can still be charged with careless driving.
3. The drivers' fines were **even**. They both paid \$500.
4. I don't **even\*** know how she (**even\***) survived. She was so distracted that she hit five cars.
5. That patch of highway is not very **even**. You would have noticed it if you weren't on your phone.

### Discussion

Answers will vary. Discuss in small groups or pairs.  
Can also be done individually as written answers.

### Critical Thinking

Answers will vary. Discuss in small groups or pairs.  
Can also be done individually as written answers.

### Listening

1. distracted, traffic
2. visual, manual, cognitive
3. Texting, behind the wheel
4. driver error, mobile
5. GPS, fiddling
6. think twice, split second