



DISTRACTED DRIVING

Grades 9-12 | Lesson 4



A man with dark hair and sunglasses is driving a car. He is holding a silver smartphone to his ear with his left hand, indicating he is on a phone call. His right hand is on the steering wheel. The car's interior, including the dashboard and rearview mirror, is visible. The background shows a blurred view of a road and greenery, suggesting motion. The overall tone is serious, emphasizing the danger of distracted driving.

Lesson Overview

**A 5-SECOND PHONE
GLANCE** at 55 mph covers
the length of a football field
— completely blind.

DISTRACTION isn't just about phones,
and the solution isn't just about
willpower. It takes knowledge of what's
actually happening in your brain and
the social courage to speak up when
someone else is driving distracted.



BY THE END OF THIS LESSON, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO:

Define and give examples of **VISUAL, MANUAL AND COGNITIVE DISTRACTION**.

Explain why texting combines all three **DISTRACTION TYPES** and calculate distance traveled in 5 seconds at 55 mph.

Demonstrate realistic passenger language for **SPEAKING UP** when a driver is distracted.

Apply the **PULL-OVER SOLUTION** and develop a personal phone-free driving plan.

Key Vocabulary

VISUAL DISTRACTION:

Any activity that causes a driver to take their eyes off the road.

MANUAL DISTRACTION:

Any activity that causes a driver to take one or both hands off the steering wheel.

COGNITIVE DISTRACTION:

Any activity that takes mental focus away from driving — even with eyes forward and hands on the wheel.

SPEED MANAGEMENT:

Adjusting speed based on conditions, visibility and hazards — not just the posted limit.

INATTENTIONAL BLINDNESS:

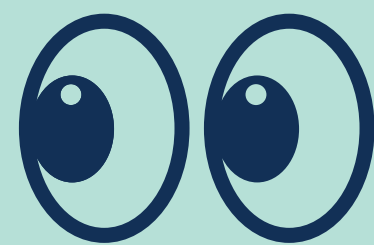
Failure to notice a clearly visible object because attention is elsewhere — you can look at the road and still not process what you see.

SECONDARY TASK:

Any activity while driving not directly related to operating the vehicle — texting, eating, applying makeup or adjusting the radio.

Types of Distraction

Eating, applying makeup and messing with the radio
each **PULL FOCUS** in at least one of these ways:



VISUAL
(eyes off the road)

Reading a text,
checking a notification,
looking at the
navigation screen



MANUAL
(hands off the wheel)

Reaching for food,
adjusting the radio,
applying makeup



COGNITIVE
(mind off driving)

Daydreaming,
hands-free phone calls,
emotionally charged
conversations

Not all distractions look the same — but all of them reduce your ability to drive safely.

Even a **TWO-SECOND GLANCE** away from the road **DOUBLES YOUR CRASH RISK**. Distraction has a very low threshold for danger.*

Distracted driving kills more than 3,000 PEOPLE in the U.S. every year.

*(Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Driver Distraction: Review of the Current State-of-Knowledge (DOT HS 811 299))



A photograph of two young women sitting in the front seats of a car. The woman on the right, with reddish hair, is holding a smartphone and looking at the screen. The woman on the left, with long blonde hair, is looking out the window. The car's interior, including the dashboard and steering wheel, is visible. The background shows a brick house and a green lawn.

Why Texting is the Most Dangerous

Texting is a common driving activity that simultaneously triggers all three types of distraction:

- ✓ **VISUAL** (eyes on phone)
- ✓ **MANUAL** (hands on phone)
- ✓ **COGNITIVE** (reading and composing)



At 55 mph, a five-second glance = 400+ feet traveled completely blind — more than the length of a football field.

In those **FIVE SECONDS**, you could swerve into another lane, miss a red light or stop sign or hit a pedestrian or animal.



Your brain
literally **CANNOT**
multitask driving.

**Hands-free calls still
create SERIOUS COGNITIVE
DISTRACTION** — your brain
processes the conversation,
not the road.

"I can do both" is the **MOST
DANGEROUS** belief in a car.



The Solution: Pull Over and Speak Up

Knowing the risk is not enough.

The question is: what do you actually do?

And what do you say when someone
else is the problem?

The Solution: Pull Over and Speak Up

AS A DRIVER

The only solution that works:
If you need to text, eat or check something — **PULL OVER FIRST.**

It is always safer to stop in a safe place than to try to manage it while moving at speed.

AS A PASSENGER

You have both the right and the responsibility to **SPEAK UP.**

Try — “Seriously, could you just drive right now?” Simple, direct, peer-appropriate.

Tell your friends — peer-to-peer messaging changes behavior in ways adult warnings often can't.

Class Discussion

1

In the video, Keegan says those few seconds “could be the difference between life and death.” Is that message more powerful coming from a peer than from an adult? Why?

2

What would you actually say to a friend who was texting while driving — not the ideal answer, but what you would really say in that moment?

3

If you decided to “tell your friends” — like the video suggests — what would that look like for you specifically? A conversation, a social post, something else?

Key Takeaways

- **THREE DISTRACTION TYPES:**
Visual, Manual, Cognitive
Texting triggers all three at once.
- **AT 55 MPH, 5 SECONDS = 400 FEET BLIND**
— more than the length of a football field.
- If something can't wait, **PULL OVER.**
It is always the right call.
- Passengers have a voice.
SPEAK UP and tell your friends.



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