



IMPAIRED & FATIGUED DRIVING

Grades 9-12 | Lesson 5



A photograph of two young women sitting in the back of a car. The woman in the foreground has reddish-brown hair and is wearing a red spaghetti-strap top. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The woman next to her has blonde hair and is wearing a blue sequined top. They appear to be at a social event, possibly a party or dance, as suggested by their attire. The car's interior and a view of green trees outside are visible in the background.

Lesson Overview

ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND FATIGUE

each reduce the same driving functions: reaction time, judgment and coordination.

Students examine how impairment progresses, what Arkansas' zero tolerance policy requires and why "I'm fine to drive" can often mean the opposite.

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

Describe how **ALCOHOL** progressively impairs driving-related cognitive and physical functions as BAC increases.

Explain Arkansas' **ZERO TOLERANCE BAC LIMIT** for drivers under 21 and the legal consequences of violation.

Identify **COMMON MYTHS** about sobering up and explain why only time reduces BAC.

Recognize the **WARNING SIGNS** of drowsy driving and describe effective alternatives to driving fatigued.

**Learning
Objectives**

Key Vocabulary

BLOOD ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION (BAC):

Percentage of alcohol in the bloodstream.
Used to measure legal impairment level.

ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY:

ARKANSAS LAW: Drivers under 21 may not drive with a BAC of 0.02% or higher.

IMPAIRMENT:

Reduction in normal physical or mental function due to alcohol, drugs, medication or fatigue.

FATIGUE:

Mental and physical exhaustion that reduces alertness and decision-making to a degree comparable to alcohol impairment.

MICRO-SLEEP:

Involuntary sleep episode lasting 1–30 seconds that can occur without the driver's awareness during fatigued driving.



How Alcohol Impairs Driving

Alcohol doesn't impair all at once — it strips away driving functions layer by layer as BAC rises.

Alcohol and drugs can impair the judgment needed to recognize impairment, making it difficult to accurately assess whether it is safe to drive.

Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC)

0.02%

Relaxed focus,
mild judgment
impairment

**ARKANSAS ZERO
TOLERANCE:
ILLEGAL FOR
DRIVERS UNDER 21**

0.05%

Reduced
coordination,
slower reaction
time, impaired
judgment of
speed and
distance

0.08%

Significantly
impaired
concentration
and information
processing

**LEGAL LIMIT FOR
ADULTS 21+**

0.10%+

Severe slowing
of reaction
time, loss of
coordination,
dramatically
reduced ability to
track movement

Myths

There are **NO SHORTCUTS** to sobering up.
Only time reduces blood alcohol concentration.

ENERGY DRINKS SOBER YOU UP

× FALSE ×

Caffeine masks
sleepiness but does
NOT reduce BAC.

FOOD OR WATER REDUCES BAC

× FALSE ×

Only time eliminates
alcohol from the
bloodstream.

A COLD SHOWER HELPS

× FALSE ×

It just creates
a cold, but still
impaired, driver.



Zero Tolerance & Legal Consequences

ARKANSAS ZERO TOLERANCE: Under 21
drivers face DWI charges at just **0.02% BAC**

CONSEQUENCES INCLUDE: License
suspension, fines, mandatory education,
insurance impacts, possible jail time

How Drugs Impair Driving

Both **DRUGGED DRIVING** and **DRUNK DRIVING** impair a driver's ability to operate a vehicle safely, but they can affect drivers in different ways.

DRUGGED DRIVING involves impairment from illegal drugs, prescription medications, over-the-counter medications or cannabis.



IMPAIRMENT can be more difficult to measure because different drugs affect people differently.

Depending on the drug, **IMPAIRMENT CAN AFFECT**

- **Judgment**
- **Coordination**
- **Attention**
- **Perception**
- **Reaction time**
- **Decision-making**

Drug use also **INCREASES CRASH RISK**, even when the drug is legally prescribed or obtained.

According to NHTSA, **MORE THAN HALF (56%)** of drivers involved in serious-injury and fatal crashes tested positive for at least one drug, highlighting the **SERIOUS RISKS** associated with drug-impaired driving.



Fatigued Driving: The Hidden Danger

18 HOURS WITHOUT SLEEP $\approx$ BAC OF 0.05%:

Reduced coordination and reaction time

24 HOURS WITHOUT SLEEP $\approx$ BAC OF 0.10%:

Equivalent to legally drunk driving

MICRO-SLEEP: Involuntary 1–30 second sleep episodes; the driver is unaware they occurred

WARNING SIGNS: frequent yawning, heavy eyelids, drifting between lanes, missing exits



THE ONLY CURE FOR FATIGUE IS **SLEEP.**

- Pull over and rest if you're tired.
- Let a licensed and alert passenger drive.
- Take regular breaks on longer trips.
- Make calls only after stopping safely.

Energy drinks may provide a temporary boost, but they do not replace sleep.

DROWSY DRIVING

IS RESPONSIBLE FOR

AN ESTIMATED 91,000

CRASHES AND 800

DEATHS PER YEAR IN

THE UNITED STATES.



Class Discussion

1

Why do so many people believe they drive fine after drinking? What does alcohol do to self-assessment?

2

What would you do if a friend insisted they were okay to drive but you had real doubts?

3

If someone offered you a ride but you knew they were fatigued, what would you say or do?





Key Takeaways

- Alcohol **IMPAIRS DRIVING** at levels far below the legal limit, especially for drivers under 21.
- **ARKANSAS ZERO TOLERANCE:** Drivers under 21 are impaired at **0.02% BAC**.
- Only **TIME** reduces BAC — coffee, food and water are myths.
- **FATIGUED DRIVING** equals drunk driving in severity — even a few seconds of microsleep can be enough to cause a serious crash because the driver is effectively asleep while the vehicle is still moving.



streetsmartar.org

