

## Chapter 7

# Driving Responsibly

### Case Study #1

**Note to Teacher:** Depending on the time of the school year, students may already have taken Driver Education. Many of the responses reflect the messages of Driver Education. Teachers should be able to draw on the experiences of their students from their Driver Education classes or their in-car driving experience. The responses in this section are representative student samples.

In Case Study #1, students did poorly on the third part of the report: Evaluate available research. The point of this was for students to research the effect of moderate amounts of alcohol and distractions on reaction time and reaction distance. The effects of alcohol and distractions are to increase the reaction time and, hence, stopping distance. The message is that people should not drink and drive, even if their blood alcohol content is below 0.08. Secondly, drivers must give the task of driving their undivided attention.

#### Challenge — Sample #1

a. Assess and clarify the problem.

*In this study, it seems that people are always getting away with irresponsible behaviour. For example, drinking but just slipping by with a lower blood alcohol level. This makes lots of people enraged, especially in this case where the driver hit the woman. It is confusing who caused the problem in this situation. The woman wasn't cautious and safe, and wore dark colours that blended her in with the night. On the other hand Mr. Smith was distracted by a hockey game at night and had drunk a few beers earlier. You don't know who to fault in this.*

b. Review the police actions.

*The police's actions in this were what they had to act according to the law. It is perfectly legal to drive under 0.08 blood alcohol level so they could not charge him for anything. To lots of people it may not seem right that he drink and drove, never mind hitting someone but the police did what they had to do. They had no other option because of the law.*

c. Evaluate the available research.

The police investigated and questioned Mr. Smith in the normal basic way about what happened. They found the main things to lead onto: drinking beer, and not seeing Ms. Martin. They then took a Breathalyzer test and found out his blood alcohol level was only 0.06, below the limit. They didn't need to do any more research because what he did was obviously an accident from the evidence, and he was below the blood alcohol level.

d. Develop a course of action to reduce such incidents.

An extreme may be to just change the law, and lower the blood alcohol level to 0 as it is for some groups of people today. It would most likely be effective in reducing some of the incidents but people will also be angry with this. Another way may be to try and reduce distractions of people, such as banning cell phones in cars, or radios. People should be advised to wear visible bright clothes at night for their own safety. Have streetlights not only at crosswalks but so that the street is lit up everywhere, creating better visibility.

## Challenge — Sample #2

1. “Assess and clarify the problem...”

There are several problems with situations like these. First of all, probably the most important, was that Mr. Smith was drinking. Although his blood-alcohol content was below the legal limit, alcohol still affects your alertness and visibility. Another problem is that Mr. Smith was listening to a hockey game on the radio. This would have provided a huge distraction to Mr. Smith. Add that to the fact that he already had a few beers clearly establishes that Mr. Smith was very distracted from assessing the road conditions and taking control of his car. The third problem is that Ms. Martin did not check both ways before crossing the street. Most of us are taught to look both ways before we cross the street but this must have slipped from Ms. Martin's mind. She should have taken extra care before stepping off the boulevard because it was fairly late at night. Finally, another problem is that Mr. Smith applied the brakes too late. If he had been going at a slightly lower speed he probably would have been able to stop in time. The time of day and his mental state are factors that add to the fact that he was driving too fast for his particular situation.

2. “Review the police actions...”

I think the police should have dealt with this situation a little more aggressively. Someone's life was at risk here and it seems that all they did was casually question Mr. Smith. The fact is that Mr. Smith ran over someone. In today's world, it doesn't seem right that you can just run over someone and not suffer any consequences. Mr. Smith had been drinking, and although he did not drink to the limit of 0.08, he did still have a few drinks which most likely affected his judgment. The police should have had a closer look at the situation. There are other options for punishment, such as taking away Mr. Smith's driver's license for a period of time.

### 3. “Evaluate the available research...”

The research into this situation is a little vague. Mr. Smith was apparently late to pick his wife up. When we're late and we're driving, our natural tendency is to pick up the pace. So why does the report say that Mr. Smith was running late, but he was driving at the speed limit? It doesn't make a lot of common sense. The report also does not mention the position of the car and if there was any physical evidence in the environment, such as skidmarks on the ground. Maybe Mr. Smith was lying and his judgment was too impaired that he never braked at all. Also, I find it a little strange that he never saw Ms. Martin. It would only make sense that he never saw her if the street corner was very dark, since she was wearing a dark blue coat. The report, overall, was just not thorough enough.

### 4. “Develop a course of action to reduce such incidents...”

There are a few things we can do to reduce such incidents. Ms. Martin was wearing a dark coat. Maybe if the street intersection was lit more brightly Mr. Smith would have seen Ms. Martin in time to prevent the accident. The main course of action we can take is to re-assess the legal limit of blood-alcohol content and the penalties for people who have been in an accident but are under the legal limit. In this particular situation, I think Mr. Smith should have been charged with at least some kind of offense. His offense was that he caused the accident. There's only so much authorities can do. The rest is up to the decisions of the public, such as Mr. Smith's decision to have a few beers before driving and Ms. Martin's decision to not look both ways before she crossed the street.

## Challenge — Sample #3

The problem is that Mr. Smith hit Ms. Martin when driving at nighttime. Mr. Smith is partly to blame for the accident. Mr. Smith had a few drinks and was listening to the radio while he was looking for the street to turn on. Mr. Smith was being distracted by the radio while driving, and his reaction time is slower because of the alcohol in his body. Old age is also a cause of slow reaction time. He was also driving at the maximum speed limit. He was driving too fast for the conditions he was in. The accident was also Ms. Martin's fault. She was wearing dark colours at nighttime, and it is hard for drivers to see dark colours. Ms. Martin also crossed in the middle of the street without looking both ways for oncoming traffic.

The police didn't charge Mr. Smith with any offences because Mr. Smith's blood-alcohol content was 0.06 mL/L of blood and was below the legal limit of 0.08. He never got charged for hitting Ms. Martin because it was partly her fault that she got hit. She never checked before crossing the street and she was wearing dark clothes. The police couldn't charge anyone because no one was breaking the law. Mr. Smith's blood-alcohol level was below the limit, and he was driving the speed limit.

To reduce such incidents, people could drive a little slower at nighttime because they can't see as good. People could wear bright clothes when walking or biking at nighttime, so that drivers can see them better from a farther distance. Drivers can also put on their high beams when there are no oncoming cars. This will allow them to see farther ahead. People that have been drinking should never drive because even though their blood-alcohol is below the limit, it still affects their driving. Pedestrians can also check both ways before crossing the street.

---

## Case Study #2

---

### Anticipation Guide—Sample #1

1. Drivers who have serious accidents are likely to be the common troublemakers.

**Before:** No, I do not agree. People who have serious accidents are not always troublemakers. That is why they are called accidents. The person is not always trying to do it, it is an accident.

**After:** No, they are still not said to be “troublemakers.”

**Comments:** The driver in the newspaper article was said to be a good person, but he still had a serious accident and wasn’t labeled a troublemaker.

2. Criminal charges should be laid against young drivers who are involved in accidents.

**Before:** It depends on what the accident was, and how it was caused. If it was caused in an illegal way such as drinking, then it is the person’s own fault and they should be charged.

**After:** Once again, I think it depends on the degree that it happened.

**Comments:** In the article, yes, the driver was traveling way over the speed limit, and that is bad enough as it is, but it caused a death. In this case, though, I wouldn’t charge him. People make mistakes.

3. The laws of physics suggest cars that are out of control can be brought back into control.

**Before:** Yes, it does suggest that. They can be stopped by an unbalanced force and put back into control. Not always, but sometimes.

**After:** Yes, I still think it does.

**Comments:** It may be hard to get thing back into control, and sometimes impossible, but lots of times it may work. You just have to have the knowledge of how it works.

4. Most serious accidents caused by teenage drivers are the result of illegal narcotics or high blood-alcohol levels.

**Before:** Yes, from what I remember, that is the biggest cause of most serious accidents.

**After:** No, most serious accidents by teenage drivers are the result of speeding.

**Comments:** I think that if more people knew this (because I know I didn’t), it may help reduce the chances if the greatest are from speeding.

5. New driving laws, like Graduated Driver Licensing, drafted specifically for novice drivers, are intended to maintain unreasonable control over young adults.

**Before:** No, it is intended to help decrease accidents because it is proven that most accidents occur from teenage drivers.

**After:** No, they aren't.

**Comments:** The new driving laws are to try and get the kids comfortable with driving on the roads and not have to have peer pressure on them at the beginning.

### Anticipation Guide—Sample #2

1. Drivers who have serious accidents are likely to be the common troublemakers.

**Before:** I think this statement is generally false. Your driving habits don't always reflect what you do outside of the vehicle. I definitely think that your attitude affects your driving, but if you get in a serious accident it may not be your fault and it may be because of other factors, like the weather or having a child in the car, etc.

**After:** After reading the article, it seems that the driver of the Mercury was obviously driving way over the speed limit and was out of school. The article didn't mention whether or not the driver was a "troublemaker" before, but I still agree with my BEFORE statement. Although alcohol and other factors affect your driving, I don't think that all people who have serious accidents will become common "troublemakers."

**Comments:** The driver of the vehicle will have to live with the guilt of killing a person for the rest of his life. His whole life is changed and if he was a "troublemaker" before the accident, I doubt he would be one after.

2. Criminal charges should be laid against young drivers who are involved in accidents.

**Before:** I don't entirely agree with this statement. As young drivers, we are still learning the "rules of the road" and the effects of our actions, such as driving at higher speeds, etc. We have to be given the chance to make mistakes because learning involves making mistakes. Although it's not always the case, I don't think young drivers deserve to be held with criminal charges when they've only grown accustomed to the road for a short time.

**After:** I still agree with my above statement. Now that I've read the article, I realize how personal it can get and that a boy my age lost his life because of someone else's actions.

**Comments:** Since the driver didn't have a previous record, I don't think he should be charged criminally at this point. He deserves severe consequences though. The biggest consequence is living with his guilt for the rest of his life.

3. The laws of physics suggest cars that are out of control can be brought back into control.

**Before:** I agree with this statement. In Driver's Ed they taught us what to do under certain situations where your car does lose control. Let's say that you hit a patch of ice and begin to swerve. If you concentrate and take full control of the wheel without speeding up (accelerating) you can bring your vehicle back under control.

**After:** In the article, the driver overcorrected and this resulted in the collision. By maintaining control over the wheel, he probably could have prevented this.

**Comments:** Since the driver was driving at such a high speed, the braking distance would be so much longer than if he was going the speed limit. At the higher speed, the driver found himself in a situation where it takes so much longer to brake.

4. Most serious accidents caused by teenage drivers are the result of illegal narcotics or high blood-alcohol levels.

**Before:** Right now, I'd say this is probably true although inexperience and speed are two other major causes.

**After:** The article mentioned that speed is statistically the greatest threat to young drivers.

**Comments:** Although the article's statement is true, illegal narcotics or high blood-alcohol levels also play a large factor in serious accidents with young drivers. Also, teenagers aren't the only ones who speed. Adults also speed and may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol when they drive.

5. New driving laws, like Graduated Driver Licencing, drafted specifically for novice drivers, are intended to maintain unreasonable control over young adults.

**Before:** I don't agree with this statement. Honestly, I'm in GDL and completing in-car training with a professional and after about three months with my learners permit, I still need a lot of practice. I think you need control or else a lot of young drivers would be very inexperienced. The rules aren't that harsh and it's not really unreasonable control.

**After:** I think the program in the article was a pretty good idea. That's only for about three months with only giving rides to family members. With our GDL program, we have to have nine months with a licenced driver for three years in the car at all times.

**Comments:** All the driver had to do was follow the simple law, and his friend would probably be alive today. Breaking the law cost his friend's life.

**Anticipation Guide—Sample #3**

1. Drivers who have serious accidents are likely to be the common troublemakers.

**Before:** I think that serious accidents are not all caused by common “troublemakers.” It depends who caused the accident. All people make mistakes while driving, not just troublemakers. The troublemakers are the ones who get into a lot of accidents and cause the accidents.

**After:** Young kids usually get into accidents more than mature adults. Young kids are usually the troublemakers on the streets because when they start driving, they drive fast because they think they’re superman and won’t get hurt in an accident. They think driving fast is cool and they don’t think about dying in an accident.

**Comments:** Serious accidents aren’t all caused by common “troublemakers.”

2. Criminal charges should be laid against young drivers who are involved in accidents.

**Before:** The accidents could’ve not been caused by the young drivers and they should not be charged. Young drivers should get charged if they are the ones who caused the accident and if they broke any laws.

**After:** I think that if young drivers speed and violate traffic signals/signs, then they should be charged. They should be charged if they caused the accident, especially if someone is killed.

**Notes**