# [***Courtesy aids safety, so mind your driving***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:47KV-M3N0-0026-G03X-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

Let's change gears this New Year's Day and concoct a set of resolutions unrelated to weight, smoking or exercise.

Just this once, take a good long look into the rearview mirror at the driver of your own car, pickup or SUV. Let's resolve to make him or her a better, safer and more courteous driver in 2003.

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Most of us think we're NASCAR-caliber behind the wheel. That's why we do crazy things --- fly down the freeway at 80 mph while chatting on the ***cellphone***, sipping coffee and munching a doughnut.

Not even Richard Petty could do all that without hitting an occasional wall. You don't want to do that, and no one in traffic behind you wants you to, either.

Most of us could cut our freeway speeds by 10 percent and not lose more than a couple of minutes in our commute. Nearly all of us would gain by limiting in-vehicle distractions. Ration your mobile ***cellphone*** calls to the most urgent, and use a hands-free model. Eat or sip with caution. Make sure hands are always on the wheel.

The Perimeter isn't Talledega, and NASCAR-style tailgating will get you in a pileup --- maybe not today, but inevitably. And there's a reason the car doing the hitting almost always is charged in a crash. It's called "following too closely."

Resolve to show consideration for fellow drivers. Cruising in the left lane more slowly than prevailing traffic angers people behind you and is a proven cause of road rage and crashes caused by weaving. Yielding to faster traffic, which is the custom in Europe and elsewhere where driver training is emphasized, would curb tailgating and facilitate traffic flow.

Go even further and resolve to take no action on the freeway that forces another driver to brake. You need more than a gap in order to squeeze into a lane. You also need to make sure no one is overtaking that gap. Pull in behind a vehicle and brake instead of jumping in front of it and slowing.

Resolve to show more patience at backed-up freeway ramps. Your time is no more valuable than that of the drivers beside you. You have no right to go to the front and force your way in, adding to the delay. If you cross a solid line --- or gore --- in the process, you are violating the law.

Resolve to make yourself more visible on the roadway. Not all of us have your perfect 20/20 vision, and we'd greatly appreciate it if you'd use your headlights at dawn, dusk or in the rain. And please note that a lot of newer vehicles with "automatic" headlights are in stealth mode from the rear --- no taillights are burning unless you physically turn them on.

Courtesy is unbelievably contagious, and you'd be surprised how doing a good deed in traffic can make you feel. When someone signals to change lanes, let them. Don't speed up to block them. Likewise, in gridlocked traffic, let someone else in.

And when you are the beneficiary of a good deed, acknowledge it with a friendly wave. Ignoring courtesy tends to make it disappear.

Obey the speed limit in residential areas and school zones. Honor the rights of bicyclists and pedestrians. Make a mistake involving another car and you usually have a fender bender and an insurance hassle. Make one with a biker or a walker and it's often a funeral.

And by all means, always wear your seat belt and don't drink and drive. Only morons ride unprotected or willingly endanger lives. You're smarter than that.

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