

Self-Driving Cars

The year is 2032, and self-driving (autonomous) cars are now available for purchase. These cars still have steering wheels and you must have a driver's license to have it on public roads. While they can be completely autonomous, the driver can elect to override those systems if they so choose. One of the biggest concerns for these cars is responsibility in the event of an accident when the car is in autonomous mode. Historically the driver of the vehicle is responsible for all actions performed by that vehicle. This is one of the reasons (in NY) why points cannot be added to a license for red-light cameras; only a fine can be administered, since the driver cannot be determined in many cases.

With autonomous cars, there are many ethical concerns about these vehicles, and you will be assigned a group to debate the ethics around the incidents involving self-driving cars, and who the responsible parties should be.

Pro Group: You are the leader for a grassroots group called, "All Cars Must Have Drivers". The group is advocating that the driver should always be responsible for the vehicle and no one other than the driver is ultimately in control. If the car were to cause an accident, run a red light, hit a pedestrian, *etc.* the driver of that vehicle is responsible. Having no one in the driver's seat is a felony crime resulting in the suspension of a driver's license of the owner and impoundment of the vehicle. Ethically, the person in the driver seat is always responsible, and it is up to the driver to do no harm.

Con Group: You are advocates who make the claim that self-driving cars are safer than their traditional counterparts. You are making the claim that people will be safer as there will be fewer drunk driving incidents, people falling asleep at the wheel, or being distracted. If the vehicle were to be involved in an accident when the vehicle is operating in autonomous mode, this is a fault of the programming, and the car manufacturer is responsible for the injuries and liable for the costs incurred. Ethically, we can't hold a person responsible for something they don't have control over, but autonomous cars are for the public good.

Jury Group: You are members of the general public who are listening to arguments from both sides. At the end of the debate, you will decide which side had better arguments. Keep in mind that your decision could have legal implications down the road, so be sure to justify the winner.