This month, we want to focus on the dangers of distracted driving. There are 3 types of distracted driving. They are:

* Visual – taking your eyes off of the road
* Manual – taking your hands off of the steering wheel
* Mental – taking your mind off of driving

Examples of distracted driving include:

* Using a cell phone
* Texting
* Eating
* Dressing
* Applying makeup

Texting while driving is especially dangerous because it involves visual, manual, and mental distraction all at the same time. Additionally, while driving at 55 mph, the average text takes your eyes off the road long enough to cover the distance of a football field. Drivers under the age of 20 are at the highest risk of death/injury from distracted driving. According to Federal estimates, this type of driving kills 5,000 people in the Unites States every year.

Here are [10 tips](http://exchange.aaa.com/safety/distracted-driving/tips-for-preventing-distracted-driving/#.VuwiOzj2bIU) easy tips that you can implement NOW to prevent distracted driving and save lives:

**10**. Fully focus on driving. Do not let anything divert your attention, actively scan the road, use your mirrors and watch out for pedestrians and cyclists.

**9**. Store loose gear, possessions and other distractions that could roll around in the car, so you do not feel tempted to reach for them on the floor or the seat.

**8**. Make adjustments before you begin your trip. Address vehicle systems like your GPS, seats, mirrors, climate controls and sound systems before hitting the road. Decide on your route and check traffic conditions ahead of time.

**7**. Finish dressing and personal grooming at home – before you get on the road.

**6**. Snack smart. If possible, eat meals or snacks before or after your trip, not while driving. On the road, avoid messy foods that can be difficult to manage.

**5**. Secure children and pets before getting underway. If they need your attention, pull off the road safely to care for them. Reaching into the backseat can cause you to lose control of the vehicle.

**4**. Put aside your electronic distractions. Don’t use cell phones while driving – handheld or hands-free – except in absolute emergencies. Never use text messaging, email functions, video games or the internet with a wireless device, including those [built into the vehicle](http://exchange.aaa.com/mental-distraction-%E2%80%93-what-it-means/), while driving.

**3**. If you have passengers, enlist their help so you can focus safely on driving.

**2**. If another activity demands your attention, instead of trying to attempt it while driving, pull off the road and stop your vehicle in a safe place. To avoid temptation, power down or stow devices before heading out. Drivers should use caution while using voice-activated systems, even at seemingly safe moments when there is a lull in traffic or the car is stopped at an intersection, because potentially dangerous distractions can last longer than most drivers expect.

**1. As a general rule, if you cannot devote your full attention to driving because of some other activity, it’s a distraction. Take care of it before or after your trip, not while behind the wheel.**

Information adapted from:

[CDC Motor Vehicle Safety](http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/distracted_driving/)

[Automobile Association of America (AAA)](https://www.aaafoundation.org/distracted-driving?gclid=Cj0KEQjwzq63BRCrtIuGjImRoIIBEiQAGLHdYbnmri7aVIINvZVrsWXD_q38SKlCIPO_yt9Qv6SzRa4aAmJO8P8HAQ)

AAA’s Top 10 Tips to Avoid Distractions While Driving