Rude Rage

We've all got that friend or family member that gets way too bent out of shape at the smallest infraction when they're operating a 2,500 lb. hunk of metal at speeds that can liquefy objects. According to a survey by Rates.ca, 83% of Canadian drivers have witnessed a road rage incident. I think it also can be called rude rage but hey, I don't make these things official.

So if you're out there and you encounter a situation where you may need some of these tips, I present the following; a fairly comprehensive list of things one can do to prevent road rage incidents, with a Canadian twist:

• Stay Updated: Follow traffic updates and news to stay informed about road conditions and potential hazards. Knowledge is power.

• Leave Early: One of the most common triggers of road rage is feeling rushed. Wake up with at least 30 or 45 minutes of extra time before you plan to leave; this will give you time to check your route, review the news, yell at your cat for knocking over that vase, stop for gas quickly, and potentially avoid any delays from traffic accidents.

• Use Your Horn Sparingly: A light tap on the horn is usually sufficient for letting other drivers know something is amiss. Honking loudly can escalate tensions or antagonize others so destroy the eardrums of other motorists only when necessary, like as a warning to prevent an accident.

• Use Hands-Free Devices: If you need to make a call while driving use a hands-free device to stay focused on the road. Safety first, always.

• Stay in Your Lane!: Avoid competing with other drivers, or retaliating for what you believe to

be inconsiderate behaviour by weaving in and out of traffic, or driving like you're a driving the Batmobile.

• Take Breaks: If you're on a long drive, take regular breaks to stretch and relax a little. Studies show that relaxing helps people to be calm. Walk around, take in the scenery, enjoy a rest stop; Canada is known for beautiful landscapes, so while you're there, take a moment to appreciate the view and let it calm your mind.

So what do you do? What happens during an altercation if some crazed citizen with an attitude starts attacking your window whilst screaming a string of profanity that could make the heavens split? Or, what if, while you're driving, someone wants to turn the road into Carmageddon?

However, don't feel bad if you've had a moment or two; it happens to everyone. Road rage is often triggered by stresses such as: being late, emergencies, or being unhappy.

According to a Leger survey undertaken for rates.ca, Alberta and Ontario have the highest percentage of drivers who admit to road rage at 55%, followed by BC and Atlantic Canada sitting at 54%. Manitoba and Saskatchewan came in at 52%, and Québec is the lowest at 48%.

The most common road rage behaviours witnessed include: cutting off another driver at 63%, tailgating at 61%, honking at 57%, and flashing lights/high-beams at 48%. Waving our longest finger around obscenely was at a suspiciously low 14%.

- Call 911 immediately if you are being attacked, and use any device you have available to record what is happening. Comply with the 911 operator, and follow their instructions directly.
- Don't Stop: If someone cuts you off or runs a red light, says something to you, or hits your car with angry bricks, avoid stopping your car to confront that other driver. Only get out of your car if there is an accident that requires the exchange of insurance or an emergency of a similar sort with legal bindings.
- Stay in Your Car: If you are at a stop, like a red light, or intersection, stay inside your car with the doors locked and windows up. If you have a

device to record the incident then gather all the evidence you can about what is happening, and attempt to wait for authorities without getting aggressive.

- Apologize: If you make a mistake whilst driving, acknowledging it through a simple wave and mouthing "sorry" can go a long way. Your safety is the most important thing so it is better to let go of the situation and move on, rather than risk a dangerous confrontation.
- Use a Non-Offensive Gesture: Wave, or give a thumbs up. Firstly, it will help you be okay with what's happening at the moment. A thumbs-up as if to say "good job". It gives the other driver the validation they are seeking, and secondly, it throws people off. They'll double take as their confused brain attempts to figure out that you just gave them the thumbs up, not that other finger.
- Avoid Eye Contact: Engaging with an angry driver can make things worse so just focus on the road and ignore any provocations. Be in a bubble of Zen. Turn up the music, and just focus on the drive.
- Deep Breathing: Practice deep breathing exercises to stay calm. Inhale deeply, hold for a few seconds, and exhale slowly. Imagine you're breathing in fresh mountain air full of candy, doughnuts, fresh apples and cake.

According to evidence, 64 % of those between 18-34 engage in road rage compared to those 35-54, who do it 58% of the time, and those 55+ who only do it 38% of the time, showing that the number of Canadians 55 plus who engage in road rage is definitively less.

In fact, 15% of 18-34 year olds have been involved in a vehicle collision due to road rage, versus 7% of those 35-54 years of age, and 3% of those 55+.

According to the Ontario Provincial Police the number of fatal motor vehicle collisions caused by speeding and aggressive driving rose by 31% in 2021.

Letting anger get the best of you behind the wheel can lead to several driving behaviours that can cause a collision, which can put both your life and car insurance rate at risk.

I found a study the U.S. Army conducted to see how much time you save by driving faster. They looked at different trip lengths and different speed limits, and checked how long the trips would take.

I recreated that study using Canadian data and calculated different trip lengths, and speed limits. Like Time Saved by Speeding (24 km Trip) Time Saved by Speeding (24 km Trip) would take if you drove 10 or 20 km/h over the speed limit.

The average one-way trip in Canada is approximately 24 kilometers (about 15 miles). Below you'll find a chart that shows how much time you save by driving 24 kilometers at speeds of 50, 80, or 100 km/h, compared to driving the same distance while speeding 10 km/h over the limit.

Speed Limit (km/h)	Time at Speed Limit	Time at +10 km/h	Time Saved
50 km/h	28.8 minutes	24 minutes	4.8 minutes
80 km/h	18 minutes	16 minutes	2 minutes
100 km/h	14.4 minutes	13.1 minutes	1.3 minutes

The result? You saved less than five minutes on a trip that's already less than 30 minutes long.

The study also showed that the higher the speed limit, the less time you save by speeding over that limit. For example, if the speed limit is 50 km/h and you drive at 60 km/h, you save about 4.8 minutes. If the speed limit is 100 km/h and you drive at 110 km/h, you only save about 1.3 minutes, even though you're going 10 km/h over the limit.

After a Road Rage Incident:

Maybe you just dodged a brick and are now panic-driving away from a dangerous lunatic. It's time to take a deep breath and handle the situation like a pro.

- Create a Playlist/Laugh It Off: Make a playlist of funny songs, comedy sketches, or soothing vibes to change your mood whenever you feel upset or angry. It just might distract your mind enough to put you back into a good mood while driving and it's hard to stay mad when you're chuckling.
- Join a Safe Driving Course: Enroll in a defensive driving course. There you will learn techniques for avoiding road rage and staying safe on the road.
  - **eSafetyFirst**: Provides a comprehensive guide to defensive driving training in Canada, including online training options.
    - https://esafetyfirst.com/blog/defensive-driving-training-in-canada-a- comprehensive-guide/
  - **Canada Safety Council**: Offers a Defensive Driving Course (DDC) designed to teach drivers the

principles of defensive driving and essential collision avoidance techniques.
- https://canadasafetycouncil.org/product/dt/defensive-driving-course/

- Anger Management: If you find yourself frequently getting angry while driving, consider taking an anger management course or joining a support group for drivers who struggle with road rage. Sharing experiences and tips with others can be helpful, and it's a great way to vent. There's no shame in seeking help.
  - **Safety Canada:** Provides an online Road Rage Awareness course designed to help drivers avoid becoming victims of road rage or succumbing to it themselves.
    - https://safety-canada.ca/courses/road-rage-awareness/
  - **AngerMasters:** Offers online road rage and aggressive driving classes that are recognized across all provinces and territories in Canada.
    - https://angermasters.com/aggressive-driving

Only 38% of respondents say they have ways to effectively manage their anger while driving, while 20% don't take any action at all to calm down, which is an unfortunate reality, and is leading to incidents such as:

- In May 2023, in the Montreal suburb of St-Eustache, Quebec, provincial police arrested two people after an alleged road rage incident that left two others seriously injured.
- A road rage incident in Calgary involving a carjacking suspect was caught on video.
- In Ontario, a 21-year-old driver died as a result of a road rage incident that led to a six- vehicle crash.
- An Edmonton woman was sought Canada-wide over a road rage incident involving assault with a weapon.
- A senior was hit with a baton in North Vancouver and lost several teeth in a road rage incident.
- In Regina, a driver was arrested after a road rage incident where they aggressively tailgated and cut off another vehicle.
- A road rage incident in Winnipeg led to a physical altercation between two drivers at a busy intersection.
- In Moncton, New Brunswick, a driver was charged after a road rage incident where they threw objects at another vehicle.
- A driver in Halifax was charged with assault after a road rage incident resulted in him exiting his vehicle and starting an altercation with the other driver in Halifax.

Driving is already risky so when you're behind the wheels of a 2500-pound chunk of metal hurtling down the road, remember: If someone else's driving annoys you, don't try to "educate" the person. Leave actual traffic enforcement to the police, but, do what you can to educate those around you about road rage and its effects. When you see someone acting like they're auditioning for a demolition derby, don't stoop to their level—just drive on, keep your cool, and if you need to call the police, go ahead and do it. Stay safe and drive smart!