

How Drivers Ed Fails Us

Driver's Ed has missed the greatest opportunity to educate youth on how to save their lives and learn defensive driving. According to statistics, car [crashes](#) are the number 1 killer of teenagers, yet we are still repeating the same ineffective teaching methods through Driver's Ed schools. As a teenager, you are happy with the independence of having a car and driving yourself around. You no longer need your parents as a chauffeur to go anywhere you want to go. You get into your 'own' car, and with pride, you push the start button and you are ready to roll without one thought in your mind that you are literally sitting in a 4000 lb plus machine that can kill you or kill someone else in a heartbeat. As a young person you think of yourself as indestructible and of course, you 'know everything' there is to know already. You feel you can handle your car under any circumstances, and nothing can happen to you. I mean you see your parents and your older siblings driving, and you think to yourself: if *they* can do it, how hard can this skill of driving be, right?

Every young teen experiences being a captive audience sitting in a neon green room for seven hours a day for seven consecutive days watching videos of the horrors of drunk driving, crashes, distracted driving and all of sudden you realize that this 'driving thing' may look easy to do, but one error, one second of being distracted could

spell out major disaster. Each day comes with a new daunting video of a tragic, unexpected accident that ruined lives and separated families. However, as I sat through Driver's Ed, I realized that they teach you about the consequences of your actions, but they never really touch on the importance of knowing how to properly maintain or control your car and how to be a [safer](#) driver. Classes like Drivers Ed seem to focus on fear factor which could be soon, in weeks or maybe months, filed away in our distant memory banks and forgotten. In my opinion, Driver's Ed has been the biggest missed opportunity to actually teach teenagers some critical things that could really save their lives. Instead of just showing scary videos of mutilated bodies for seven days straight due to drinking and driving, they should focus on other more important lifesaving and preventative matters. For example, how much tire pressure should you have based on seasons or conditions, how to check tread life on your tires, or how to handle slippery roads, and other daily obstacles drivers face.

We all agree that driving while being under the influence of Alcohol and drugs is a big part of preventable accidents on our highways. Every year nearly as many people get killed on our highway as have died in the Vietnam in over a decade of war. Another way of thinking about our highway fatalities is to think of how tragic it was for us to lose nearly 3000 people during the 911 attack; yet, more than 10 times that number die each year on our roadways. Many of these tragic deaths are preventable. For example, according to National Highway and Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA), in 2016 alone over 17,000 lives could have been save during fatal crashes if only occupants in the car were wearing their [seat belts](#). Yet during Drivers Ed there is no real

emphasis about ensuring that you and ALL occupants (not just the front seat passengers) in your vehicle are wearing seatbelts.

Driver's Ed seems to provide quite a bit of shock and awe in all the videos they present but these fear tactics only work temporarily. These videos may produce the desired result of stopping someone from drinking and driving for a while, but again it does not teach you defensive driving and how to avoid erratic drivers on the road. For example, we should be taught, via observing other cars, how to spot potential dangerous or reckless drunk driver (e.g. meandering drivers who are constantly going over wrong lanes, switching lanes without signals, crossing medians or driving at night without lights, etc.). All these factors potentially indicate that someone maybe under the influence and driving; therefore, keep your distance. According to the CDC, more than 10,000 people died in 2016 due to driving under the [influence](#). As a result, it would be much more important to learn how to how to spot various behaviors than to see a dead body of someone who was driving while under the influence.

So, the question that we need to ask ourselves why are the death tolls and accidents in the US so much higher than many other countries? If you compare us to Canada, Sweden or The United Kingdom, you will find that on a per capita basis our death toll is much worse. Angie Smith in her article [America's Traffic Death Toll is a National Disgrace](#), wrote " the American traffic fatality rate reached 12.4 per 100,000 people last year [2016], about twice as high as Canada and four-and-a-half times higher than in the United Kingdom. Put another way, if America achieved the same fatality rate as the UK, more than 30,000 lives would be [saved](#) each year".

Therefore, it is important to start thinking where Driver's Ed for young teenagers is failing us and how to improve the preventive measures that actually work. It's time to change how we teach Driver's Ed and how we educate young drivers, like myself, about distracted driving, driving under the influence, the benefits of seat belts, and how to maintain the car to ensure that we give ourselves the best chance of avoiding accidents and live. As I said earlier, car crashes are the number [ONE](#) killer of teenagers; If we start taking the lives of our youth drivers more seriously, we will improve their awareness and the potential dangers of driving. This is not only a car we are driving, but potentially a deadly machine that we should earn thorough [training](#) on how to properly operate it to ensure it does not end up [killing](#) / injuring us or others. If we think of the car as a weapon, then ask yourself the following question: would we ever want to give a weapon to a teenager without thorough training and extensive practice? The answer is an emphatic NO! If we transpose the same thinking to car ownership and Driver's Ed, then we would most likely end up saving tens of thousands of lives each year. Driver's Ed is failing miserably from taking full advantage of having so many young teenagers in their classes that are truly eager to learn about driving and avoiding accidents; yet, they end up receiving very little in the form of preventive education. The Urban dictionary definition of "crazy" is doing the same exact thing over and over again and expecting a different result. It would be crazy if we do not change the way we teach Drivers Ed courses that do little to prevent disasters that are killing our [youth](#) on the roads at an alarming rate every year.

Author Analysis

<http://teachmag.com/archives/1525>

<http://teachmag.com/archives/3174>

Editorialist Richard Worzel predominantly writes about the topic of American youth and how it can be bettered. Worzel uses various techniques throughout his editorials that have proven to empower his opinion and make his work superior. The editorials that I chose were Why Education Must Change and Educating To Fail in which he thoroughly discusses the pros of this argument and makes a very concise claim that he then supports with hard facts. In Why Education Must Change, Worzel proposed a question and then continued to answer it himself with irrefutable statistics. He also wrote in first person which makes stating his opinion on the matter more effective. I utilized both these techniques in my editorial so my audience has a clear idea on my view on the teaching methods of Driver's Ed and evidence on how it has failed American Youth. In the second editorial, Educating To Fail, there was a strong, serious tone throughout that made Worzel sound very credible and knowledgeable. This use of ethos went a long way and gave his editorial a certain classiness. I tried to integrate this into my paper by having my own voice while still maintaining a formal tone. When writing an effective editorial, simple techniques such as the use of ethos, logos, and writing in first person can be the difference in having an average or exceptional piece of work.