DANGER BEHIND THE WHEEL:
The Facts about Distracted Driving

DVD Version
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Teacher’s Resource Book

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MAIN MENU

➤ Play

➤ Play with Spanish Subtitles

This option allows you to view the program with Spanish subtitles. Subtitles are enabled/disabled by selecting a button on the DVD player remote or by using the remote to select subtitles from the menu button.

➤ Chapter Selection

From here you can access many different paths of the DVD, beginning with the introduction and ending with the credits.

1. Introduction
2. Jordan Cibley
3. What Research Shows
4. Jacy Good
5. Reggie Shaw
6. The Law
7. Jennifer Smith
8. Conclusion

➤ Teacher’s Resource Book

A file of the accompanying Teacher’s Resource Book is available on the DVD. To open the file you need to load the DVD onto a computer that has a DVD-ROM and Adobe Acrobat Reader. Right click on the DVD icon and then double click on the file titled “Teacher’s Resource Book.”
Every year, nearly 500,000 Americans are injured and 6,000 more are killed as a result of distracted drivers who lose control of their vehicles while texting, talking on cell phones, eating, programming their radios or engaging in other activities that distract from the task at hand. According to the National Safety Council, a staggering 81 percent of people ages 18 to 49 admit that they talk on a cell phone while driving. Clearly, distracted driving is a growing danger to highway safety.

Texting while driving is the fastest growing and potentially most dangerous form of distracted driving. Nearly two-thirds of young people between the ages of 18 and 29 admit to texting while driving on a regular basis. Studies from Monash University suggest that teens who text message while driving spend 400 percent more time looking away from the road than non-texters—thus decreasing their reaction time and exponentially increasing their chances of causing an injurious or fatal accident.

The latest research on this phenomenon provides us with shocking news. One study suggests that driving while distracted isn’t really very different from driving while intoxicated! Another study showed that drivers who talk on cell phones (even those with hands-free options) are just as hindered by slower reaction and braking times as drivers with a 0.08 percent blood alcohol concentration level. The National Safety Council offers yet another amazing fact: merely listening to a cell phone conversation creates a 37 percent drop in spatial awareness, which correlates directly with the kind of mental distractions that cause accidents. While these findings are true for drivers of all ages, they are especially worrisome for young drivers who lack experience behind the wheel of a car.

With the pace of our modern, always-connected society, it’s critical that educators help teens understand how easily they could become distracted drivers—or the victim of one. Teens must be vigilant; even one slip-up may put their lives at risk. The video Danger behind the Wheel: The Facts about Distracted Driving reveals the truth about distracted driving risks through scientific research and unforgettable real-life stories. Armed with these facts, teens will be better prepared to identify the risks, make smart choices and perhaps even save lives.
After watching the video *Danger behind the Wheel: The Facts about Distracted Driving* and participating in the activities included in this Teacher’s Resource Book, your students will be able to:

- define distracted driving
- explain the risks of driving while distracted
- recognize how frequent, dangerous and common distracted driving is
- understand the legal consequences of distracted driving for all drivers, and especially for teens
- identify some of the specific ways that distracted driving affects the driver’s brain
- recognize the signs of distracted driving in others
- know how to implement strategies to avoid or eliminate distracted driving
- learn about and participate in national campaigns to raise awareness and educate others
- appreciate the particular dangers of driving while texting, which is by far the most risky of all distracted driving behaviors
As the program begins, on-screen text asks viewers if they can identify the leading cause of teen deaths. Several guesses—homicide, suicide, AIDS and drug overdoses—are listed on-screen before the top cause of teen death is revealed: motor vehicle crashes, most of which are caused by distracted driving.

Viewers are told that each year 6,000 teens die in car crashes, 75 percent of which do not involve alcohol or drugs. Teens are more than four times more likely to be in a crash than any other group of drivers. The host explains, “Most drivers, whatever their age, think that while others may be stupid or incompetent drivers, they themselves are excellent drivers who are fully capable of multitasking.”

Next, the video turns to street interviews, with an interviewer asking young people if they ever multitask while driving—including listening to music, eating or using cell phones. “I’ll talk on the phone sometimes or I’ll eat food or pretty much what I need to do while I’m driving,” says one. “I’ll touch up my makeup or try to grab a bite if I’m late,” says another. “Sometimes I’m texting or on the phone.”

The host explains that, while drivers might fall prey to endless distractions, the most common distraction is using a cell phone. “At any given moment, 10 percent of drivers aged 16 to 24 years old are on their cell phones.”

A title reads, “Jordan Cibley.” Jerry Cibley appears to tell the story of his son, Jordan. Three weeks before high school graduation, Mr. Cibley was on the phone with his son while Jordan was driving. “It wasn’t an important conversation,” the father recalls. “The next thing I know, I just heard him say “ah,” or “oh.” I’ll never know exactly what he said. And then the phone went dead.”

At 18, Jordan Cibley was killed when his car slammed into a tree while he was looking for his dropped cell phone. “I love him so much, and that love will never go away; but he did a very stupid thing,” says Mr. Cibley. “I did a stupid thing. I knew better than to talk with him while he was on his cell phone. And I have to live with that every day of my life.”

More street interviews follow. Young people are asked why they think so many people use their cell phones while driving. “It’s the Facebook culture,” answers one. “You’ve got to be connected all the time.” The young people concede that it’s not safe, but then affirm that they still do it. Why? A young man replies, “Because I feel my driving is safe enough and as long as my eyes are on the road, I’m fine to do that.”

The host reminds us that while many of us may have similar views, current research shows that just isn’t true. The program switches to a lab at the University of Utah, where psychology professor David Strayer uses a high-fidelity simulator to run experiments that monitor the effects of distracted driving. “One of the first things we learned is that when you talk on a cell phone, it’s
pretty hazardous. In fact, you’re about four times more likely to get in a crash when you’re talking on a cell phone than if you weren’t distracted by the use of that phone.” He continues, “To put that four-fold risk into some perspective: when we look at people who are drunk, intoxicated at the legal limit of 0.08 blood alcohol level, their crash risk is also about four times higher than if they weren’t impaired.”

Hands-free phones are not any safer, Strayer asserts, despite what people may believe. He explains the reasons: “You don’t notice things in your peripheral vision as well. The things you are looking at you don’t necessarily see as well.” Viewers are told that “looking at something but failing to ‘see’ it is called inattentional blindness.” Being distracted causes drivers to miss obvious things, such as traffic lights or exit signs.

Texting while driving is even worse. “People will take their eyes off the road for five, six, seven seconds,” Strayer states, “and if you’re going at freeway speeds you may be traveling one, two, maybe three football lengths depending on how long your eyes are off the road.” Texting while driving makes the driver eight times more likely to be in a crash. “You wouldn’t get in a car and blindfold yourself for five or six seconds. That would be crazy, but when people are text messaging they’re doing the very same thing,” Strayer says.

In the street interviews, young people are told that talking while driving—even using hands-free phones—is the same as driving drunk and that texting while driving increases the chances for a crash by eight times. Each one expresses surprise at these facts. The host says, “Let’s face it, the facts alone are not enough to convince many people to stop.”

Viewers next hear from Jacy Good, a woman who was hit by a distracted driver on her college graduation day. She and her parents were in the car. “An 18-year-old young man was talking on his cell phone approaching a red light, not really checking what he was doing,” Good recalls. “And a tractor-trailer traveling in the opposite direction swerved to miss him and hit our car full force.”

Both of Jacy Good’s parents were killed. She spent a week in a coma and emerged with a severe brain injury that paralyzed the left side of her body. She is still undergoing intensive rehabilitation to attempt to regain control of her shattered limbs. “I think I definitely have a mission now,” she says. “I have to make something good out of the worst day of my life so that I can make a difference. I can help save people’s lives so that my parents’ deaths can have meaning. There’s just no conversation that’s so important that it’s worth your own life or other people’s lives on the road.”

The host returns, stating, “Research at the University of Utah’s driving lab has shown that almost 98 percent of drivers are not capable of driving safely while talking on the phone.” He reminds viewers that texting while driving is even more dangerous than talking on a cell phone.
An on-screen title reads, “Reggie Shaw.” The video introduces a young man who was involved in a fatal car accident while texting and driving. “A lot of teenagers feel like they always need to be talking with someone to be popular,” Shaw says. “I was the same way…On my way to work I was [driving and] sending text messages like I had always done. I drifted across the center line and struck another car head-on.” Bart Rindlisbacher, a Utah Highway Patrol trooper who arrived at the scene of the crash, describes the scene: “It was a pretty devastating crash,” he says. “I went to the victims’ car and it was obvious that there were fatalities involved.” Shaw recalls, “I just remember kind of going in shock,” he says. “My heart stopped, and I was scared to death. I couldn’t believe what I had just done.”

The two victims were James Furfaro and Keith O’Dell, whose daughter, Megan, is interviewed next. “My dad was my best friend—he did everything with me,” she says. “I miss talking to him all the time.” She confesses, “Me and all my friends used to text and talk on the phone, and ever since… there’s no way.”

Fifty percent of teen drivers report sending or receiving texts while driving, viewers learn, but they rarely consider the injury or grief they may cause—as well as the legal consequences. Next, the video introduces James Swink, county attorney for Logan, Utah, where Reggie’s accident occurred. “Reggie Shaw was charged with two counts of negligent homicide,” he says. “It’s a class A misdemeanor. At the time he was charged, the state of Utah did not have a texting law.” Reggie Shaw spent 30 days in jail for his crime. He describes it as a “miserable period.”

After his release, Shaw helped the Utah State Legislature pass one of the nation’s stiffest distracted driving laws in 2009. He describes his testimony: “I told them about my accident and the impact it has had on me, and I knew that a law would prevent other people from going through what I put these two families through and what I’ve been through,” Shaw says. Swink outlines the penalties for viewers: texting and driving can carry penalties including a $750 fine and 30 days in jail. If a fatality occurs, the driver could be sent to jail for 15 years.

Many states are following Utah’s lead to enforce bans on distracted driving. The host explains, “In many cases, [the states] are being prodded by people whose lives have been forever changed by distracted driving crashes. These advocates are organizing to change how we think about driving.”

The next speaker is Jennifer Smith, President and co-founding board member of FocusDriven, Advocates for Cell-Free Driving. She shares the tragic story of how her mother was killed while delivering cat food to a local animal shelter. A teenager, driving while chatting on the phone, crashed into Smith’s mother’s car. “Witnesses report that he never even tried to brake,” she says. “There were no skid marks. He got out of the car and admitted he was on the phone.”
Smith’s mother was pronounced dead less than three hours later. Smith shows compassion for the driver when she remarks, “He was a twenty-year old student. He worked two jobs, lived at home with his parents. He never had a speeding ticket, never had a parking ticket…probably never did anything bad in his whole life.”

Smith felt powerless to prevent her mother’s death, and was exasperated by the fact that she always saw people driving while talking on the phone. But after researching the science behind the dangers of distracted driving and reading about the tragic stories of others killed by distracted drivers, she reached out to four families and founded FocusDriven. “Our vision is to stop all cell phone use while driving… to support the victims and their families and to change the entire culture… to make people aware that these are lives at stake and that no phone call, no email and no text message is worth a life;“ Smith says.

As the program draws to a close, the host reminds viewers of the research, the legal consequences and the tragic stories that make a compelling case against distracted driving. He asks the audience, “What does it take to convince you of the dangers of distracted driving?” After these words, viewers see a succession of photos of people who have been killed in distracted driving crashes.

**Answer Key for Pre/Post Test**

1. b
2. c
3. d
4. c
5. b
6. d
7. c
8. d
9. a
10. a
STUDENT ACTIVITIES
Read each of the following statements and select the correct answer.

1. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the most common distraction while driving is:
   a. fiddling with the radio
   b. using a cell phone
   c. eating
   d. grooming or applying cosmetics

2. At any given moment, what percentage of 16- to 24-year-olds are talking on their cell phones while driving?
   a. 1 percent
   b. 5 percent
   c. 10 percent
   d. 50 percent

3. Driving and using a cell phone is safe if you:
   a. use a hands-free device.
   b. limit yourself to texting.
   c. limit yourself to only brief conversations.
   d. Nothing makes it safe to drive while using a cell phone.

4. When drivers read or compose text messages, they typically take their eyes off the road for:
   a. 1 to 2 seconds
   b. 3 to 4 seconds
   c. 5 to 7 seconds
   d. more than 10 seconds

5. Talking on a cell phone and driving at the same time is ____ driving with a BAC of 0.08 percent (which is legally intoxicated):
   a. far less dangerous than
   b. equally as dangerous as
   c. more dangerous than
   d. slightly less dangerous than

This activity is continued on the next page.
6. You are ___ times more likely to get into a crash while texting and driving.
   a. two
   b. three
   c. five
   d. eight

7. What percentage of teenagers report sending or receiving texts behind the wheel?
   a. 10 percent
   b. 25 percent
   c. 50 percent
   d. 85 percent

8. Each year, approximately how many teens die in car crashes in the United States?
   a. less than 1,000
   b. 2,000
   c. 4,500
   d. 6,000

9. When you look at something but you don’t actually “see” it, this is termed:
   a. inattentional blindness.
   b. visual dissonance.
   c. cognitive distraction.
   d. unintentional stupidity.

10. According to scientific research, what percentage of drivers are NOT capable of driving safely while talking on the phone?
    a. 98 percent
    b. 52 percent
    c. 27 percent
    d. less than 10 percent
How often do your peers engage in distracted driving? Do they see it as dangerous or do they think it’s no big deal? Find out by conducting a survey with young drivers you know.

**PART ONE: Gather Your Data**

Ask five young drivers the questions below. Tell the respondents that their answers will be anonymous and encourage them to answer honestly. Record their responses on the chart below. If you are a driver, you can answer the questions yourself and then interview four more drivers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Every day</th>
<th>Once a week</th>
<th>Once a month</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How often do you use a cell phone while driving?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. How often do you eat snacks or drink while driving?</td>
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<td>3. How often do you groom yourself (style hair, put on makeup, look in the mirror) while driving?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. How often do you use a GPS or navigation system while driving?</td>
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<td>5. How often do you change the radio station, CD or iPod while driving?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. How often do you read (maps, homework or text messages) while driving?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. How often do you drive when you are sleepy or tired?</td>
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*This activity is continued on the next page.*
PART TWO: Tally the Results

Each answer has a point value. Use the chart below to calculate a score for each person’s survey.

- Every day = 3 points
- Once a week = 2 points
- Once a month = 1 point
- Never = 0 points

Once you have tallied the score, give each person a Risk Result Score, using the chart below. The higher the score, the more at risk the person is for being in a distracted driving accident. You can grade and categorize the scores with the chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Risk Result Score</th>
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<tr>
<td>16 - 21</td>
<td>Extreme Risk</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 - 15</td>
<td>High Risk</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 - 11</td>
<td>Moderate Risk</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 - 5</td>
<td>Low Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No Risk</td>
</tr>
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</table>

PART THREE: Pool Your Resources

After you complete your five surveys and tally the scores, report your data to your teacher. Create a larger sample of survey respondents by combining the data of all your classmates. Together, write down your collective results.

PART FOUR: Analysis

Get into groups of three or four students. Your teacher will assign each group one question from the survey. Together, design a pie chart or bar graph that visually displays the total results. Be creative! Include colors and illustrations.

PART FIVE: Presentation and Discussion

After you present your chart or graph to the class, discuss the following questions together.

1. What distracted driving activity did people engage in most? Why do you think this is?
2. Were your respondents surprised when you told them their Risk Result Score? Were you surprised at your own score? How did you compare to everyone else?
3. What was the highest score? What was the lowest?
4. In general, how would you describe the risk level for distracted driving among your peers?
5. Did your respondents seem aware of the risks? Did they do it anyway? If so, how did they rationalize it?
6. Did anyone admit to any unusual or odd habits while driving? What was the strangest?
Being distracted may not mean the same thing to everyone. For instance, some people need total quiet while studying, but others have no problem listening to loud music or TV while doing homework. Some of us can multitask, while others need to focus on doing one thing at a time. When it comes to driving, the U.S. Department of Transportation categorizes distraction into three specific types:

**Visual distraction** refers to anything that causes you to take your eyes off the road.

**Manual distraction** refers to anything that causes you to take your hands off the wheel.

**Cognitive distraction** refers to anything that takes your mind off what you’re doing.

For each type of distraction, come up with five examples that might affect you—both as a driver and in general. A few examples are listed below to start you off:

**Visual Distractions** *(example: flashing lights)*

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**Manual Distractions** *(example: reaching for a pair of sunglasses)*

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**Cognitive Distractions** *(example: answering a question)*

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Many people think that they can still drive safely while talking on the phone, texting, eating or applying makeup—even though research has shown that this just isn't true. In fact, as you heard in the video, less than two percent of the driving population is truly capable of driving safely while multitasking or talking on a cell phone.

Below are several common excuses that people give for their distracted driving habits. Imagine that you are a passenger in a car whose driver gives you one of these excuses. How would you respond? Use the facts you learned from the video and from the Myths of Distracted Driving fact sheet to help you prepare a response.

1. “It’s okay for me to drive and talk on the phone as long as I use a hands-free device.”

   ___________________________________________________________________________________________________

   ___________________________________________________________________________________________________

   ___________________________________________________________________________________________________

2. “There's no difference between me using a cell phone and having a conversation with someone in the car.”

   ___________________________________________________________________________________________________

   ___________________________________________________________________________________________________

   ___________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. “I'm used to multitasking. Some people can't handle talking and driving at the same time, but I can.”

   ___________________________________________________________________________________________________

   ___________________________________________________________________________________________________

   ___________________________________________________________________________________________________

4. “I only looked away for a few seconds.”

   ___________________________________________________________________________________________________

   ___________________________________________________________________________________________________

   ___________________________________________________________________________________________________

This activity is continued on the next page.
5. “It’s not illegal or anything.”

6. “I only need one hand to drive. I can program the GPS with the other.”

7. “The best time for me to talk is during my commute. That’s the only time I’m not doing a million other things at once.”

8. “I won’t have time for breakfast if I don’t eat it in the car.”

9. “I’m just trying to find a better radio station than this one.”

10. “My cigarette fell under my seat! I have to grab it before it burns a hole in the carpet!”
Research one of the topics below and write a brief paper on your findings. You can gather information at your school or local library, as well as on the Internet. Each topic has a series of questions to get you started. Use a Resource Tracker to keep track of your sources and reference them properly. Be prepared to share your findings with the class.

**Distracted Driving and the Brain**
How does distraction affect a person’s brain while driving? What are the effects on memory and reaction time? What do new scientific studies say about the links between distraction and accidents?

**Distracted Driving and Teens**
Many states have created laws that specifically target teen drivers who use cell phones or texting devices while driving. Why is distracted driving especially dangerous for young people? Which distractions are considered the most dangerous for teens, and why? What role does a teen’s inexperience play in the risk for crashes?

**Changing Laws**
In your state, have new laws been implemented as a result of distracted driving accidents? Research your state’s most recent legislation and compare it to similar laws in at least three other states. Which states have the strictest laws?

**Distracted Driving Statistics**
The video states that the leading cause of death for American teens is motor vehicle crashes—and that 75% of the crashes causing teen fatalities have nothing to do with alcohol or drugs. Investigate the latest data on fatal and non-fatal crashes caused by distracted driving. What age group is most at risk for distracted driving?

**Grassroots Campaigns in Your Town**
The fight against distracted driving is being led by ordinary people looking to make their own towns and roads safer. Locate a community-based campaign in your city or state and write a profile of them. How did they form? What outreach initiatives are they pursuing in your area? How can someone get involved?

*This activity is continued on the next page.*
**Activity 5b**

**Resource Tracker**

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<td>Activity tracker:</td>
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The stories that you saw in *Danger behind the Wheel: The Facts about Distracted Driving* are unforgettable. The crime-scene photos of cars crushed beyond recognition are horrific. Now that you have seen the video, take a moment to think about how distracted driving may already be affecting your life—as well as the lives of your friends and family.

1. Have you ever been a passenger in a car where the driver was distracted, either with a cell phone, text message or other behavior? What did you do? What would you do if it happened again?

_________________________________________________________________________________________________
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2. Do you know anyone who had been involved in a crash—or a close call—due to their own distracted driving, or that of someone else? Have you witnessed any accidents or close calls? Describe.

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_________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. Have you been guilty of distracted driving yourself? What could you do differently in the future? Give specific examples of how you might change your behaviors—whether they involve technology like texting and cell phones, or other distractions like eating or fixing your hair while driving. Consult the *Safe Strategies* fact sheet for suggestions on how you can be a safer, more focused driver.

_________________________________________________________________________________________________
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Research shows that an average driver who writes or reads a text message takes his or her eyes off the road for almost five seconds. This increases the chances of crashing by 23 times.

As technology advances, there are increased risks of distracted driving crashes. However, technology may also be the source of potential solutions to the problem! In recent years, several companies have developed applications for phones that are meant to discourage distracted driving. For instance, one company is working on a device that can automatically lock your phone when you are traveling at a certain speed.

PART ONE:
For this activity, investigate a few of these new devices—whether they are gadgets, electronic applications (“apps”) or some other type of technology. Write a brief report in which you identify at least one device and answer these questions:

► How does this technology work to stop phone use while driving?

► What are its limitations?

► How might it be improved?

PART TWO:
Use your imagination to invent your perfect anti-distracted driving app for your phone or vehicle. Draw or describe your invention in the space below. Give your device a catchy name, if you like. Be specific about how your invention will help reduce the number of crashes caused by distracted drivers.

Name: ________________________________
As you heard in the video, distracted drivers have a tendency to “look at” but not really “see” the objects around them. This is called \textit{inattentional blindness}.

Some studies indicate that drivers using cell phones—even with hands-free devices—fail to “see” as much as 50 percent of their driving environment. Their eyes “see” what is going on around them, but their brains don’t register it.

\textbf{PART ONE:}
To learn more about this phenomenon, read the \textit{Scientific American} article excerpted below. The full text is available at <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=none-so-blind>.

\textbf{None So Blind}
By Michael Shermer

Picture yourself watching a brief video of two teams of three players each. One team wears white shirts and the other black shirts, and the members move around in a small room tossing two basketballs. Your task is to count the number of passes made by the white team—not easy, given the weaving movement of the players. Unexpectedly, a gorilla enters the room, walks directly through the group of players, thumps his chest and exits.

Would you see the gorilla?

Most of us believe we would. In fact, 50 percent of the subjects in this remarkable experiment by Daniel J. Simons of the University of Illinois and Christopher F. Chabris of Harvard University did not see the gorilla, even when asked if they noticed anything unusual.

The effect is called \textit{inattentional blindness}. While we are attending to one task—say, talking on a cell phone while driving—many of us become blind to dynamic changing events, such as a gorilla in the crosswalk.

\textbf{PART TWO:}
Has anything like this ever happened to you? Get together with your classmates and discuss this phenomenon. If possible, view the video that the author mentions in his article. It can be found online here: <http://viscog.beckman.illinois.edu/flashmovie/15.php>
In the video, you heard from many people who have investigated or experienced the dramatic consequences of distracted driving. Below are several quotes. Choose one and write a brief essay on the back of this sheet describing your reaction to what is being said.

“My son was 18 years old. And now I had to call my wife on the phone and tell her our boy was gone. It is not supposed to happen that way. My son should be here with me today.”

~Jerry Cibley

“You wouldn’t get in a car and blindfold yourself for five or six seconds. That would be crazy, but when people are text messaging they’re doing the very same thing.”

~David Strayer

“I think I definitely have a mission now. I have to make something good out of the worst day of my life so that I can make a difference. I can help save people’s lives so that my parents’ deaths can have meaning.”

~Jacy Good

“He did a very stupid thing. I did a stupid thing. I knew better than to talk with him while he was on his cell phone [while driving]. And I have to live with that every day of my life.”

~Jerry Cibley

“There’s just no conversation that’s so important that it’s worth your own life or other people’s lives on the road.”

~Jacy Good

“Some days I’ll just scream, ‘Get off the phone! Get off the phone!’ as I’m driving. I’ll pull up to a stoplight and [in] every car around me, they’ll be talking on the phone.”

~Jennifer Smith

“This accident occurred because we believe he dropped his cell phone. The only time I know my son didn’t have his seat belt on was on the day he was killed; and I suspect he took it off to reach down to grab his cell phone, and he slammed into a tree.”

~Jerry Cibley

“We see lots of cases where people drive through stop signs and traffic lights. When someone is talking on a cell phone—be it hand-held or hands-free—their crash risk is about the same as a drunk driver.”

~David Strayer
With distracted driving accidents on the rise, many states are taking stricter measures to punish those who put their lives—and the lives of others on the road—at risk. Some states have passed laws against using any kind of phone (including hands-free devices) while driving, but these laws vary widely. As you learned in the video, in Utah if you cause the death of another person while texting and driving, you could spend up to 15 years in prison.

What do you think the laws in your state should be? For the distracted driving offenses below, research the current penalties in your state and write them down in the table below. Most of this information can be found on the U.S. Department of Transportation’s special website devoted to preventing distracted driving <http://www.distraction.gov/state-laws>. If you need further help, contact your local law enforcement officials.

If you think that the current penalty is fair, write “SAME” in the last column below. If you would change the law, use that column to describe what penalties your law would impose.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distracted Driving Offense</th>
<th>What is the penalty in your state today?</th>
<th>What do you think the penalty should be?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Texting while driving</td>
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<td>Causing a non-fatal accident while texting</td>
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<td>Causing a non-fatal accident while talking on a cell phone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Causing a fatal accident while texting, talking on a cell phone or using any hand-held electronic device</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: The U.S. Department of Transportation’s website also includes an interactive game that will allow you to find out more about the distracted driving laws in your specific state. Check it out here: <http://www.distraction.gov/distraction-challenge/index.html#/intro>
Read the topics below. Choose one to debate with your classmates. Use the back of this page to formulate your opinion. Be sure to include specific facts to support your position.

**TOPIC 1**

Do you think it’s fair for young drivers to be held to a different legal standard than other drivers? Are teens being unfairly targeted? Some studies have indicated that adults over the age of 30 are the population that talks most frequently on cell phones while driving. Other research suggests that inexperienced drivers in their teens have the highest proportion of distraction-related fatal crashes. What do you think? You may want to consult the *State Laws for Teens* fact sheet for more information.

**TOPIC 2**

Some people believe that it should be illegal to have a cell phone in the car—that all electronic devices should be stored in the trunk while the vehicle is in motion. But opponents argue that cell phones in cars can be useful in certain situations, such as when there is a need for 911 ambulance services. Proponents say that trusting people to not use their cell phones is too big a risk to take, and we should adopt zero-tolerance policies for cell phones in cars. What do you think? If you are in favor of restricting cell phone use, how far should restrictions go?
In the video, you learned of a tragic collision involving a young man named Reggie Shaw. One morning, 19-year-old Reggie sent a text message to a friend while driving to work—something he had done countless times before. This time, however, his car drifted across the road’s center line and crashed into an oncoming car which was then struck by a second vehicle. Both of the car’s occupants were killed instantly.

Reggie Shaw pleaded guilty to two counts of negligent homicide and later helped Utah pass a law banning texting and driving by giving emotional testimony to the state’s legislators.

**PART ONE: Write a Speech**

Imagine that Reggie Shaw stands before the United States Congress, arguing for a national law to ban texting and driving. On a separate sheet of paper, write a brief, one-page speech that Reggie could deliver to Congress. Your speech should incorporate his story and the statistics cited in the fact sheets, as well as any other details you have learned about this growing danger.

**PART TWO: Class Performance and Discussion**

Each student will read his or her speech in front of the class as if they were Reggie Shaw. At the end, everyone will vote for the most persuasive speech. Together, discuss why you found that speech to be the most persuasive. Was it the use of concrete facts? Was it the powerful personal story? What was the most compelling moment from the winning speech?
While most problems with distracted driving come from common behaviors—talking on a cell phone, eating or fiddling with the radio—sometimes people get caught doing outrageous things while driving. Consider these bizarre, but true, stories:

➤ A caller on the NPR program *Car Talk* reported seeing a woman flossing, gargling and brushing her teeth while piloting her car down the highway. She even rolled down the window to spit!

➤ A woman in Key West, Florida, was on her way to meet her boyfriend when she caused a two-car accident. The reason? Her passenger took the wheel so she could *shave her legs!* Also, she was driving with a suspended license.

Now it’s time to get creative. Invent your own superhero, with powers suited to fight distracted driving. He or she might have the ability to fly to the scene of a swerving driver, super strength to pull a car over or the ability to disable a phone merely by using mental energy waves. Give your superhero a name, like Distracto Man, the Road Warrior or SafetyBot. Don’t be afraid to let your imagination run wild!

Choose one of the true situations above—or find one of your own in the news—and draw a short comic strip with your superhero intervening to stop the distracted driver before he or she causes an accident. Use the blank strip below for your comic.
When it comes to the risks of distracted driving, too many people are in the dark. Ignorance about distracted driving is dangerous—drivers who don’t understand that it can be deadly may take foolish risks and suffer tragic consequences.

Public awareness campaigns are spreading fast. Many states are passing tougher laws against distracted driving, the federal government has launched a “Put It Down” campaign to remind drivers not to use cell phones in the car and Oprah Winfrey has started a campaign against distracted driving, declaring April 30th as a national No Phone Zone Day!

Now it’s your turn to help spread the word. Produce a creative message for your classmates, your families—anyone you know who drives a car! Make sure to include the definition of distracted driving and why it is harmful. Remind others that the price for not paying attention to the road is simply too high. We all have a part to play in making sure everyone keeps their eyes and mind on the road and hands on the wheel.

Some ideas you may want to use include:

- compose an original song with lyrics
- write a rap
- design a poster
- write and present a dramatic skit
- record a radio commercial
- create a collage
- film a short video
- design a banner for the hallway, gym or cafeteria
- write a poem
- create an email blast
- design a print ad
- create a website

NOTE: on the next page, you will see samples of artwork that the U.S. government has created to publicize its latest campaign to educate Americans about the dangers of distracted driving.

*This activity is continued on the next page.*
Available in color or black and white at: <http://www.distraction.gov/files/get-involved/General/PhonelHand-Logos.zip>

Available in color or black and white at: <http://www.distraction.gov/files/get-involved/General/PutItDown-Logos.zip>

FACT SHEETS
Distracted driving can be defined as operating a motor vehicle while also engaging in any non-driving activity that takes the driver’s attention off the road. These activities can distract from the primary task of driving and greatly increase the risk of causing an accident.

There are three main types of distraction that lead to distracted driving:

**Visual Distractions:**
- taking your eyes off the road

**Manual Distractions:**
- taking your hands off the wheel

**Cognitive Distractions:**
- taking your mind off concentrating on driving

Any type of distraction while driving can potentially endanger the lives of drivers, passengers and pedestrians. These are some of the most common forms of distracting activities while driving:

- using a cell phone (calling or texting)
- eating or drinking
- talking to passengers
- grooming (brushing hair, applying makeup, adjusting clothes)
- reading, including maps, newspapers, directions, homework
- using a GPS or navigation system
- watching a video or movie
- changing the radio station, CD or Mp3 player
- daydreaming
- holding a pet on your lap

Just ONE distraction can lead to an accident but some activities are especially dangerous because the driver is engaging in all three types of distractions. Consider texting: to text while driving, you must take your eyes off the road to look at the phone, you take your hands off the wheel to type and your mind is focused on writing the text instead of paying attention to road signs, conditions and terrain. This triple threat can be especially deadly.

*Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)*
There’s no difference between talking to someone on the phone and talking to someone sitting in the car.

**FALSE:** Actually, while some studies suggest that a driver talking to a passenger in the car is dangerous, using a cell phone is far more dangerous. Here’s why: a passenger in the car can help the driver watch the road, monitor for hazardous conditions and—perhaps most importantly—sense when it would be prudent to stop talking. A person on the other end of the phone remains unaware of road conditions and can’t help or determine when to stop talking. <http://www.focusdriven.org/why_cell_free.aspx>

It’s entirely safe to use a cell phone as long as a hands-free device is enabled.

**FALSE:** Evidence shows that even when using a hands-free device, there is still enough cognitive distraction to worsen a driver’s performance. A driver is more likely to miss important visual and audio cues that could make the difference between driving safely and causing a collision. Studies confirm that talking on a cell phone with a hands-free device while driving produces reaction times that are similar to driving with a blood alcohol level of 0.08 percent (essentially, driving drunk).

Looking away from the road for only a few seconds can’t hurt.

**FALSE:** Driving at a speed of 45 miles an hour, a driver looking away from the road for two seconds is actually traveling blind for over 132 feet—nearly half the length of a football field! Reaction time is shortened dramatically over this distance, meaning that even a quick look away from the road could result in a catastrophic accident.

I’ve memorized the buttons on my cell phone, so I don’t have to look down at my keypad when I dial or text.

**FALSE:** Humans are visual creatures by nature—and that means it’s highly unlikely you won’t look down at your phone. No matter what, you are still dividing your attention between two very different tasks. This puts you at risk of “inattentional blindness”—a situation where you may not register events or changes in road conditions in your brain even though you might see them with your eyes.

The human brain is hardwired to do more than one thing at a time.

**FALSE:** Despite what we like to believe, the human brain can’t really multitask—it just switches rapidly between single tasks. Each switch adds a tenth of a second of processing time, which is known as “reaction time cost.” As your brain continually switches, these “reaction time switching costs” add up to perceptible seconds of time. This may not be dangerous while you’re working on homework and talking on the phone simultaneously, but on the road, it’s long enough for you to travel hundreds of yards without reacting, and long enough to cause a serious or even fatal accident.

*Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)*
Distracted driving comes in many forms, but the use of electronic devices while driving is unquestionably the fastest growing threat on the highway. Consider these statistics:

1. More than 275 million Americans own cell phones and 81 percent of them talk on those phones while driving. (Nationwide Mutual Insurance)

2. Nearly two-thirds of young people between 18 and 29 years of age admit to texting while driving.

3. Driving while using a cell phone reduces the amount of brain activity devoted to driving by 37 percent. (Carnegie Mellon)

4. Using a cell phone while driving, even when it’s hands-free, delays a driver’s reactions as much as having a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08 percent. In other words, driving and using a cell phone at the same time has the same effect as drunk driving. (David Strayer, University of Utah)

5. Each time you write or read a text message, you take your eyes off the road for almost five seconds and increase your risk for an accident up to 23 times. (David Strayer, University of Utah)

6. At least 1.6 million traffic accidents (28 percent of all crashes) in the U.S. are caused by drivers using cell phones and/or texting. (National Safety Council)

7. In 2008, nearly 37,000 people died in car accidents in the United States. Of these fatalities, 16 percent (or 5,870 people) were caused by distracted drivers. (NHTSA)

8. In 2008, 1,630,000 people were injured in car accidents in the United States. Of these injuries, an estimated 21 percent (or 342,300 injuries) were caused by distracted drivers. (NHTSA)

9. The proportion of drivers reportedly distracted at the time of the fatal crashes has increased from 8 percent in 2004 to 11 percent in 2008. (National Automotive Sampling System (NASS) General Estimates System (GES))

10. Drivers under age 20 have the highest proportion of distraction-related fatal crashes (16%). The next largest group of distracted drivers involved in fatal crashes is drivers in the 20- to-29-year-old age group (12%). (NHTSA)
Despite what we would like to believe, the human brain can’t really multitask—it just switches rapidly between single tasks. In reality, the brain handles tasks sequentially, assigning priority and then switching between tasks rapidly. We may think that we are doing two things at the same time, but in reality, we’re only performing one task at a time.

Each switch adds a tenth of a second of processing time, which is known as “reaction time cost.” As these tasks add up (like continually talking and driving), these tenths of a second add up into full seconds. While driving, these multiple-second delays translate into hundreds of yards driven before you can react to a changing or dangerous condition.

Even accomplishing one task in the brain requires a six-step process:

1. Your brain first must **select** the information it will attend to first.
2. Then it must **process** the information.
3. Then the brain **encodes** the information, which creates a memory.
4. It then **stores** that memory.
5. Then it needs to **retrieve** the information stored as a memory.
6. Finally, it **executes** or acts on the information.

Whenever the brain is overloaded with tasks (such as when driving and talking on a cell phone), all of these processes are affected. This applies to distracted driving just as much as it does to patting your head and rubbing your stomach while reciting the alphabet.

Consider these statistics:

- In scientific testing, 97.5 percent of people who were asked to engage in distracted driving simulations failed their tests.
- Distracted driving testers took 20 percent longer to apply the brakes when necessary than others.
- When distracted, drivers’ memory performance dropped by 11 percent.
- Stopping distances for distracted driving testers involved seconds—not fractions of seconds—which increased the distances they traveled by multiple car lengths.
- When test subjects were asked to do simple math problems while driving, their ability to get the correct answers dropped 3 percent.

Many states have enacted laws to help curb the dangers of distracted driving among drivers of all ages. A number of states have gone even further, recognizing the particular risk for inexperienced teen drivers by passing specific laws to help combat distracted driving among drivers under the age of 18.

There are two main types of enforcement for under-18 drivers—primary and secondary.

**Primary enforcement** means a police officer can issue a citation simply by catching someone using a hand-held device while driving.

**Secondary enforcement** means a police officer can issue a citation only if a driver’s cell phone use has caused another moving violation, such as a collision.

As of 2010:


…6 states prohibit cell phone use for novice drivers with secondary enforcement: Arkansas, California, Louisiana, Maryland, Nebraska and Virginia.


…5 states prohibit text messaging for novice drivers and offer secondary enforcement: Iowa, Louisiana, Nebraska, New York and Virginia.

In addition, the states of Michigan, Idaho, Maine, New Hampshire and South Carolina have passed comprehensive laws making it illegal for anyone to drive while distracted, regardless of the reason.

**At present, no national laws exist to ban distracted driving, but more states are expected to pass laws in the near future.**


*Source: Governor’s Highway Safety Administration*
If you must take a phone call or send a text, find a safe spot and pull over. Don’t resume driving until you’ve finished using the phone.

If you know you will have trouble resisting the urge to answer your phone, turn it off every time before you get into your vehicle.

If you regularly eat meals while driving, make sure to keep some crackers or energy bars on hand. You can quickly eat a snack before starting your car.

If you ride with a friend, ask him or her to take the call. If there are questions for you from the caller, have your friend write them down and ask you later after you’ve finished driving.

Secure any loose items that could move around and distract you before you start the car. Also, this will keep them from becoming projectiles in the event of quick braking or a collision.

Preset your radio stations and climate control so you don’t need to press many buttons. If you have an iPod, build a playlist at home and start it before you start the car.

If you regularly find yourself grooming while driving, allow yourself extra time to arrive ahead of time instead. Then you can finish your grooming activities when you arrive at your destination early.

Driving while angry is like driving drunk: If you’re experiencing strong emotions, calm down before getting in your car.

Familiarize yourself with the controls of the vehicle you are driving. If you can’t find a control the first try without looking, then wait until you can safely pull over or park the car.

Plan your route clearly ahead of time so you won’t need to check maps or GPS while driving.

Ask passengers to keep their phones off.

If you are tired, don’t be afraid to call for a ride. You can always pick up your car later.

Avoid slowing down to look at crashes or other distractions on the road.

Check your mirrors frequently—this helps keep you alert and on top of conditions around your vehicle.
10 Driving Distractions and How to Deal With Them
<http://www.edmunds.com/advice/youngdrivers/articles/120513/article.html>
   Car website Edmunds.com offers detailed strategies for young people to avoid distracted driving, from texting to talking with friends in the car.

Focus Driven
<http://www.focusdriven.org/index.aspx>
   On online youth movement aimed at connecting and banning together to stop distracted driving.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
<http://www.nhtsa.gov/Distracted>
   A reliable one-stop source for information, laws, statistics and prevention efforts related to distracted driving. The NHTSA has proposed a Driver Distraction Program with proposed initiatives and countermeasures to enforce safe driving practices.

National Safety Council
<http://www.nsc.org/safety_road/distracted_driving/pages/distracted_driving.aspx>
   The National Safety Council's distracted driving page offers the latest in scientific research, plans to ban distracted driving and a newsletter you can sign up for to learn about how to combat distracted driving in your area.

New York Times: Driven To Distraction
   Starting in 2009, the New York Times began publishing this Pulitzer Prize-winning series on the dangers of distracted driving and the evolving laws designed to fight it.

Oprah's No Phone Zone
<http://www.oprah.com/packages/no-phone-zone.html>
   Oprah Winfrey decided to tackle the distracted driving problem head-on with her No Phone Zone program. On the official website, you can sign pledges, watch her interviews with those affected by distracted driving and get involved. You’ll also find detailed information on how you can talk friends and family out of texting and driving.

U.S. Department of Transportation Distracted Driving Information
<www.distraction.gov>
   The U.S. Department of Transportation developed this website to both inform the public and present plans to combat the dangers of distracted driving. On this website, you’ll find all the most up-to-date statistics, detailed research and suggestions for curbing distracted driving all boiled down into easy-to-understand pages.


*This fact sheet is continued on the next page.*


### Other Programs

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Visit our website for detailed descriptions of the above programs.

Available from
Human Relations Media
41 Kenisco Drive
Mount Kisco, NY 10549

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