

## Newbury Group of Advanced Motorists

### Advanced Driving Articles

#### 4 – Concentration

*by David Skinner, Institute of Advanced Motorists, Newbury Group*

One of the key skills of advanced driving is the ability to concentrate – that is, to apply your mind and body fully to the driving task to the complete exclusion of everything else.

Many drivers don't do that. They listen to the car radio or music system, converse with passengers or are preoccupied with other matters. Some of the time, that is not a problem. Modern cars are so easy to drive that, on a good road in light traffic, with fine weather and good visibility, driving doesn't take all your concentration and you have quite a bit left over to do all these other things.

But what if you encounter a problem? There might be an incident, such as an object in the road, another driver doing something stupid, a mechanical fault in your car – anything could happen to change your leisurely drive into a rapidly developing emergency. Unless you are concentrating properly, your reactions might not be instant enough for you to avoid becoming part of it.

The Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) estimates that 'driver error' is a contributory cause in a massive 95% of vehicle crashes. Much of that driver error – doing the wrong thing, or not doing the right thing quickly enough – is due to a lack of concentration. Even a momentary lapse can be significant. At 70 mph, the maximum legal speed on most motorways and dual carriageways, during a lapse of concentration for just one second you will travel over 100 feet. And whenever there is a collision on a motorway there is almost always a series of shunts or near misses on the opposite carriageway as drivers stop concentrating on their own driving to have a look.

If you find your concentration beginning to wane, you need a way to get it back. The IAM trains its advanced driving pupils to practise doing a driving commentary – describing the road and traffic hazards that arise, and what they propose to do about them. The commentary is not a mandatory part of the IAM test, but it is good a way of ensuring that drivers concentrate on the driving task. You might want to try it next time you drive.

If you want to know more, visit the Newbury Group of Advanced Motorists website at [www.niam.org.uk](http://www.niam.org.uk), or contact the Group Secretary, Dick Bird, by e-mail on [secretary@niam.org.uk](mailto:secretary@niam.org.uk) or by telephone on 07717 366500.