

## Skill 2: Sense of danger

**Key points:** - Without a good sense of danger you cannot be safe.  
- Most motorists have a poor sense of where danger really comes from.

Unless you know what danger is, you can't control it. This is an obvious statement - but it uncovers a big problem, because:

**most people are wildly overconfident about their understanding of where danger comes from.**

If you ask any bunch of people, "What are the causes of danger on the road?", everyone's list will be different. And they would include a lot of things they just wish other people would not do. But these are things you can't control, which is not very useful.

So this chapter looks at the causes of danger that are in every situation, and in a way that you can control. It will give you:

**a grasp of danger that enables you to successfully manage risk.**

This is the core of how the whole new approach to safe driving began.

However, there are two ideas that allow people to put off thinking much about danger.

Firstly, the highways are, fortunately, quite forgiving places. Most mistakes have little consequence, so we get away with them. And this regular support from good fortune lets us ignore the errors. After all, why would you dwell on things that don't seem to matter?

But if it takes a crash or near miss to catch your attention, then experience is a very bad teacher. It invites you to continue to gamble on the leniency of fate.

It also confuses your sense of danger since most of it is shrugged off.

So a pattern emerges where minor errors are repeated, and grow into bigger ones - until disaster strikes and inflicts a severe punishment.



Secondly, and even more of a hindrance, is that we deliberately blame bad luck for crashes.

We call them "accidents". Which is a wonderfully convenient word, meaning "an event without apparent cause, a happening by chance".

What a superb release from feeling responsible!

With these two millstones around the collective mind of motorists, it is not surprising that a lot of danger is ignored, and:

**the average sense of danger is quite poorly developed.**

Specifically frail are the abilities to:

- detect risks very early, when they are easier to handle
- assess danger objectively, when luck can so often seem to affect the outcome
- control threats actively to keep them at a safe level.

The following sections examine the causes of risk quite radically, and build into a simple model that will:

- explain risk in terms you can detect and make decisions about
- show how danger always has multiple causes
- give a clear structure for a vast expansion in your thinking about danger.

### 2.2.1 Defining risk

**Key point:** - Risk is about the probability and the consequences of a collision. And they should not be confused.

We said before that risk is inevitable in driving. And that in practical terms, "safe" must actually be a deliberate reduction of danger, by actively managing risk. Furthermore, it is pointless to demand that risk is zero, or that someone else should take care of it.

The start point is:

**to be totally clear about what risk really is.**

Turning again to the dictionary, the definition of "risk" refers to the chance of something happening, and the bad consequences.

This is immediately useful in separating two things that are often confused:

1. the probability of a collision happening
2. the consequences if it does.

The first is about avoiding a crash, and the second is about how severe it would be.

