



Ross Bentley's High Performance Driving Tips - #1

HIGH PERFORMANCE DRIVING

The other day I was asked if the advanced driving instruction I give was "defensive driving". I immediately responded "no", and then tried to explain what "advanced driver training" really is. That's when the old sports saying, "the best defence is a good offence" came to mind.

Why? Well, I thought, in today's driving world, being "defensive" is not the best tact to take. Instead, being somewhat "offensive" seems to be a better solution. Now, don't get the wrong impression here! I'm not talking about going around forcing people off the road, driving at excessive speeds, and being overly aggressive.

What I'm really talking about is being pro-active in your driving - what I call a "high performance driving".

What is a "high performance driver"? First, what it isn't. It's not someone who races around the streets at high speed. It's not necessarily a race car driver. Being a "high performance driver" means many things: always driving in control of your vehicle and the situations and conditions around you; always driving smoothly and with finesse; being confident and sympathetic; and always thinking about what you're doing behind the wheel. In other words, you can be a high performance safe driver - being safer than the average driver.

The bottom line is "high performance driving" means driving at the highest performance level – driving at your very best - in whatever you do, whether that be driving a twisty mountain highway, competing in a slalom event, avoiding a collision on a busy city street, controlling a skid on an icy road, or just creeping along comfortably in rush hour traffic.

That's what this article, and the ones to follow, are all about... helping you discover the necessary skills, techniques and mental attitude to become a "high performance driver"; and the enjoyment and sense of pride that comes from that.

Now, I would like you to think about something for a moment. Recall being a passenger. There are some drivers you feel comfortable with - and confident in their driving abilities. I'll also bet there are some people you never want to ride with again in your life!

So, what's the difference?

In most cases, the driver with whom you feel uncomfortable (or even scared) probably had you rocking and pitching about in the seat with every brake and gas pedal application, each turn of the steering wheel. It wasn't a very smooth ride, was it?

In fact, driving smoothly - driving with *finesse* - is the most important *technique* of a "high performance driver".

However, it's more than good skills and techniques. It also takes the right *attitude*. In fact, if I had to pick one single factor that contributes most to "high performance driving", it would be to keep an *open mind* - a willingness to always want to improve and learn more about driving. The best "high performance drivers" are always the ones who are ready to learn something new every time they get behind the wheel.

Vehicles have advanced so much over the past decade. Superior braking, steering, handling and safety systems are a part of every vehicle today. But to get the most out of these high-tech systems, drivers must continually upgrade their knowledge and techniques.

By improving your skills, you'll feel more confident in your ability behind the wheel. By keeping an open mind, you'll experience enjoyment in everyday driving. These are some of the keys to being a "high performance driver". And, I'm sure you will agree, if more drivers became "high performance drivers", today's roads would be a much safer place.

So, in future articles I will deal with everything from shifting basics to skid control and the ideal cornering line; and the attitudes behind "high performance driving". You will probably notice that all of my tips apply equally to the racetrack, the slalom course, and the street, as long as you respect the safety limits of each. I can't stress that enough. Driving inappropriately for the conditions or situation is just plain stupid. High performance driving means driving smart.

Ross Bentley, Senior Instructor, Driving Unlimited
Professional Race Driver