The main ingredient of defensive driving is attitude. To be a defensive driver, you must always drive with genuine concern for your own safety and that of others. Defensive drivers are not quick to lose their patience or temper, but are not timid or overcautious either. They are confident and make good decisions.

Driver error is the root cause of 85 per cent of motor vehicle collisions on Ontario’s roads and highways.* If we are the problem, then we are also the solution. Understanding why and learning what we can do about it are essential to becoming a defensive driver.

Defensive Driving techniques
Defensive drivers use techniques they’ve learned that allow them to drive safely, over and above what is required by law. Defensive drivers are aware of their surroundings at all times and can foresee possible dangers. Instead of depending on other people to do the right thing, they leave extra time and space in case another driver doesn’t slow down in time or merge safely.

Defensive drivers know where the blind spots are on other cars and trucks, and they make sure not to drive where they can’t be seen. They also stay the correct

*According to statistics provided by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation.
distance behind the vehicle in front of them so they
don’t have to keep braking—they don’t find themselves
without enough space to avoid an injury. They also
make sure they have an escape route in case there is a
collision close to them.

A defensive driver concentrates on the task at hand.
There are lots of things that can be distracting—
electronic devices like cell phones, laptops, and GPS
units, as well as factors such as fatigue and worries
about home or work. If a driver doesn’t pay attention to
those things when they’re behind the wheel, they will
find it easier to concentrate on driving. Remember—in
Ontario it’s illegal to use any hand-held communication
or entertainment devices while driving or to look at
display screens that are unrelated to the driving task.

Another essential part of defensive driving is to drive
at a speed that’s safe for the conditions. When the
weather makes the road slippery or reduces visibility,
the drivers who use a little less speed will get to their
destination safely.

A driver’s physical well-being is also important
because hearing, vision, and fatigue can all affect your
driving ability. So it’s important to take stock of these
factors before driving: Have you got your glasses with
you? Did you have breakfast this morning? Did you get
enough sleep?

Sometimes a defensive attitude begins before you even
get behind the wheel. It’s important to inspect a vehicle,
whether it’s a company truck or your own car, before
hitting the road. If a driver notices an under-inflated tire
or an oil patch before heading out, it can save time and
annoyance and possibly prevent an accident.

Those are just a few of the things you can do to
become a defensive driver, but the most important one
is to have the right attitude. It can have a tremendous
effect on your own safety and the safety of those who
share the road with you.

How IHSA can help
If you want to learn how to become a defensive driver,
IHSA has several training courses that can help. No
matter what type of vehicle you use, IHSA can teach you
the basic concepts, factors, and practices of defensive
driving. You can also learn how to teach IHSA’s courses
yourself by taking one of our instructor workshops.

• Defensive Driving—Commercial
• Defensive Driving—Commercial Instructor
  Workshop
• Defensive Driving—G Class Driver
• Defensive Driving for Emergency Response
  Personnel
• School Bus Improvement Course
• School Bus Improvement Instructor Workshop

Visit ihsa.ca to find out when and where our courses
are taking place. And if you can’t find a course in your
area, let us know and we’ll do our best to meet your
training needs.