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Ten Tips/Lessons For Commuters

It was almost seven years ago that I left New York City. I had had a car growing up in the Midwest, but it was always a funmobile... a tool for road trips, concert quests and general mayhem. I gave it up after a while living where public transportation rules. But then new job came along out West and Manifest Destiny required wheels. So I bought some.

Eventually, I returned to New York, but I was an upstate gal. In other words, still a driver. But this time it was for work more than pleasure. I was commuting an hour or more each way every day to work.



Recently I moved back down to the Big Apple and gave up the car lifestyle once again and have put my life in the hands of New York's finest cab drivers.

As my farewell to my fine automobile, and to the frustrations of that daily commute, I offer these pearls of wisdom acquired over these last few years.

Mergers And Accusations: When you see a sign that tells you a lane is closed ahead or that you're approaching an accident, here's a novel idea... get out of that lane. No, I don't mean keep going until you're right up on the merge. I mean, when you see the sign and you see an opening in the lane next to you, just slide on over then and get it over with. Oh, what's that? You don't want to be a whopping four or five cars behind where you'll ultimately be after you and your rebellious non-merging pals finally start this process? Yeah, you'll live.



Busted!: Car windows are not one-way mirrors. We all see you picking your nose.

Car Karma: Letting someone switch lanes instead of speeding up to keep them from getting into the lane ahead of you is not a sign of weakness. Slow down and wave them in. You'll feel better about yourself. Riding up on a car flashing your lights maniacally while screaming "Get ooooooover!!!" when they're not going the speed you want them to go is likely to backfire. Smile instead, catch their eye when they look in there rear view and gently motion that you'd appreciate their moving over for a sec.



The Cop Crawl: When you see that a police officer has pulled someone over, has his car in park with the lights flashing and is standing at the window of the offending driver, you have nothing to worry about. So there's no need to do five miles under the speed limit until he's out of your rear view mirror's range. It's not like he's gonna spot you with his naked eye, say to the person he's writing up "My goodness, that guy's doing 70 in a 65! Stay here!"

And then jump into his car to chase you down. Relax.

Lane Of The Free: I've never gone shopping for an SUV, but I'm starting to believe that somewhere in their pitches sales people are telling potential buyers "Oh, and if you get this sweet baby, you'll have unlimited control of every left lane everywhere." Newsflash, SUV driver, you don't own the left lane. And sometimes smaller cars are no only capable of going as fast if not faster than you, but they actually want to do so. So move over you self-indulgent, gas guzzling weenie!

Not So EZ Pass: Despite its name, the EZ Pass (the Northeast's electronic toll collection system) is actually quite difficult for some drivers. First of all, if you don't have an EZ Pass and you're approaching a toll, here's a tip: look for the yellow flashing lights ahead and drive away from them toward the green

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flashing lights. If you have an EZ Pass, please recognize that 5 MPH is not synonymous with "come to a complete stop." But even if it did, why would you stop so far away from the sensor that it can't actually read your pass and switch the signal to EZ Pass Go? Just... you know... go!



Thank You, Please: What ever happened to waving? Whether it's letting you go at a stop sign even though it's clearly my turn or I've slowed down to let you get into the lane ahead of me, I've shaved seconds off of my life helping you out. Where's the gratitude? I'm not asking for your firstborn or a declaration of eternal love. Just a flick of the wrist to acknowledge that

without me, you'd be back where you started.

Dear Jersey Plates: How ya doin'? Listen, I just want to take a sec to acquaint you with this awesome feature your car has. It's called a "turn signal." What you do is, you push a little bar or button near your steering wheel and as if by magic, lights on your car start to blink. This is kinda cool because then the people driving near you have a little hint that you're about to do something that might affect them: namely, switch lanes in front of or behind them. Cool... right??

Not Exit Only: This requires a little bit of logic and anticipation, but once you grasp it, it just makes everyone's life so much easier. When you see an exit sign, sure, that means people are going to be moving over to drive their cars off of the road you're on and onto another road. That's pretty universally understood. What seems to be overlooked, however, is that simultaneously there are people who want to move from that other road onto the one you're on, too. So, just bear that in mind and perhaps when you see an exit move over to the left for a minute and let those people get onto the road without having to slow down to a near stop and back traffic up the other way or potentially sideswipe you forcing themselves into traffic.



Driver's Zen: You can choose to be a glass half empty person and dread your commute, ultimately making it seem much longer than it actually is. Or you can look at the glass as half full and look at it like some awesome alone time. Crank the tunes, sing out loud, have fun. Enjoy the ride!

Posted by [Rothman](#) on Aug 20 02:00

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