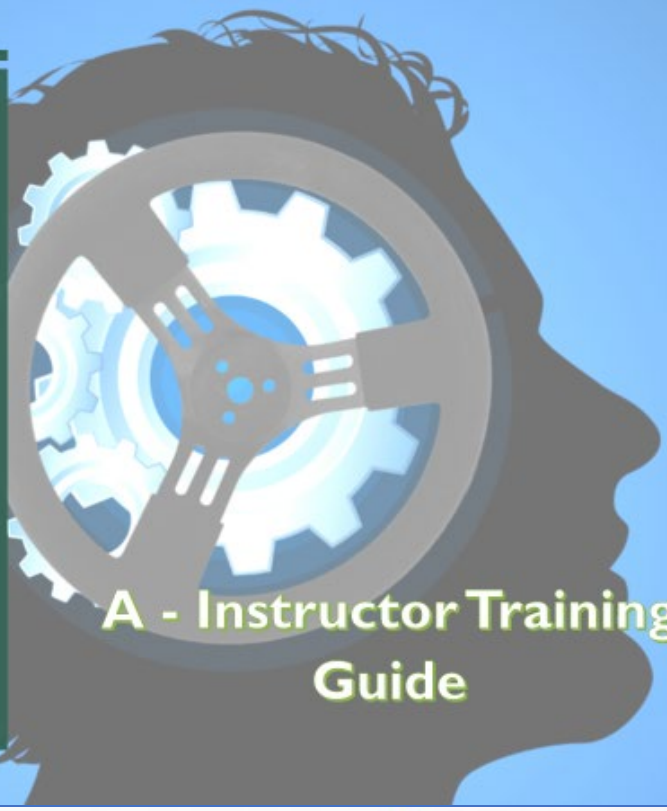
A

# DECISION MAKING PROCESS

PA ENHANCED DRIVING GUIDE



## A - Instructor Training Guide

Be Ready, Be Safe, Be Responsible

# STOP-THINK-GO

"A Matter of Driver & Traffic Safety"

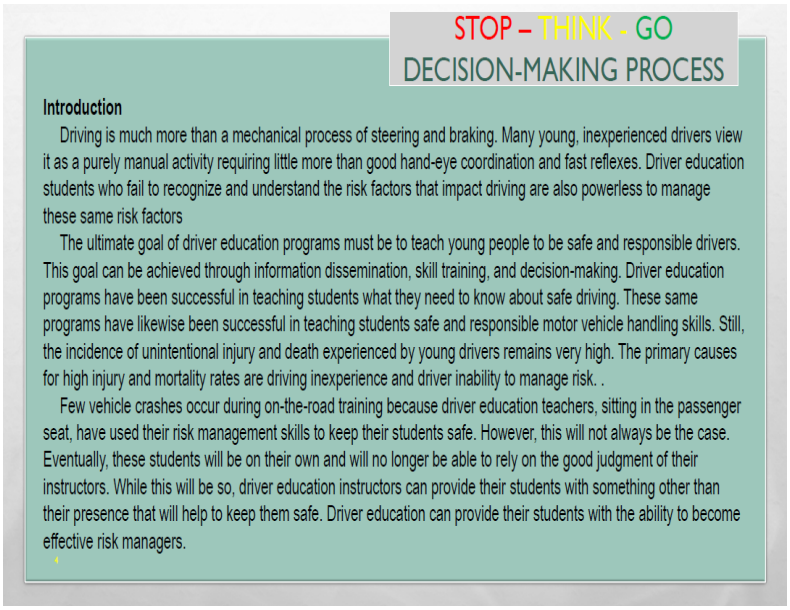
pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

IUP Institute for Rural Health & Safety

STOP – THINK - GO
DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

## Contents


| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | Introduction | 40 | Processing the Dilemma |
| 8 | Purpose | 49 | Reasons Why Students Fail to use Decision-Making |
| 11 | Driver Limitations | 54 | Decision-Making Applications |
| 14 | Human Errors | 53 | Case Situations |
| 15 | Process | 54 | Exams |
| 21 | STOP-THINK & GO Decision-Making Process | 55 | Slide Video Case Situations |
| 28 | Right, Reality, & Responsibility | 56 | Simulations |
| 37 | Practice | 57 | Role Plays |
| 38 | A Driving Dilemma | 57 | Crash Reenactments |
| 39 | Decision-Making Worksheet | 58 | Behind-the-Wheel Decision-Making |

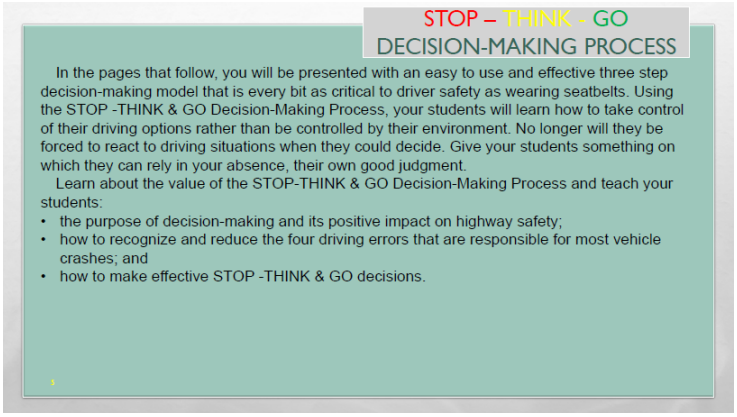



Introduction

Driving is much more than a mechanical process of steering and braking. Many young, inexperienced drivers view it as a purely manual activity requiring little more than good hand-eye coordination and fast reflexes. Driver education students who fail to recognize and understand the risk factors that impact driving are also powerless to manage these same risk factors.

The ultimate goal of driver education programs must be to teach young people to be safe and responsible drivers. This goal can be achieved through information dissemination, skill training, and decision-making. Driver education programs have been successful in teaching students what they need to know about safe driving. These same programs have likewise been successful in teaching students safe and responsible motor vehicle handling skills. Still, the incidence of unintentional injury and death experienced by young drivers remains very high. The primary causes for high injury and mortality rates are driving inexperience and driver inability to manage risk.

Few vehicle crashes occur during on-the-road training because driver education teachers, sitting in the passenger seat, have used their risk management skills to keep their students safe. However, this will not always be the case. Eventually, these students will be on their own and will no longer be able to rely on the good judgment of their instructors. While this will be so, driver education instructors can provide their students with something other than their presence that will help to keep them safe. Driver education teachers can provide their students with the ability to become effective risk managers.




Introduction

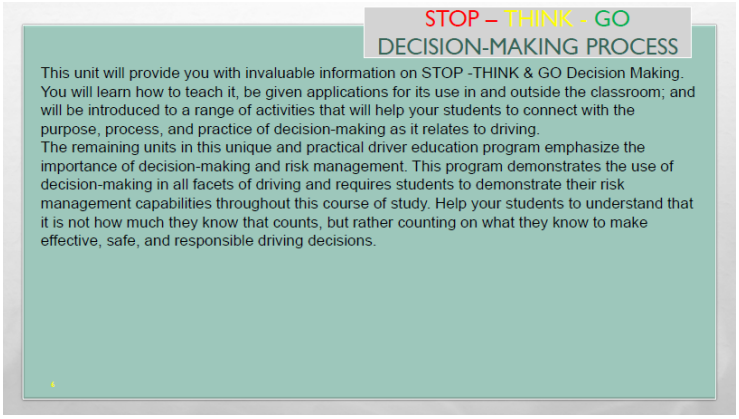
In the pages that follow, you will be presented with an easy to use and effective three step decision-making model that is every bit as critical to driver safety as wearing seatbelts. Using the STOP -THINK & GO Decision-Making Process, your students will learn how to take control of their driving options rather than be controlled by their environment. No longer will they be forced to react to driving situations when they could decide. Give your students something on which they can rely in your absence, their own good judgment.

Learn about the value of the STOP-THINK & GO Decision-Making Process and teach your students:

the purpose of decision-making and its positive impact on highway safety;

how to recognize and reduce the four driving errors that are responsible for most vehicle crashes; and

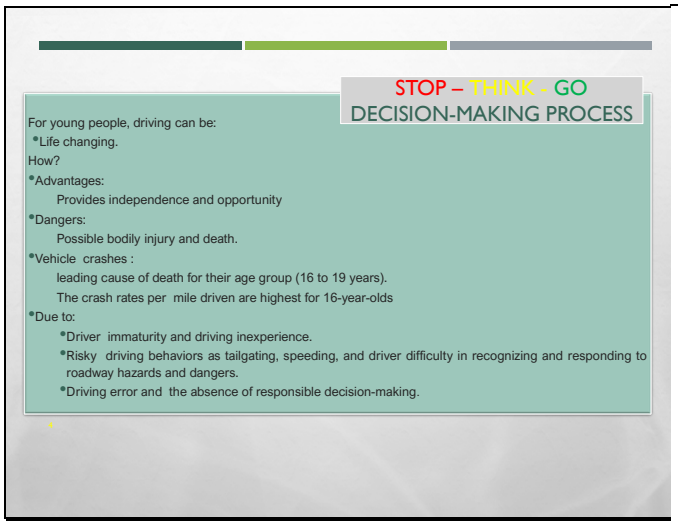
how to make effective STOP -THINK & GO decisions.




This unit will provide you with invaluable information on STOP -THINK & GO Decision Making. You will learn how to teach it, be given applications for its use in and outside the classroom; and

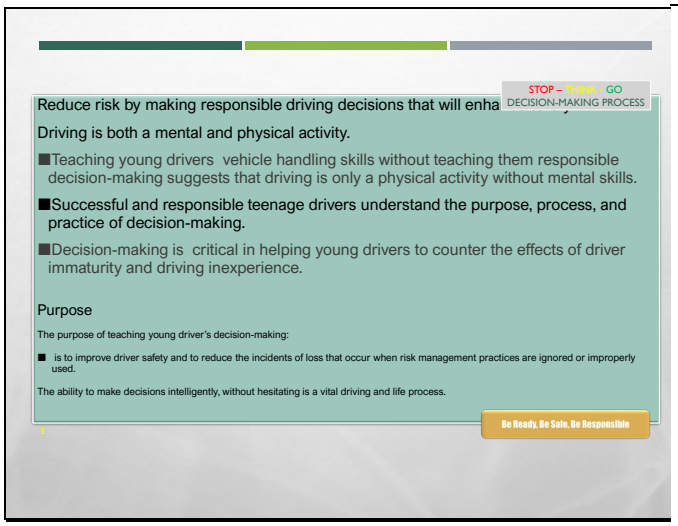
will be introduced to a range of activities that will help your students to connect with the purpose, process, and practice of decision-making as it relates to driving.

The remaining units in this unique and practical driver education program emphasize the importance of decision-making and risk management. This program demonstrates the use of decision-making in all facets of driving and requires students to demonstrate their risk management capabilities throughout this course of study. Help your students to understand that it is not how much they know that counts, but rather counting on what they know to make effective, safe, and responsible driving decisions.




## STOP - THINK & GO DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

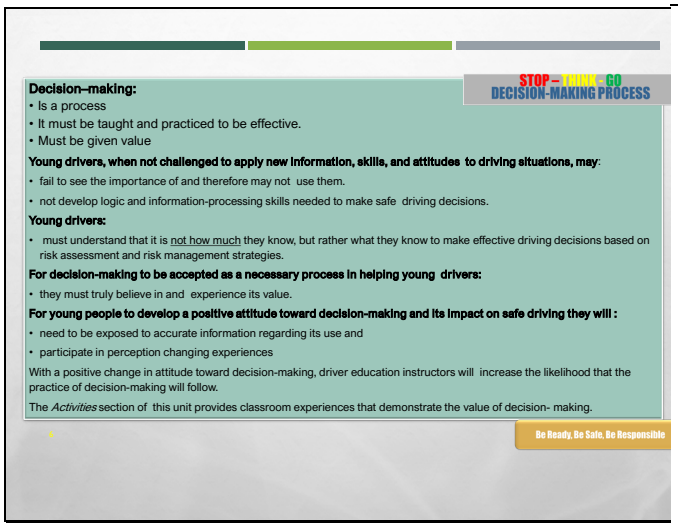
Driving is a life changing experience. For some young people, it will provide them with independence and opportunity while others will face bodily injury and death. What many teenage drivers don't understand is that despite the advantages of driving, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for their age group (16 to 19 years). The crash rates per mile driven are highest for 16-year-olds, the age when most beginning drivers obtain their licenses. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the US Department of Transportation believe that the high incidence of vehicular crashes among teenagers is largely due to driver immaturity and driving inexperience. This deadly combination of deficits accounts for such risky driving behaviors as tailgating, speeding, and driver difficulty in recognizing and responding to roadway hazards and dangers. Consequently, teenage drivers find themselves in difficulty when responding to routine and changing driving situations which require them to be effective risk managers. Indeed, most crashes involving young drivers can be related to driving error and the absence of responsible decision-making.




Since driving is a hazardous activity, drivers must be prepared to make responsible driving decisions that will enhance human safety. Driving is both a mental and physical activity. Teaching young drivers vehicle handling skills in the absence of teaching them effective and responsible decision- making is to suggest that driving is purely a robotic activity completely devoid of logic and reason. Successful and responsible teenage drivers understand the purpose, process, and practice of decision-making. Decision-making is a critical factor in helping young drivers to counter the effects of driver immaturity and driving inexperience, the two leading causes of vehicular crashes, death, and disability in this population.

**Purpose**

The purpose of teaching young driver's decision-making is to improve driver safety and to reduce the incidents of loss that occur when risk management practices are ignored or improperly used. The ability to make decisions intelligently, without procrastinating or vacillating, is a vital driving and life process.




As with any process, decision-making must be taught and practiced if it is to be used effectively. To recognize decision-making as a central condition of driving and then fail to integrate this process into every dimension of driver education is to negate its importance as a life-saving tool.

Young drivers, who are not challenged to apply newly acquired information, skills, and attitudes to driving situations, may fail to see the importance of these teachings and therefore may not use them. They will not develop logic and information-processing skills needed to make safe driving decisions in fluid environments.

Young drivers must understand that it is not how much they know that counts, but rather counting on what they know to make effective driving decisions based on solid risk assessment and risk management strategies.

In order for decision-making to be accepted as a necessary and viable process in helping young drivers to get from where they are to where they want to be safely, they must truly believe in and experience its value. If young people are to develop a positive attitude toward decision- making and its impact on safe driving, they will need to be exposed to accurate information regarding its use and participate in perception changing experiences that will amplify its virtues.

With a positive change in attitude toward decision-making, driver education instructors will increase the likelihood that the practice of decision-making will follow. The *Activities* section of this unit provides classroom experiences that demonstrate the value of decision- making.

Driver education instructors can help young drivers to develop a positive appreciation for decision-making. They can help them to understand that most vehicular crashes involving their age group occur because of driver limitations and human error, both of which can be reduced through effective decision-making. They also must learn that most poor decisions are not the fault of the process, but rather lie with the decision-maker's failure to use the process correctly.

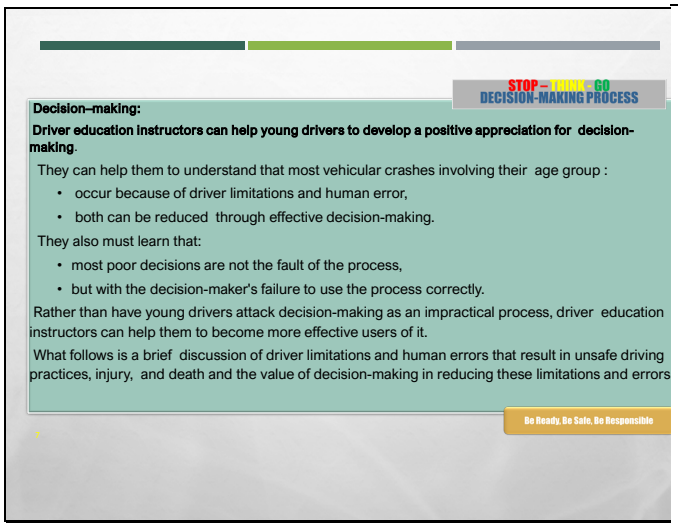
Rather than have young drivers attack decision-making as an impractical process, driver education instructors can help them to become more effective users of it. What follow is a brief discussion of driver limitations and human errors that result in unsafe driving practices, injury, and death and the value of decision-making in reducing these limitations and errors?

**Driver Limitations**

Learning to make effective driving decisions is contingent upon helping young people to understand how they limit their driving options in the absence of decision-making. What follows is an explanation of three ways in which young drivers compromise their driving safety without knowing it.

1. **Decisions are limited by a driver's capabilities.**

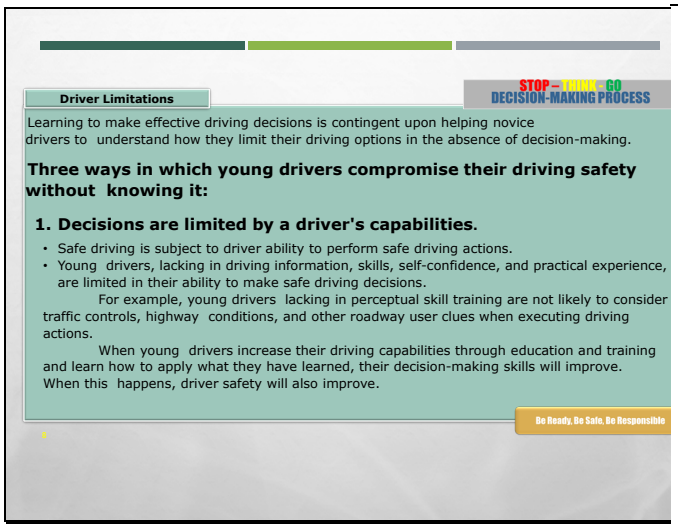
   Safe driving is contingent upon driver ability to perform safe driving actions. Young drivers, lacking in driving information, skills, self-confidence, and practical experience, are limited in their ability to make safe driving decisions. For example, young drivers lacking in perceptual skill training are not likely to consider traffic controls, highway conditions, and other roadway user clues when executing driving actions. When young drivers increase their driving capabilities through education and training and learn how to apply what they have learned, their decision-making skills will improve. When this happens, driver safety will also improve.




**Decision–making:**

Driver education instructors can help young drivers to develop a positive appreciation for decision-making. They can help them to understand that most vehicular crashes involving their age group occur because of driver limitations and human error, both of which can be reduced through effective decision-making. They also must learn that most poor decisions are not the fault of the process, but rather lie with the decision-maker's failure to use the process correctly.

Rather than have young drivers attack decision-making as an impractical process, driver education instructors can help them to become more effective users of it. What follow is a brief discussion of driver limitations and human errors that result in unsafe driving practices, injury, and death and the value of decision-making in reducing these limitations and errors?

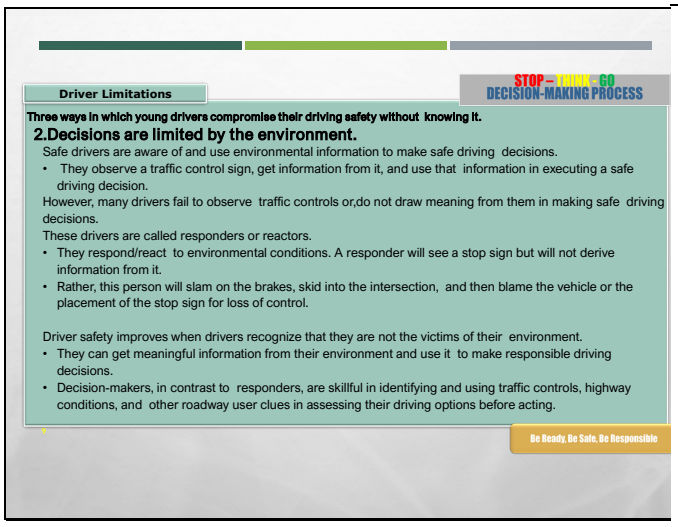



**Driver Limitations**

Learning to make effective driving decisions is contingent upon helping young people to understand how they limit their driving options in the absence of decision-making. What follows is an explanation of three ways in which young drivers compromise their driving safety without knowing it.

1. **Decisions are limited by a driver's capabilities.**

   Safe driving is contingent upon driver ability to perform safe driving actions. Young drivers, lacking in driving information, skills, self-confidence, and practical experience, are limited in their ability to make safe driving decisions. For example, young drivers lacking in perceptual skill training are not likely to consider traffic controls, highway conditions, and other roadway user clues when executing driving actions. When young drivers increase their driving capabilities through education and training and learn how to apply what they have learned, their decision-making skills will improve. When this happens, driver safety will also improve.

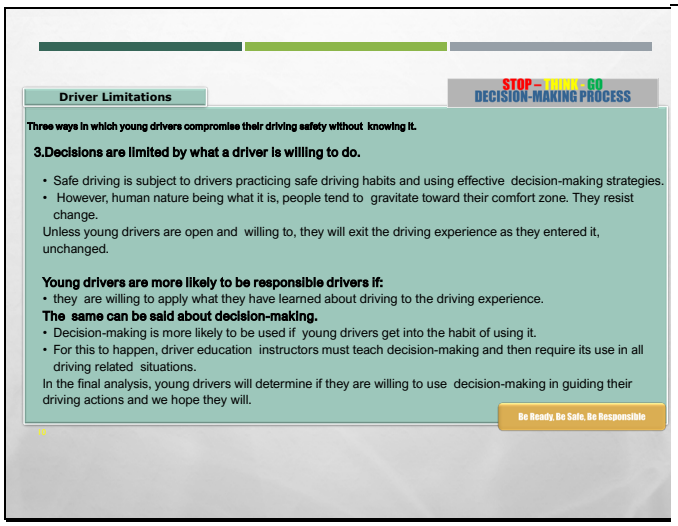



**Driver Limitations**

Learning to make effective driving decisions is contingent upon helping young people to understand how they limit their driving options in the absence of decision-making. What follows is an explanation of three ways in which young drivers compromise their driving safety without knowing it.

- **Decisions are limited by the environment.**
  Safe drivers are aware of and use environmental information to make safe driving decisions. They observe a traffic control sign, derive information from it, and use that information in executing a safe driving decision. However, many drivers fail to observe traffic controls or if they see them, they do not derive meaning from them in making safe driving decisions. These drivers are called responders or reactors. They respond/react to environmental conditions. A responder will see a stop sign but will not derive information from it. Rather, this person will slam on the brakes, skid into the intersection, and then blame the vehicle or the placement of the stop sign for Joss of control.

Driver safety will improve when drivers recognize that they are not the victims of their environment. They can derive meaningful information from their environment and use it to make safe and responsible driving decisions. Decision-makers, in contrast to responders, are skillful in identifying and using traffic controls, highway conditions, and other roadway user clues in assessing their driving options before taking action.



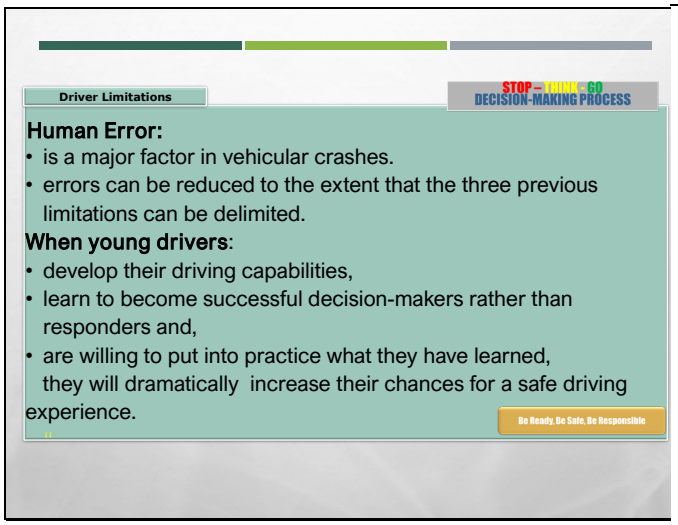

**Driver Limitations**

Learning to make effective driving decisions is contingent upon helping young people to understand how they limit their driving options in the absence of decision-making. What follows is an explanation of three ways in which young drivers compromise their driving safety without knowing it.

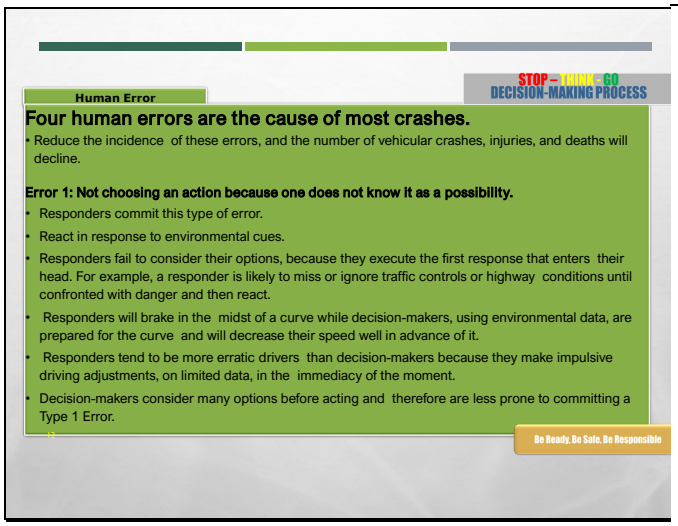
- **Decisions are limited by what a driver is willing to do.**

  Safe driving is contingent upon drivers practicing safe driving habits and using effective decision-making strategies. However, human nature being what it is, people tend to gravitate toward their comfort zone. They resist change. Unless young drivers are open to change and are willing to do so, they will exit the driving experience as they entered it, unchanged.

  Young drivers are more likely to be safe and responsible drivers to the extent that they are willing to apply what they hav e learned about driving to the driving experience. The same can be said about decision-making. Decision-making is more likely to be used if young drivers get into the habit of using it. For this to happen, driver education instructors must teach decision-making and then require its use in all driving related situations. In the final analysis, young drivers will determine if they are willing to use decision-making in guiding their driving actions and we hope they will.

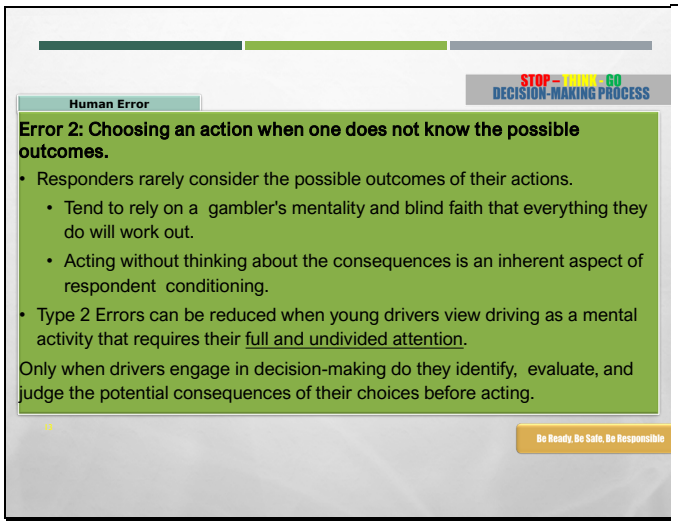



**Driver Limitations**
**Human Errors**
Human error is a major factor in vehicular crashes. Many of these errors can be significantly reduced to the extent that the three previous limitations can be delimited. When young drivers develop their driving capabilities, learn to become successful decision-makers rather than responders, and are willing to put into practice what they have learned, they will dramatically increase their chances for a safe driving experience.

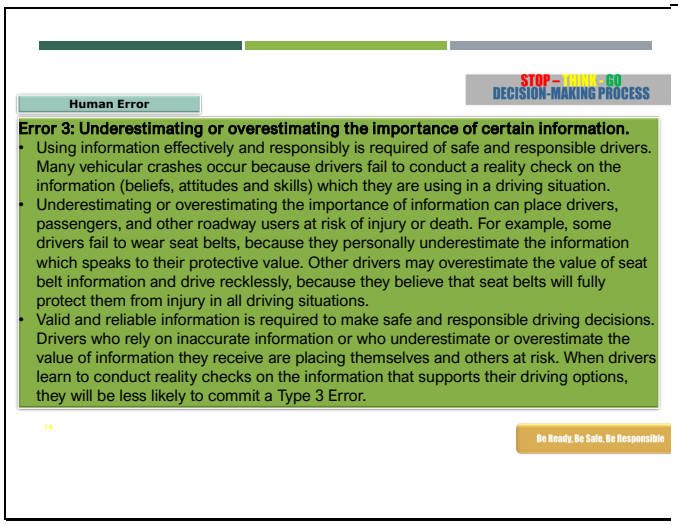



**Human Error**
**Four human errors are the cause of most crashes.**
The following four human errors are the cause of most vehicular crashes. Reduce the incidence of these errors, and the number of vehicular crashes, injuries, and deaths will decline.

**Error 1: Not choosing an action because one does not know it as a possibility.**
Responders commit this type of error. They react in response to environmental cues. Responders fail to consider their options, because they execute the first response that enters their head. For example, a responder is likely to miss or ignore traffic controls or highway conditions until they are confronted with danger and then react. Responders will brake in the midst of a curve while decision-makers, using environmental data, are prepared for the curve and will decrease their speed well in advance of it. Responders tend to be more erratic drivers than decision-makers because they make impulsive driving adjustments, on limited data, in the immediacy of the moment. Decision-makers consider many options before taking action and therefore are less prone to committing a Type 1 Error.




**Human Error**
**Error 2: Choosing an action even though one does not know the possible outcomes.**
Responders rarely consider the possible outcomes of their actions. They tend to rely on a gambler's mentality and blind faith (wishful thinking) that everything they do will work out in their favor. Acting without thinking about the consequences is an inherent aspect of respondent conditioning.
Type 2 Errors can be reduced when young drivers view driving as a mental activity that requires their full and undivided attention. Only when drivers engage in decision-making do they identify, evaluate, and judge the potential consequences of their choices before acting.

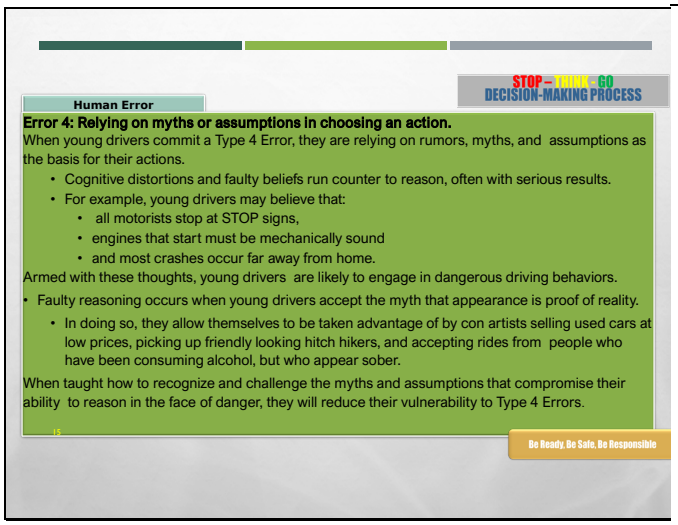



**Error 3: Underestimating or overestimating the importance of certain information.**

Using information effectively and responsibly is required of safe and responsible drivers. Many vehicular crashes occur because drivers fail to conduct a reality check on the information (beliefs, attitudes and skills) which they are using in a driving situation.

Underestimating or overestimating the importance of information can place drivers, passengers, and other roadway users at risk of injury or death. For example, some drivers fail to wear seat belts, because they personally underestimate the information which speaks to their protective value. Other drivers may overestimate the value of seat belt information and drive recklessly, because they believe that seat belts will fully protect them from injury in all driving situations.

Valid and reliable information is required to make safe and responsible driving decisions. Drivers who rely on inaccurate information or who underestimate or overestimate the value of information they receive are placing themselves and others at risk. When drivers learn to conduct reality checks on the information that supports their driving options, they will be less likely to commit a Type 3 Error.

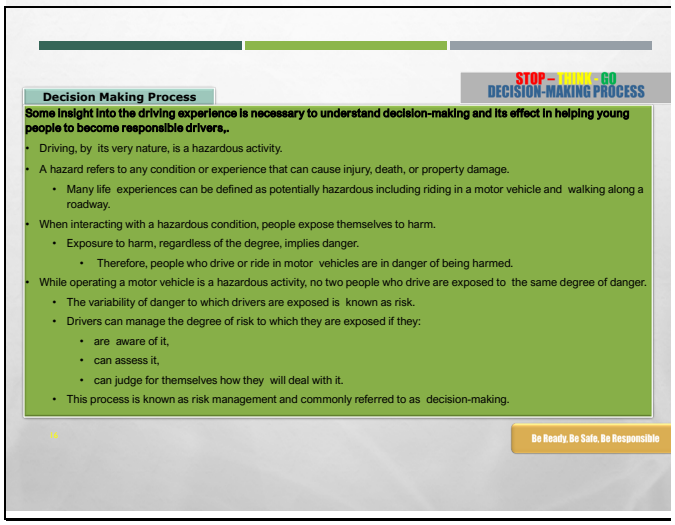



**Human Error**

**Error 4: Relying on myths or assumptions in choosing an action.**

When young drivers commit a Type 4 Error, they are relying on rumors, myths, and assumptions as the basis for their actions. Cognitive distortions and faulty beliefs run counter to reason, often with dire consequences. For example, young drivers may believe that all motorists stop at STOP signs, vehicle engines that start must be mechanically sound and that most vehicular crashes occur far away from home. Armed with these thoughts, young drivers are likely to engage in dangerous driving behaviors.

Similar faulty reasoning occurs when young drivers accept the myth that appearance is a valid proof of reality. In doing so, they allow themselves to be taken advantage of by con artists selling used cars at low prices, picking up friendly looking hitch hikers, and accepting rides from people who have been consuming alcohol, but who appear sober. When young people are taught how to recognize and challenge the myths and assumptions that compromise their ability to reason in the face of danger, they will reduce their vulnerability to Type 4 Errors.




**Process**

In order to understand decision-making and its significance in helping young people to become safe and responsible drivers, some insight into the driving experience is necessary. Driving, by its very nature, is a hazardous activity. A hazard refers to any condition or experience that has the potential for causing injury, death, or property damage. Consequently, many life experiences can be defined as potentially hazardous including riding in a motor vehicle and walking along a roadway.

When people interact with a hazardous condition they expose themselves to harm. Exposure to harm, regardless of the degree, implies danger. Therefore, people who drive or ride in motor vehicles are in danger of being harmed.

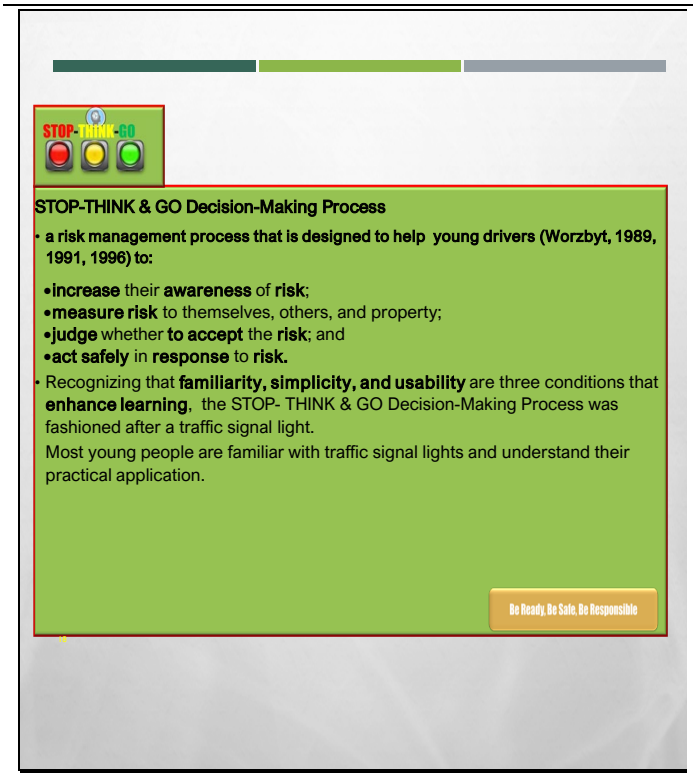
While operating a motor vehicle is a hazardous activity, no two people who drive are exposed to the same degree of danger (harm). The variability of danger to which drivers are exposed is known as risk. Drivers can manage the degree of risk to which they are exposed if they are aware of it, are able to assess it, and then are able to personally judge for themselves how they will address it.

his process is known as risk management and commonly referred to as decision-making.


When faced with a known risk, drivers have five options they can implement to increase their safety:

- **Risk Avoidance.** When the potential for personal risk to life and property is judged to be excessive, an individual may choose to avoid the risk altogether.
    - *Example:* Bob chooses not to ride in motor vehicles with drivers who have been consuming alcohol.
- **Risk Prevention.** Most driving situations pose a variety of dangers that can be corrected before the driver even gets behind-the-wheel.
    - *Example:* Before Bob enters his vehicle, he checks his tires for worn spots, washes his windshield, and checks and replaces worn engine hoses and belts.
- **Risk Reduction.** While risk prevention actions are applied in advance of being exposed to the risk, risk reduction methods are applied while participating in the risk- taking event.
    - *Example:* Susan uses traffic control information that warns her of a sharp curve in the road and she adjusts her speed accordingly (lowers speed).
- **Risk Protection.** When involved in a hazardous activity that poses physical harm, participants can anticipate that harm and protect their bodies.
    - *Example:* Bob and Susan wear seat belts as passengers and drivers in motor vehicles.
- **Risk Acceptance.** Recognizing that few things in life are perfectly safe, people have to judge the level of risk (harm) which they are willing to accept. This decision is made after considering ways in which the risk can be managed.
    - *Example:* Bob and Susan choose to accept the risk that driving a motor vehicle presents knowing that they have done what they can to make driving a relatively safe experience.

Decision-making (risk management) is designed to reduce driver limitations and human errors as they relate to the driving experience. What follows is an in-depth discussion of the decision-making process and how to use it effectively and responsibly.

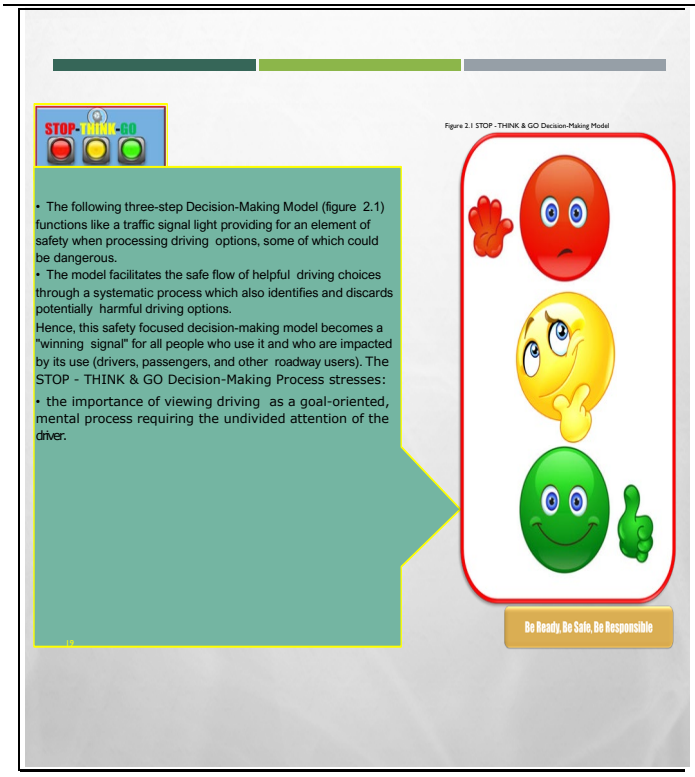



## STOP- THINK & GO Decision-Making Process

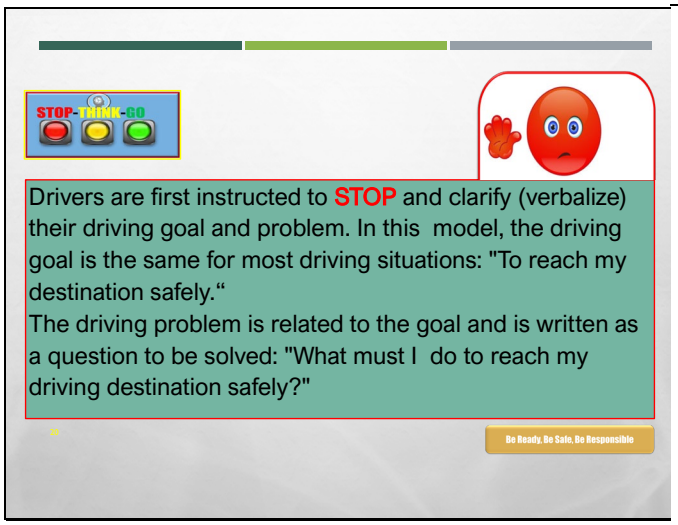
STOP - THINK (& GO Decision-Making is a risk management process that is designed to help young drivers (Worzbyt, 1989, 1991, 1996)

- increase their **awareness** of risk;
- **measure** risk to themselves, others, and property;
- **judge** whether to accept the risk; and
- **act** safely in response to risk.

Recognizing that familiarity, simplicity, and usability are three conditions that enhance learning, the STOP- THINK & GO Decision-Making Process was fashioned after a traffic signal light. Most young people are familiar with traffic signal lights and understand their practical application in helping to insure for the safe flow of vehicular and pedestrian traffic through busy and potentially dangerous intersections.

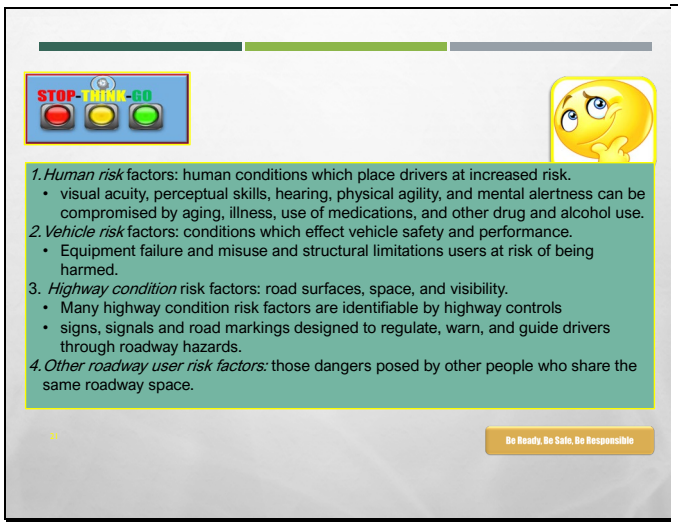



The following three-step Decision-Making Model (figure 2.1) functions like a traffic signal light providing for an element of safety when processing driving options, some of which could be dangerous. The model facilitates the safe flow of helpful driving choices through a systematic process which also identifies and discards potentially harmful driving options. Hence, this safety focused decision-making model becomes a "winning signal" for all people who use it and who are impacted by its use (drivers, passengers, and other roadway users).



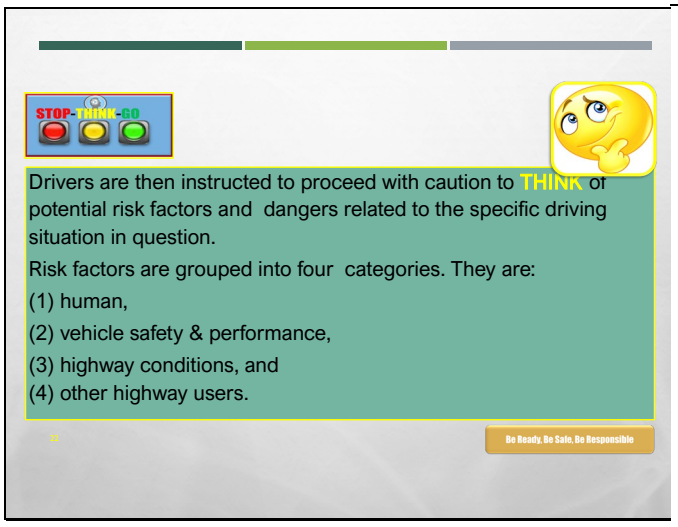

The STOP - THINK & GO Decision-Making Process stresses the importance of viewing driving as a goal-oriented, mental process requiring the undivided attention of the driver. Drivers are first instructed to STOP and clarify (verbalize) their driving goal and problem. In this model, the driving goal is the same for most driving situations: "To reach my destination safely." The driving problem is related to the goal and is written as a question to be solved: "What must I do to reach my driving destination safely?"

.

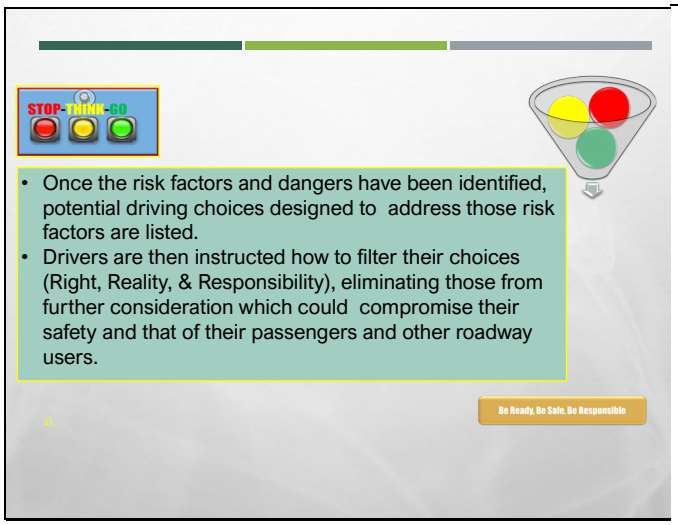



- *Human risk factors* relate to those human conditions which place drivers at increased risk. Factors such as visual acuity, perceptual skills, hearing, physical agility, and mental alertness can be compromised by such factors as aging, illness, use of medications, and other drug and alcohol use. •
- *Vehicle risk factors* relate to all those conditions which effect vehicle safety and performance. Equipment failure and misuse and structural limitations place driver, passengers, and other highway users at risk of being harmed.
- *Highway condition* risk factors relate to road surfaces, the availability of space, and visibility. Many highway condition risk factors are identifiable by highway controls such as signs, signals and road markings which are designed to regulate, warn, and guide drivers through roadway hazards.
- *Other roadway user risk factors* relate to those dangers posed by other people who

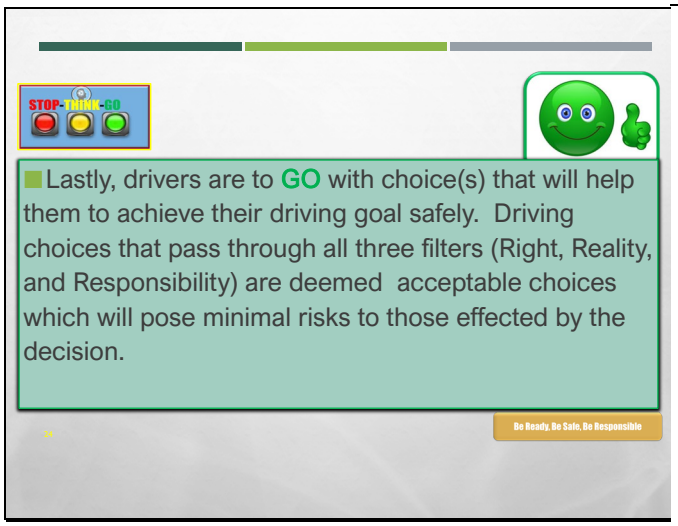
share the same roadway space.



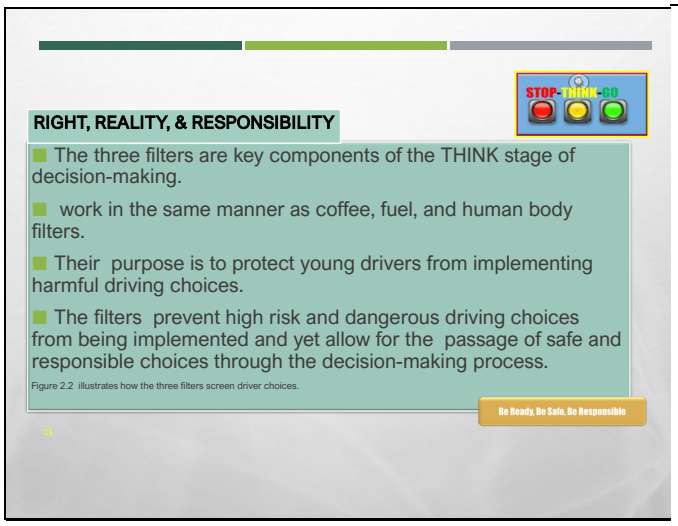

Human risk factors relate to those human conditions which place drivers at increased risk. Factors such as visual acuity, perceptual skills, hearing, physical agility, and mental alertness can be compromised by such factors as aging, illness, use of medications, and other drug and alcohol use. • Vehicle risk factors relate to all those conditions which effect vehicle safety and performance. Equipment failure and misuse and structural limitations place driver, passengers, and other highway users at risk of being harmed. • Highway condition risk factors relate to road surfaces, the availability of space, and visibility. Many highway condition risk factors are identifiable by highway controls such as signs, signals and road markings which are designed to regulate, warn, and guide drivers through roadway hazards.



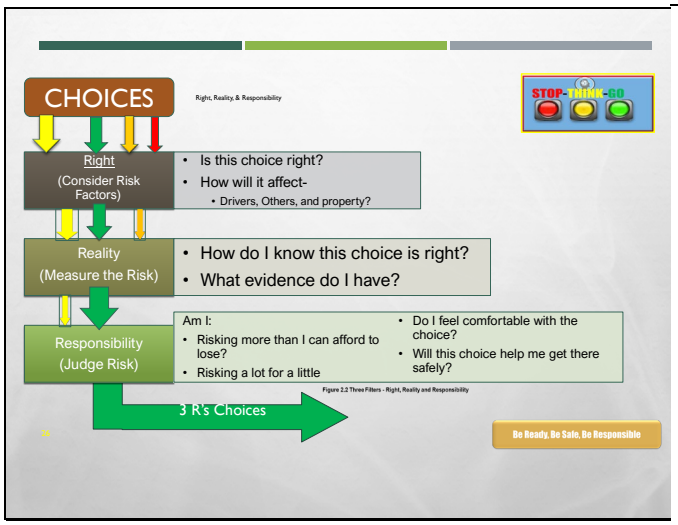

Once the risk factors and dangers have been identified, potential driving choices designed to address those risk factors are listed. Drivers are then instructed how to filter their choices (Right, Reality, & Responsibility), eliminating those from further consideration which could compromise their safety and that of their passengers and other roadway users.



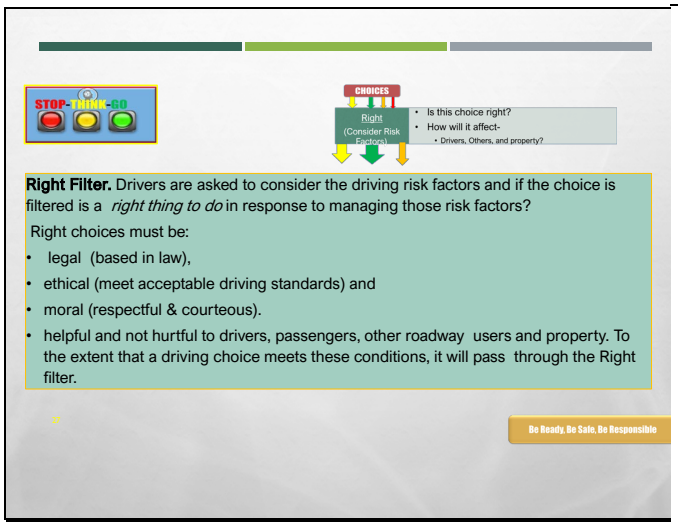

Lastly, drivers are to GO with choice(s) that will help them to achieve their driving goal safely. Driving choices that pass through all three filters (Right, Reality, and Responsibility) are deemed acceptable (safe) choices which will pose minimal risks to those effected by the decision.



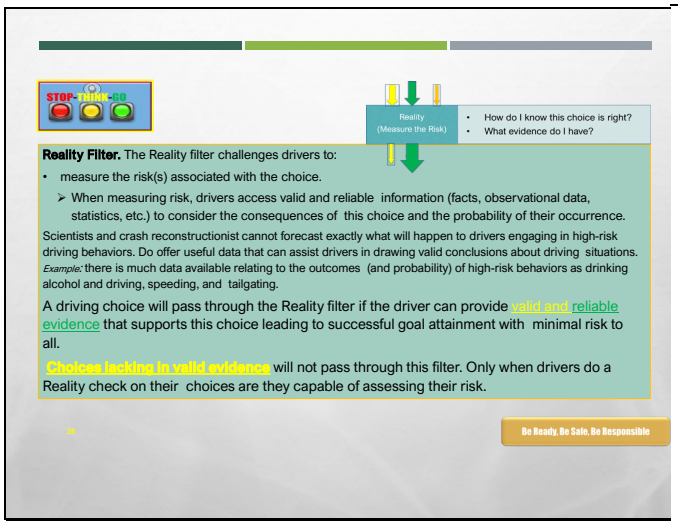

The three filters of Right, Reality, and Responsibility are key components of the THINK stage of decision-making. They work in the same manner as coffee, fuel, and human body filters. Their purpose is to protect young drivers from implementing harmful driving choices. The filters prevent high risk and dangerous driving choices from being implemented and yet allow for the passage of safe and responsible choices through the decision-making process. Figure 2.2 illustrates how the three filters screen driver choices.




When young drivers are confronted with a driving situation, they are encouraged to seek a 3R's solution. The three filters will help drivers to slow down and review their driving choices in light of the risks they present. High-risk choices are to be avoided and acceptable risk choices are to be managed and implemented with safety in mind (risk protection, risk prevention, and risk reduction).



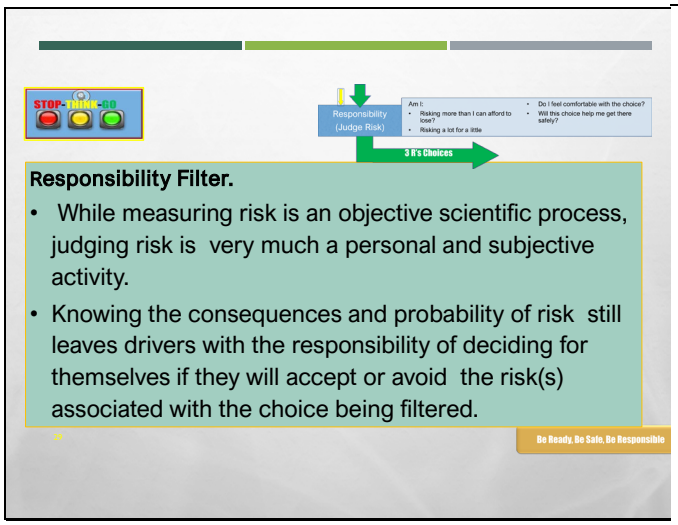

**Right Filter.** Drivers are asked to consider the driving risk factors and if the choice is filtered is a *right thing to do* in response to managing those risk factors? Right choices must be legal (based in law), ethical (meet acceptable driving standards) and moral (respectful & courteous). In addition, Right choices must be helpful and not hurtful to drivers, passengers, other roadway users and property. To the extent that a driving choice meets these conditions, it will pass through the Right filter.



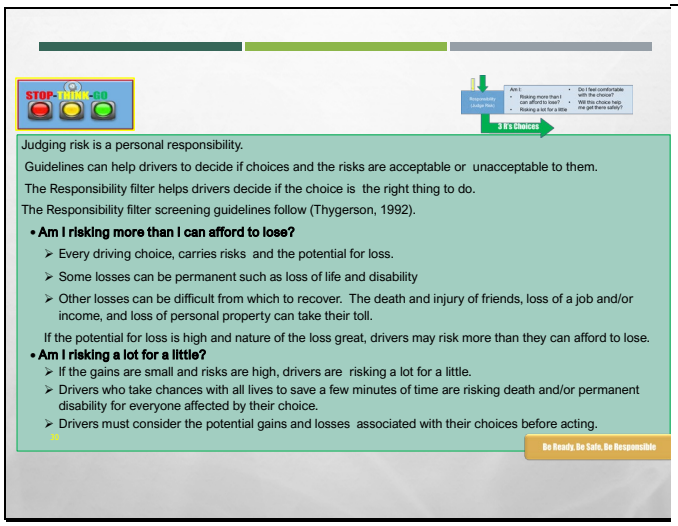

**Reality Filter.** The Reality filter challenges drivers to measure the risk(s) associated with the choice being considered. When measuring risk, drivers are to access valid and reliable information (facts, observational data, statistics, etc.) so they can consider the consequences of this choice and the probability of their occurrence.

While scientists and crash reconstructionist cannot forecast who, when, or what will happen to specific individuals who engage in high-risk driving behaviors, they are able to offer useful predictive data that can assist drivers in drawing valid conclusions about their own driving situation. For example, there is much available and valid data pertaining to the consequences (and probability) of such high-risk behaviors as drinking alcohol and driving, speeding, and tailgating.

A driving choice will pass through the Reality filter if the driver can provide valid and reliable evidence that supports this choice as one that will lead to successful goal attainment with minimal risk to driver, passengers and other roadway users. Choices lacking in valid and reliable evidence will not pass through this filter. Only when drivers do a Reality check on their choices are they capable of assessing their risk.

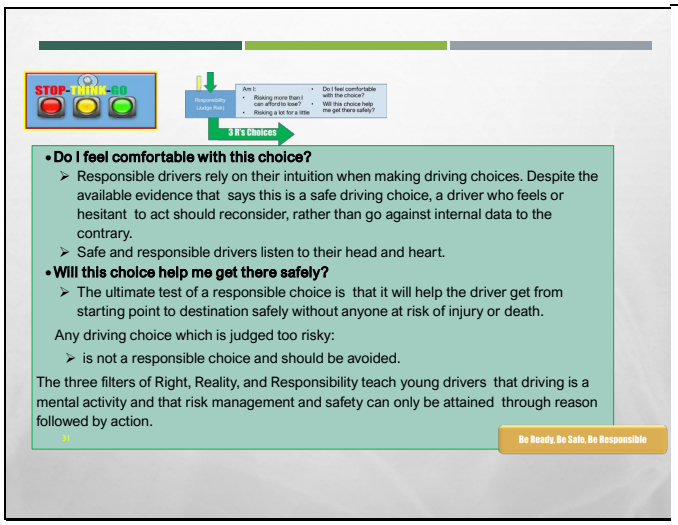



**Responsibility Filter.** While measuring risk is an objective scientific process, judging risk is very much a personal and subjective activity. Knowing the consequences and probability of risk still leaves drivers with the responsibility of deciding for themselves if they will accept or avoid the risk(s) associated with the choice being filtered.



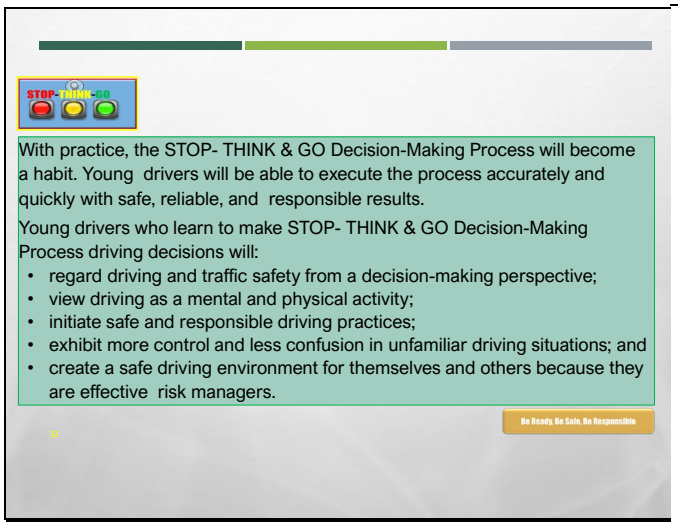

While judging risk is a personal responsibility, there are guidelines that drivers can apply in helping them to decide if a particular driving choice and the inherent risks are acceptable or unacceptable to them. The Responsibility filter helps drivers decide if the choice in question is the right thing to do. The Responsibility filter screening guidelines follow (Thygerson, 1992).

- **Am I risking more than I can afford to lose?** With every driving choice, there are risks and the potential for loss. Some losses can be permanent such as loss of life and physical and mental disability while other losses can be difficult from which to recover. The death and injury of friends, loss of a job and/or income, and loss of personal property can take their toll in human suffering. If the potential for loss is high and the nature of the Joss great, drivers may be risking more than they can afford to lose.
- **Am I risking a lot for a little?** If the gains are small and the risks are high, drivers are risking a lot for a little. Drivers who take chances with their Jives and the lives of others to save a few minutes of time are risking death and/or permanent disability for everyone affected by their high-risk choice. Drivers must consider the potential gains and losses associated with their choices before acting.




- **Do I feel comfortable with this choice?** Responsible drivers rely on their own intuition and gut feelings when making driving choices. Despite all of the available evidence that says this is a safe and responsible driving choice, a driver who feels uneasy or hesitant to act should reconsider his/her position rather than go against internal data to the contrary. Safe and responsible drivers listen to their head and heart.
- **Will this choice help me get there safely?** The ultimate test of a responsible choice is that it will help the driver get from where he/she is to where he/she wants to be safely without putting passengers and other highway users at risk of injury or death.

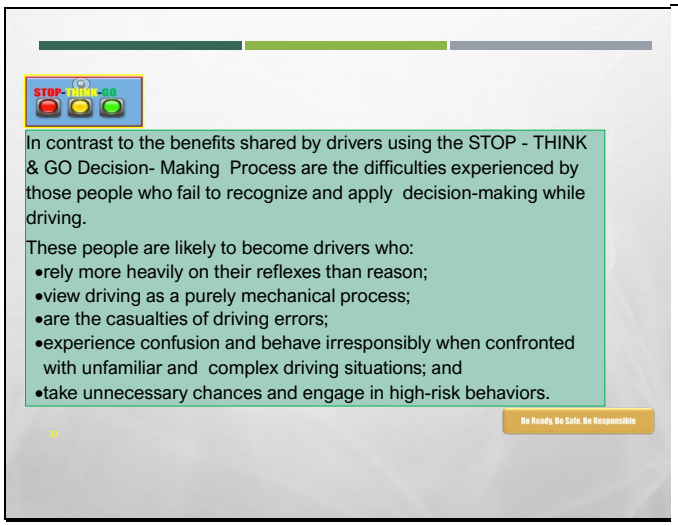
Any driving choice which is judged by the driver to be too risky is not a responsible choice and should be avoided. The three filters of Right, Reality, and Responsibility teach young drivers that driving is a mental activity and that risk management and safety can only be attained through reason followed by action.




**PRACTICE**

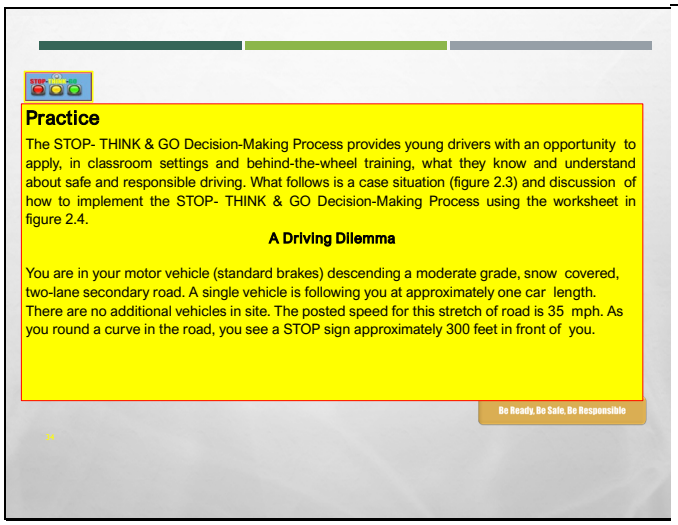
With practice, the STOP- THINK & GO Decision-Making Process will become a habit. Young drivers will be able to execute the process accurately and quickly with safe, reliable, and responsible results. Young drivers who learn to make STOP- THINK & GO Decision-Making Process driving decisions will:

- regard driving and traffic safety from a decision-making perspective;
- view driving as a mental and physical activity;
- initiate safe and responsible driving practices;
- exhibit more control and less confusion in unfamiliar driving situations; and
- create a safe driving environment for themselves and others because they are effective risk managers.




In contrast to the benefits shared by drivers who use the STOP - THINK & GO Decision- Making Process are the pitfalls that are experienced by those people who fail to recognize and apply decision-making while driving. These people are likely to become drivers who:

- rely more heavily on their reflexes than reason;
- view driving as a purely mechanical process;
- are the casualties of driving errors;
- experience confusion and behave irresponsibly when confronted with unfamiliar and complex driving situations; and
- take unnecessary chances and engage in high-risk behaviors.

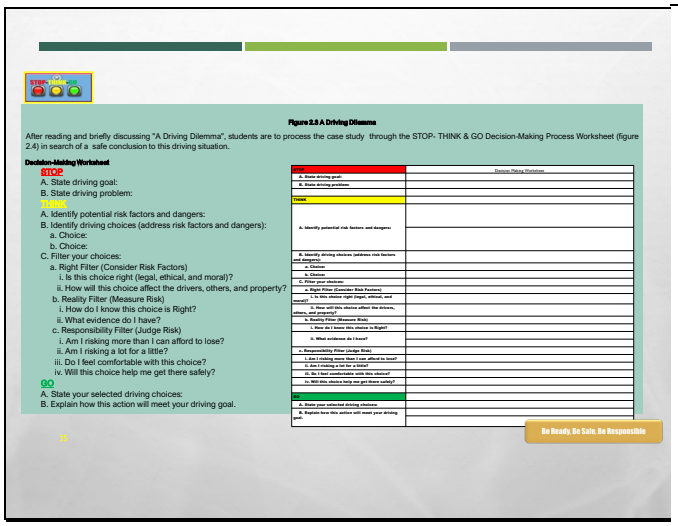



## Practice

The STOP- THINK & GO Decision-Making Process provides young drivers with an opportunity to apply, in classroom settings and behind-the-wheel training, what they know and understand about safe and responsible driving. What follows is a case situation (figure 2.3) and discussion of how to implement the STOP- THINK & GO Decision-Making Process using the worksheet in figure 2.4.

### A Driving Dilemma

You are in your motor vehicle (standard brakes) descending down a moderate grade, snow covered, two-lane secondary road. A single vehicle is following you at approximately one car length. There are no additional vehicles in site. The posted speed for this stretch of road is 35 mph. As you round a curve in the road, you see a STOP sign approximately 300 feet in front of you.




### Figure 2.3 A Driving Dilemma

After reading and briefly discussing "A Driving Dilemma", students are to process the case study through the STOP- THINK & GO Decision-Making Process Worksheet (figure 2.4) in search of a safe conclusion to this driving situation.

**Decision-Making Worksheet**

***STOP***

- State driving goal:
- State driving problem:

***THINK***

- Identify potential risk factors and dangers:
- Identify driving choices (address risk factors and dangers):
  - Choice:
  - Choice:
- Filter your choices:
  - **Right Filter** (Consider Risk Factors)
    - Is this choice right (legal, ethical, and moral)?
    - How will this choice affect the drivers, others, and property?
  - **Reality Filter** (Measure Risk)
    - How do I know this choice is Right?
    - What evidence do I have?

***GO***

A. State your selected driving choices:
B. Explain how this action will meet your driving goal.

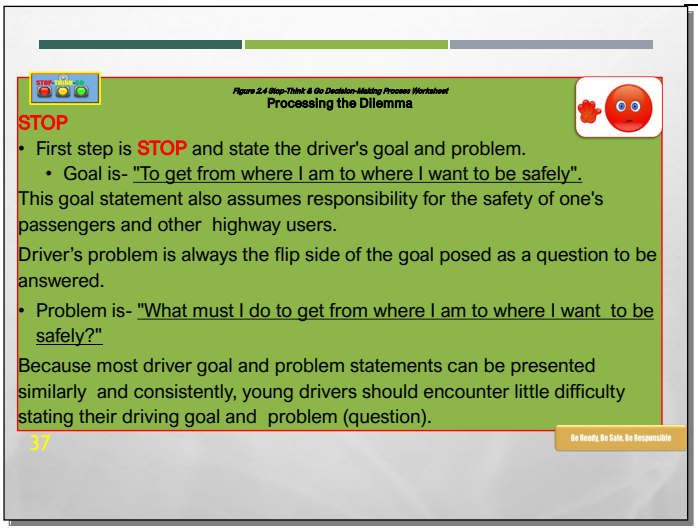



***Figure 2.4 Stop-Think & Go Decision-Making Process Worksheet***

**Processing the Dilemma**

STOP. The first step that students must take after discussing the particular of this case situation is to STOP and state the driver's goal and problem. In this case situation, as is true for most driving challenges, the driver's goal is, "To get from where I am to where I want to be safely".
This goal statement also assumes responsibility for the safety of one's passengers and other highway users.
The driver's problem is always the flip side of the goal and is stated as a question to be answered. Thus the driver's problem is, "What must I do to get from where I am to where I want to be safely?"
Because most driver goal and problem statements can be presented similarly and consistently, young drivers should encounter little difficulty stating their driving goal and problem (question).

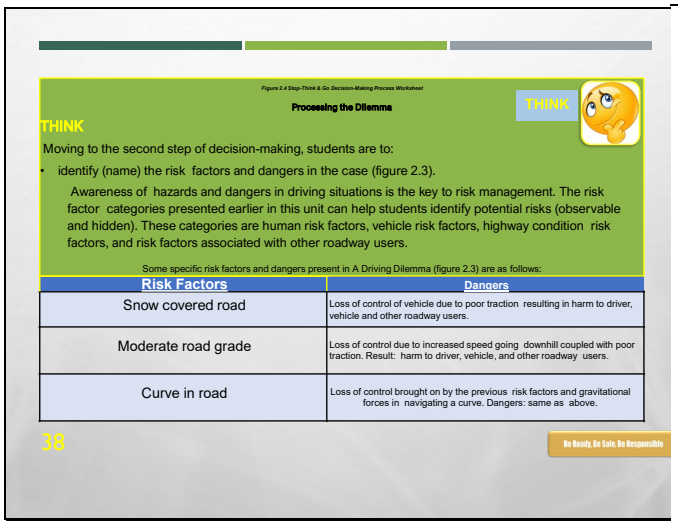


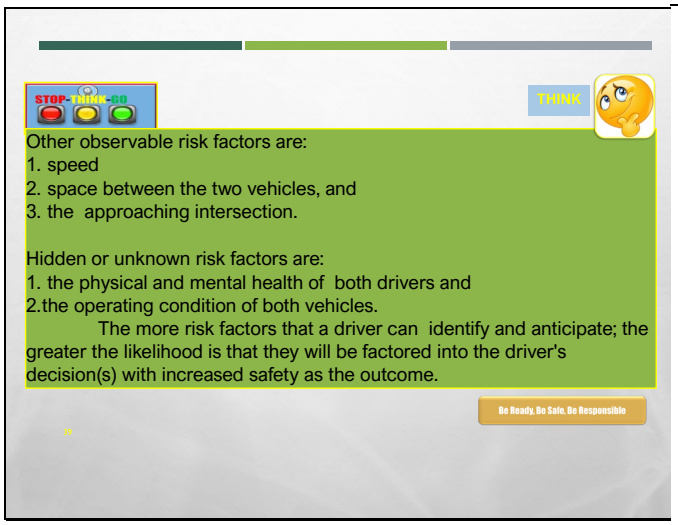

***Figure 2.4 Stop-Think & Go Decision-Making Process Worksheet***

**Processing the Dilemma**

THINK. Moving to the second step of decision-making, students are to identify (name) the risk factors and subsequent dangers in the presenting case study (figure 2.3). Awareness of hazards and dangers in driving situations is the key to risk management. The risk factor categories presented earlier in this unit can help students identify potential risks (observable and hidden). These categories are human risk factors, vehicle risk factors, highway condition risk factors, and risk factors associated with other roadway users.

Some specific risk factors and dangers present in A Driving Dilemma (figure 2.3) are as follows:

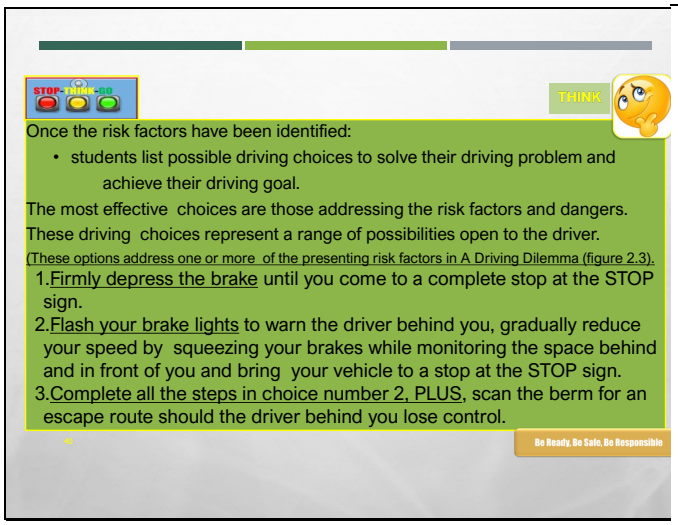
- Snow covered road Loss of control of vehicle due to poor traction resulting in harm to driver, vehicle and other roadway users.
- Moderate road grade Loss of control due to increased speed going downhill coupled with poor traction. Result: harm to driver, vehicle, and other roadway users.
- Curve in road Loss of control brought on by the previous risk factors and gravitational forces in navigating a curve. Dangers: same as abo




Other presenting risk factors are speed, the space between the two vehicles, and the approaching intersection. Hidden or unknown risk factors are the physical and mental health of both drivers and the operating condition of both vehicles. The more risk factors that a driver can identify and anticipate; the greater the likelihood is that they will be factored into the driver's decision(s) with increased safety as the outcome.

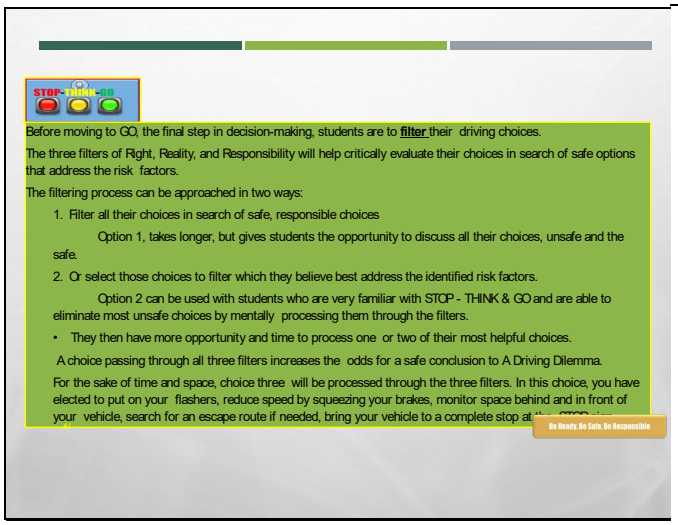
Once the risk factors have been identified, students are to list possible driving choices that can help them to solve their driving problem and achieve their driving goal. The most effective choices will be those that address the presenting risk factors and dangers. The following driving choices represent a range of possibilities open to the driver. These options address one or more of the presenting risk factors in A Driving Dilemma (figure 2.3).

- Firmly depress the brake until you come to a complete stop at the STOP sign.
- Flash your brake lights to warn the driver behind you, gradually reduce your speed by squeezing your brakes while monitoring the space behind and in front of you and bring your vehicle to a stop at the STOP sign.
- Complete all of the steps in choice number 2, and in addition, scan the berm (shoulder) for an escape route should the driver behind you lose control of his/her vehicle and threaten your safety.

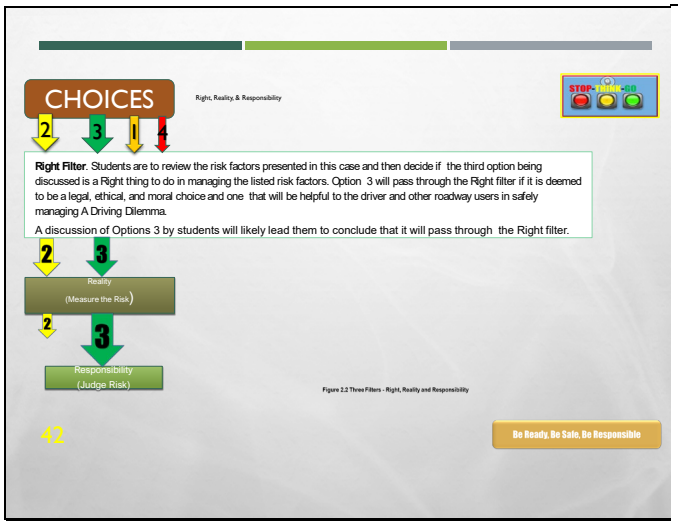



Once the risk factors have been identified, students are to list possible driving choices that can help them to solve their driving problem and achieve their driving goal. The most effective choices will be those that address the presenting risk factors and dangers. The following driving choices represent a range of possibilities open to the driver. These options address one or more of the presenting risk factors in A Driving Dilemma (figure 2.3).

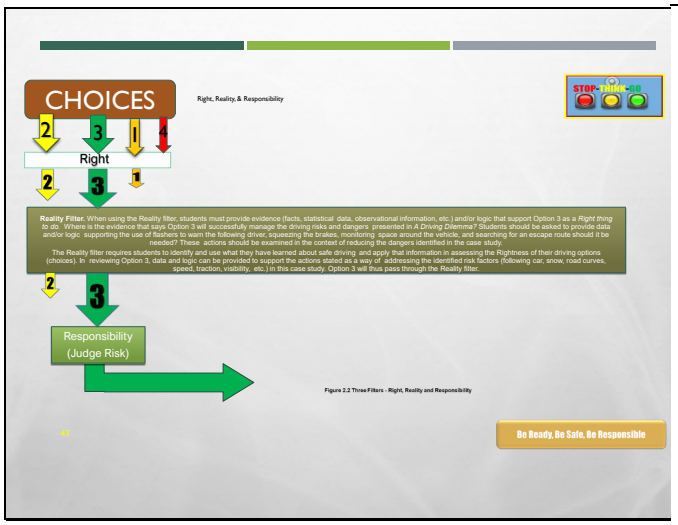
- Firmly depress the brake until you come to a complete stop at the STOP sign.
- Flash your brake lights to warn the driver behind you, gradually reduce your speed by squeezing your brakes while monitoring the space behind and in front of you and bring your vehicle to a stop at the STOP sign.
- Complete all of the steps in choice number 2, and in addition, scan the berm (shoulder) for an escape route should the driver behind you lose control of his/her vehicle and threaten your safety.



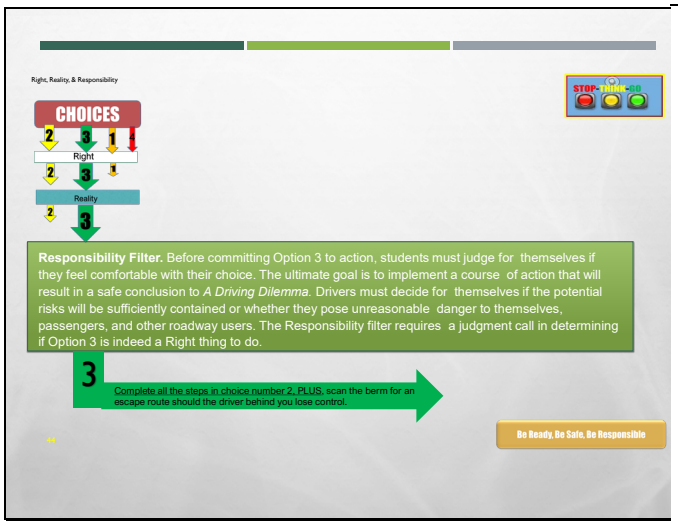

Before moving to GO, the third and final step in decision-making, students are to filter their driving choices. The three filters of Right, Reality, and Responsibility will help students to critically evaluate their choices in search of those options that are safe and address the risk factors in question.
The filtering process can be approached in two ways. Students can be asked to filter all of their choices in search of safe and responsible choices or they may select those choices to filter which they believe best address the identified risk factors. The first option, while taking longer, gives students the opportunity to discuss all of their choices, the unsafe and the safe. The second option can be used with students who are very familiar with the STOP - THINK & GO Decision-Making Process and who are able to eliminate most unsafe choices by mentally processing them through the filters. They then have more opportunity and time to process one or two of their most helpful choices. A choice that passes through all three filters increases the odds for a safe conclusion to A Driving Dilemma. For the sake of time and space, choice three will be processed through the three filters. In this choice, you have elected to put on your flashers, reduce speed by squeezing your brakes, monitor space behind and in front of your vehicle, search for an escape route if needed, bring your vehicle to a complete stop at the STOP sign.



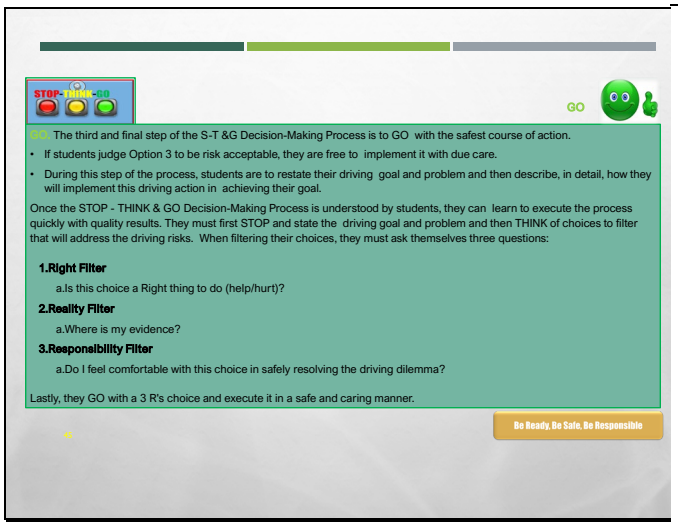

**Right Filter**. Students are to review the risk factors presented in this case and then decide if the third option being discussed is a Right thing to do in managing the listed risk factors. Option 3 will pass through the Right filter if it is deemed to be a legal, ethical, and moral choice and one that will be helpful to the driver and other roadway users in safely managing A Driving Dilemma.
A discussion of Options 3 by students will likely lead them to conclude that it will pass through the Right filter.




**Reality Filter.** When using the Reality filter, students must provide evidence (facts, statistical data, observational information, etc.) and/or logic that support Option 3 as a *Right thing to do.* Where is the evidence that says Option 3 will successfully manage the driving risks and dangers presented in *A Driving Dilemma?* Students should be asked to provide data and/or logic supporting the use of flashers to warn the following driver, squeezing the brakes, monitoring space around the vehicle, and searching for an escape route should it be needed? These actions should be examined in the context of reducing the dangers identified in the case study.
The Reality filter requires students to identify and use what they have learned about safe driving and apply that information in assessing the Rightness of their driving options (choices). In reviewing Option 3, data and logic can be provided to support the actions stated as a way of addressing the identified risk factors (following car, snow, road curves, speed, traction, visibility, etc.) in this case study. Option 3 will thus pass through the Reality filter.




**Responsibility Filter.** Before committing Option 3 to action, students must judge for themselves if they feel comfortable with their choice. The ultimate goal is to implement a course of action that will result in a safe conclusion to *A Driving Dilemma.* Drivers must decide for themselves if the potential risks will be sufficiently contained or whether they pose unreasonable danger to themselves, passengers, and other roadway users. The Responsibility filter requires a judgment call in determining if Option 3 is indeed a Right thing to do.

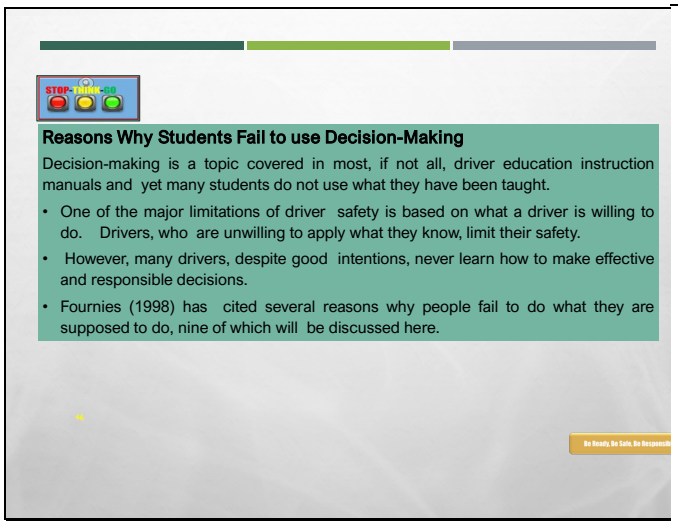



**GO.** The third and final step of the STOP - THINK & GO Decision-Making Process is to GO with the safest course of action. If students judge Option 3 to be risk acceptable, they are free to implement it with due care. During this step of the process, students are to restate their driving goal and problem and then describe, in detail, how they will implement this driving action in achieving their goal.

Once the STOP - THINK & GO Decision-Making Process is understood by students, they can learn to execute the process quickly with quality results. They must first STOP and state the driving goal and problem and then THINK of choices to filter that will address the driving risks. When filtering their choices, they must ask themselves three questions:

- **Right Filter**
  - Is this choice a Right thing to do (help/hurt)?
- **Reality Filter**
  - Where is my evidence?
- **Responsibility Filter**
  - Do I feel comfortable with this choice in safely resolving the driving dilemma?

Lastly, they GO with a 3 R's choice and execute it in a safe and caring manner.




**Reasons Why Students Fail to use Decision-Making**

Decision-making is a topic covered in most, if not all, driver education instruction manuals and yet many students do not use what they have been taught. One of the major limitations of driver safety, and discussed earlier in the unit, is based on what a driver is willing to do. Drivers, who are unwilling to apply what they know, limit their safety. However, many drivers, despite good intentions, never learn how to make effective and responsible decisions. Fournies (1998) has cited a number of reasons why people fail to do what they are supposed to do, nine of which will be discussed here. These reasons will help driver education instructors stay focused in their teaching and alert to reasons which may account for student failure in learning decision-making and other driving related skills.

- **They don't know why they are supposed to do it**

  Students are not likely to Learn decision-making unless they are convinced that the process will benefit them. They need to experience the benefits of decision-making through activity that demonstrates its value. In addition, if we want students to view driving as a decision-making experience, they must be taught driving from that perspective. They must see driving situations as decisions to be made and they must understand the goal(s) to be achieved. They must likewise understand the benefits of decision-making and the pitfalls to those who fail to use the process effectively.

- **They don't know what they are supposed to do.**

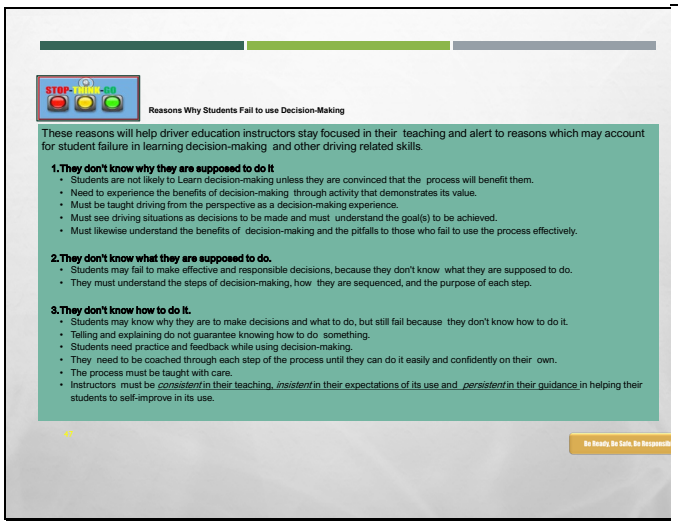
  Students may fail to make effective and responsible decisions, because they don't know what they are supposed to do. They must understand the steps of decision-making, how they are sequenced, and the purpose of each step.

- **They don't know how to do it.**

  Students may know why they are to make decisions and what to do, but still fail because they don't know how to do it. Telling and explaining do not guarantee knowing how to do something. Students need practice and feedback while using decision-making. They need to be coached through each step of the process until they can do it easily on their own and with confidence. The process must therefore be taught with care. Instructors must be *consistent* in their teaching, *insistent* in their expectations of its use and *persistent* in their guidance in helping their students to self-improve in its use.

- **They receive no positive consequences for doing it.**

  Students who know how to use decision-making are not likely to persist in its use if they are not recognized for their efforts. Decision-making will be awkward at first and not something that students will continue to do if they think that it really doesn't matter to those teaching the model.




**Reasons Why Students Fail to use Decision-Making**

These reasons will help driver education instructors stay focused in their teaching and alert to reasons which may account for student failure in learning decision-making and other driving related skills.

- **They don't know why they are supposed to do it**

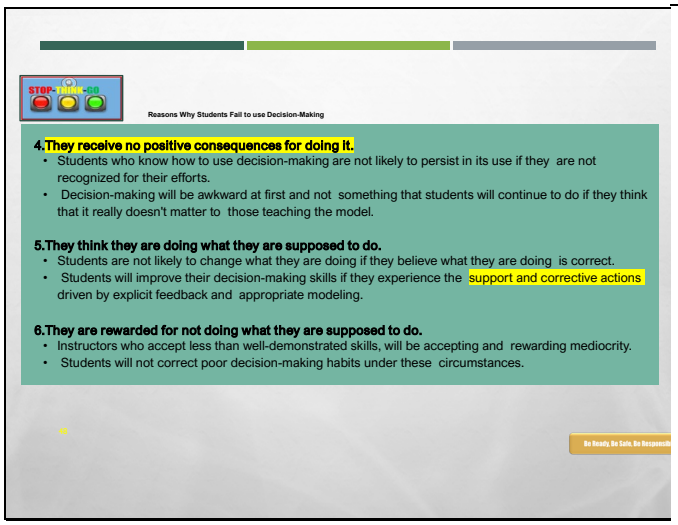
  Students are not likely to Learn decision-making unless they are convinced that the process will benefit them. They need to experience the benefits of decision-making through activity that demonstrates its value. In addition, if we want students to view driving as a decision-making experience, they must be taught driving from that perspective. They must see driving situations as decisions to be made and they must understand the goal(s) to be achieved. They must likewise understand the benefits of decision-making and the pitfalls to those who fail to use the process effectively.

- **They don't know what they are supposed to do.**

  Students may fail to make effective and responsible decisions, because they don't know what they are supposed to do. They must understand the steps of decision-making, how they are sequenced, and the purpose of each step.

- **They don't know how to do it.**

  Students may know why they are to make decisions and what to do, but still fail because they don't know how to do it. Telling and explaining do not guarantee knowing how to do something. Students need practice and feedback while using decision-making. They need to be coached through each step of the process until they can do it easily on their own and with confidence. The process must therefore be taught with care. Instructors must be *consistent* in their teaching, *insistent* in their expectations of its use and *persistent* in their guidance in helping their students to self-improve in its use.




**Reasons Why Students Fail to use Decision-Making**

- **They receive no positive consequences for doing it.**

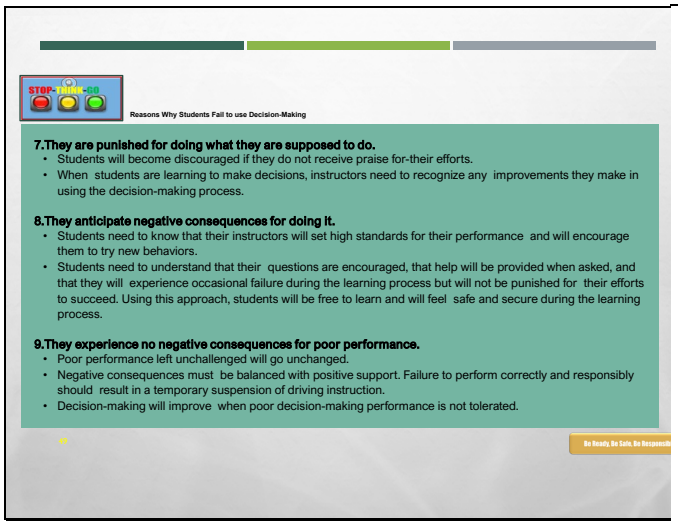
  Students who know how to use decision-making are not likely to persist in its use if they are not recognized for their efforts. Decision-making will be awkward at first and not something that students will continue to do if they think that it really doesn't matter to those teaching the model.

- **They think they are doing what they are supposed to do.**

  Students are not likely to change what they are doing if they believe what they are doing is correct. Students will improve their decision-making skills if they experience the support of concerned teachers and corrective actions driven by explicit feedback and appropriate modeling.

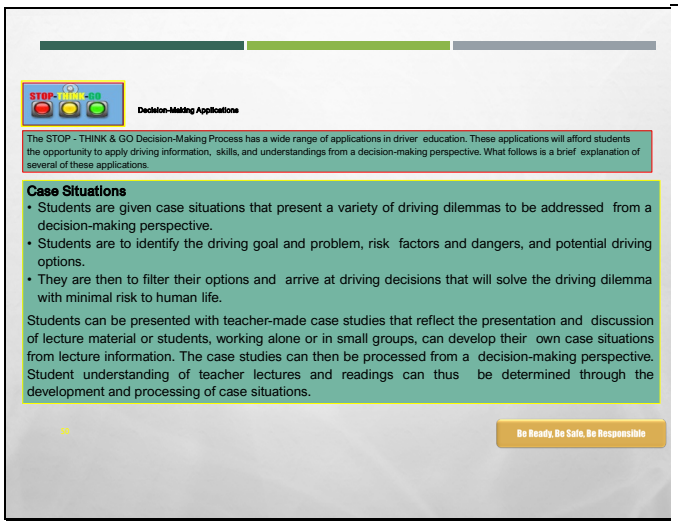
- **They are rewarded for not doing what they are supposed to do.**

Instructors who accept less than well-demonstrated skills, will be accepting and rewarding mediocrity. Students will not correct poor decision-making habits under these circumstances.




**Reasons Why Students Fail to use Decision-Making**

- **They are punished for doing what they are supposed to do.**
  - Students will become discouraged if they do not receive praise for-their efforts.
  - When students are learning to make decisions, instructors need to recognize any improvements they make in using the decision-making process.
- **They anticipate negative consequences for doing it.**
  - Students need to know that their instructors will set high standards for their performance and will encourage them to try new behaviors.
  - Students need to understand that their questions are encouraged, that help will be provided when asked, and that they will experience occasional failure during the learning process but will not be punished for their efforts to succeed. Using this approach, students will be free to learn and will feel safe and secure during the learning process.
- **They experience no negative consequences for poor performance.**
  - Poor performance left unchallenged will go unchanged.
  - Negative consequences must be balanced with positive support. Failure to perform correctly and responsibly should result in a temporary suspension of driving instruction.
  - Decision-making will improve when poor decision-making performance is not tolerated.

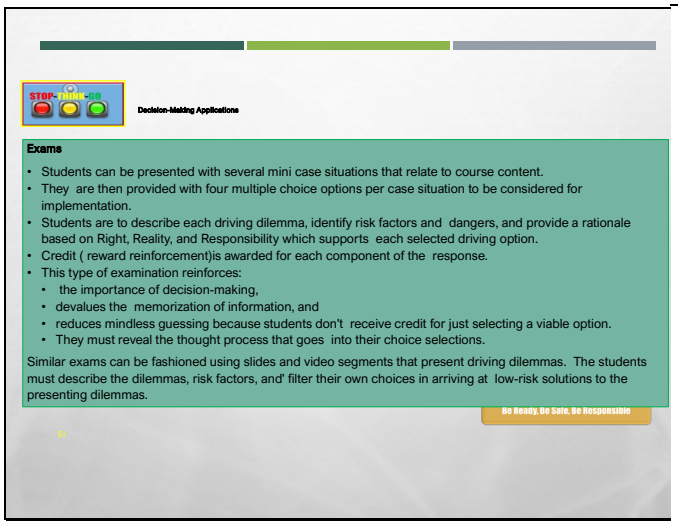



## Decision-Making Applications

The STOP - THINK & GO Decision-Making Process has a wide range of applications in driver education. These applications will afford students the opportunity to apply driving information, skills, and understandings from a decision-making perspective. What follows is a brief explanation of several of these applications.

## Case Situations

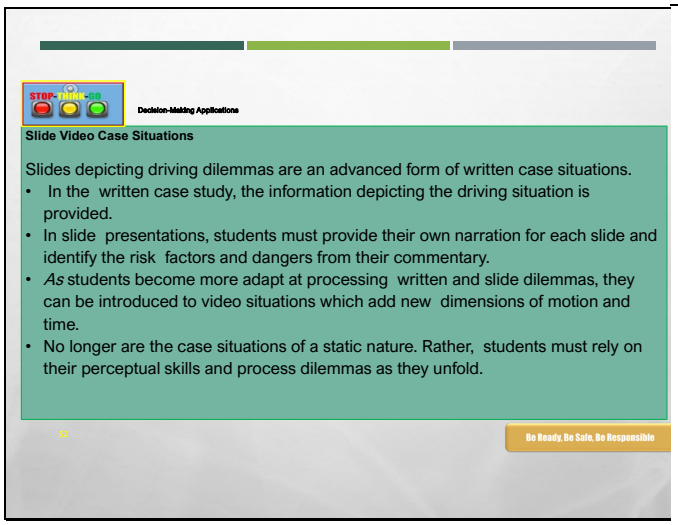
Students are given case situations that present a variety of driving dilemmas to be addressed from a decision-making perspective. Students are to identify the driving goal and problem, risk factors and dangers, and potential driving options. They are then to filter their options and arrive at driving decisions that will solve the driving dilemma with minimal risk to human life. Students can be presented with teacher-made case studies that reflect the presentation and discussion of lecture material or students, working alone or in small groups, can develop their own case situations from lecture information. The case studies can then be processed from a decision-making perspective. Student understanding of teacher lectures and readings can thus be determined through the development and processing of case situations.




## Exams

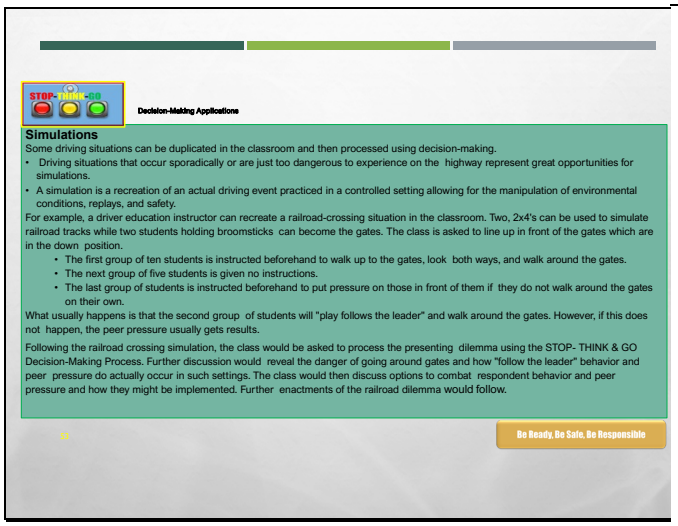
- Students can be presented with several mini case situations that relate to course content.
- They are then provided with four multiple choice options per case situation to be considered for implementation.
- Students are to describe each driving dilemma, identify risk factors and dangers, and provide a rationale based on Right, Reality, and Responsibility which supports each selected driving option.
- Credit ( reward reinforcement)is awarded for each component of the response.
- This type of examination reinforces:
- the importance of decision-making,
- devalues the memorization of information, and
- reduces mindless guessing because students don't receive credit for just selecting a viable option.
- They must reveal the thought process that goes into their choice selections.

Similar exams can be fashioned using slides and video segments that present driving dilemmas. The students must describe the dilemmas, risk factors, and' filter their own choices in arriving at low-risk solutions to the presenting dilemmas.



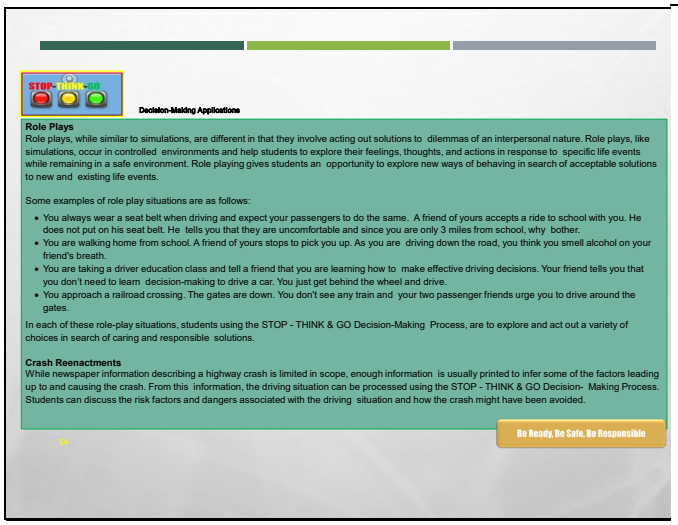

**Slide Video Case Situations**

Slides depicting driving dilemmas are an advanced form of written case situations. In the written case study, the information depicting the driving situation is provided. However, in slide presentations, students must provide their own narration for each slide and identify the risk factors and dangers from their commentary. *As* students become more adapt at processing written and slide dilemmas, they can be introduced to video situations which add new dimensions of motion and time. No longer are the case situations of a static nature. Rather, students must rely on their perceptual skills and process dilemmas as they unfold.




**Simulations**

Some driving situations can be duplicated in the classroom and then processed using decision making. Driving situations that occur sporadically or are just too dangerous to experience on the highway represent great opportunities for simulations. A simulation is a recreation of an actual driving event practiced in a controlled setting which allows for the manipulation of environmental conditions, replays, and safety. For example, a driver education instructor can recreate a railroad-crossing situation in the classroom. Two, twelve-foot 2x4's can be used to simulate railroad tracks while two students holding broomsticks can become the gates. The class is asked to line up in front of the gates which are in the down position. The first group of ten students is instructed beforehand to walk up to the gates, look both ways, and walk around the gates. The next group of five students is given no instructions. The last group of students is instructed beforehand to put pressure on those in front of them if they do not walk around the gates on their own. What usually happens is that the second group of students will "play follows the leader" and walk around the gates. However, if this does not happen, the peer pressure usually gets results. Following the railroad crossing simulation, the class would be asked to process the presenting dilemma using the STOP- THINK & GO Decision-Making Process. Further discussion would reveal the danger of going around gates and how "follow the leader" behavior and peer pressure do actually occur in such settings. The class would then discuss options to combat respondent behavior and peer pressure and how they might be implemented. Further enactments of the railroad dilemma would follow.




**Role Plays**

Role plays, while similar to simulations, are different in that they involve acting out solutions to dilemmas of an interpersonal nature. Role plays, like simulations, occur in controlled environments and help students to explore their feelings, thoughts, and actions in response to specific life events while remaining in a safe environment. Role playing gives students an opportunity to explore new ways of behaving in search of acceptable solutions to new and existing life events.

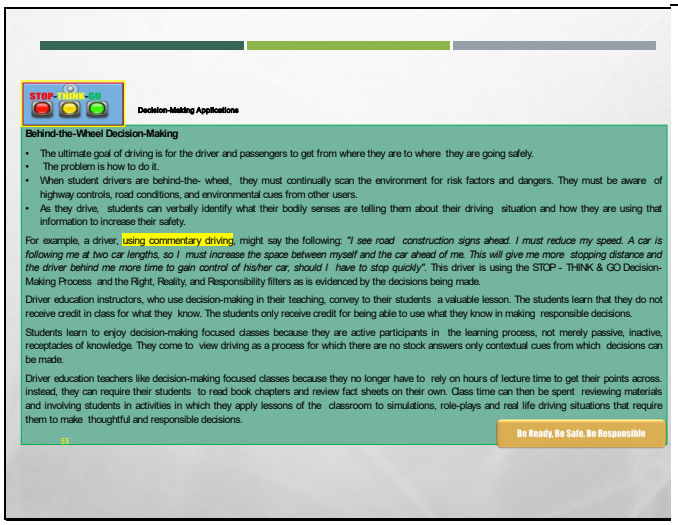
Some examples of role play situations are as follows:

- You always wear a seat belt when driving and expect your passengers to do the same. A friend of yours accepts a ride to school with you. He does not put on his seat belt. He tells you that they are uncomfortable and since you are only 3 miles from school, why bother.
- You are walking home from school. A friend of yours stops to pick you up. As you are driving down the road, you think you smell alcohol on your friend's breath.
- You are taking a driver education class and tell a friend that you are learning how to make effective driving decisions. Your friend tells you that you don't need to learn decision-making to drive a car. You just get behind the wheel and drive.
- You approach a railroad crossing. The gates are down. You don't see any train and your two passenger friends urge you to drive around the gates.

In each of these role-play situations, students using the STOP - THINK & GO Decision-Making Process, are to explore and act out a variety of choices in search of caring and responsible solutions.

**Crash Reenactments**

While newspaper information describing a highway crash is limited in scope, enough information is usually printed to infer some of the factors leading up to and causing the crash. From this information, the driving situation can be processed using the STOP - THINK & GO Decision- Making Process. Students can discuss the risk factors and dangers associated with the driving situation and how the crash might have been avoided.




**Behind-the-Wheel Decision-Making**

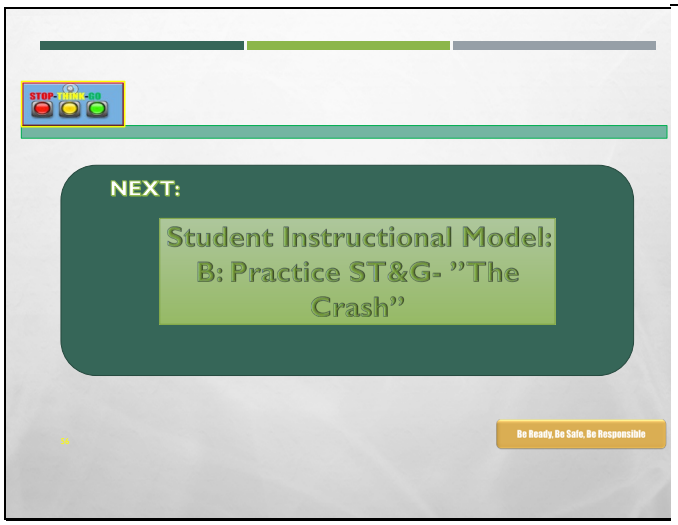
The ultimate goal of driving is for the driver and passengers to get from where they are to where they are going safely. The problem is how to do it. When student drivers are behind-the- wheel, they must continually scan the environment for risk factors and dangers. They must be aware of highway controls, road conditions, and environmental cues from other users. As they drive, students can verbally identify what their bodily senses are telling them about their driving situation and how they are using that information to increase their safety.

For example, a driver, using commentary driving, might say the following: *"I see road construction signs ahead. I must reduce my speed. A car is following me at two car lengths, so I must increase the space between myself and the car ahead of me. This will give me more stopping distance and the driver behind me more time to gain control of his/her car, should I have to stop quickly"*. This driver is using the STOP - THINK & GO Decision-Making Process and the Right, Reality, and Responsibility filters as is evidenced by the decisions being made.

Driver education instructors, who use decision-making in their teaching, convey to their students a valuable lesson. The students learn that they do not receive credit in class for what they know. The students only receive credit for being able to use what they know in making responsible decisions.

Students learn to enjoy decision-making focused classes because they are active participants in the learning process, not merely passive, inactive, receptacles of knowledge. They come to view driving as a process for which there are no stock answers only contextual cues from which decisions can be made.

Driver education teachers like decision-making focused classes because they no longer have to rely on hours of lecture time to get their points across. instead, they can require their students to read book chapters and review fact sheets on their own. Class time can then be spent reviewing materials and involving students in activities in which they apply lessons of the classroom to simulations, role-plays and real life driving situations that require them to make thoughtful and responsible decisions.




**Behind-the-Wheel Decision-Making**

The ultimate goal of driving is for the driver and passengers to get from where they are to where they are going safely. The problem is how to do it. When student drivers are behind-the- wheel, they must continually scan the environment for risk factors and dangers. They must be aware of highway controls, road conditions, and environmental cues from other users. As they drive, students can verbally identify what their bodily senses are telling them about their driving situation and how they are using that information to increase their safety.

For example, a driver, using commentary driving, might say the following: *"I see road construction signs ahead. I must reduce my speed. A car is following me at two car lengths, so I must increase the space between myself and the car ahead of me. This will give me more stopping distance and the driver behind me more time to gain control of his/her car, should I have to stop quickly"*. This driver is using the STOP - THINK & GO Decision-Making Process and the Right, Reality, and Responsibility filters as is evidenced by the decisions being made.

Driver education instructors, who use decision-making in their teaching, convey to their students a valuable lesson. The students learn that they do not receive credit in class for what they know. The students only receive credit for being able to use what they know in making responsible decisions.

Students learn to enjoy decision-making focused classes because they are active participants in the learning process, not merely passive, inactive, receptacles of knowledge. They come to view driving as a process for which there are no stock answers only contextual cues from which decisions can be made.

Driver education teachers like decision-making focused classes because they no longer have to rely on hours of lecture time to get their points across. instead, they can require their students to read book chapters and review fact sheets on their own. Class time can then be spent reviewing materials and involving students in activities in which they apply lessons of the classroom to simulations, role-plays and real life driving situations that require them to make thoughtful and responsible decisions.