

# WHEN IN DOUBT, DRIVERS STEER TOWARD THE SHOULDER



BY RAY MAGLIOZZI

## Dear Car Talk:

All my life I've noticed that some people veer abruptly to the right onto the shoulder when braking suddenly. I've always wondered if these people are doing this consciously for some reason, or if it's unconscious, or maybe their brakes are pulling to the right. If they

are doing this intentionally, why?

—James

I think it's to avoid bashing into the car in front of them, James. If you're driving along and the car in front of your stops suddenly, what do you do?

OK, what do you do after you've run through all your four-letter words?

Well, you slam on your brakes to try to stop before you plow into the car in front of you, right? And if there's any question about whether you'll be able

to stop in time, you steer your car to the right, onto the shoulder. You could

steer your car to the left, but you'd be driving into oncoming traffic. And Darwinism has already removed most of the "brake and steer left" genes from the human gene pool.

So the shoulder is the obvious place to point the car. If you're lucky enough to be able to stop in time, no harm done. And if you're not able to stop in time, you'll pass the stopped car on the right instead of testing your car's airbag (Hey, good news, Hon, our airbag works!).

I suppose it's possible that in some cases, the crown of the road (which

slopes down to the right) may direct some cars to the right in an emergency stop, but cars are built to go straight when you hit the brakes.

I'm guessing it's human ingenuity in action here, James.

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*Got a question about cars? Write to Ray in care of King Features, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803, or email by visiting the Car Talk website at [www.cartalk.com](http://www.cartalk.com).*

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