HOW'S MY DRIVING? ASK MY CAR

Using gadgets while you're driving can be a very bad thing, but an expert on automotive distractions says using a gadget that watches you while you're driving can be a very good thing.

"People don't always understand the degree of distraction they may be exposing themselves to … so the idea is to help people understand that distraction by providing them with feedback," says John D. Lee.

Lee outlines the magnitude of the problem: More than 40,000 people die every year in motor vehicle crashes, and research indicates that failures of attention - including distractions or drowsiness - probably played a role in most of those crashes.

Crashes and near-crashes are about three times as likely to happen when the driver is performing a complex task not related to driving (such as dialing a phone or even texting), and twice as likely during a moderately complex task (such as inserting a CD), Lee reported.

As new technologies are introduced, the list of potential distractions keeps getting longer.

Of course, most drivers overestimate their own abilities: In one survey, 88 percent of the respondents judged themselves to be safer than the average driver.

So how does watching the driver help? Lee's method was to install a special camera system that saves video snippets for the 10 seconds before and after every abrupt movement on the road.

After the feedback sessions, the number of events triggered by risky drivers declined 89 percent, Lee said, and the rate of risky driving remained low even six weeks later.

Source: msnbc.com April 16, 2009 by Alan Boyle

I. Answer the following questions using your own words but taking into account the information in the text. (2 points: 1 point each)

a.   According to the text, what can be good and/or bad about using "gadgets" while driving?

b. How can feedback provided to drivers help improve their driving

II. Are the following statements true (T) or false (F)? Identify the part of the text that supports your answer by copying the exact passage on the answer sheet. (1.5 point: 0.5 each)

a. In most deadly car accidents, lack of attention seems to be involved.
b. The use of new technologies diminishes the frequency of distractions.
c. In Lee's study, the video camera installed in the car helps you watch for holes in the ground.

III. Find a synonym for each of the four definitions below from these six options: (1 point: 0.25 each)
   **gadget   crashes   drowsiness   survey
   snippets   rate**

a. The state of being almost asleep.
b. Small fragments of information such as data or images.
c. A study to gather specific information.
d. A device or tool designed to perform a particular task or function.

c.

IV. Choose a, b, or c, in each question below. Only one choice is correct (1.5 points: 0.5 each)
1. Most people who die in a car accident...
a) failed to pay attention and drowned.
b) were driving too fast.
c) were not paying attention to their driving.

2. According to the author, when driving:
a) Texting is a less dangerous task than inserting a CD.
b) Non-related driving tasks can lead to crashes.
c) You can perform a moderately complex task, but not a complex task.

3. When the author says that "most drivers overestimate their own abilities", he means that:
a) Most drivers drive safer than others.
b) Most drivers feel safe when judging other drivers.
c) Most drivers think they are very competent at driving.

Part B. Composition (130-150 words approximately). Choose one of the following topics (4 points)
1. What can be done to reduce the number of car accidents?
2. How do you think technology can prevent road accidents?

Teacher's

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II.

a. True (More than 40,000 people die every year in motor vehicle crashes, and research indicates that failures of attention - including distractions or drowsiness - probably played a role in most of those crashes.)
b. False. (As new technologies are introduced, the list of potential distractions keeps getting longer.)
c. False (Lee's method was to install a special camera system that saves video snippets for the 10 seconds before and after every abrupt movement on the road.)

III.

a) drowsiness
b) snippets
c) survey
d) gadget

IV.

1. c
2. b
3. c