

SMArticles

Science and Mathematics Academy

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DRIVING!

By: Maggie and Olivia

It could be because you made a terrible turn, or because there was a careless cat running in front of you. Maybe there was a deadly downpour that made it impossible for you to see, or maybe you just lost track of time and found yourself whipping down winding roads. It may have been your fault, and it may have been someone else's fault, but regardless, most accidents are preventable. There are four main reasons that accidents occur: people being under the influence of drugs or alcohol while driving, people being aggressive while driving, people being careless while driving, and finally people being in the wrong place at the wrong time (which is by definition an accident). Sadly, sometimes accidents are truly unavoidable, but to make them as unlikely as possible, it is imperative for drivers to practice defensive and alert driving.

Driving under the influence is never appropriate. Not only do you risk your own life when you turn the key to start that car, but you risk the life of every driver on the road that day. It is important to remember that when you are under the influence of either drugs or alcohol, your judgment is impaired, and a potentially fatal mistake made because of this lack of judgment could result in irreversible consequences lasting a lifetime. If you make the decision to use drugs or drink alcohol, make the decision to avoid driving. Your "innocent" trip could ruin your life, and take someone else's.

Another common cause of accidents is aggressive driving. Often, when you are on the road and a person is driving close behind your car or honking at you, a surge of road rage flares up in you. It is extremely important to compose yourself and not let it get to you. This can often be a hard task, but speeding up or responding in other ways means you are playing their game and are no longer focusing on the road or the other drivers around you.

Careless driving is another reason many accidents happen. Some text while driving or speed through yellow lights, not realizing the risk they are taking. A text is never worth losing a life for and a few extra seconds saved is not worth a lifetime of remorse. It is easy when you are in the moment to forget to fully stop at a stop sign or to put your turn signal on, but those are the things that separate good drivers from bad drivers. A rule of thumb is if you would do it with your parent in the car, or a police officer somewhere close and visible, you should probably do it all the time.

Finally, some accidents are not preventable. Some accidents happen for reasons out of your control. Even the best drivers have been rear ended or cut off. You cannot predict these accidents, and it is hard to avoid them. The only way to decrease the chance of them happening to you is to be the safest and most alert driver you can be.

Remember: It is okay to make a wrong turn. There is no reason to quickly jerk into the other lane. Just turn around later. Never make a risky decision to save time. Also, you are always better safe rather than sorry. Or dead. If you do not feel comfortable taking a right on a red light or going with-out a green arrow, then don't do it. The people behind you can honk all they want, but ultimately, if you make that turn when you are not ready, it is your car and your life on the line, not theirs.

Taking A Test For Fun

By: Abbey and Natalie

Students do not usually like taking tests, but the typically extraordinary students of the Science and Mathematics Academy have opted to anyway. About thirty students have signed up to take part in the American Mathematics Competition (AMC). The students will take a math test, competing with students from around the nation. They will have the opportunity to receive high school awards for their school and for themselves, as well as qualify for the American Invitational Mathematics Exam. The purpose of this competition is to increase interest in mathematics and problem solving while also challenging the students. SMA students are taking the test on February 22. Make sure to ask how it went!

TWINdians

By: Dominique

They've been called Rahman, Twin, Noodle, and even the occasional Nisheed, but they have rarely been called by their actual names. Until now. Said to look completely different by their peers, who have the advantage of 3 years spent in close proximity, the TWINdians finally achieved their own identity in the eyes of the teachers through the idea of writing the period of each twin on the backboards. One teacher went as far as to make a laminated poster. Hopefully, someday, the teachers will be able to tell Nishad and Naveed Rahman apart, but until then, their eyes will quickly glance at their backboards before calling on them.

SRT Corner

Matthew Wang is a senior in Mr. Sloan’s SRT IV class. His capstone project involves computer science and investigating “machine learning” in card games.

What is the most important thing you learned in SRT for your capstone?

As much as I hate to say it, knowing how to format and cite in APA was essential for the literature review and presentations. Being well-versed in APA goes way beyond the capstone, too.

Are the things you learn about writing a proper lab notebook important for your capstone?

Absolutely! It may seem tedious at first, but when you’re working on a large project over a long time, keeping records of everything you think and do is critical.

Is it important to remember what you learned in all four of your SRT courses when working on your project?

SRT is really a cumulative experience; the skills of research, data collection, notebook keeping, and presentation are constantly reviewed and honed. Because SRT builds upon itself, every year is crucial. Unfortunately, that means it never “gets easier;” put the effort into getting things right early on, though, and it’ll pay off.

What are the "mini capstones" in SRT III and how did they help you?

The four so-called “mini-capstones” encapsulate an entire project experience into one quarter; as you might imagine, they’re intense. Each teacher—Mr. Evans, Mrs. Gabriel, Mr. Leff, and Mrs. McDonough – coaches you through a full project in their respective fields of expertise: robotics, environmental sciences, engineering, and biology. I got to evaluate my interest in each field, which helped me identify a project idea and mentor for SRT IV. Between the four projects, I also got to practice technical writing, poster-making, notebook keeping, and presenting. Teamwork is also a huge part of SRT III; although I’m flying solo on my capstone, learning group planning and accountability was valuable nonetheless.

Did SRT help you more than other classes with your project?

Yes and no. SRT certainly provided a foundation and a well-guided approach to my project. I’ve pulled in bits about programming from SRT II and III, as well as my Microcontrollers elective, but since my project is pretty specialized, I had to learn most of the background on my own. That seems to be the case for most seniors; a little jumpstart from other classes, but you learn a lot of stuff on your own.

How hard would your capstone project have been if you had never taken SRT?

Considering I wouldn’t have my mentor, I don’t think my project would ever get off the ground. So, um, very?

Do you think you will use the things you learned in SRT after high school?

Oh, most definitely. I’m planning to intern with my mentor this summer, and hopefully continue my capstone research in college. SRT taught me some important stuff that I’ll have to use for the rest of my career.

Teacher Corner

	Mr. Leff	Mr. Evans	Mr. Chapman	Ms. Liberto	Mrs. Voskuhl	Mr. Davis	Mr. Sloan	Mrs. Gabriel	Mrs. McDonough
How long have you been teaching?	33 years	13 years	39 years	6 years	8 years	5 years	7 years	19 years	19 years
What is your favorite football team?	Giants	None	Baltimore Colts	Ravens	None	None	Steelers	Ravens	Ravens
What is the most interesting thing you have ever done?	Hitchhiking across the country	Climbing Mt. Adams in Washington state	Recovering from a fatal disease	Cave-tubing in Belize	Going to Europe	Hiking in Colorado with a keystone group	Being a rock-climbing instructor	Backpacking in Europe	Watching Sea Turtles lay eggs and then watching the babies hatch on a beach in Mexico