

Driving Safety Parent Program





Summer 2021

Parent Driving Safety



We were all there once: getting behind the wheel for the very first time. We went through the driving lessons, the test. We made mistakes, maybe even had a few accidents, but somehow we made it through and became seasoned drivers. Now, as adults, it's our job to usher teens into the driver's seat. Keeping them safe while they learn is paramount in our minds, especially since the facts about teen drivers are sobering.





Knowing facts like these makes it difficult to hand over the keys, but driving is an important part of growing up and becoming an independent person—especially in places where there isn't a lot of public transportation and teens need a car to get to school or work. So it is up to us, as adults, to help guide them to good decisions (and to be the best examples we can.)

Teen Driving Facts:

- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for U.S. teens. Texting while driving is the leading culprit.
- For every mile driven, teen drivers ages 16 to 19 are nearly three times more likely to be in a fatal crash than drivers aged 20 and older.
- The crash fatality rate is highest within the first six months after getting a license.
- Other teen passengers increase the risk of crashes for teens. The more teen passengers, the higher the risk.



FIVE WAYS TO KEEP YOUR TEEN SAFER BEHIND THE WHEEL

#1 Practice, Practice, Practice

Studies show that teens need **AT LEAST 50** hours of training on the road before they can become fully-fledged and safe independent drivers. Skills take time to develop, and driving is a skill. Give teens all the time they need to feel confident and familiar with being behind the wheel, and make 50 hours of practice a minimum mark they must achieve before driving on their own.



#2 Set the Rule — The Car Is Not for Socializing

Even adults sometimes think they can drive while catching up with friends on a call, or having others ride along to talk to, but these are NOT good ideas, especially for teens in their early stages of driving. Teens need to understand that, when they get into the driver's seat of a car, they are now responsible for their lives and the lives of their passengers. Do they really want to be distracted when they hold lives in their hands?

Since the biggest culprits of teens not paying attention to what's happening on the road are cell phones and friends riding with them—AND since most teen-driving accidents happen within the first six months of driving—what can you do?

- *For the first six months, limit teens to having only one passenger in the car while they are driving, preferably an adult.*
- *Make the car a gadget-free zone. Have teens put phones and devices in the glove compartment or keep them zipped up in their backpacks. They can respond to messages and calls once they get where they're going. This means when you call, you may have to wait until they can call you back. Be patient as a parent with their response time.*
- *Even if the car has a bluetooth calling feature, do not allow any calls in the car. If teens absolutely have to call someone because they're lost or need help, tell them to pull the car over, park, and then make the call.*



#3 Just Do It— Everyone Buckle Up

Compared with other age groups, teens have the lowest rates of seatbelt use. In 2015, only 61% of high school students reported that they always wear seat belts when riding with someone else. And research shows that seat belts reduce serious crash-related injuries and deaths by about 50%.

Make sure your teen knows that it may be uncomfortable, and it may wrinkle their clothes, but it's better to arrive at your destination a little uncomfortable and wrinkled than never arriving at all. Set a good example and require it of your teens: wear the belt—it just may save your life.

#4 Speed Limits Actually Matter

We tell teens to follow the speed limit, but what do we do when we're in a hurry? Try to speed up and "make-up time?" It's never good to set this example that time can be "made up" on the car ride—you may just be in a hurry to get in an accident. Also be aware that running late isn't the only reason some people speed. Playing music can cause drivers to slip into faster speeds without noticing. And finally, thanks to incredibly good suspension engineering, some cars make drivers and passengers feel like they're going slower than they actually are.

*Traffic engineers conduct a lot of research before they suggest a speed limit. Their goal is to get drivers to their destinations as quickly and as safely as possible. So they do keep drivers' time in mind while setting the limits. Maybe it seems illogical to drive a "slow" speed limit when there doesn't seem to be any traffic or people around, but drivers should always be ready for the unexpected. **Driving too slowly isn't safe either. When a driver isn't in the flow with other cars, those behind them become more at risk for accidents.***

So what's the best thing to do? The gauge in the car shows the real speed, and the speed limit posted wasn't just a random choice. Therefore, set a good example and expect your teens to pay attention to the speed limit and stick to it. Encourage them to leave the house earlier if they know they need to get somewhere sooner.

#5 Teach Them to Be Good Examples to Their Peers

Driving moves teens up and forward in the world, as long as they do it wisely. Encourage your teens to set the best example for their friends, and to ignore pressure by others to leave safe driving rules behind. Encourage them to be good leaders. They just may help others save lives as well.



ACTIVE PARENTS MEAN SAFER TEENS

WATCH:

Parents Are the Key to Safe Teen Drivers



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows how parents can help teen drivers stay safe behind the wheel by being actively involved in their driving safety. With good communication, defined expectations, and patience, parents can rest a little easier when handing over the keys.



Key Takeaways

- Young drivers lack the maturity, skill, and experience to deal with distractions. Studies show that a young driver needs AT LEAST 50 hours of training on the road before they can become a safe, independent driver.
- The biggest distractions are cell phones and friends riding with you.
- Compared with other age groups, teens have the lowest rate of seatbelt usage. Research shows that seat belts reduce serious crash-related injuries and deaths by about 50%.

Continue the Conversation...

- Why does distracted driving contribute to so many accidents?
- What are your local laws regarding teen driving?
- How do distracted driving and accidents impact insurance rates?
- Why is seat belt usage so significant?
- What limits can we set knowing the research that is out there regarding accidents and safe driving?
- Limiting passengers, setting boundaries when they have occupants in their cars, or no friends in the car at all? What's realistic?



Additional Resources

For Students:

- [Things to consider in regards to distracted driving](#)
- [Tips and hints to be a better driver](#)

For Adults:

- [What you need to know about teen drivers](#)
- [Teen drivers](#)

