



Keeping Young Drivers Safe

A resource for parents and educators from an alliance between
State Farm and The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Quick Tips For Parents to Keep Young Drivers Safe

1. **Set the Example.** "Practice what you preach" is an important rule that must be followed. Drive safely long before your teen receives a learner's permit. If you don't want your son or daughter talking on a cell phone or eating while driving, don't do those things while driving. Always wear a seat belt. Make sure you're not speeding or tailgating. Try not to drive if you're angry or tired.
2. **Practice, Practice, Practice.** Be sure to devote at least 50 hours to teaching your teen to drive. It's the single most important factor in developing a safe driver.
3. **Keep it interesting.** Vary the routes, time of day, and driving conditions to give the new driver in the family confidence in a wide range of driving situations.
4. **Gradually introduce new privileges.** Once your teenager receives his license, it may be tempting to give him carte blanche to drive where he wants, when he wants, and with whom he wants. But research shows that night driving, driving with passengers, and driving without a destination are all factors that contribute to high crash rates. Remember to set ground rules before he gets his license.
5. **No passengers for at least six months.** Research shows that a teen's risk of being involved in a crash increases exponentially with each adolescent passenger. Until you're sure your child can manage passengers and other distractions responsibly, set a "no peer passengers" rule unless an adult is along for the ride. When he or she is ready, start by allowing only one passenger. Then gradually increase the number of teen passengers allowed in the car. Teach your child that it's OK to tell passengers, "Please don't distract me while I'm driving."
6. **Discuss the route.** Before letting your teen head out alone, make sure the route is on well-practiced roads. Restrict trips to those with a purpose and on low-speed roads.
7. **Talk about unsafe situations.** Discuss ways your child can avoid them.
8. **No nighttime driving for at least six months.** A teens' crash risk increases at night. For the first six months after licensure, your son or daughter shouldn't drive after 9:30 p.m. or 10 p.m. Then gradually allow your teen to drive later, perhaps by half-hour increments.
9. **Wait to buy your teen a car.** It is not recommended to buy a teen driver a car immediately. Instead for the first year or so after licensure, let your child share the family car (a later-model mid-sized to large sedan is safest). This will allow you to control vehicle access and to agree on conditions of use (wearing a seat belt, no passengers, no cell phone, and responsibility for gas/repairs, etc).
10. **Teach your teen to "scan" for hazards.** Scanning surroundings for potential hazards is particularly difficult for a young driver. During your supervised driving practice, remind your son or daughter to keep an eye on the traffic several cars ahead. Also stress the importance of looking to the sides for brake lights and traffic signals, as well as hazards such as roadblocks, pedestrians, or emergency vehicles.