



THE USAA  
EDUCATIONAL  
FOUNDATION®

*Good Information for Good Decisions.®*

**SAFETY**

# **DISTRACTED DRIVING**



## OUR MISSION

The mission of The USAA Educational Foundation is to help consumers make informed decisions by providing information on financial management, safety concerns and significant life events.

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## 2 WHAT IS DISTRACTED DRIVING?

Driving requires your full attention. When driving, you must remain alert and aware of your surroundings so that you can respond to traffic lights, pedestrians, cyclists and emergency vehicles. You also may need to react to unexpected hazards at a moment's notice.

Any activity that takes your eyes off the road, your hands off the wheel or your mind off of driving — even for a brief second — puts you and those around you in danger.

### DISTRACTED DRIVING INDICATORS

Think about the last time you drove. Did you:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk on your mobile phone?            | <input type="checkbox"/> Shave, put on makeup or brush your hair?                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk hands-free on your mobile phone? | <input type="checkbox"/> Reach for something on the floor or between the seats?                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read or send texts?                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Get distracted by other passengers?                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use your navigation system?           | <input type="checkbox"/> Look over your shoulder to check on passengers or cargo in the back seat? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adjust the radio?                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Daydream?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watch a DVD?                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Sightsee?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read a newspaper, magazine, map?      |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eat, drink or smoke?                  |  |

If you checked any of the above, you are driving distracted and you are at an increased risk of an accident.

### What You Should Do

Every day, drivers, passengers and pedestrians are injured or killed in distraction-related crashes. You and your family should learn the dangers of distracted driving and how to recognize and avoid activities that can lead to a crash.

Distracted driving is 100 percent preventable. As you drive, try to identify when you become bored and inattentive. Notice the times you reach for the radio or mobile phone. Once you recognize activities that distract you, you can take steps to avoid them. These general tips can also help you stay alert and safe behind the wheel.

## BEFORE YOU DRIVE

- Plan ahead. Know your route and check road and weather conditions.
- Get ready before you leave home. Avoid personal grooming in the vehicle.
- Allow time to arrive at your destination without rushing.
- Secure children appropriately. Give them safe items to keep them occupied during the trip.
- Restrain pets appropriately when they travel with you.
- Secure cargo in your vehicle.
- Keep your mobile phone readily accessible in the event of an emergency. Leave a voicemail on your mobile phone saying you are driving and will call back at a safer time.
- Set vehicle controls, such as the radio, navigation system, air conditioner and lighting.
- Adjust the seat and mirrors.
- Buckle up and make sure all passengers are wearing their seat belts.

## WHILE DRIVING

- Stay focused on the road. Concentrate on the task of driving.
- Do not talk on the phone.
- Do not read or send texts.
- Pull over to a safe location if you need to use your navigation system, check a map or do anything that takes your eyes, hands or mind off of driving.
- Keep the radio volume at a level that allows you to hear and respond to horns, emergency vehicle sirens and other important sounds outside your vehicle.
- Do not eat or drink.
- Do not smoke.
- Tell passengers if their behavior distracts you. Ask them to stop.
- Do not daydream or sightsee.

### WHILE DRIVING *CONTINUED*

- Stay calm. Avoid driving when you are upset or tired. Do not respond emotionally to other drivers' behavior.
- Remain aware of vehicles around you. If another driver appears distracted (talking on the phone, texting, eating, drifting out of the correct lane), maintain a safe following distance.

### AS A PASSENGER

- Speak up if the driver reads or sends a text, receives a call or allows other distractions.
- Offer to assist the driver with the vehicle controls (for example, the radio, navigation system, air conditioner).
- Help the driver stay alert to what is happening on the road.
- Help the driver stay calm. Do not engage the driver in a serious or emotional conversation.

### AT ALL TIMES

- Do not call or text someone you know is driving.
- If you receive a call from someone who is driving, ask him to call back at a safer time.
- Remember, driving requires your full attention. It is not a time to catch up on phone calls, meals or personal grooming.
- Keep your driving skills sharp. Consider taking a class to improve your driving abilities.

Teens are most likely to drive distracted and be injured or killed in vehicle crashes. Talk with your teen openly and candidly about distraction risks. Teach your teen that taking their eyes, hands or mind off the task of driving, even for a second, could cause someone's injury or death.

## Parents

- Set a good example. Teens learn more from your behavior than your words. Practice driving the way you want your children to drive. Stay alert and avoid distractions. Never talk on the phone or send or read texts while driving.
- Set clear rules and enforce them. Take the keys if your teen ignores safe driving rules.
- Know your state's driving laws. Make sure your teen understands them, too. For laws in your area, visit [www.distraction.gov](http://www.distraction.gov) and select State Laws from the Get The Facts menu.
- Sign the "Safe Driving Agreement." Post a copy of the signed agreement where you and your teen will see it often.

## Teens

- Be a safe, attentive driver. Follow the tips in this publication for avoiding distractions.
- Be a responsible passenger. Offer to "co-pilot" when riding in another individual's vehicle. Assist the driver with the vehicle controls (for example, the radio, navigation system, air conditioner). Speak up if a driver becomes distracted.
- Encourage family and friends to avoid driving distractions. Set a good example, especially for other young drivers. Let them know you care about their safety.
- Sign the "Safe Driving Agreement." Review it periodically.

## Teen Safe Driving Video

Helping keep your teen safe behind the wheel is very important. That is why we have developed a video designed to help teens develop safe driving skills.

**We invite you and your teen to watch the “On The Road” video which focuses on:**

- Driver distractions
- Poor weather conditions
- School zones and emergency vehicles
- Road rage
- Impaired driving

**To watch the video:**

- Visit [www.usaaedfoundation.org](http://www.usaaedfoundation.org)
- Click the Health & Safety tab
- Click On The Road (DVD)

**After watching the video you can discuss the consequences of risky driving behavior with your teen and help reinforce the importance of being an alert and responsible driver.**



You and your teen can also view educational information on financial, health and other safety related topics at:

[www.usaaedfoundation.org](http://www.usaaedfoundation.org)<sup>®</sup>



# SAFE DRIVING AGREEMENT 7

I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand that driving is a privilege, and I promise to:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Obey all traffic laws and signs.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Always check and adjust my vehicle controls, such as the radio, navigation system, air conditioner, lighting, seat and mirrors before driving.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintain at least $\frac{1}{4}$ tank of gas at all times. It is not safe to be stranded on the side of the road.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Always check oil levels and tire pressure.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Always wear my seat belt and ensure that anyone riding with me is also wearing a seat belt.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Be aware of my surroundings and other vehicles to ensure safe driving.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Avoid distractions that divert my attention from the road while driving. These include talking on my mobile phone, texting, adjusting vehicle controls, reading, eating, drinking, grooming, picking up loose items from the floor or between the seats and talking to passengers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Never drive after consuming alcohol or using illegal substances.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Never ride with a driver who has consumed alcohol or used illegal substances.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Never drive if I am using over-the-counter or prescription medications that cause drowsiness.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Never drive someone else's vehicle or let anyone drive mine unless it is an absolute emergency, such as illness or injury. All drivers must be insured to operate any vehicle.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have no one with me when I am driving unless I have obtained permission from my parent(s).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Support my parent's decision to install a video camera or other monitoring device in the vehicle that I am driving and agree to review the tapes with them to evaluate my driving skills.

As the parent(s) or legal guardian(s), I (We), \_\_\_\_\_, agree to let our teen, \_\_\_\_\_, maintain driving privileges as long as \_\_\_\_\_ adheres to the above checklist.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Legal Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Legal Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teen Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## 8 FOR MORE INFORMATION

### **Insurance Information**

#### **Institute (III)**

(212) 346-5500

[www.iii.org](http://www.iii.org)

### **National Safety Council**

(800) 621-7615

[www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org)

### **The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety**

(202) 638-5944

[www.aaafoundation.org](http://www.aaafoundation.org)

### **The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety**

(703) 247-1500

[www.iihs.org](http://www.iihs.org)

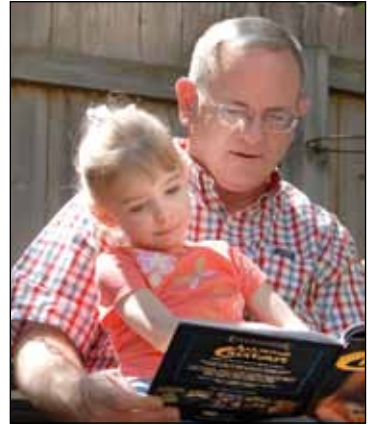
### **The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration**

(888) 327-4236

(800) 424-9153

[www.distraction.gov](http://www.distraction.gov)

## RESOURCES



The USAA Educational Foundation offers the following publications on a variety of topics:

**MAKING YOUR HOME A SAFER PLACE (#531)**

**BUYING A VEHICLE THAT MEETS YOUR NEEDS (#505)**

**INSTALLING CHILD SAFETY SEATS (#544)**

**SAFE ON THE ROAD (#570)**

**CHILD SAFETY IN AND AROUND VEHICLES (#555)**

**BEHIND THE WHEEL A PRACTICE DRIVING GUIDE FOR TEENS AND PARENTS (#565)**

**ON THE ROAD (DVD) (#567)**

**THE EFFECTS OF AGING ON DRIVING SKILLS (#535)**

**PREPARING FOR PARENTHOOD (#563)**

**HELPING CHILDREN DEVELOP HEALTHY HABITS (#547)**

**CHOOSING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE (#546)**

**To order a free copy of any of these and other publications, visit [www.usaaedfoundation.org](http://www.usaaedfoundation.org) or call (800) 531-6196.**

Information in this publication was current at the time it was printed. However, the Foundation cannot guarantee that websites and phone numbers listed in this publication have not changed since then.

If a website address or phone number has changed since you received this publication, log on to a search engine and type in keywords of the subject matter or organization you are researching to locate such updated information.

**Somerset County Traffic Safety Alliance**  
**www.sctrafficsafety.com**

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[WWW.USAAEDFOUNDATION.ORG](http://WWW.USAAEDFOUNDATION.ORG)



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