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VEHICLE AND DRIVING SAFETY

BEHIND THE WHEEL

A PRACTICE DRIVING GUIDE FOR TEENS AND PARENTS



K.E.Y.S.®
KEEPING EVERY YOUTH SAFE



OUR MISSION

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2 GETTING STARTED

Teen drivers have the highest crash involvement and fatality rates of any group. They are not only inexperienced, but they often overestimate their abilities. Distractions contribute to more than half of all crashes.

Driver education programs are important in helping beginning drivers learn fundamental skills and the rules of the road. But, it takes more than just learning the basics to safely operate a vehicle. It takes practice, supervised practice.

This publication will assist you in guiding your teen through progressively complex practice driving sessions, identifying common driving distractions, sharing safety and security reminders and entering into a safe-driving agreement with your teen driver.

Driving Distractions

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), distractions while driving are the number one cause of teenage crashes. Discuss with your teen the importance of paying attention while driving. Distractions contribute to more than half of all crashes because they disrupt a driver's concentration and shorten reaction time.

The most common distractions are:

- Talking on a cell phone or texting.
- Talking with other passengers.
- Changing radio stations or CDs.
- Eating or drinking.
- Combing or brushing hair, putting on makeup or shaving.

The National Safety Council (NSC) estimates at least 23 percent of all crashes — or at least 1.3 million crashes each year — are caused by drivers using cell phones (either talking or texting).

Your teen will learn driving habits by watching you drive.

WHEN DRIVING, DO YOU EVER		
	YES	NO
Talk or text on your cell phone?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Change radio stations or CDs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eat, drink or smoke?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pick up something from the floor that you have dropped?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Read or write?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reach for something in the glove compartment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comb or brush your hair, put on your makeup or shave?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Put on contact lenses or use eye drops?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
File, clip or polish your nails?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered “yes” to any of the questions, you have been a distracted driver. Lead by example and demonstrate safe driving habits. Your teen driver needs to understand that any kind of distraction can impact safe driving. Engage in discussion with your teen about how to avoid distractions.

Avoid Distractions

- If you need to use your cell phone while driving, pull off the traveled roadway and stop in a safe place before using your phone.
- Stay focused and pay attention.
- Do not drive if you are tired.
- Keep your conversation with passengers to a minimum.
- Have your passenger change the radio station or CD.

4 TIPS FOR PARENTS

Before you begin the practice sessions, make sure you are demonstrating the behaviors you will want from your teen.

DO YOU ALWAYS		
	YES	NO
Wear your seat belt?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Avoid distractions that divert your attention from the road such as using a cell phone, texting, smoking, grooming, eating and drinking or adjusting the radio while driving?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Observe posted speed limits?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintain safe following distances?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use your signal when changing lanes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Come to a complete stop at stop signs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stop for red lights?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Treat other drivers with courtesy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Refrain from drinking alcohol and driving?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drive defensively and anticipate the actions of other drivers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

It is important to discuss the consequences of risky driving behavior. Teens do not exhibit the same driving behaviors with friends as they do with their parents. The fatal crash risk for drivers 16 to 19 years of age is greater when other teens are passengers than it is when driving alone, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS).

Seat belts, distractions, drinking alcohol and driving, speeding and teen passengers are critical topics to discuss. The effect of traffic tickets and crashes on the cost of insurance is also an important subject.

Make The Most Of The Practice Sessions

- Plan the route for each session and discuss the skills you will be observing with your teen.
- Begin with 15 to 20 minute sessions and gradually increase to an hour.
- Stay calm. Remember, your teen is nervous too.
- Give positive feedback.
- Be patient and expect mistakes.
- Give specific but concise instructions.
- Check traffic before instructing your teen to change lanes, make turns or stop.
- Direct your teen's attention to changing road conditions, hazards and other drivers. This helps develop their ability to anticipate potential problems.
- Instruct your teen to always be aware of motorcyclists, cyclists and pedestrians.
- After each session, give constructive feedback and ask for feedback about your instruction.

THE FATAL CRASH RISK FOR DRIVERS 16 TO 19 YEARS OF AGE IS GREATER WHEN OTHER TEENS ARE PASSENGERS THAN IT IS WHEN DRIVING ALONE, ACCORDING TO THE INSURANCE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY (IIHS).

6 DRIVING SCENARIOS

Scenario One: Observation

You are behind the wheel in this scenario. The objective is for you to guide your teen through the process of driving. Use the vehicle your teen will be driving for the remainder of the practice sessions. Focus on the skills and explain why you are doing things. This helps you put the basic skills together in a useful sequence for your teen driver.

The observation scenario is intended to be an active exercise. Engage your teen in dialogue about the driving skills you are demonstrating.

IN THE DRIVEWAY EXPLAIN THE BASIC OPERATION	NOTES
<input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle safety features — airbags, seat belts	
<input type="checkbox"/> Seat controls	
<input type="checkbox"/> Steering wheel adjustment	
<input type="checkbox"/> Mirror controls	
<input type="checkbox"/> Dashboard	
<input type="checkbox"/> Signal controls	
<input type="checkbox"/> Windshield wipers	
<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency lights	
<input type="checkbox"/> Parking brake and release	
<input type="checkbox"/> Gear shift	
<input type="checkbox"/> Location of insurance documentation and registration	

ON THE ROAD DEMONSTRATE AND EXPLAIN THE SKILLS	NOTES
<input type="checkbox"/> Using signals	
<input type="checkbox"/> Using mirrors	
<input type="checkbox"/> Checking blind spots	
<input type="checkbox"/> Braking	
<input type="checkbox"/> Turning	
<input type="checkbox"/> Changing lanes	
<input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining speed	
<input type="checkbox"/> Driving defensively — anticipating the actions of other drivers	
<input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining proper following distances	
<input type="checkbox"/> Scanning for hazards — anticipating potential problems	
<input type="checkbox"/> Being aware of motorcyclists	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yielding — intersections and right of way	
<input type="checkbox"/> Merging	
<input type="checkbox"/> Parking — on the street and in parking lots	
<input type="checkbox"/> Backing up	

Scenario Two: Getting The Feel Of The Vehicle

This driving scenario should take place in a large empty parking lot. The purpose of this scenario is to help the teen driver feel comfortable maneuvering the vehicle. Emphasis is placed on basic skills. Even if your teen has taken a driver education course, getting the feel of the vehicle they will be driving is very important. All vehicles handle differently.

Check each item when you feel the skill has been mastered.

BASIC OPERATION

- Adjusting the mirrors, seat and steering wheel

- Locating the blind spots

- Starting the engine

- Accelerating

- Turning

- Using signals

- Braking

- Backing up

- Parking — pulling into and out of a parking space

Special Considerations

If your vehicle is equipped with an antilock braking system (ABS), it is important to teach your teen how to operate the brakes safely. Drivers should never pump antilock brakes. This type of braking system pumps the brakes automatically, many times every second. Instead, apply firm and continuous pressure to the brake pedal to activate the antilock brakes. When antilock brakes are working, the driver may feel a pulsating sensation from the brake pedal.

Have your teen practice hard braking by accelerating to 25 or 30 mph and pressing hard on the brakes. Repeat several times until your teen is comfortable with the feel of antilock brakes.

If your vehicle is equipped with antilock brakes, you may want to have your teen practice this technique: Place an empty box in the center of a large empty parking lot. While approaching the box at a speed of 25 or 30 mph, have your teen hit the brakes, steer around it and get back into the “lane.”

Scenario Three: Low Traffic Areas

Plan a route along neighborhood and city streets. Be sure to choose streets with speed limits that are not more than 35 mph. Before you depart, talk with your teen about the route and any special situations you expect to encounter such as school zones or road construction.

Check each item when you feel the skill has been mastered.

SKILLS

- Using signals
- Braking
- Turning right
- Turning left
- Approaching controlled intersections with traffic lights or signs
- Approaching uncontrolled intersections
- Making protected and unprotected turns
- Determining right of way
- Changing lanes
- Maintaining proper speed
- Scanning and identifying hazards
- Maintaining proper following distances

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Pedestrians
- Crosswalks
- Bicyclists
- Bike lanes
- Children and pets
- Motorcyclists
- School buses
- School zones
- Emergency vehicles
- Bus stops
- Turning lanes

Scenario Four: Urban Areas

This scenario should be practiced on city streets with speed limits of 45 mph or less. The business district, shopping areas and downtown may be good choices for sessions on urban traffic. Plan your route in advance and prepare your teen for the added challenges of heavier traffic and increased traffic control measures.

Check each item when you feel the skill has been mastered.

SKILLS

- Keeping up with the flow of traffic, but not following too closely

- Approaching controlled intersections with traffic lights or signs

- Approaching uncontrolled intersections

- Turning from the proper lane

- Adjusting speed

- Maneuvering in busy parking lots

- Parking — streets and lots

- Entering the roadway

- Merging with traffic

- Scanning and identifying hazards

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Crosswalks

- Buses

- Heavier traffic

- Restricted-use lanes — buses, right turn only

- One-way streets

- Street-parked vehicles

- Motorcyclists

Scenario Five: Rural Roads

After your teen has mastered the low traffic and urban driving scenarios, you are ready to guide them through the rural road scenario. Rural roads present a number of challenges to the beginning driver. These roads often consist of two narrow lanes, divided only by painted lines. They can have sharp curves and generally do not have shoulders for safe emergency maneuvering.

Check each item when you feel the skill has been mastered.

SKILLS

- Keeping up with the flow of traffic, but not following too closely
- Approaching controlled intersections with traffic lights or signs
- Approaching uncontrolled intersections
- Maintaining proper speed
- Handling curves
- Passing other vehicles
- Allowing others to pass
- Scanning and identifying hazards

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Animals
- Limited sight distances
- Slow-moving vehicles
- Higher speeds
- Vehicles entering the roadway from side roads
- Cautionary signs
- Motorcyclists

NEARLY 75% OF ALL ROLLOVER CRASHES OCCUR IN RURAL AREAS, SO PRACTICE WITH CAUTION WHEN DRIVING ON RURAL ROADS.

— NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION (NHTSA)

Scenario Six: Highways And Interstates

This driving scenario takes place on urban and rural highways. Be sure to consider the time of day when choosing your routes. You will want to expose your teen to a variety of traffic situations. Start with low traffic situations and gradually progress to high traffic times and routes. Discuss the routes in advance and prepare your teen for any special situations you expect to encounter (for example, interchanges, construction zones).

Check each item when you feel the skill has been mastered.

SKILLS

- Entering the roadway

- Keeping up with the flow of traffic, but not following too closely

- Maintaining proper speed

- Changing lanes — always signaling

- Passing

- Allowing others to pass

- Merging with traffic

- Exiting

- Scanning for hazards

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Higher speeds equal longer stopping distances

- Blind spots

- Large trucks

- Highway interchanges

- Motorcyclists

Truck drivers have blind spots in front of, behind and on both sides of their large vehicles. Remember, if you cannot see the driver's face in the truck's side view mirrors, he cannot see you. Do not follow a truck too closely. This will keep you out of the blind spot and give you a better view of the road.

Scenario Seven: Night Driving

For the nighttime scenario, choose streets on which your teen has previously practiced. The familiarity of landmarks and intersections will help them better recognize how things appear differently at night.

Check each item when you feel the skill has been mastered.

SKILLS

- Adjusting mirrors to reduce glare
- Turning lights on at twilight
- Keeping up with the flow of traffic, but not following too closely
- Maintaining proper speed
- Using high beams appropriately
- Avoiding glare from oncoming traffic
- Approaching controlled intersections with traffic lights or signs
- Approaching uncontrolled intersections
- Scanning for and identifying hazards
- Determining distances

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Limited sight distances
- Animals
- Pedestrians
- Stopped vehicles
- Driver fatigue/drowsiness
- Motorcyclists

When you consider that the majority of high school social and extracurricular activities take place at night, the importance of nighttime driving practice becomes critical.

Scenario Eight: Inclement Weather

Rain, snow and ice can make driving hazardous, even for the most experienced driver. Helping your teen gain driving experience during adverse weather conditions is very important. After you are comfortable with your teen's driving performance in all other situations, it is time to progress to the inclement weather scenario.

Begin by having your teen practice driving maneuvers in a large empty parking lot. When you are both ready for an on-road session, choose a route that is familiar.

Check each item when you feel the skill has been mastered.

SKILLS	SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS
<input type="checkbox"/> Using lights and windshield wipers appropriately	<input type="checkbox"/> Use of lights in fog
<input type="checkbox"/> Braking	<input type="checkbox"/> Use of defogger and defroster
<input type="checkbox"/> Keeping up with the flow of traffic, but not following too closely	<input type="checkbox"/> Standing water
<input type="checkbox"/> Reducing speed appropriately	<input type="checkbox"/> Ice on bridges
<input type="checkbox"/> Turning	<input type="checkbox"/> Stopped vehicle
<input type="checkbox"/> Approaching controlled intersections with traffic lights or signs	<input type="checkbox"/> Hydroplaning
<input type="checkbox"/> Approaching uncontrolled intersections	<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss what to do if the vehicle gets stuck

Some states require drivers to turn their headlights on whenever the windshield wipers are on. Even if it is not the law in your state, it is a good idea because it increases the likelihood that your vehicle will be seen by other drivers.

16 SAFETY AND SECURITY REMINDERS

The following are tips and reminders to help keep your teen safe on the road.

- Take your vehicle for a full safety inspection 1 to 2 weeks before a long trip.
- Be well-rested and alert each time you get behind the wheel.
- Never drive after consuming alcohol or using illegal substances.
- Never drive using over-the-counter or prescription medications that cause drowsiness.
- Always wear a seat belt and require all passengers to buckle up as well.
- Obey all traffic safety laws.
- Slow down in adverse weather conditions.
- Avoid distractions that divert your attention from the road (for example, using a cell phone, texting, eating or adjusting the radio while driving).
- Place warning devices, when needed, at least 200 feet behind the vehicle.
- Do not overload your vehicle with passengers.
- Drive safely and defensively at all times.
- Be aware of motorcyclists. They can be hard to detect, especially if they are in your blind spot.
- Give emergency vehicles the right of way.
- Drive safely. Do not provoke other drivers.
- Do not open your window for any stranger.
- Only individuals listed on your insurance should operate your vehicle.
- Keep a list of emergency contact numbers available. If you carry a cell phone, program important numbers into your phone — roadside assistance, insurance company, 9-1-1, home, etc.
- Make sure you have a flashlight and an extra set of batteries in your vehicle.
- Carry a current roadmap and plan your trips. Do not experiment with a new route — especially at night.
- Keep the vehicle doors locked.
- If you believe you are being followed by a stranger, drive to the nearest police station, fire department or any open place of business.

18 CHOOSING A VEHICLE FOR YOUR TEEN

Teens should drive vehicles that reduce their risk of being involved in crashes and that offer state-of-the-art protection in case they do crash. Whether your teen will be driving the family vehicle or one of their own, here are some tips that can help you make the best choice.

What To Avoid

- Vehicles with a performance image. These vehicles can encourage speeding.
- Sport utility vehicles. SUVs — especially smaller ones — pose a rollover risk. Less-experienced drivers may be more likely to overcorrect a turn or use abrupt steering motions which can cause a rollover.
- Small vehicles. Because of their size and weight, small vehicles generally offer less crash protection.
- Older vehicles. Most of today's vehicles offer better crash protection than those made 6 to 10 years ago.
- Motorcycles. Regardless of who is driving them, motorcycles are extremely dangerous.

What To Look For

- A mid- or full-size vehicle. Generally, bigger is better. However, you do not have to put your teen in the largest vehicle you can find. Many mid- and full-size vehicles offer excellent crash protection.
- Check the safety ratings. This information is available on the Web sites of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), www.safercar.gov and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), www.iihs.org. You can also access these Web sites through The USAA Educational Foundation Web site at www.usaaedfoundation.org.
- Newer models offer better safety equipment. A newer, mid-size vehicle with airbags is a better choice than an older, larger vehicle without airbags, according to the IIHS.
- Monitoring devices can be installed in vehicles to record teen driving behaviors. Parents can review the monitored driving with their teen drivers as a learning tool to encourage the development of safer driving habits.

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 rearview and side 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 like talking on my cell phone, texting, grooming, eating and drinking or adjusting the radio while driving.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Never drive after consuming alcohol or using illegal substances.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Never ride in a vehicle where the driver 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 in the vehicle unless I have obtained permission from my parent(s) or guardian(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 my parents 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 they promise to adhere to the above checklist.

Parent's or Legal Guardian's Signature

Date

Parent's or Legal Guardian's Signature

Date

Teen's Signature

Date

RESOURCES



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

KEEPING EVERY YOUTH SAFE (K.E.Y.S.)

- **ON THE ROAD (DVD) (#567)**
- **COST OF DRIVING (#568)**

BUYING A VEHICLE THAT MEETS YOUR NEEDS (#505)

SAFE ON THE ROAD (#570)

CHOOSING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE (#546)

LIVING A GREENER LIFE (#560)

INTERNET SAFETY FOR TEENS (#573)

SOCIAL NETWORKING (#576)

HOW TO SUCCEED IN COLLEGE (#512)

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GET INVESTMENTWISE (#521)

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Somerset County Traffic Safety Alliance

www.sctrafficsafety.com

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