

before the wheel™

teen driver coaching strategies

Teen Driver: Newly Licensed First Year Program

2014 Premier Edition



build trust



phase privileges



present positive options

licensed to drive at 65 miles per hour: now what?

Your teen is legally authorized to drive unchaperoned at high speeds. Anxiety and fear are the emotions that you as a parent may be feeling right now. It is important to direct your concerns into a positive proactive approach to coaching and empowering your teen to achieve strong technical skills, decision making skills and strategies for handling peer pressure situations.

This newsletter provides recommendations and guidelines for the following concerns and helps you to successfully navigate your teen through the first year of driving:

- How much vehicle use should my teen have in the first several months?
- Will my teen follow the basic safety rules of wearing a seat belt, not adding additional passengers, not having alcohol, staying within speed limits and safely parking at a complete stop for cell phone communication?
- How can I equip my teen with the critical thinking skills that are required to recognize and quickly respond to dangerously developing situations?
- How can I present positive options for my teen to manage peer pressure situations and tactfully exit situations?

Step 1: Build on Your Teen's Trust and Start the Driving Conversation on a Positive Note!

Your teen does trust you and your advice. You have more influence on your teen than any of the teen's peers.

Use the positive, proactive, supportive successful formula that you have utilized for the previous 16 years. You have provided a merit based approach to your child's stepping stones in life. You have spent countless hours in the vehicle talking to your child, cheering your child on when a game was won, providing learning lessons and thoughts on what to do next time when his or her team lost. You have practiced with your child, sat by the piano, helped with homework and been his or her most loyal fan as you sat in freezing cold stands or sweltering heat.

Your teen is looking for that same approach for this very new venture of driving. It is essential that you lay a foundation with your teen that discussing driving is going to be a positive ongoing conversation.

Start the conversation with your teen about driving in a relaxed setting, a favorite restaurant or coffee shop usually works well.

Step 2: Phase Privileges and Practice Technical Skills With Your New Teen Driver!

Introducing your teen to a limited set of driving scenarios will help your teen acclimate to the different levels of decision making required on the road.

The National Safety Council and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety recommend phasing privileges for your new teen driver.

The September 25, 2009 US News and World Report article, "Firm Parents Keep Teen Drivers Safe" recommends monitoring and parental guidance for your new driver. The article provides information from two studies by Kenneth Ginsburg of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

Dr. Ginsburg comments:

"Parent involvement really matters. Active parenting can save teenagers' lives. Parents who give rules, set boundaries and monitor those boundaries with warmth and support can have a really dramatic effect on teen driving safety".



The phased program for your teen must be tailored to your teen's skill set.

Privileges Recommended for the first 3 to 4 months:

Drive:

- to and from school and work
- to and from sports and extra-curricular activities
- to and from malls, theaters and restaurants that are within 10 miles of the home
- to and from friends' homes on familiar routes

Take:

- roads with stop signs and traffic lights that regulate traffic flow
- right turns when entering a lane without traffic lights or stops signs, avoid taking left turns unless there is a traffic signal

Parents practice the following with your new driver:

- merging onto the highway and maintaining highway speeds and changing lanes
- turning right and left at large multi-lane intersections with traffic signals and left turn lanes
- getting safely in and out of roundabouts

The Five Non-Negotiable Restrictions:

Seat belts: must be worn at all times by the driver and all passengers

Graduated Driver License Restrictions: usually 0 to 1 unrelated passenger is allowed for the first 9 months to 1 year: follow the state required guidelines

Absolute Sobriety: not a drop of alcohol

Speed Limit: Stay within speed limit at all times

Cell Communication: park safely at a complete stop with ignition off for all texts and calls

Dr. Ginsburg also recommends:

It is important to make sure there is a reward for your teen for good driving behavior, there has to be something in it for the teen.

Compliment your teen when he or she successfully completes this first stage. Meet with your teen and celebrate the accomplishment. Your teen has gained additional privileges due to his or her own actions. More weekend driving privileges is a good next step.

If your teen did not successfully follow the steps from the first phase, it is important to be positive and supportive. Give your teen a clean slate and an additional month or two to master this group of privileges.

Step 3: Engage Your Teen To Strategize with the Coaching Playbook!

coaching playbook

you need to be the advance team for your teen!

An advance team for the president goes to a location days before the president arrives for an event. Hours before the president arrives, the team becomes more persistent and intent on providing a safe environment for the president and all the individuals attending the event.

Not only does the team "look under every rock" and leave "no stone unturned" in searching for dangerous threats to security, the team also tries to "anticipate every possible scenario" that could present a danger or threat.

You need to play this same role for your teen.

He or she does not have the knowledge and experience to anticipate numerous situations that develop on the road. You do have knowledge and have experienced situations in which a split second decision was the difference between a safe trip and a crash. It is important that you share this knowledge with your teen in a positive, proactive sequential manner.

Your teen wants to be a great driver. You are in a position to empower your teen with the skills and strategies to be a great driver.

You can prepare your teen to make the right decision in a variety of situations by practicing more difficult driving maneuvers, discussing possible scenarios and preparing your teen to think ahead!

The three most important areas for you and your teen to focus on are:

- **Technical Skill Building**
- **Situational Decision Making**
- **Peer Pressure Strategizing**

Technical Skill Building:

This can be achieved by taking your teen out for additional driving practice and exposing your teen to different situations. Maneuvering on ice, merging

on the highway, practicing left and right turns at large intersections and practicing getting into and out of roundabouts.

If a defensive driving class is offered in your area, it is worth the time and money to have your teen take this class.

It is important to develop a positive step-by-step tactical approach that is designed for your teen. A plan of action that encompasses the technical and decision making skill level that is aligned with the technical and strategic abilities of your teen.

Situational Decision Making:

All conversations should start on a positive note. You should be guiding your teen to develop a plan on “what to do”. Every time you communicate with your teen driver, you want it to be the beginning of a new conversation. Your instructions and guidance will lead to an open ended ongoing discussion. Your teen will want to discuss and work on more potential situations.

It is essential that you present your teen with positive paths to manage situations

Peer Pressure Strategizing:

Working with your teen in advance on strategies provides you the closest thing to the dream scenario of having an earpiece in your teen's ear and you are on the other end; coaching and telling your teen what to do next.

Before your teen enters the vehicle as a driver or as a passenger of another teen driver, he or she needs to have a set of options in mind on how to handle different situations.

Four tactics that provide options and are easy to remember are:

Prepare, Predict, Prevent, Protect

Prepare

The technical skill building, situational decision making and peer pressure strategizing prepares you and your teen to expect the unexpected; work with your teen on the potential situation samples on the following page. Give your teen the opportunity to write out

solutions and then verbally discuss what the best options are for each situation.

Predict

Use examples that help your teen foresee situations that are developing and have potential for a negative outcome. Help your teen visualize the next steps. For example: The driver next to you is involved in a conversation on his cell phone. The driver will not be anticipating harmful situations that are evolving. He is not focused on what is happening on the road. His ability to respond quickly is **impaired by the distraction of the telephone conversation**. Teach your teen to compensate for the other driver's possible errors in judgement and expect that this driver may not signal, may change lanes quickly or make other poor decisions.

Prevent

The alert and attentive driver sees far ahead. Why does the vehicle next to me look like it has no driver? The driver has leaned over to grab the bottle of soda that fell out of the holder on the last turn. The distracted driver is not going to be able to anticipate a possible impact. To avoid an interaction with this driver, maintain presence of mind and safely adjust speed, distance and position in your lane.

Protect

The people in our vehicle are the most important people in our lives. We do not drive around with strangers. Advance planning and preparation will lead to safe outcomes for the driver and the passengers. ■



FROM
THE EDITOR



empower your teen...

with critical thinking skills that will help your teen assess, evaluate and respond quickly to evolving situations.

We have the ability and opportunity to empower our teen with a higher level of technical training and strategizing. Motivate your teen to join you in striving to be a great driver! Yes, offer concert tickets, more vehicle privileges, a day at the golf course or the water park. Get your teen excited about excelling at driving. It is a skill that he or she will use for a lifetime.

Who is ultimately responsible to make the decisions in a crisis situation after entering the vehicle? The teen is ultimately responsible.

Ask yourself: Have I prepared my teen for that critical moment?

There are behaviors and situations that lead up to crashes and collisions. We as parents need to provide information so that our teen can recognize that events are coming together that may lead to a negative outcome. Your teen does have control if preventative action is taken sooner rather than later.

I am available to talk with you further and look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

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coaching playbook; potential situations

it is not "if the situation is going to happen"; it is "when the situation happens" is your teen prepared?

Here are sample potential situations that you and your teen can verbally discuss or write out answers. You may also want to provide scenarios that he or she may have already encountered or heard about happening to other teens. The examples are in the first person, the teen is the I.

Potential Situation 1

I drive to the coffee shop by myself and am meeting 4 friends. We talk for a while and someone mentions that he is going to the mall and has his van and can take everyone with him. I would like to go to the mall but I am not sure how long I want to stay. What should I do next?

Potential Situation 2

I am a passenger. My neighbor drove me to a summer graduation party. The party was at the beach and everyone was pretty spread out. My neighbor and I were split up for most of the day and finally hooked up later in the afternoon to drive home. I realized at that point that my neighbor had been drinking. No one else at the party lives close to me. What should I do now?

Potential Situation 3

My best friend, Mandy, just got her driver license. I also recently received my license yet have not had many opportunities to drive. I am very excited. We have waited so long to "get out on our own" without always having to arrange rides with our parents. We leave at noon to go to lunch and a movie. After lunch, Mandy says she is picking up two other friends. I am uncomfortable with this because I know we are not supposed to have additional passengers yet. What should I do now?

Potential Situation 4

I am in the vehicle with another teen driver and the teen driver's 6 year old brother is in the back seat. The driver is starting to text while driving. What should I do now?

Potential Situation 5

I am the driver and I am past the probationary license stage. I have 3 passengers and we are going to the high school championship soccer game. We are all pretty excited and the two girls in the back seat are starting to get pretty goofy. I am annoyed by that but really annoyed that one of them is refusing to wear a seat belt. What should I do now?
