

# before the wheel™

*teen driver coaching strategies*

2016 Edition

## the Road America teen driving program puts your teen safely in the drivers seat!



You as a parent may be combatting that uneasy feeling that tells you: “My teen passed the driving test but does not really have a lot of real life driving experience.”

Your uneasy feeling is based on reality. For both men and women, drivers aged 16 to 19 years of age, have the highest average annual crash and traffic violation rates of any other age group. Parents need to take the extra step of providing their teens with every possible advantage in overcoming the obstacles and dangers that they will face on the road.

*The key to your teen arriving safely to each destination is providing your teen with the tools to assess situations and swiftly respond to potential DANGERS!*

The Road America Teen Driving Program allows your teen to develop skills to quickly respond to common emergency situations while in a safe, controlled environment. Participants

practice collision avoidance techniques that include emergency lane changes, braking, skid control and a variety of other fundamental auto control drills.

**Your teen will learn all of the following:**

**Prepare** - The ability to swiftly respond to changing weather conditions while practicing evasive maneuvers in order to avoid collisions.

**Predict** - Develop defensive driving skills to understand the behaviors of other drivers. For example, a driver in

---

***A single passenger in your car can double the risk...***

---

the lane next to your teen is involved in a conversation on the cell phone. Your teen can predict that this driver will not be aware of harmful traffic situations that are evolving. Your teen will know to change lanes, speed up or slow down in order to evade contact with a distracted driver.

**Prevent** - When your teen sees something happening ahead or notices a change in the rear view or side mirrors, he or she must be ready to act confidently. Maintaining presence of mind and safely adjusting speed and attaining more distance from other vehicles will often bring a positive result.

**Protect** - The most important people in your teen's life are often in the vehicle with your teen. Your foresight as a parent and decision to require a defensive driving class will help protect your teen and his or her friends from serious injury or worse.

**The Road America Teen Driving Program also advises you to talk to your teen about all of the following:**

**Keep Your Cell Phone Off** - Multiple studies indicate using a cell phone while driving is the equivalent of driving drunk even when using a hands-free phone.

*continued on page 3*

**Sign up your teen now for the Road America Teen Driving Program**

**Save \$20 by Using Promo Code: Save20**



**DRIVING SCHOOL**

# are we addicted to texting and driving?

Temptation meets opportunity when a cell phone is ringing or beeping with a text while we are driving. Our society puts a premium value on multitasking and being available 24/7. We want to answer, we often feel the need to answer. We are conflicted and on occasion give in and answer the text or call. We justify our actions by telling ourselves that we need to stay connected. It is expected of us. Our boss, colleagues, family and friends certainly would be disappointed if we cannot get back to them right away.



*A couple of questions that we can all ask ourselves are:*

- Can we really give our “undivided” attention to driving when engaging in texting and cellphone calls?
- Is it worth it to put ourselves, our passengers, other drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians at risk so that we can fulfill our need to stay connected?

Attention studies are presented in the 2014 book, "A Deadly Wandering" by Matt Richtel. In the book, a psychology professor and several neuroscientists contribute results from their research to help us understand how difficult it is to focus on driving while engaging in conversations utilizing technology. Work from Doctor David Strayer, one of the United States most prominent attention science researchers, and a Princeton University attention research study are mentioned in this article.

Doctor David Strayer's research shows that we cannot effectively concentrate on driving while we are multitasking and talking on a telephone or texting. Our brains are wired to prioritize. Our brain will automatically select the most immediate task even though the immediate task, a phone or text conversation, is not nearly as important as the potential “life and death” situation happening on the road.

Our brains identify an urgency and a significance in the phone or texting conversation. We feel that we may miss out on short term information that may or may not be important several hours later.

Findings from research done at Princeton University collaborate with Dr. Strayer's results and can be summarized as follows:

When the brain is asked to consider two different sources of information, it appears to present a competition in the brain. Our brains will gravitate toward what we see as the most pertinent information and there will be a decline in neurological resources dedicated to what we see as less important information.

**Consider This:** As we are driving along the highway or a familiar road, it seems to be mundane and easily manageable. We may have been on the road 1000 times before without incident. We feel that there is nothing cognitively challenging about this drive. A cell phone rings or beeps with a text. This sudden activity is more stimulating to us. It can be compared to a flash of light in a dark room. We will reactively turn toward the light. A conversation with someone about an event, a work issue or a personal concern does engage us and captures our attention. Unfortunately,

all too often, the activity on the familiar road changes drastically and becomes more dangerous. Now, it is grabbing our attention. In many cases, it is too late. Our brains do need to transition to the new stimulus being the most important and urgent. Our reaction time is not able to make up for the lost ground at the speed we are traveling and a crash occurs.

I am frequently asked the question: Why is talking or texting different than having a conversation with someone who is sitting in the car with you? The answer is that you are distracted; yet at the same time, you are receiving the additional benefit of an “extra pair” of eyes on the road. This person is able to foresee possible evolving situations and will often speak up and provide the driver with enough time to react.

**What can we do?**

If you are trying to lose weight, do you frequently put whip cream on your latte and hope it all works out in the end? If you are an alcoholic, do you stop at the tavern on your way home from work with the hopes of listening to some music and having a soda?

If you are attracted to answering a beeping or ringing phone, turn your cell phone off before entering the vehicle. Plan for designated stops if you really do have calls, texts and emails that need a quick turnaround.

All of us can take the steps today that lead to a positive outcome for all drivers, passengers, bicyclists and pedestrians! ■

---

---

## Provide Your Teen With Every Possible Advantage

---

---

**Don't Text** - Research shows texting on average causes a loss of focus on the road for 4.6 seconds. You can drive the length of a full football field in that time. A lot can go wrong while you drive the length of a football field without your eyes on the road. Don't try the "texting-while-stopped" approach, either, as many states ban texting while behind the wheel. And, when you have your head down, you won't notice key developments that



may occur. Remember, you still need to pay attention to the road when you're stopped.

**Minimize Distractions** - It may be tempting to eat, drink, flip around the radio dial, or play music loudly while you're cruising around town; however, all can cause your mind or vision to wander, even for a few seconds. As an inexperienced driver, you are more apt to lose control of your car. Distractions can significantly increase the chances that you do not notice impending danger or notice it too late and lose the ability to control the vehicle.

---

---

## Speeding is a Major Contributor to Teen Driving Collisions

---

---



**Drive Solo** - Having a single teen passenger in your car can double the risk of causing a car accident. Adding additional teen passengers causes the risk to escalate.

**Turn on Your Headlights** - Using your headlights increases your visibility and helps other drivers see you. Early morning, late at night or early evening (dusk), foggy conditions, rain and snow conditions all require the use of lights.

**Obey the Speed Limit** - Speeding is a major contributor to teen accidents. This is especially true when driving on unfamiliar roads or roads with lots of traffic. Don't feel pressured to keep up with traffic if it seems like everyone else is flying by you. Driving within the speed limit helps ensure a safe trip and avoids costly traffic tickets. ■

---

---

## 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

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,

Anne Scallon  
Publisher & Editor

*Before The Wheel*  
1141 N Old World 3rd Street  
Suite 1310  
Milwaukee, WI 53203  
[www.beforethewheel.com](http://www.beforethewheel.com)  
262-617-3139  
[annescallon@aol.com](mailto:annescallon@aol.com)

© Access Publications, LLC. All rights Reserved.

# coaching playbook; potential situations

Prepare your teen for “What to do when a situation has been identified as potentially dangerous”. Your teen needs to have ideas and options ready to tactfully come up with an excuse to avoid or exit the situation without ridicule and peer pressure backlash.

Discuss the following with your teen. Your teen should walk away with at least two options in mind on how to handle each situation.

## 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.

Should I join the group going in the van? What are the advantages and disadvantages of driving to the mall in my own vehicle versus going with the group?

---

---

---

---

## Potential Situation 2

My friend drove me to a summer graduation party. My friend 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 friend had been drinking. No one else at the party lives close to me.

Should I offer to drive my friend’s car and drop him off at his house? Should I seek another ride?

---

---

---

---

## Potential Situation 3

My best friend, Mandy, just got her driver’s license. She picks me up 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 she is not supposed to have additional passengers yet. What should I do now?

---

---

---

---

## Potential Situation 4

I am the driver and am past the probationary license stage. I am driving 3 friends and we are going to the high school championship soccer game. We are all pretty excited yet I am annoyed that one of them is refusing to wear a seat belt. What should I do now?

---

---

---

---