

EARNED PRIVILEGES™



A Phased Privilege Program for Teen Drivers

Your teen has recently received his/her driver license. For many parents, it is the first time the teen will be completely independent of monitoring and free to make decisions that have serious consequences.

It is important to decide early in the process what you are going to do this week, this month, and this year to ensure that your teen has the best possible safety information, decision making abilities, and technical driving skills, before he/she gets behind the wheel or enters the vehicle as a passenger of another teen driver.

The first step is to support your teen by providing clear guidelines. The decisions you make will affect your teen's short and long term attitudes about driving.

Communication should be relaxed and relevant potential situations and scenarios should be discussed with your teen. Parents need to clarify and attain agreement from their teen that there are restrictions that are non-negotiable, listed on page 4 of this workbook.

Frequent communication, leading by example, and phasing privileges are the best way to direct your teen on a safe driving path.

Parents can significantly influence the teen's ability to make wise decisions regarding driving. An online defensive driving program helps parents: develop a defensive driver attitude, understand the risk that teens face, and tailor a phased program that fits their teen's needs. Before The Wheel™ recommends starting with an online defensive driving program.

Alive at 25 Parent Program Online

The program informs parents of high risk situations that teens frequently encounter and how to avoid them and also provides parents with ideas on how to handle conversations with your teen. Go to www.nsc.org/demos and sign up for the Alive at 25 Parent Program Online for only \$24.95. The program includes a bookmark feature that allows the parent to complete the program in one sitting or several sittings. The entire program takes approximately 2 hours.

Parent Decision Making

Case Studies

Cali – Drive to School

Cali is a brand new driver and a sophomore in high school. She has had her driver’s license for one week. It is the end of October. Her mom informs Cali on Monday that she will have a car available on Tuesday morning for Cali to drive to school.

On Monday, Cali’s mom sets down the guidelines. Cali must leave 15 minutes earlier than the usual carpool that she takes to school. This allows for the fact that Cali is a new driver and there may be weather and traffic conditions that need to be taken into consideration.

On Tuesday morning, it is raining and much darker than it usually is for that time of day. There are piles of wet leaves on the sides of the streets in the neighborhood where Cali lives. Cali did not get ready by the agreed upon time. She is ready at the time that the carpool usually leaves to drive to school. She does not have the extra 15 minutes in the schedule.

You play the role of the mom. What should you do next and why?

Danny – Graduated Driver License Compliance

Danny finished football practice. Danny recently received his driver license but was not able to drive to school today. Steve also drives but has only had his license for one month. Steve had agreed the previous evening to drive Danny home as his only passenger from football practice.

Steve tells Danny that he can still drive him home but he is also giving Joe and Tom a ride. Danny accepts the ride.

Danny arrives home and his dad is working trimming some bushes on the front lawn. He sees Danny get out of the car that has a total of 4 teenagers. He knows Steve only has a probationary license.

You play the role of dad. What should you do next and why?

Phase Privileges for your teen

Your teen has an uneasy feeling about all the different situations that may occur on the road when he/she is handed the car keys without clear guidelines and expectations.

Introducing your teen to a “limited set of driving scenarios” the first few months after receiving his/her license will help your teen acclimate to the different levels of decision making required on the road. When he/she has mastered the skills needed for this first group and is violation and collision free, does not engage in distracted behaviors, respects the agreed upon curfew, follows the Graduated Driver License rules, wears his/her seat belt, requires seat belt use for all passengers, and stays within the speed limit at all times, he/she should be rewarded and provided with an additional set of privileges.

Remember, your good example of being courteous to other drivers, not engaging in cell phone communication, wearing the seat belt and requiring all passengers to wear seat belts, and driving a well maintained, clean, and safe car will tremendously influence your teen’s attitudes about driving.

How can you be a highly supportive parent that guides your teen without controlling your teen?

The following steps help you provide opportunities for your teen to “earn privileges” and attain more access to the vehicle by showing maturity and respect for the rules.

Phase I First meet with your teen in a casual setting, a favorite restaurant or coffee shop and talk to your teen about the privileges he/she will have during the first 3 to 4 months of driving.

Review and download the “Just Drive” Driving Contract on page 9 of the current newsletter at www.beforethewheel.com. Talk with your teen about the responsibilities and expectations and sign the agreement. File this in a safe place and review it with your teen every few months.

All recommendations for the phased program are guidelines. The program for your teen must be tailored to your teen’s skill set, the environment you live in, and automobile availability in your household.

Possible Phase I Privileges, the first few months after receiving the license

- o Drive to and from school and work
- o Drive to and from sports activities or extra-curricular activities
- o Drive to and from malls, theaters, and restaurants that are within 10 miles from home
- o Take roads with frequent stop signs or traffic lights that regulate traffic flow
- o Drive one weekend night with one passenger and follow all curfew rules
- o Drive to and from friends’ homes on familiar routes

Restrictions: Remember to provide these non-negotiable restrictions

- Absolute Sobriety, not a drop of alcohol
- Cell Communication–pull into a parking lot, park safely or go to a coffee shop or fast food restaurant
- Graduated Driver License, GDL, compliance, only one unrelated passenger for the first nine months
- Seat Belts, all occupants must wear seat belts at all times
- Speed Limit, stay within speed limit at all times

Phase II *Phase II Privileges, 4 to 7 months after receiving the license*

Your teen has “earned a new group of privileges”. Meet with your teen and talk about the next phase of privileges. You may allow your teen more access to the car on weekends and evenings in this phase.

Compliment your teen on taking the initiative to show maturity in the first few months of driving. Arriving home at the agreed upon times, wearing seat belts and requiring passengers to wear seat belts, following the Graduated Driver License

laws, and being collision and violation free are all indications that your teen respects and understands rules and laws that protect drivers, passengers, and everyone on the road.



You may start this conversation by talking about different “What if” scenarios and seeing how your teen feels he/she should respond to the scenario.

- o What if a passenger says he/she is not going to wear a seat belt?
- o What if your teen’s best friend wants to drag race?
- o What if your teen drank alcohol?
- o What if your teen did not keep track of the time and now will arrive home later than curfew?
- o What if the weather has changed?

Discussing “What if” scenarios helps your teen become a better decision maker.

Your teen must have an alternative plan in place before getting behind the wheel or getting in a vehicle as a passenger of another teen.

Phase III *Phase III 6 to 9 months after receiving the license*

Your teen has been driving for 6 to 9 months. This is a good time to meet again and require your teen to take a defensive driving class and fine tune his/her skills.

Also review the “Just Drive” Driving Contract and determine if your teen is ready for full privileges after he/she has completed a defensive driving class.

Go to www.beforthewheel.com and visit the following links for more information, *Just Drive*, *teendrivers.ncsc.org*, and *Firm Parents Keep Teen Drivers Safe*.