Tips for Parents: How to Communicate, Set Expectations and Limitations

“ Teens who say their parents set rules and monitor where they are going and with whom in a helpful, supportive way are half as likely to be in a crash and 70 percent less likely to drive intoxicated than teens who describe their parents as less involved.”

**State your position clearly**

- It is important that your teen understands your views on safe driving.
- Set rules for driving: always use restraints, no impaired driving.
- Set rules for learning: no peer passengers, restricted access to the vehicle.

**State that you will monitor the rules**

- Research has shown parental involvement and monitoring helps teens make safe choices. Ask questions, be clear and stress that you care.

**Make it easier to follow the rules**

- Peer pressure can be hard to navigate for a teen. Give them ways to get out of difficult situations so they do not feel as though they need to engage in high risk behaviors. Select a code word that a teen can say to you if they feel uncomfortable in a given situation.

**Let the law back you up**

- Utilize the provisions in PA Graduated Driver Licensing during the permit phase and the junior license phase to enforce your rules and limitations.

**Give your teen motivation to act responsibly**

- Let your teen know it's about safety, not control. Talk about why the rules are in place – because you care.

---

**Authoritative parenting is seen as the most effective, balanced approach. These parents have clear rules, boundaries and expectations but rather than saying “You'll do as I say”, they explain their reasoning.**

Research demonstrated that teens who said their parents set rules, knew their whereabouts and whom they were with, and were helpful and supportive, are half as likely to be in a crash.

[www.teendriversource.org](http://www.teendriversource.org)
Understanding Teen Risk Behavior

- Research is giving us insight as to why some teens have difficulty regulating risk-taking behaviors.
- The area of the brain that weighs consequences, suppresses impulses and organizes thoughts does not fully mature until about age 25.
- Hormones are more active in teens, which influence the brain’s neurochemicals, resulting in thrill seeking behavior and experiences that create intense feelings.

Tips for Parents:

- Set an example.
- Know the rules of the road.
- Make sure your vehicle is safe and maintained.
- Be familiar with the requirements of teaching your teen to drive.
- Talk about driving.
- Allow your teen to practice in various situations, times of day and weather types.
- There is no such thing as too much practice.

After your Teen receives their license:

- Enforce a curfew.
- Set a passenger limit.
- Gradually increase the time and distance you allow your teen to drive.
- Do not allow your teen to start bad habits in the car: eating, drinking, and using cell phones.
- Ride with your teen occasionally to monitor their skill.

Parents must lead by example!

Be a role model and demonstrate good driving behaviors for your teen. Your teen will learn from your actions behind the wheel. If you talk and text when driving, speed or drive without your seat belt, it sends the message to your child that these behaviors are acceptable.

www.cdc.gov/Motorvehiclesafety/Teen_Drivers/index.html
Experience Behind the Wheel

75 percent of all teen driver crashes were the result of a teen driver’s error. Half of all serious teen driver crashes were caused by these three specific errors.

- Driver did not properly scan to detect and react to hazards (21%)
- Driver was driving too fast for road conditions (21%)
- Driver was distracted by something in or outside the vehicle (19%)

There is no "magic number" that transforms a teen into an experienced driver. However, the greatest lifetime chance of crashing occurs in the first 6 to 12 months after receiving a license.

There are three basic stages that a teen moves through in developing experience:

**Stage One: Novice**

New drivers need adult supervision, not only to explain the mechanics of driving, but also to provide specific guidance to navigate various road conditions.

- Knowing the rules of the road.
- Knowing how to steer, reverse, make turns, and park the car.
- Knowing when, and how, to interact with other road users.

**Stage Two: Advanced Beginner**

New drivers who have completed the minimum state-required practice hours to acquire a license generally know how:

- To deal safely with a few traffic situations.
- Lower their speed in congested zones and residential areas.
- Often overestimate their driving competence, putting themselves in situations beyond their ability.
- Require rules and close supervision. Continued adult-supervised practice helps them gain experience.

**Stage Three: Developing Competence**

With more experience, reflection and guidance, young drivers begin to build a broader base of on-road, behind-the-wheel experiences which allow them to:

- Monitor the environment around the vehicle, scanning far ahead to identify risks and to adjust driving accordingly.
- Always wear a seat belt and make sure that passengers do, too.
- Recognize and avoid distractions inside and outside the vehicle, including those related to passengers, cell phones, or other electronic devices.
- Never drive impaired (drugged, drowsy or drunk).
- Control emotions when driving.
- Recognize and avoid driving in conditions that are too challenging.
- Never take intentional risks while driving.
- Respect other road users, including motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians, and adjust driving behavior accordingly.

www.teendriversource.org
Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) programs are associated with a substantial reduction in 16-year-old drivers’ fatal crash involvement. The most comprehensive programs are associated with the greatest benefit.

Although three components of GDL separately contribute to reduced crash rates – extended learner permit period, nighttime driving restrictions, and passenger restrictions – GDL programs that combine all three may result in the highest crash reductions among 16-year-old drivers.

Nearly all states have some components of GDL law in place to help protect teens from serious accidents during the first several months of driving.

HOW CAN PARENTS HELP THEIR TEENS THROUGH THIS PROCESS?

**During the Learner’s Permit phase:**

- Supervise teen’s practice driving and provide important coaching and instruction.

**During the Newly Licensed phase:**

- Use a parent-teen driving agreement (see inside of this folder) to set privileges that give teens experience in less risky driving conditions.
- Continue to monitor the teen’s unsupervised driving, including conditions they drive in and how they are driving.
- Make opportunities to ride with the teen to continue giving supervised practice in riskier conditions.
- Frequently emphasize that teens follow all traffic laws and the terms of their driving agreement.
- Evaluate the teen’s driving and adjust driving privileges as they gain more experience.

www.teendriversource.org
Motor vehicle crashes remain the No. 1 cause of death for adolescents.

The greatest lifetime chance of crashing occurs in the first 6 months after licensure.

The overwhelming majority (75 percent) of teen driver crashes are due to a “critical error,” with three common errors accounting for nearly half of these crashes:

- Lack of scanning that is needed to detect and respond to hazards.
- Going too fast for road conditions (e.g., driving too fast to respond to others or to successfully navigate a curve).
- Being distracted by something inside or outside of the vehicle.

Environmental conditions, such as poor weather, vehicle malfunction, or aggressive driving, and drowsy driving are not primary factors in most teen crashes.

The fatal crash rate for drivers ages 16 to 19, based on miles driven, is four times higher than for drivers ages 25 to 69.

Teen passengers and cell phones are two distractions proven to kill teens.

Seven percent of teens surveyed have been the driver in at least one crash where someone needed medical attention.

One-fourth of all 9th through 11th graders have been in a in a crash as a passenger where someone needed medical attention.

www.teendriversource.org
Eight Danger Zones

Eight teens a day are killed in car crashes. Make sure your young driver is aware of the leading causes of teen crashes, and put rules in place to help your teen stay safe.

**No. 1 Driver inexperience**
Most crashes happen during the first year a teen has a license. Provide at least 65 hours of supervised driving practice over at least six months.

Make sure to practice on a variety of roads, at different times of day, and in varied weather and traffic conditions. This will help your teen gain the skills he or she needs to be safe.

**No. 2 Driving with teen passengers**
Crash risk goes up when teens drive with other teens in the car.

Follow the state's teen driving law for passenger restrictions. Limit the number of teen passengers your child can have to zero or one. Keep this rule for at least the first 6 months.

**No. 3 Nighttime driving**
For all ages, fatal crashes are more likely to occur at night; but the risk is highest for teens.

Follow the state's teen driving law and make sure your teen is off the road between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. while they have a junior driver's license.

**No. 4 Not using seat belts**
The simplest way to prevent car crash deaths is to buckle up.

Require teen to wear a seat belt on every trip. This simple step can reduce your teen's risk of dying or being badly injured in a crash by about half.

**No. 5 Distracted driving**
Distractions increase your teen’s risk of being in a crash.

Don’t allow activities that may take your teen’s attention away from driving, such as talking on a cell phone, texting, eating, or playing with the radio.

**No. 6 Drowsy driving**
Young drivers are at highest risk for drowsy driving, which causes thousands of crashes every year.

Teens are most tired and at risk when driving in the early morning or late at night. Be sure your teen is fully rested before he or she gets behind the wheel.

**No. 7 Reckless driving**
Research shows that teens lack the experience, judgment, and maturity to assess risky situations.

Help your teen avoid the following unsafe behaviors.

- Speeding: Make sure your teen knows to follow the speed limit and adjust speed to road conditions.
- Tailgating: Remind your teen to maintain enough space behind the vehicle ahead to avoid a crash in case of a sudden stop.
- Insufficient scanning: Stress the importance of always knowing the location of other vehicles on the road.

**No. 8 Impaired driving**
Even one drink will impair your teen’s driving ability and increase the risk of a crash.

Be a good role model: don’t drink and drive, and reinforce this message with your teen.

[www.cdc.gov/ParentsAreTheKey/danger/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ParentsAreTheKey/danger/index.html)
I, ____________________________, will drive carefully and cautiously and will be courteous to other drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians at all times.

Driving Restrictions

I agree to the following restrictions, but understand that these restrictions will be modified by my parents as I gain more driving experience and demonstrate that I am a responsible driver.

For the first ______ months, I will not transport more than ______ passengers under the age of 18. If I transport more than ______ passengers under the age of 18 during this time period, the penalty will be the loss of my driving privileges for ______ weeks/months.

*PA state law says that a Junior License holder may not transport more than one non-family member under the age of 18 for the first 6 months of licensure and no more than three non-family members under the age of 18 in the second 6 months.
This restriction will be re-assessed after ______ months of successful compliance.

Signature: __________________________________________

For the next ______ months, I will not transport more than ______ passengers of any age. If I transport more than ______ passengers of any age during this time period, the penalty will be the loss of my driving privileges for ______ weeks/months.
This restriction will be re-assessed after ______ months of successful compliance.

Signature: __________________________________________

For the next ______ months, I will not drive between the hours of ______ pm and ______ am. If I drive during this time period, the penalty will be the loss of my driving privileges for _______ weeks/months.

*PA state law says that a Junior License holder may not drive between the hours of 11pm and 5am unless permitted due to school activity, work or volunteer/charitable service.
This restriction will be re-assessed after _______ months of successful compliance.

Signature: __________________________________________

Driving Behaviors

I promise that I will obey all the rules of the road. I will:

- Always wear a seat belt and make all my passengers buckle up.
- Obey all traffic lights, stop signs, other street signs, and road markings.
- Stay within the speed limit and drive safely.
- Never use the car to race or to try to impress others.
- Never give rides to hitchhikers.

If I violate the rules of the road, the penalty will be the loss of my driving privileges for _______ weeks/months.

Signature: __________________________________________
Teens & Parents Driving Agreement

I promise that I will make sure I can stay focused on driving. I will:
- Drive with both hands on the wheel in the proper positions (8 and 4 or 9 and 3 as stated in the Pennsylvania Driver Manual.
- Never eat, drink, or use a cell phone to talk or text while I drive.
- Drive only when I am alert and in emotional control.
- Call my parents for a ride home if I have had any alcohol or drugs that impair my driving ability.
- Always take my medicine on time (if I am taking medicine for ADHD) and not drive if I am unable to focus my attention completely on driving.

If I violate the above terms concerning staying focused on driving, the penalty will be the loss of my driving privileges for ______ weeks/months.

Signature: _____________________________________________

I promise that I will respect laws about drugs and alcohol. I will:
- Drive only when I am alcohol and drug free.
- Never allow any alcohol or illegal drugs in the car.
- Be a passenger only with drivers who are alcohol and drug free.

If I violate the above terms concerning drugs and alcohol, the penalty will be the loss of my driving privileges for ______ weeks/months.

Signature: _____________________________________________

I promise that I will be a responsible driver. I will:
- Drive only when I have permission to use the car and I will not let anyone else drive the car unless I have permission.
- Drive someone else’s car only if I have my parent’s permission.
- Pay for all traffic citations or parking tickets.
- Complete my family responsibilities and maintain good grades at school as listed here:
  ______________________________________________________

  ______________________________________________________

  I understand that I am not permitted to drive to off-limit locations or on roads and highways as listed here: 

  ______________________________________________________

If I violate the above terms concerning being an overall responsible driver, the penalty will be the loss of my driving privileges for ______ weeks/months.

Signature: _____________________________________________

I agree to follow all the rules and restrictions in this contract. I understand that my parents will impose penalties (see above), including removal of my driving privileges, if I violate the contract. I also understand that my parents will allow me greater driving privileges as I become more experienced and as I demonstrate that I am always a safe and responsible driver.

Signature: Driver __________________________________________ Date ________________

Parent promise: I also agree to drive safely and to be an excellent role model.

Signature: Parent (or guardian) __________________________________________ Date ________________

Signature: Parent (or guardian) __________________________________________ Date ________________