

Parent's Guidelines and Help Resources

Driving in the car with my teenager

Is your teen fully prepared for the responsibilities of driving? Has your teen driven extensively in all kinds of weather conditions, under varied traffic situations, and at night? Before you hand over the keys, both of you need to feel comfortable.

Don't worry, you are not expected to replace the Driver Education Teacher. Your job is to help your teen practice what he/she learns and encourage him or her to develop safe habits and skills. The In-Car Guidelines (see forms) offer suggestions on what to practice and discuss during driving sessions.

Here are a few tips for supervising your teen's driving practice:

- **Plan routes that allow your teen to practice different skills.** Driving to and from the same grocery store every week will not adequately prepare your teen to be a skilled, licensed driver.
- **Take your teen out for driving practice under as many different conditions as possible.** Safe drivers are experienced in responding to changing weather, visibility, traffic volume and speed.
- **Take your teen to get a license only when you and your teen feel the time is right.** Even though they are eligible to get a license after three months of holding an instruction permit, many teens may not be ready for a license that quickly. You need to decide when your teen has demonstrated the skills and attitude to be able to drive without an adult. The driving log (see forms) can help you keep track of which skills your teen has performed well and which need more practice.
- **Set a good example when you drive.** Your teen is much more likely to be a calm and courteous driver, wear a safety belt and obey the speed limit if you do it first.
- **Provide a safe motor vehicle for practice sessions.** If your car needs a tune-up, take your teen along for a lesson in car maintenance. Now is the time to talk about the costs of having a car and whether or not your teen needs to contribute.
- **Fill out a contract with your teen that makes all your rules and consequences very clear.** You can use the Teen-Parent Contract (see forms) we have provided. Be sure to enforce the rules, even when your teen protests. Offer your teen praise and rewards for responsible driving.
- **Work with your teen's Driver Education Instructor.** Have a short conference with your Driver's Education Instructor after each driving session to find out what driving skills are needing improvement.
- **Meet with your insurance agent.** Your agent should discuss the costs, responsibilities and safety issues of driving with you and your teens. Research shows that teens who pay for a portion of the maintenance and insurance of the family car are more likely to be safe drivers.