

NAVIGATE TO SAFETY

Roadmaps for parents of teen drivers

Driving carries a lot of risk for teenagers, but, as a parent, you can do a lot to minimize that risk.

This series of roadmaps, based on decades of highway safety research, can help you choose an **appropriate vehicle** for your teen, understand the **available safety technology**, and set **rules for your new driver**.



Q Laying down the law

As the parent of a teen driver, establishing and enforcing rules is one of your most important jobs. Make sure you know the laws in your state, but don't hesitate to set stricter limits.

For effective rules, parents can look to **decades of research on graduated licensing laws**. These laws, which differ from state to state, are designed to ease beginners into driving under conditions that minimize risk.

The strongest laws require a minimum intermediate license age of 17, a minimum permit age of 16, at least 70 required hours of supervised practice driving, and, for the initial period of licensure, a night driving restriction starting at 8 p.m. and a ban on all teen passengers. Each of these restrictions reduces crashes and fatalities, but no single state has all of them.

As a parent, get familiar with the graduated licensing provisions in your state so that you can enforce them. See [iihs.org/laws](https://www.iihs.org/laws) for a summary of graduated licensing requirements in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

And consider going further. For example, you don't have to allow your teen to get their learner's permit the minute they turn the required age. When they do get

their permit, keep a log of the time they spend driving under your supervision, and set a goal at or close to 70 hours even if your state requires far less.

Once they are licensed, **set an early curfew, and don't allow them to drive friends**, at least at first. **Make sure they know you expect them to obey the speed limit and avoid distractions** behind the wheel. When it comes to cellphones, you can require them to use blocker apps such as Apple's Do Not Disturb While Driving. Many monitoring apps include this feature too.

Setting a good example is key. Even when your kids are young, keep in mind as you drive the around that future teen drivers are watching you.

Once you've established the rules for the newly licensed driver in your family, **put it in writing**. Use the teen driver contract on the next page or create your own. Make sure your teen understands the reasons for each of the rules.

After you and your teen sign the document, hang it on the fridge or somewhere where you can both refer to it. Check in every now and then to ensure you are each holding up your end of the bargain. You can revisit it and make modifications as your teen gains experience or new challenges arise.

PARENT-TEEN DRIVING CONTRACT

I, _____ (teen), agree to abide by the following rules (signify agreement to the statements by initialing inside the parentheses):

- () I will always tell a parent or guardian where I am going and when I expect to return.
- () I will call home when it is safe to do so if I feel I will not make curfew.
- () I will not drive any nonadult passengers other than my sibling(s). After I have my license for _____ months, I may drive with one nonadult passenger with specific permission from my parent or guardian.
- () I will always use a seat belt, whether I'm the driver or a passenger. When I am allowed to have passengers, I will only drive if everyone is buckled.
- () I will always treat pedestrians, cyclists, and other motorists with courtesy.
- () I will call my parent or guardian for a ride if I ever feel unsafe to drive or to ride with another driver, no matter the reason.
- () I will always obey posted speed limits, signs, and all traffic laws. I will adjust my driving based on weather and road conditions, including rain, snow and/or high winds.
- () I will not engage in thrill-seeking, stunts, or any form of racing.
- () I will never eat, drink or use my phone — including hands-free — to make or answer calls, send or read texts, take pictures or use social media while driving, even at a stop sign or red light. If I need to call home, I will find a safe place to legally park first.
- () I will only program GPS and music when the car is legally parked, never when at a stop sign or red light
- () I will not drive outside of agreed upon territories/boundaries.
- () I will not smoke, vape, or consume cognitively impairing substances in the car.
- () I will not drive while fatigued or impaired, including by drugs (prescription or otherwise), or alcohol.
- () I will not be a passenger in a car driven by someone under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
- () I will not conceal any warnings, tickets, or collisions from parents/guardians.
- () I will never drive anyone else's car or allow anyone to drive my car without permission from my parent or guardian.
- () I will only drive between the hours of _____ and _____. This rule may be revisited and possibly revised in _____ months or on _____ (date).

Additional rules for our Teen driver:

: _____

PARENT-TEEN DRIVING CONTRACT

I/We, _____ (parent[s]/guardian[s]),
agree to fulfill the following commitments (signify agreement to the statements by initialing inside the parentheses):

- () I/We will stay involved as my/our newly licensed teen gains more driving experience, checking in with them and occasionally riding with them.
- () I/We will be patient and encouraging, sharing observations and coaching in a calm and respectful manner
- () I/We will follow the rules of the road and refrain from distracting behaviors while driving.
- () I/We will make arrangements to get my/our teen home if it is unsafe for my teen or someone else to drive, no matter the reason.
- () I/We will maintain some form of roadside assistance for my/our teen to use.
- () I/We agree that driving is a privilege linked to satisfactory behavior at home and school including: complying with family rules, completing duties at home properly and on time, showing proper respect for parents and others, and maintaining attendance, conduct, and effort at school.

Expenses:

Our family agrees that our Teen driver will pay the indicated percentage of expenses related to the following responsibilities:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ____ Cost of vehicle | ____ Cost of insurance | ____ Damage due to abuse |
| ____ Vehicle registration | ____ Maintenance costs | ____ Collision damage |
| ____ Cost of fuel | ____ Parking fees/decals | ____ Tickets, fines, penalties |

Additional rules for our family:

Signature of teen: _____ Date: _____

Signature of parent(s) or guardian(s): _____ Date: _____

_____ Date: _____

_____ Date: _____

_____ Date: _____