

## Prepping Your Young Driver for the Road

If you have a teen who will be driving soon, consider taking advantage of this extra time at home and teaching them the rules of the road. Preparation and knowledge always make a safer driver, and this extra time means your teen can learn in a no-rush environment and absorb the material at their own speed.

Remember that you have more influence on your teen than you may think. Share your driving experiences with them—lessons learned, close calls, even your mistakes. Stress safety as the top priority, always.

### The rules of the road

The first step is for them to become familiarized with the basic laws and rules of driving. Look into driver education courses online. Classes are interactive and teach traffic laws, safe driving techniques, and dangers and risks of the road.

Your state's DMV website should also have plenty of resources, such as driver handbooks, driving tutorials and sample written tests.

### Tour the vehicle

To help your teen get a feel for the vehicle, take them through all the features and controls—both inside and outside the car. First, inside:

- Location of owner's manual, registration and insurance card
- Dashboard controls
- Windshield wipers
- Seat belts, air bags and other safety features
- Steering wheel & seat adjustment
- Headlights, low beams, fog lights and high beams
- Turn signals
- Emergency/parking brake
- Gas and brake pedals (and ABS)
- Cruise control
- Mirrors — location & adjustments
- Emergency lights & warning indicator lights
- Ignition

Next, take a tour around the outside of the vehicle:

- Overview of engine, including the battery and 5 important fluids (engine oil, coolant, power steering fluid, brake fluid and windshield washer fluid)
- Tires — reading PSI and correct inflation
- Location of safety items such as spare tire, jack, jumper cables, chains and emergency roadside kit (bonus: teach them how to change a tire)

- Taillights & brake lights

Remember to also explain things such as vehicle maintenance schedules (check the owner's manual), safety ratings and what to do in roadside emergencies.

### **Go for a spin**

If your teen has done well on the above, has a learner's permit and is covered by your insurance, it might be time for them to start practicing (depending on your city's current stay at home orders).

Although streets should be relatively quiet, start first in a large, empty parking lot. Be sure to give directions in a clear, calm voice, and well in advance. Answer questions calmly and informatively. Give your teen time to learn at a comfortable pace. Take your time and gradually increase driving practice time.

Your state's DMV should have lesson plans [online](#) for practice sessions. But in general, lessons start with the basics of starting the vehicle, making adjustments to controls, moving forward, stopping, backing up and turning, before moving on to lane changes, intersections, and practicing in traffic. Advanced lessons include parallel parking, freeway driving and parking on hills.

### **Take the pledge**

Teen drivers are involved in more collisions than any other age group. Risk factors include distracted driving, risky behaviors behind the wheel, driving inexperience and lack of maturity.

You can reinforce the responsibility and privilege of safe driving by signing a safe driving contract with your teen (samples [here](#) and [here](#)). You can also lead by example by joining your teen in taking a pledge against distracted driving.

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