

What Parent with Teenagers Can Do

With or without a graduated licensing law, parents can establish rules based on the graduated model. In particular:

Don't rely solely on driver education. Driver education may be the most convenient way to learn skills, but it doesn't necessarily produce safe drivers. Poor skills aren't always to blame. Teen attitudes and decision-making matter more. Young people naturally tend to rebel. Teens often think they're immune to harm, so they don't use safety belts as much and they deliberately seek thrills like speeding. Training and education don't change these tendencies. Peer influence is great but parents have much more influence than they are typically given credit for.

Know the Law. Become familiar with restrictions on beginning drivers. Enforce the rules. Click here to learn about the laws in [Utah](#). A person under 17 years of age may not operate a motor vehicle on the highway between the hours of 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. During the first six months after receiving a license no passengers under 21 are allowed in the vehicle (family members are an exception and passengers are allowed if traveling for school purposes.)

Restrict Night Driving. Most young drivers' night time fatal crashes occur from 9 p.m. to midnight, so teens shouldn't drive much later than 9 pm. The problem isn't just that such driving requires more skill. Late outings tend to be recreational, and even teens who usually follow the rules can be easily distracted or encouraged to take risks.

Restrict Passengers. Teen passengers in a vehicle can distract a beginning driver and/or lead to greater risk-taking. Because young drivers often transport their friends, there's a teen passenger problem as well as a teen driver problem. About 6 of every 10 teenage passenger deaths (59%) during 2003 occurred in crashes with a teen driver. While night driving with passengers is particularly lethal, many fatal crashes with teen passengers occur during the day. The best policy is to restrict teenage passengers, especially multiple teens, all the time.

Supervise Practice Driving. Take an active role in helping your teenager learn how to drive. Plan a series of practice sessions in a wide variety of situations, including night driving. Give beginners time to work up to challenges like driving in heavy traffic or on the freeway. Supervised practice should be spread over at least six months and continue even after a teenager graduates from a learner's permit to a restricted or full license.

Remember that You're a Role Model. New drivers learn a lot by example, so practice safe driving. Teens with crashes and violations often have parents with poor driving records.

Require Safety Belt Use. Don't assume that belt use when you're in the car with your 16-year-old means belts will be used all the time, especially when your child is out with peers. Remember that belt use is lower among teenagers than older people. Insist on belts all the time.

Prohibit Drinking. Make it clear that it's illegal and highly dangerous for a teenager to drink alcohol. While alcohol isn't a factor in most crashes of teen drivers, even small amounts of alcohol can impair teen drivers.

Choose Vehicles for Safety, Not Image. Teenagers should drive vehicles that reduce their chances of a crash and offer protection in case they do crash. For example, small cars don't offer the best protection in a crash. Avoid cars with performance images that might encourage speeding. Avoid trucks and sport utility vehicles — the smaller ones, especially, are more prone to roll over.