

Parenting the Teenage Driver

Dale Wisely, Ph.D.

www.parentingteendrivers.com

What parents can do.

Focus on critical risk factors by:

- **Limiting teenage passengers** in the car with teenage drivers
- Emphasizing **seat belts** for driver and ALL passengers at all times
- **Prevention of substance abuse**
- **Discouraging driving when teen is sleep-deprived**
- **Avoiding use of cell-phones, texting, GPS, MP3 players, etc.,** when driving

I. **Provide better training.**

- a. Encourage getting learner's permit as early as possible. Do not set any unrelated conditions, such as good grades.
- b. During that year, provide as much supervised experience as you can, under a variety of road and weather conditions.
- c. Directly supervise teen's driving a MINIMUM of 50 hours. Keep a log.
- d. Require a full year with the learner's permit. If getting the permit is delayed, delay getting the full driver's license.
- e. Whether or not your teen takes Driver's Education, considering providing additional professional training.
- f. Consider private instruction.
- g. Consider a crisis driving program such as at the University of Montevallo (<http://montevallo.edu/atsc/>)

II. **Make smart choices about vehicles.**

- a. WAIT on purchasing a car for a teen driver.
- b. Emphasize that it is an additional family car and not the property of the teenager.
- c. Consider rotating who drives what cars in your family, to discourage teen's sense of personal ownership of a vehicle.
- d. Choose sensible, reliable, solid transportation with good crash data. Avoid flashy cars, sporty cars, and cars meant for recreation (off-road, etc.)
- e. Safety test ratings are available at <http://www.safercar.gov>

III. **Insist on a written parent-teen contract.**

- a. Use a contract to establish rules and consequences. Cluster rules by how "serious" violations would be. As a consequence for rule violations, withdraw **independent**

Remind yourself what's at stake.

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- driving privileges for a period of time. (Allow, encourage, even require the teenager to drive during this period, but with a parent in the car with them.)
- b. Start with a strict contract, and make an appointment to review and revise in a few weeks after signing. If things go well during those initial weeks, relax the contract somewhat. If things go poorly, leave it strict, or make it stricter.
 - c. Consider having the teenager read the contract aloud to you at the time of signing.
 - d. Sample Contracts:
 - i. Dale Wisely's: <http://www.parentingteendrivers.com>
 - ii. Allstate: <http://www.allstate.com/tools-and-resources/parent-action-plan.aspx>
 - iii. Car Control/Teendrivers.com: <http://teendrivers.com/contract.htm>

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