

Advice for Teen Driving Safety

by: Ben Swecker

How do you teach a 16 year old to be safe and courteous behind the wheel of an automobile? Unfortunately, there is no magic formula to prepare your teenager for the **responsibilities of driving**. Driver education at its best is a team effort involving schools, communities, students, and parents.

The driver—especially the young driver—continues to be a weak link in automotive safety. In 2007, 2,168 drivers ages 15 to 20 died in car crashes. In addition, injuries to students in car crashes account for more years of productive life lost than all other causes. Hospitalization and rehabilitation costs, lost time from school, and other costs associated with long-term injuries create substantial emotional, physical, and financial problems for students, their families, schools, and the community.

Parents and families, in cooperation with school programs, are in the best position to encourage and model responsible behavior. Parental reinforcement of basic driving skills and good decision making will reinforce safe driving habits that will last their children a lifetime.



One school district's approach

In 2004, Prince William County (Virginia) Public Schools, in conjunction with the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles launched a program called Partners for Safe Teen Driving (<http://www.safeteendriving.org/>). This program recognizes that parents are key to addressing this public health crisis by having parents attend a training session in which driver education training, graduated licensing requirements, state laws, insurance, and other topics are discussed.

Partners for Safe Teen Driving maps out a plan that can be used by parents to prepare teens to learn to drive. The following tips are emphasized in the Partners for Safe Teen Driving Program:

- Teach your teen that driving is a privilege, not a right!
- Understand recent medical research that shows impulse control is lower in teens and may lead them to take more risks.
- Assess whether special considerations apply to your child, such as a diagnosis of AD/HD that could interfere with driving.
- Know the driving laws as well as your teenager. It's your ally in setting reasonable limits.
- Establish a driving contract with your teen.
- Educate yourself about how to teach your child to drive.
- Understand the driver's education program in your school or community so that your home training matches and reinforces it.
- Be a good role model.

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Resource:

- [45-Hour Parent/Teen Driving Guide](#) (Virginia Dept. of Education)