

Parent's Guide

TO TEEN DRIVING: THE ROLE OF PARENTS



TEEN DRIVERS AND PASSENGERS

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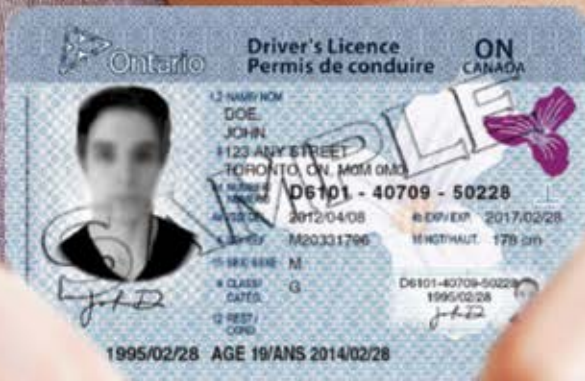
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Getting a drivers licence is an exciting stage in life for many teens. As a parent, this stage can be a nice change from the routine drives to a friend's house or movie theatre. Then again, it can be one of the most stressful stages you are faced with.

Helping your teen become a safe driver and passenger takes time, planning and patience.

This resource is designed for you to help your teen become a safe driver and passenger.



Facts on Teen Drivers

Did you know...

Ontario is:

- one of the safest places to drive in North America
- a leader in road safety with a focus on:
 - Seat belt use
 - Speeding and street racing
 - Driver distractions
 - Impaired driving: Zero blood alcohol concentration (BAC) for drivers 21 and under
 - Novice drivers: Graduated Licensing System (GLS)
 - Driving schools: Lists of approved schools; new driver training curriculum

As a result of the efforts noted above, 60% fewer teens have been injured or killed in a traffic crash over the past 25 years.

Traffic crashes remain the #1 cause of death for young people aged 15-24.

Most car crashes can be prevented, and you can help!

In Durham Region:

- 1 in 10 young drivers are involved in traffic crashes that result in injury to themselves, others or vehicle damage
- 1 teen visits an emergency room due to a traffic crash almost every day

... most traffic crashes can be prevented!



Your Impact on Teen Drivers

You can make a difference!

As a parent, you have a greater impact on your teens driving than you may realize!

- Teens say parents strongly affect their driving (even more so than their peers).
- Teens say they learn the most from their parents.
- You can help reduce your teen's risk of crashing by:
 - being informed about driving laws and restrictions
 - showing an interest in your teens hobbies, how they like to spend their time and who their friends are
 - supporting your teen through good times and bad
 - setting rules
 - enforcing rules

Turn to page 6 and take our quiz.

As a parent, you have the greatest impact on your teens driving through:

- positive role modeling
- the support of Ontario's Graduated Licensing System restrictions (www.mto.gov.ca)
- setting limits
- caring relationships with your teen



You can make a difference.

Know the risks.

Talk about the risks.

Take steps to limit these risks with your teen.

You are an Important Role Model

As the parent of a teen driver...

True or False

T F

- ☐ ☐ I always wear my seat belt.
- ☐ ☐ I never use my cell phone while driving.
- ☐ ☐ I always drive the speed limit.
- ☐ ☐ I always drive at a safe distance from other cars.
- ☐ ☐ I always drive focused and alert (not impaired by alcohol, medications, drugs or fatigue).
- ☐ ☐ I am aware of Ontario's Graduated Licensing System and driving laws.
- ☐ ☐ I have talked to my teen about the risks of teen drivers and passengers.
- ☐ ☐ I know the greatest threat to my teen driver is inexperience.
- ☐ ☐ I believe my teen is responsible and mature enough to start driving.
- ☐ ☐ I give my teen the freedoms they have earned, set firm limits and follow through on consequences.
- ☐ ☐ I keep track of my teen's driving including practice hours and road conditions.
- ☐ ☐ I have talked with parents of my teen's friends to agree on driver and passenger rules.
- ☐ ☐ I praise my teen for using good judgment, following rules and improving their driving skills.
- ☐ ☐ I have asked my teen to call me anytime they feel unsafe to drive or ride as a passenger.

If you answered true to most the boxes, you and your teen are likely ready to begin this new and exciting stage. This booklet is meant to help you guide your teen to become a safe driver and passenger.

The Risks of Teen Drivers

THE RISKS OF TEEN DRIVERS

Young drivers have the greatest risk for crashing because of their age and inexperience.



Age

- Traffic crashes are the #1 cause of death for young people aged 15 – 24.
- Risk taking behaviours, decision making skills and use of judgement are controlled by the prefrontal cortex (part of the brain). This part of the brain is not fully developed until age 25.



Inexperience

- Most teen crashes are caused by inexperience and happen in the first year of driving.
- Driving involves complex skills achieved only through practice.
- Gradually gaining experience is key to learning driving skills. Young drivers need to practice driving both before and after getting a licence.
- Most teens rank their driving skills too high and their risks of crashing, too low.
- Teens believe they are “experienced” drivers as soon as they get their licence. This belief puts them at risk as new drivers and as passengers.



Young drivers increase their risk for crashing when age and inexperience are combined with the following risk factors.



Distracted Driving

- In 2013, distracted driving caused more deaths than impaired driving and speeding.
- People who talk on a cell phone while driving are 4 times more likely to crash.
- People who text while driving are 23 times more likely to crash.
- Teens falsely believe that “driving distracted” does not increase their risk of a fatal crash.
- Many factors can affect your focus on the road, such as:
 - passengers
 - eating/drinking
 - changing settings on radio
 - taking care of hygiene/grooming
 - cell phones, GPS, etc.



Passengers

- The more teen passengers in a vehicle, the greater the risk of a fatal crash.
- When teens drive with peers they are easily distracted and may feel pressured into taking risks.
- 2 out of 3 teens killed in car crashes are passengers of teen drivers.
- Young male drivers are more likely to take risks while driving with young male passengers.



Speeding

- In Canada, 40% of fatal crashes are caused by a speeding driver, 16-24 years old.
- Speed is a major risk factor for crashing and severe injury. The faster you drive, the less time you have to react.
- Many crashes happen because teen drivers are not fully aware of their surroundings and drive too fast for road conditions.
- Young males are most likely to speed.





Seat Belt Use

- 96% of adults in Ontario use seatbelts, yet only 67% of high school students in Durham Region state they always wear a seat belt.
- The best way to reduce injuries and deaths caused by car crashes is to wear a seat belt.
- Seat belts spread the impact of a crash over larger and stronger parts of the body. This includes the shoulders, chest and hips.
- Young drivers and passengers are the least likely to wear seat belts and the most likely to crash.
- An unbelted passenger can become a high speed object during a crash, putting others at risk for injury.



Impaired Driving

- Impaired driving means driving under the influence of alcohol, other drugs (prescription and non-prescription) and driving while tired.
- 15% of high school students in Durham Region have driven a vehicle within an hour after using marijuana or hashish. 13% have driven a vehicle within an hour after drinking alcohol.
- Almost 1/3 of high school students in Durham Region have been a passenger with a driver who had been drinking.
- Even a small amount of alcohol can decrease your decision-making skills and reaction time.
- Young drivers are the least likely of all drivers to drink and drive.
- Driving under the influence of marijuana is just as dangerous as driving under the influence alcohol.



What is Your Role?

FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

1. START EARLY

The Problem:

“One day our daughter in grade 9 missed the school bus after I left for work. She grabbed a ride with the neighbours teen who just got his licence. We hadn’t talked about who she could ride with, so we set some ground rules after that.”

The Facts:

- We often wait to talk to our children about safe driving until the age of 15.
- Yet, by this age attitudes toward driving have already been developed.

Try This:

- Talk with your teen about being a safe driver and passenger before they start driving.

Tips:

- Talk about driver and passenger safety early
- Know the Ontario GLS
- Be a safe driver
- Keep track of practice driving
- Set and enforce driving restrictions
- Put it in writing



2. KNOW THE GRADUATED LICENSING SYSTEM (GLS)

The Problem:

“I grew up with the 365 system so I didn’t know what the G1 and G2 were. It was hard to keep track of what my daughter could and couldn’t do in each stage. I counted on her to know.”

The Facts:

- The GLS is a two-step process. New drivers gradually gain driving experience and the skills needed to reduce their risks.
- Your role is crucial in making sure your teen knows and follows the rules of the GLS.

Try This:

- Get to know Ontario’s GLS restrictions and traffic laws.
- Talk about the GLS restrictions and traffic laws with your teen.
- Review the GLS and decide if your teen needs more restrictions than what is written in the law requirements. Go ahead and add your own rules based on the driving needs of your teen.

3. BE A SAFE DRIVER

The Problem:

“Now that my son has his G1, he critiques my every move when I’m driving. He reacts more to how I drive than what I say.”

The Facts:

- How you drive speaks louder than words.
- Your teen wants to learn from you and thinks of you as a role model.

Try This:

- Teach safe driving habits.
- Practice what you teach.
- Wear your seat belt.
- Never use a cell phone while driving.
- Limit distractions.
- Drive at a safe speed and distance from other cars.
- Drive focused and alert (not impaired by alcohol, medications, drugs or fatigue).



WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?



4. TRACK PRACTICE DRIVING

The Problem:

"I know a big part of learning to drive is good judgment, which only comes with practice. I let my daughter drive as much as possible, even though it's stressful driving with her."

The Facts:

- Most driving schools only provide 10 hours of practice driving.
- We often think our teens have had more hours of practice driving than what is true.
- Teen drivers are more successful at driving when parents help track the hours and conditions driven.

Try This:

- Record and keep track of the hours your teen has practiced driving.
- Ensure your teen gets at least 50 hours of practice driving in a variety of conditions (weather, type of road, time of day and traffic volume). Practice hours can include driving with a driving instructor, a parent or a trusted adult.
- Include at least 10 hours of night driving and 10 hours of winter driving.
- Find a trusted adult your teen can drive with to gain 50 hours of practice driving if:
 - You do not have a licence
 - You find it too stressful driving with your teen
 - You do not have enough time

5. SET AND ENFORCE DRIVING RESTRICTIONS

The Problem:

“It’s really hard setting rules and sticking to them with a ‘pleading teen’. Although it can be stressful at times, I’d rather have a ‘pleading teen’ than a teen who has been involved in a crash.”

The Facts:

- Setting and enforcing driving rules can cause stress between a parent and their teen.
- Teens want to know what you expect from them and the consequences of their actions.

Try This:

- Set driver and passenger rules with your teen that match the risks of teen drivers.
- Be firm and follow through on consequences.
- Review the rules with your teen. Go ahead and change the rules as your teen earns or loses driving privileges.
- Talk with the parents of your teen’s friends. Agree on common driver and passenger rules that your teens will follow.
- Ask your teen to call you anytime they feel unsafe to drive or ride as a passenger.
- Show support when your teen uses good judgment, follows rules and improves their driving skills.

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?



6. BE CLEAR AND PUT IT IN WRITING.

The Problem:

"My husband is too much of a softy when it comes to our teen. I think both parents have to be on the same page when making rules and sticking to them".

The Facts:

- Your teen needs to know what you expect
- from them.
- A Driving Contract can help you clearly
- explain the rules and consequences.

Try This:

- Create a Driving Contract with your teen. Include rules that reflect your teen's current driving skills and consequences for breaking the rules.
- Follow through with the consequences within the contract.
- Change the rules as your teens driving skills improve.
- Share the Driving Contract with other adults who may be involved in your teens driving (trusted adults, family members, etc.).



You can make a difference.

Know the risks.

Talk about the risks.

Take steps to limit these risks with your teen.

A Balanced Approach to Parenting

The relationship you have with your teen can help protect them from risky driving.

A BALANCED APPROACH TO PARENTING

Did you know? Parenting styles can range from being very strict to being overly relaxed. A balanced style that is both kind and firm is the best approach.

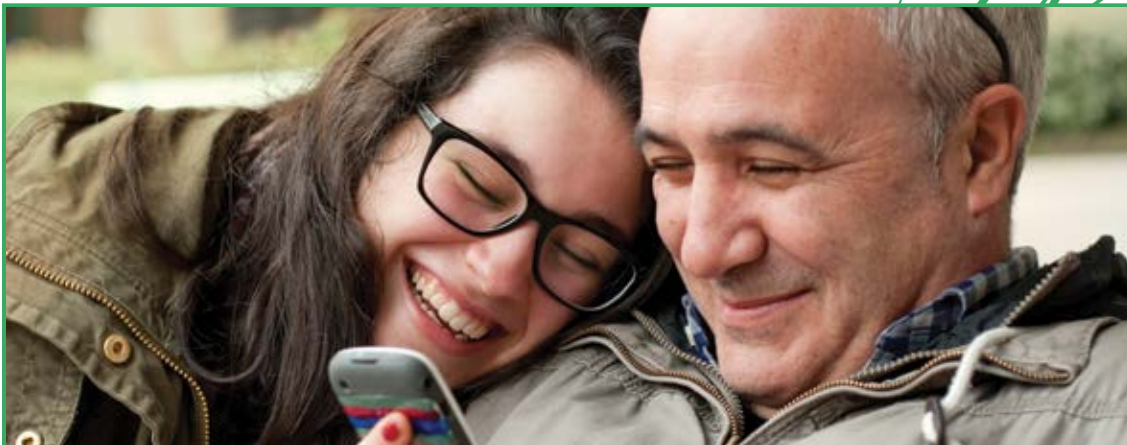
Support your teen while you enforce rules. This balanced approach to parenting can include:

- giving freedom within limits
- providing support in a non-controlling way
- talking with your teen on a regular basis
- staying informed and involved in your teen's interests
- helping your teen become independent
- having respect for your teen's privacy as long as they are safe
- setting rules and consequences with your teen
- following through on consequences when the rules are broken

Example: "I care about you and will give you the freedoms you earn. However, for safety reasons, you will do as I say."

Teens who say their parents provide **support** and **enforce rules** are less likely to:

- crash
- speed
- use a cell phone while driving
- drive impaired
- drive without wearing a seat belt



"Things have changed so much since I learned to drive. The roads are more busy, we have cell phones, and car insurance is much more expensive. I'm taking driving a lot more seriously with my kids than my parents did with me."

"My son knows I'll drive him where he needs to go until he gets more driving experience. I'd rather stay up late to pick him up from a friend's house than worry about him driving at night with friends."

Parents Speak Out

"Expect to disagree with your teen when the topic of driving rules and consequences comes up. It's all part of the experience. Stay positive and do what is best for the safety of your teen."

"Life is about making choices. Give your teen lots of driving experience, review the rules and consequences and respect each other. You have to let them go, knowing you have done your job well."



For More Information

For more information on 'Teen Drivers and Passengers' including:

- Getting a Driver's Licence
- Driver Education
- Parenting Your Teen
- Road Safety
- On-line Videos

Please visit durham.ca/parentdrivingguide

FOR MORE INFORMATION



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HEALTH
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Durham Health Connection Line
905 668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729
durham.ca/parentdrivingguide

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.

