

Wisconsin Parent Packet

for teenage drivers

Help your teen drive safer, and live longer.

Teen drivers on Wisconsin roadways

Drivers between the ages of 16-19 are more likely to be involved in a motor vehicle crash than any other age group.

Teen Drivers have more crashes involving high risk factors compared to other segments of the population.

They are more likely than other drivers to be reported as exceeding the speed limit, driving too fast for conditions, failing to control the vehicle, and driving inattentively. In 2001, 16-19 year olds accounted for only 6% of licensed drivers but were involved in 14% of crashes!

Teens are at a higher risk when they are driving and their passengers are teens. A study conducted by researchers at the John Hopkins School of Public Health in Baltimore found that the more teens you put into a car with a teenager behind the wheel, the more likely the driver will die in a crash. Safety belt use is also compromised in these situations.

2001 Department of Public Instruction Youth Risk Behavior Survey reported high risk behavior by Wisconsin teenagers:

- 17 % had driven after drinking in the last 30 days
- 36% reported riding with a driver at least 1 time, who had been drinking
- 34% reported always wearing their safety belt when riding in a car
- 61% reported wearing their safety belt most of the time
- Of the 54% of students who reported drinking in the last 30 days; 34% binge drank (had five or more drinks at one time)

This survey also reported some young people are making healthy choices:

- 48% of students reported not drinking in the past 30 days
- 69% of females and 63% of males said it was important not to use alcohol and other drugs
- 21% of students surveyed reported never using alcohol

How this parent packet can help

As parents/guardians of a young person who is obtaining a driver license, you have a large task in front of you. Your teen probably sees getting his/her license as meaning many things; freedom, fun, becoming/feeling like an adult. You may see it as freedom as well but also a cause for worry about. More than likely you have heard stories similar to those included in this packet.

We hope the materials provided in this folder will arm you with the knowledge and tools to increase your teen's chance of surviving their first few years and beyond, behind the wheel.

There are many different pieces of information included in this packet designed to help you and your teen. **Please pay special attention to the following important tools:**

- Safe-Driving Promise
- Teen-Parent Contract
- Underage Alcohol Offenses and Related Penalties
- Driving Log

Also included are materials on bicycle and motorcycle safety, along with updated information about the new Graduated Driving Licensing law. Also included is a checklist of test and safe-driving skills to practice with your teenager. We wish you the best in this new and exciting challenge with your teenager.

Skills novice drivers can establish

Novice drivers are more easily distracted, especially when carrying other peers as passengers.

Increase following distance anytime conditions deteriorate. An old rule of thumb was for drivers to establish and maintain at least a two-second following distance. Today, safety professionals are encouraging that drivers establish and maintain a four-second following distance under ideal conditions.

When visual and/or roadway conditions are less than ideal, drivers should establish a six or more second following distance. Once established, pick a location or object in the distance ahead. When the vehicle ahead passes that object, start counting "one-thousand-one, one-thousand-two,....., up to one-thousand-six."

Stay out of a large vehicle's blind spots; if you can't see the truck driver in his/her window or mirror, he/she can't see you.

Novice drivers need to gain experience in conditions that are less than ideal to appreciate how braking and vehicle control is affected. You can provide valuable learning experiences about braking on wet, snow-covered or icy surfaces, yet control for safety. Make sure you seek out a large unobstructed and flat area, like an open parking lot.

In an open parking lot you can give your novice driver an opportunity to feel and experience how anti-lock brakes act and feel; you can also provide opportunities for your driver to experience how less than ideal road conditions affect the steering capabilities. The greater the reduced amount of traction a vehicle's tires has with the pavement/road surface, the sooner a vehicle will begin to slide. Factors to consider with skids include traction, speed and the degree of directional change/steer.

Know that when traveling at 55 mph, it takes a car 193 ft. to stop and can take a loaded tractor-trailer up to 430 ft. to stop

What adults can do to help

1. **Be an example.** Model the behaviors you want your son or daughter to exhibit. Wear your safety belt at all times, stay calm, drive the speed limit, and don't drink and drive.
2. **Be clear.** Go over the safe driving promise and driving contract with your son or daughter. Listen to your child's point of view. Link driving privileges to overall behavior. Emphasize consequences of failure to meet expectations.
3. **Be positive** and emphasize your expectations concerning responsible behavior, and your concern for your child's safety.
4. **Be prompt.** Act promptly if there is an infraction of expectations.
5. **Be firm, but gentle.** Express disappointment when rules are broken. Do not negotiate consequences for infractions.
6. **Be consistent.** Punish each infraction the same way it was agreed upon. Both parents must provide a united front on issues. Be consistent by enforcing and applying agreed-upon rules and consequences.
7. **Be fair.** Get all the facts before you take action. Let your child know that they are not being singled out; many other parents are using these methods.
8. **Be flexible when establishing deadlines.** Zero flexibility could lead your child to drive at breakneck speeds to meet them. Don't allow exceptions too frequently.
9. **Be forgiving.** Your love must be unconditional.

NOTE: Adapted from AAA's "Teaching Your Teens To Drive" program

When out practicing with your novice driver...

Practice all types of driving with a young person; night-time, different weather conditions, merging, different types of roadways. See enclosed checklist

Stress the importance of watching out for, and sharing the road with, bicycles, pedestrians, motorcycles, mopeds and school buses.

Avoid playing the radio, tape or CD player. Control in-vehicle noises. Early practice sessions should be without audio distractions.

Don't have any family members as passengers. Allow your novice driver to focus attention on the driving task without the possibility of passenger distractions.

As driving time and experience are gained, slowly introduce how to pre-tune the radio to reduce distracted driving because of trying to find a radio station.

Do not allow a car-phone to be used by the driver unless the vehicle is stopped in a safe area and out of traffic.

Have the driver vocalize what they are identifying and predicting as they navigate the vehicle in traffic (called commentary driving). This gives you an opportunity to hear and determine whether they are focusing on important components and potential hazards and situations.

As a supervising passenger and mentor, you can also commentary drive, especially in the first couple of practice sessions. This helps direct the driver to focus on certain situations, highway users and traffic conditions.

Even after your novice driver has obtained his/her unrestricted probationary license, continue to encourage (or establish rules) limiting the number of passengers they are allowed to have when driving.

Do not take driver out practicing if they are notably fatigued or on any medication that may adversely affect their ability to safely operate a vehicle.

Insurance tips for parents and teen drivers:



Good student discounts can help ease insurance premiums. Many insurance companies offer discounts if the new driver maintains a "B" average (3.0) or above. The student must supply a copy of the grades each semester. Ask your insurer about good student discounts.



Some companies will include a new driver in a preferred plan with the parents as long as the child remains violation free. If a new driver receives a violation (either a ticket or a crash), they will be renewed in a higher rated program.



Insurance is often less expensive if the child is made a principal operator on an older vehicle rather than an occasional operator on the family's newer vehicle. If the child is made the principal operator on an older car with liability only, the insurance rates will be based on this vehicle. Premiums can be higher if the new driver is listed as the principal or occasional operator on the nicer family vehicle.

For further information:

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