



Teen Driving Safety: Graduated Driver Licensing saves lives

As teens go back to school this fall, many of them will transition from the safest mode of transportation – school buses, to the most dangerous – driving themselves. The back-to-school season is a great time to learn about Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) and what practices will work best for your family.



What is GDL?

Graduated Driver Licensing allows teens to practice driving skills in low risk situations, moving through driver license stages with gradually increasing responsibility. Motor vehicle crashes kill more teens than homicide, suicide and disease combined, mostly due to inexperience and distractions.

Motor vehicle crashes are the No. 1 cause of death for teens.

Passing a driver's test alone does not make a young driver "experienced." It takes time and practice to gain the experience needed to be a responsible driver. GDL is a learning process that keeps new drivers safe by maximizing experience and minimizing risks. And while it may be more convenient for a teen to drive on his or her own, it's much safer for a parent to drive multiple teens or for teens to drive alone. This will keep your teen as safe as possible.

Teaching teens about GDL

GDL reduces teen driver crashes and deaths by up to 40 percent.

Parents need to make a commitment to work closely with their teens to manage their driving experience and also should set a good example by modeling the behavior they expect. You can implement life-saving GDL practices in your home by following these six tips:

Extend the learner's permit period

Prolonging the period in which a novice driver practices with parent supervision increases the teen's driving experience. With a learner's permit stage of at least 6 months – and practice at nighttime and in inclement weather – a teen will better develop his or her skills.

Set a nighttime driving restriction

Most nighttime fatal teen crashes happen in the hours before midnight, according to teen driver crash data. NSC recommends no unsupervised driving after 10 p.m., and earlier is even better.

Set a passenger restriction

According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, one passenger increases a teen's crash risk by 48 percent, and the risk grows dramatically as more passengers are added. NSC recommends zero passengers allowed during a teen's first 12 months of driving.

Ban cell phone use while driving

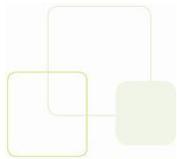
NSC estimates that 24 percent of all crashes involve cell phone use, and NHTSA found that the percentage of drivers visibly manipulating hand-held devices while driving is significantly higher among drivers age 16 to 24 than those of other age groups. Cell phone use should be banned among all drivers, and parents should lead by setting a good example.

Make safety belts mandatory

Safety belts are the most effective safety device in vehicles and everyone should be buckled in at all times. NHTSA data shows wearing a safety belt can reduce the risk of crash injuries by 50 percent or more.

Prohibit alcohol

According to NHTSA, 20 percent of young drivers ages 16 and 17 who were killed in crashes had been drinking. Every state has a zero tolerance law for underage drivers, meaning teens should not have any measurable alcohol in their system.



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