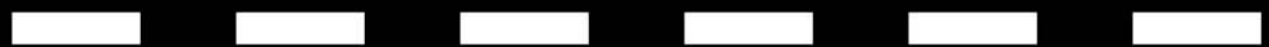




# **Defensive Driving Academy**



**Coaching Tips and  
Parent/Teen Contract**



# Defensive Driving Academy

## **THE ROLE OF PARENTS...**

All parents want teens to have their freedom, and teen drivers can be helpful when it comes to family driving responsibilities. But first, teens need to become safe drivers, which requires practice and experience. Research shows that when parents take an active role in their teens' driving education and set certain driving guidelines, their teens' chances of being in a crash can be greatly reduced. Here are some hints at creating a positive learning environment.

**Talk with your teen** about the 'privilege' of driving and the risks that come with being behind the wheel and create a Parent / Teen Driving Agreement (use the one attached or use it as a guideline to create your own personal agreement). By opening up this line of communication you and your teen will understand the risks, responsibilities and consequences.

**Be a good role model.** Teens look to their parents for guidance and, as parents, you are role models behind the wheel. Modeling safe driving, even with your younger children, is crucial to your teen's success. Follow all traffic laws, always buckle up and avoid using the cell phone when driving.

**Set driving ground rules** from the beginning to help your teen learn to drive. In the early stages of driving, work with your teen to determine limits that everyone can live with. Slowly introduce him/her to high-risk driving situations such as bad weather, nighttime driving, heavy traffic, and highway driving.

**Make it clear** to your teen that mixing alcohol or drugs and then driving is unacceptable. Teens should never drive impaired or with someone else who is impaired. It is wise to come to an agreement on how your teen will deal with a situation like that, and, together, come up with a solution you can both live with.

**Do not underestimate distractions** and the negative impact they have on your teen's ability to focus on their driving. This includes cell phones, texting, eating in the car, other passengers, music, etc...

**The brain is still developing** during teen years and the greatest changes to the parts of the brain that are responsible for functions such as self-control, judgment, emotions, and organization occur between puberty and adulthood. Take this into serious consideration as you take this journey with your child.

**Your teens needs you** during this important transition. You cannot teach 'experience', but you can give them the resources they need to succeed. Parents should continuously monitor and coach throughout this process, and most importantly, stay involved and communicate.

## **BE A GOOD DRIVING "COACH"...**

**Decide what you're going to do** and where you're going to do it before each practice session. This will help avoid the complications of getting caught up in situations you hadn't planned on or prepared for.

**Keep the risk level low** and try to anticipate problems and avoid awkward situations. Choosing the right location for practice sessions is an important factor here.

**Don't overload:** Don't hit the beginner with everything at once, a big part of being a good coach is reminding the driver to check traffic, to signal and to bring attention to potential hazards. But once again, remember that everything you say is also a distraction for the driver. Be sparing in your comments and, above all, try to avoid letting the beginner get into situations he or she can't handle. Limit the amount of driving tasks and always put "safety" above everything else. Mentally bring yourself back to when you first started driving. You will be able to relate to your teen more on their level if you remember just how tough it was to for you to learn.

**Communicate clearly:** Give directions well in advance and try to always use the same terms (for example, don't say "accelerator" one time and "gas pedal" the next). Never point your finger and say, "let's go over there". Instead, say to your teen, "When you reach the next traffic light, turn right into the mall parking lot". It's difficult to drive a car if you don't have a clear idea of where you're going or what's next. You should also have your teen driver recite what they see around them as they drive (for example, there is a school zone sign on my right, and a stop sign coming up). This way you can determine, together, if they have tunnel vision or if they are getting the 'big' picture.

**Be ready** to give timely assistance. Cueing the beginner to brake or steer before he or she gets into trouble may prevent an accident. Last-second warnings can lead to panic. In advance, think about the things you may have to do if your teen panics and does not respond properly.

**Don't get excited** during practice sessions. This communicates itself quickly to the driver and can make performance difficult.



**Be positive:** Compliment your novice driver on doing things well. Comments such as "good turn", "good steering", or "good speed", give the beginner assurance and reinforce this behavior. It's easy to fall into the trap of making a constant stream of negative comments. Remember the 10 to 1 ratio, point out ten things they did right to the one thing they did wrong. Positive reinforcement pays off!

**Don't** present yourself as a complete expert on driving. Driving is a complex task with many aspects to it and, as an amateur, your attitude should be one of willingness to learn. This will be a good example to your teenager.

The most important thing you can do is to enjoy your time together. **Have fun!** Focus on the driving experience and leave all the family issues at home.

## **Parent/Teen Driving Agreement**

The intent of this agreement is to avoid any misunderstandings concerning our family driving rules. Together we will agree to vehicle use and operation rules, and the consequences for breaking any of these rules.

**Financial responsibilities** - determine who and what percentage each person will be responsible for:

\_\_\_\_\_ Vehicle costs                      \_\_\_\_\_ Taxes and registration fees

\_\_\_\_\_ Fuel costs                              \_\_\_\_\_ Monthly insurance costs

\_\_\_\_\_ Maintenance costs

Total costs: Parents/guardians: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Teen driver: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Vehicle Maintenance** - determine who will be responsible for the following:

Check fluids \_\_\_\_\_ Clean windows \_\_\_\_\_

Check tire pressure \_\_\_\_\_ Clean exterior \_\_\_\_\_

Clean interior \_\_\_\_\_

**Family safety belt agreement:**

Consequences of violation: \_\_\_\_\_

**School achievement:**

Consequences of violation: \_\_\_\_\_

**Consequences for:**

- Moving violation or crash/property damage: \_\_\_\_\_
- Alcohol or other drug use: \_\_\_\_\_
- Curfew violation: \_\_\_\_\_
- Violating passenger restrictions: \_\_\_\_\_
- Failure to provide destination or time of return: \_\_\_\_\_
- Allowing others to drive the car: \_\_\_\_\_
- Failure to call if you are more than 30 minutes late: \_\_\_\_\_
- Irresponsible behavior: \_\_\_\_\_

This agreement may be amended at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teen Driver

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent or Legal Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date