



8 DANGER ZONES FOR TEENS BEHIND THE WHEEL

Getting a driver's license is an exciting time for a teen. But driving is especially dangerous for young, new drivers. In fact, 11 teens die each day as the result of a car crash. As a parent, you can help keep your teen safe on the road. Make sure your teen is aware of the leading causes of teen crashes and how to avoid them.

- **No. 1: Driver inexperience:** Crash rates are highest during the first year a teen has a license. Provide as much supervised driving practice as possible—at least 30 to 50 hours over a period of no less than six months. This will help your teen gain the skill he or she needs. Even when your teen has a full license, it is a good idea to limit his or her driving during risky conditions. These include driving at night, in bad weather, on highways, and with teen passengers. Allow more driving privileges as your teen gains experience and skill.
- **No. 2: Driving with teen passengers:** Crash risk goes up when teens drive with other teens in the car. Nearly 2 out of 3 teen crash deaths that involve 16-year-old drivers happen when a new driver has one or more teen passengers. Follow your state's GDL laws for passenger restrictions. If your state does not have a teen passenger rule, limit the number of teens your child may drive to zero or one. Keep this rule for at least the first 6 months of his or her license.
- **No. 3: Nighttime driving:** Nighttime fatal crash rates for 16-year-olds are nearly twice as high as daytime rates. Nighttime driving is risky because it is harder to see at night and people are often tired. Be sure your teen is off the road by 9 or 10 PM. Stick by this rule for at least the first 6 months of your teen having his or her license.

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THE CAR
KEYS-

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- **No. 4: Not using seat belts:** In 2007, 6 out of 10 teen drivers and 2 out of 3 teen passengers who died in car crashes were not wearing seat belts. The simplest way to prevent motor vehicle crash deaths is to buckle up. Wearing a seat belt will cut your teen’s risk of dying or being badly injured in a crash by about half. Remind your teen to wear a seat belt on every trip—even just for a drive around the corner.
- **No. 5: Distracted driving:** Nearly 8 out of 10 crashes happen within 3 seconds of a driver becoming distracted. Common distractions for teen drivers are talking on cell phones, using in-car electronic devices, text messaging, eating, playing with CDs or the radio, and yelling out the window. Forbid all activities that could affect your teen’s driving attention.
- **No. 6: Drowsy driving:** Young drivers are at highest risk for drowsy driving, which causes thousands of crashes every year. Other than late at night, teens are most tired and at risk when driving between 6 and 8 in the morning. Be sure your teen is fully rested before he or she gets behind the wheel.
- **No. 7: Reckless driving:** Research shows that teens lack the judgment and maturity to assess risky situations. Help your teen to avoid the following unsafe behaviors.
 - **Speeding:** Make sure your teen knows to follow the speed limit and adjust speed to road conditions.
 - **Tailgating:** Remind your teen to maintain enough space behind the vehicle ahead to avoid a crash if a sudden stop is needed.
 - **Insufficient scanning:** Stress the importance of always knowing the location of other vehicles on the road. Scan ahead before making left turns; to the side when yielding the right of way at intersections; and behind when changing lanes.
- **No. 8: Impaired driving:** Of all drivers between 15 and 20 years of age involved in fatal crashes in 2007, nearly 1 out of 3 had been drinking. In the United States, it is illegal for anyone under age 21 to drink alcohol. All states have zero tolerance laws that ban underage drinking and driving. Most states will suspend or cancel the license of a teen who violates these laws. Strictly enforce zero tolerance laws at home, whether or not your teen driver is caught by law enforcement.

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