

# Driving Practice

## PARENT-SUPERVISED ACTIVITY: DRIVING TRACKING CHART

Teens can learn a lot from observing an experienced driver. Though young drivers have ridden with adults countless times, it's a different experience when your teen takes the passenger seat ready to learn, observe, and reflect.

A parent or guardian should complete the following activities with their teen driver:

Before you get on the road, sit down with your teen to set goals about what you want to accomplish for the day or what you want to accomplish before they take their driver's exam.

Set a total number of hours you feel they need to be confident in using different techniques, driving on different types of roads, and driving during different times of the day. As a parent, you should feel comfortable to set an exact number of hours that your teen must experience each of these conditions before you allow them to drive in them without your supervision.

Once this chart is filled out, you and your teen can keep a copy on record as they complete goals that have been set.

GOAL	# OF HOURS NEEDED	# OF HOURS COMPLETED
Driving on freeways and highways rather than side streets		
Driving in traffic		
Driving in a city		
Driving at night		
Driving in the rain during the day		
Driving in the rain at night		
Driving in the snow (if applicable to your region)		
Other goals		

## PARENT-SUPERVISED ACTIVITY: BEST DRIVING BEHAVIORS

One of the very first things you can do is sit in the vehicle with your teen and talk about the things you do before you even start the engine.

Eliminate the opportunity for distraction for your teen driver. Discuss taking your cell phone and putting it into the glove box. Address other distractions that might be in the vehicle as well (e.g., friends, the radio station, etc.). Remind your teen driver to limit their distractions to drive as safely as possible.

Explain the preparation<sup>1</sup> steps you complete each time you get ready to drive:

- Adjust your seat.
- Depress brake pedal as far as possible. Should still have a slight bend in the knee.
- Arms should be the same—slightly bent (never locked but also not completely bent).
- Hands should be at 9 and 3.
- Fasten your seatbelt.
- Check and/or adjust the side and rearview mirrors.
- From the driver's seat, tilt your head to left, almost to the window and adjust the driver's mirror so you can just see side of the car. For the passenger-side mirror, lean your head to the middle of the car and adjust so you can just see the outside of the car.
- Gas gauge? Tire pressure? Turn cell phone off and put it in the glove box to avoid temptation, etc.

Take your teen for a drive around your community, first with you behind the wheel. Remember to limit the amount of conversation between you and your teen until the car has stopped to reduce distractions for your teen driver. As you drive, complete the following activities together. Once you have demonstrated this behind the wheel, change positions and watch your teen driver try to model their driving behavior on the behaviors you executed.

- Explain that your eyes are constantly scanning and moving so that you are fully aware of your surroundings and are able to react quickly. Instruct your teen to scan as you drive: looking to the left, to the right, in the side and rear-view mirrors and then returning quickly to the road. Ask your teen to verbalize their observations as you drive, taking special notes of potential hazards. How do these observations affect your driving?
- Now explain that you should always have a minimum of a three-second following distance from the car in front of you. (Following distance can be determined by making note of when the car in front of you passes a fixed object. Once the car has passed this object, count "one-one thousand, two-one thousand, three-one thousand." For a three-second following distance, your car should pass this same object only after you have reached "three-one thousand.") Have your teen calculate your

<sup>1</sup>Teens Learn to Drive. Learn to Drive: 7 Steps before You Start the Car. Ontario, Canada: 2010. Updated August 9, 2010. <http://teenslearntodrive.com/before-starting-the-car/>

following distance and modify your driving if necessary. Complete this activity as you drive through different speed limit zones and discuss how the change in speed affects your following distance.

- Once you have driven around your community, drive to the entrance ramp of a local highway. Explain to your teen that merging<sup>2</sup> requires the driver to observe their surroundings and react accordingly. Ask your teen to silently make note of your actions and reactions as you merge. Once you have merged successfully, discuss your teen's observations. "What did you do? What did the drivers around you do? What was successful and what could have been done differently?" Now exit the highway at the next exit ramp and merge back onto the highway in the opposite direction. Again, ask your teen to silently make note of your actions and reactions. Once you have merged successfully, discuss the similarities and differences of this merge with your previous merge. Arrive at the conclusion that while all driving situations are slightly different, they each require you to be an alert, observant and defensive driver.

#### REFERENCES:

- [National Institutes of Health Infographic: Distracted Driving: What Parents Should Know about Distracted Driving](#)
- [Pre-Driving Checklist](#)
- [The Parent's Supervised Driving Program](#)
- [Stay Focused on Driving](#)

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<sup>2</sup>DefensiveDriving.com. How to Merge into Traffic: Houston, Texas, <https://www.defensivedriving.com/safe-driver-resources/how-to-merge-into-traffic/>.