

Parents and the Beginning Teen Driver

Teenagers under age 19 must provide proof of successful completion of a state-approved driver education program and must hold a learner's permit at least nine months before they can receive a driver's license in Virginia. The driver education program must provide 36 classroom periods and include components about alcohol safety, drug abuse awareness, aggressive driving, distracted driving, motorcycle awareness, and organ and tissue donation awareness. In addition, teenagers must have 14 in-car instruction periods to include seven periods of driving and seven periods of observation.

Allstate Insurance Company provides these tips and guidelines to make sure parents and their teenager get the most out of a driver education program:

- Seek out parents and teens who have recently participated in driver education programs, and ask about their experience and recommendations.
- Visit the facility and ask about what the program entails, details regarding on-road practice and conditions, the program's accreditation status, instructor credentials, how much liability the driver education school carries, and parental involvement.
- When your teen is learning to drive, it's important to maximize the quantity and quality of supervised driving experience. Ideally, this involves a partnership between parents and professional driver education instructors, so be sure to choose a driver education program that shares this philosophy.
- Look for programs that maximize on-road driving practice and parent involvement.
- Be mindful that a driver education program is merely a first step in the learning-to-drive process. It's up to parents to provide your teen with the bulk of supervised driving practice and instruction prior to licensure.

- Ask the instructor how you can best supplement the driver training your teen is getting in the course and ask if there are any particular driving habits your teen needs to improve.
- Talk to your teen about driving lessons and discuss further with an instructor if needed.
- Even after completing driver training, let your teenager know if he or she does something unsafe. Remember that driver education is an ongoing process and teens still will be developing driving skills after they've completed the class.

For more information, go to

<http://www.allstate.com/foundation/teen-driving/parent-tips.aspx#2>.

In addition to completing a driver education program, teenagers must have at least 45 hours of driver practice, 15 of which must have been completed after sunset. Parents must certify that their teenager has completed this minimum number of hours behind the wheel.

MORE INFORMATION . . .

Many school divisions and communities in Virginia have partnered to develop Safe Teen Driving programs. As of March 2009, 41 school divisions have launched the program, and approximately 10 communities now require parents of teen drivers to attend mandatory meetings. At this meeting, parents receive information about Virginia's graduated licensing procedures, current driving techniques, procedures for helping teach their children to drive, curfew restrictions, and more. For more information, go to <http://www.safeteendriving.org>.