

Parent Anxiety and Teen Driving

Perhaps few 'passages' in a child's life cause more anxiety for parents than the first time behind the wheel of the family car. Visions of fender benders, traffic tickets, property damage, and inflated insurance rates often dance in the heads of concerned parents, while the teen dreams of taking all 14 of her closest friends to the mall by herself.

Teen drivers need to receive practical advice from parents who have years of experience to share. While parents may dread the thought of actually trusting their child with their very lives, the experience doesn't have to be fraught with danger. Here are some helpful anxiety reducing tips for parents.

- Be prepared to guide your student all the way through the licensing process.
- Maintain a safe vehicle.
- Vary the driving conditions and destinations by complexity, from day to night, good weather to rain and snow, empty roads to crowded, high-speed highways.

- Try to keep your emotions in check. The anxiety level for a student driver is already high, so you should do your best to create a supportive atmosphere. The minute you feel your own emotions getting out of control take this time to collect your own thoughts, then explain precisely what incident sparked your reaction. Avoid assessing blame or name-calling.
- Set a good example. Know the traffic rules and obey them. Your teen is watching! Your driving habits have a tremendous effect on the safety and attitude of your teen as they begin one of the most stressful times in your and their lives: learning to drive safely and responsibly.

FEW MORE TIPS . . .

Safe driving habits:

- Get the big picture: Stay back and see it all. Knowing what's ahead, beside, and behind you can help you make safe driving decisions.
- Keep your eyes moving: scan, don't stare. Shift your eyes every few seconds and check your mirrors frequently.
- Leave yourself an out: maintain a cushion of space on all four sides of your vehicle. Keep a four- to six-second interval between you and the traffic ahead.
- Make sure other drivers see you. Communicate in traffic. Use your lights and turn signals.