



## PARENTS HOLD THE KEYS

The number one reason for teen crashes is driver inexperience – not drinking and driving, speeding, or filling a car with friends, although those choices can also be deadly. While parents can set rules and enforce laws that prohibit risky behavior, parents must also realize that they are the ones who must give their teenager the time to practice driving skills and become a mature, safe, and courteous driver.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:

“All young drivers start out with very little knowledge or understanding of the complexities of driving a motor vehicle. Technical ability, good judgment, and experience all are needed to properly make the many continuous decisions, small and large, that add up to safe driving.”

A recent study by the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and State Farm noted the following:

“Laws and policies that address distractions by limiting the number of peer passengers and prohibiting cell phone use among novice drivers will help reduce crash rates, but will only address part of the problem. Many crashes will still occur due to the inability of teen drivers to detect and respond to a hazard in time.”

The study noted that parents should focus on helping their teens learn to scan the roadway for hazards during driving practice sessions. Parental reinforcement of basic driving skills and good decision making will lead to safe driving habits that will last a lifetime.

Each year, many high school students are killed and thousands more are injured on Virginia’s roadways. Hospitalization and rehabilitation costs, lost time from school, and other costs associated with long-term injuries create substantial emotional, physical, and financial problems for students, their families, and communities.

Parents and families – not the school – are in the best position to encourage responsible behavior and have a sustained effect on minimizing risks faced by inexperienced drivers.



## PARENTS: BE A GOOD EXAMPLE!

- Always wear your safety belt
- Correct your own unsafe driving habits
- Know Virginia traffic laws
- Obey speed limits
- Don’t talk on your cell phone
- Don’t use other electronic devices
- Don’t multitask while driving
- Don’t eat or drink behind the wheel
- Set your GPS before beginning your trip

## What You Need to Know!

### Juvenile Licensing Process

#### Learner’s Permit Requirements

- 15 years and six months old
- pass the two-part knowledge exam

#### Driver’s License Requirements

- 16 years and three months old
- have learner’s permit for at least nine months
- if under 18, 45 hours of behind-the-wheel experience, certified by a parent or guardian
- if under 18, complete a state-approved driver education program
- pass the road test

A completion certificate is issued after the road test is passed. The certificate and learner’s permit act as a temporary driver’s license for 180 days. If under 18, permanent licenses are issued by judges to teens and their parents or guardians during juvenile licensing ceremonies held in court.

For the complete law on learner’s permit and driver’s license requirements, see Virginia Code 46.2-334.

### Teen Driving Restrictions

Conviction of the curfew or passenger restriction laws can result in driver’s license suspension.

**Curfew** – Drivers under 18 are prohibited from driving midnight to 4 a.m. except when: driving to work; to a school, civic or religious activity; with a licensed parent; or there’s an emergency.

**Passengers** – Drivers under 18 may carry only one passenger under 21 unless with a licensed parent. After holding a license for one year, drivers may carry up to three passengers under 21 only if:

- they are driving to a school-sponsored activity
- or a licensed driver 21 or older is in the front seat
- or there’s an emergency

Passenger restrictions do not apply to family members. Learner’s permit holders may not carry more than one passenger under 18.

**Mobile Devices** – Phone Down. It’s the Law. - It is illegal to hold a handheld personal communications device while driving in Virginia.

For the complete teen driver restrictions law, see Virginia Code 46.2-334.01.

