



GET ROAD READY

*A Guide to Help Parents and Teens
Navigate Safe Driving Together*

Getting a license is an exciting time for teens and their families, but it comes with risks. Passing the road test does not mean that new drivers are good drivers; that comes with good preparation, experience and avoiding risks. This is important because crashes are a leading cause of death for teens, who face their highest lifetime crash risk in the months following licensure. The good news is that the learner period, when a teen is learning and practicing driving with an adult, is the safest time. This guide is here to help parents and caregivers make the most of learning to drive and know how to support their teens through this exciting yet complex process.



WHAT THIS GUIDE COVERS



How teen brain development affects driving behavior



Safety tips for new drivers and how parents can help to lower crash risks



Step-by-step information on getting a learner's permit and driver's license in PA and NJ



Our virtual driving assessment: A way to test your teen's skills and their crash risk

Whether your teen is just starting to drive or you want to help them become a safer driver, this guide provides useful tools and knowledge for a successful driving experience.

WHY ARE TEEN DRIVERS AT RISK?

Teen brains work differently from adult brains. The part of the brain that helps with decision-making (the frontal cortex) and other parts of the brain are still developing until the mid-20s. Because of this, teens are more likely to act on impulse, take risks and struggle to consider consequences.

This brain development stage increases teen driving risks. Studies show that 75% of serious teen crashes happen because of critical mistakes, such as:

- **Not spotting hazards** (for example, distracted driving or not scanning the road)
- **Driving too fast** for road conditions or following too closely
- **Losing control** of the vehicle (for example, oversteering or not braking enough)



To learn more about how the teen brain affects behavior, problem solving and decision making, scan this code.



HOW CAN WE REDUCE THE RISK?

FOLLOW THE GRADUATED DRIVER LICENSING (GDL) SYSTEM

The GDL system helps new drivers build driving experience safely through the following three stages:

1. **Learner's permit** – Teens learn to drive and practice driving with a licensed adult.
2. **Intermediate (junior) license** – Teens gain privileges to drive without an adult but with restrictions, such as curfews, limited passengers and no phone use while driving.
3. **Full license** – Teens are fully licensed with no extra rules.



Scan this code to use an interactive map to get your state's GDL requirements.

USE TEEN DRIVER SOURCE'S PRACTICAL TOOLS

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) offers a free online resource — called Teen Driver Source — to help parents and teens navigate the journey of learning to drive safely. The website includes:

- **Practice driving lessons** – Step-by-step guides, videos and tips for supervised driving practice.
- **Safety tips** – How to avoid distractions, wear seatbelts and follow speed limits.
- **State licensing laws** – Easy explanations of permits, licenses, and GDL requirements and restrictions.
- **Setting rules** – Templates and tips for creating parent-teen driving agreements.
- **Crash prevention strategies** – Information on common risks and how to prevent crashes.

Teens can use the site to learn about:

- **Driving skills** – Ways to improve basic and advanced driving skills and performance.
- **Safe driving tips** – Tips to avoid distractions and risky behaviors like texting while driving.
- **Being a good passenger** – Ways to encourage safe driving when riding with others.

Visit **Teen Driver Source** (teendriversource.research.chop.edu) to access lessons, videos and downloadable tools to make learning to drive a safer experience for everyone.



MAKE THE MOST OF THE LEARNER'S PERMIT

Once teens get their learner's permit, they need to practice with a licensed adult. Parents play a key role in helping them gain confidence and skills. Tips for effective practice driving include:

- **Talk about the process** – Getting a license is not automatic. It takes practice, skills and responsibility.
- **Adapt to the teen's learning style** – Each teen learns differently. Be patient and adjust lessons based on their progress. Spend more time on some skills that are more difficult, less on others.
- **Encourage independence** – Have your teen look up your state's driving laws and explain them to you. Discuss their challenges and goals to make driving more engaging.
- **Prepare for practice drives** – Both the quantity and the variety of practice that is needed.
 - **Change the setting:** Practice in different environments and gradually increase the challenge (neighborhood, local streets, highways, night driving) to help your teen gain experience in different conditions.
 - **Mix up goals:** Balance structured lessons (like hazard detection) with casual drives.
 - **Stay calm:** Driving is a new skill that is challenging to learn. A relaxed atmosphere helps with learning. Take breaks, if needed. Remember to focus on driving and don't distract your teen with other topics.

Practicing in a variety of driving conditions helps teens become confident and skilled drivers. We're here to support you! Check out our **Teen Driving Plan** developed through years of CHOP research.



Scan this code
to get started on our
Teen Driving Plan.



Scan this code to watch
a video with tips on how
to talk to your teen.

HELP YOUR TEEN THROUGH THE INTERMEDIATE (JUNIOR) LICENSE PERIOD

After earning a learner's permit and passing the driving test, teens receive an intermediate or junior license. This allows them more independence to practice driving on their own, but with certain restrictions designed to keep them safe while they gain experience.

Once teens pass their driving test, they might feel as skilled as experienced drivers, which can make it harder for them to accept license restrictions. You can help by framing the intermediate license as giving them new privileges to drive on their own, but not full privileges. These will come when they have more experience and time behind the wheel.

Here's how you can support your teen during this time:

- **Create house driving rules together** – Work with your teen to set clear driving rules, such as no texting or drinking and driving. Use your state's laws as a guide but adjust to include more restrictions early on based on your teen's maturity level. Remind them that these rules are about safety, not control.
- **Keep control of the keys** – Teens who have their own car or easy access to one are more likely to take risks and get into accidents. Sharing the family car encourages communication and oversight on their driving plans. Have them turn in the keys when they get home.
- **Encourage open communication** – Rules and supervision are important, but trust is key. Explain the reasons behind your rules and listen to your teen's concerns. Reward responsible behavior with more privileges. Be someone your teen can "blame" when making safe choices with friends, like saying, "My parents won't let me."

By staying involved, you can help your teen transition from a supervised driver to a confident, safe, independent one.



SEE HOW SKILLED YOUR TEEN IS WITH OUR VIRTUAL DRIVING ASSESSMENT

CHOP's virtual driving assessment (VDA) is a free 15-minute simulation that tests your teen's ability to drive safely and avoid crashes. It provides feedback and tips to help them improve, even if they don't have a permit or license yet. How teens perform on the VDA is proven to relate to whether they are at risk for crashing: Teens who perform well on the VDA are less likely to crash; those who struggle are more likely to crash.

How does the VDA work?

Your teen will use a screen, a steering wheel and pedals to practice driving in different situations, such as:

- Following cars at safe distances
- Navigating turns and curves
- Obeying speed limits
- Handling intersections

*More than **8** out of **10** teens recommend the assessment and want to take it again.*

After the session, you'll receive feedback on their driving skills and links to videos created by experts to help your teen improve.

Why is it offered at doctor visits?

Car crashes are the leading cause of death for teens, with drivers aged 16–19 crashing four times more often than older drivers. Offering the VDA at CHOP Primary Care locations provides valuable insights to help reduce their crash risks before teens start driving alone.

How do I schedule it?

Ask your primary care provider to schedule a free virtual driving assessment. It can be done before or after your teen's next well visit, or you can schedule a separate appointment. Teens can take the VDA multiple times.



Scan this code to learn more about the VDA.



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