



# **Driver Education Handbook for Parents.®**

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## Introduction

For most teenagers, learning to drive is an exciting and highly anticipated rite of passage that means greater independence lies ahead. For parents, teaching their teen to drive may be a time of mixed emotions. Parents often want their teens to have more independence, but they may also feel anxious about how their teens will fare behind the wheel of a car.

A plan of action may reduce the anxiety parents experience when faced with the prospect of teaching their teenagers to drive. Though every teenager and parent is unique, a standardized driver training plan can be customized to meet most families' needs. When customizing a driver-training plan, parents must consider their child's maturity level, particularly with regard to her or his decision-making ability and degree of dependability.

### Parents Influence Driving Behavior

Parents should be aware of their own driving behaviors and patterns. Parents often display risky driving behaviors that will influence the habits of their new teen driver. Examples include:

- Eating or drinking
- Grooming (applying makeup or shaving)
- Talking on a cellular telephone
- Being distracted by a conversation with a passenger
- Neglecting to wear a safety belt on every trip
- Aggressive driving, such as speeding or fast, frequent lane changes
- Rolling through stop signs or running red lights



**Exercise One:** Teens copy many of their parents' driving behaviors. Parents want their teens to copy behaviors that make them safer drivers. It is important to remember that when your teen copies risky driving behaviors, she or he is doing so without the benefit of years of experience and highly-developed skills.

Consider your driving habits. Write down the driving behaviors and patterns that are risky. If you discovered that your teen was performing those behaviors, would you consider her or him a safe driver? If the answer is no, make a commitment to stop the behavior immediately.

Next, consider your driving habits and write down the driving behaviors and patterns that you want your teen to copy. Make a commitment to model those behaviors for your teen consistently.

### **Talking With Your Teen**

Another important part of teaching teenagers to drive safely is communication. Parents should talk about responsible driving with their teens each time they ride together.

**Exercise Two:** On your next car trip with your teen, conduct a pre-trip vehicle inspection aloud. Use the following steps:

1. As you approach the vehicle:
  - a. look for items that obstruct the path of the vehicle
  - b. notice the general condition of the vehicle
  - c. look underneath the vehicle for leaks
  - d. make sure lights and reflectors are clean
  - e. visually inspect tires for low air pressure
2. After you enter the vehicle:
  - a. place the key in the ignition
  - b. lock all doors
  - c. ensure that the parking brake is on and that the gearshift lever is in park
  - d. adjust the seat position so that knees are slightly bent and the upper body is a minimum of 10 inches away from the steering wheel
  - e. position the head restraint directly behind the middle of the head
  - f. fasten safety belt:
    1. adjust the safety belt to fit snugly across the lower hips
    2. make sure the shoulder strap of the safety belt crosses over the breastbone and rests across the collarbone; adjust the side pillar to improve the shoulder strap fit, if necessary
  - g. adjust the steering wheel and steering column
  - h. position inside and outside mirrors to maximize viewing range
  - i. ensure that the inside windshield is clean; clean the windshield once per week to minimize glare
3. When you start the vehicle:
  - a. place the right foot on the brake pedal and start the vehicle
  - b. check your oil, fuel and temperature gauges
  - c. adjust the air conditioning/heating

- d. move the gearshift selector to drive or reverse and release the parking brake
- e. visually scan the area and check your mirrors to be sure it is safe to proceed

**Exercise Three:** Take another trip with your teen. Ask your teen to help you conduct the pre-trip vehicle inspection. As you drive, discuss the driving environment with your teen. Point out potential hazards and discuss methods of managing them. For example, if you see a small child, you might point out how quickly the child could run into your path. Discuss how to approach the child and potential avenues of escape if an emergency should occur.



This dialogue with your teen should include information about:

- how weather and traffic conditions affect driving
- the difference between city and highway driving
- when to pull out in traffic and factors that contribute to that decision
- handling situations that may be confusing to new drivers, such as yellow lights, four-way stops, and emergency vehicles
- any situation about which your teen has questions or concerns

Provide a running commentary every time you drive with your teen. Demonstrate the visual inspection process, point out potential hazards, and explain the decision-making process that you encounter. This will help to guide your teen in her or his decision-making skills.

### **Car Insurance for Teen Drivers**

**Exercise Four:** Show your insurance policy to your teen, visit your insurance company's web site together, or pay a joint visit to your insurance agent's office. Explain, or ask your agent to explain, the purpose of motor vehicle insurance. Define insurance terminology, such as bodily injury liability, comprehensive

coverage, personal injury protection, and uninsured motorist coverage. Discuss the cost of insurance and how the cost of your insurance policy might increase or decrease. Ask your insurance agent whether a driver education course or good student discount is available. Find out how much your insurance premium will increase after a single accident or ticket. Ask your teen to commit to keeping her or his insurance rates as low as possible and [compare new driver insurance rates](#) together.

### **Teaching Your Teen Traffic Laws**

**Exercise Five:** Obtain a copy of your state's [Driver's Handbook](#) from the Department of Motor Vehicles. Review each section with your teen to make sure that she or he understands the information in the Handbook.

You may also want to enroll your teen in the [DMV Exam Prep course](#) at LowestPriceTrafficSchool.com, which:

- will save you time
- will save your teen the embarrassment of failing the exam
- will provide your teen with additional driver training
- has a money-back guarantee

Look for driving-related newspaper articles that you can share with your teen. Each article provides an opportunity for learning. The National Safety Commission provides subscriptions to the [Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin](#) for a very modest fee. It's packed with valuable information that will provide continuing driver education to your teen after she or he becomes licensed. Teens are most susceptible to crashes when they have some driving experience and are feeling confident (perhaps overconfident) in their driving abilities. The Bulletin reminds them that they are not invincible.

You have probably noticed that you have completed several driver-training exercises with your teen, but she or he has not yet sat behind the wheel of the vehicle. A tremendous amount of preparation is required to teach teenagers to drive safely. And for many parents, driving is such an ingrained habit that they must refresh their knowledge about fundamental driving concepts.

Since many states require parents to accompany their teen for a mandatory number of hours of behind-the-wheel instruction before the teen can receive a regular operator's license, **your teen is dependant on you for proper training.**

This Handbook has been designed to assist you in accomplishing this goal. It includes the following:

- Definition of a safe driver
- Tips for helping your teen earn a learner's permit and driver's license

- How to evaluate and monitor your teen's progress using our Teaching Checklist and Evaluation Report and Logbook of Driving Experience
- Checklist Instructional Guide that explains how to describe and evaluate skills like pre-vehicles checks, parallel parking, and proper passing techniques

Enjoy the Handbook and good luck with driver training!

## Chapter 1: Definition of a Safe Driver

The specific definition of a safe driver varies, depending on the source. For example, at the Insurance Information Institute, a Safe Driver is one who has three to five years of accident- and citation-free driving. According to the National Safety Commission, a Safe Driver is a driver with an excellent **B.A.S.E.** B.A.S.E. is an acronym for:

### **Behavior, Attitude, Skills, and Experience**

A safe driver:

- Weighs the consequences of her or his **Behavior**
- Displays a positive, alert, and safety-conscious **Attitude**
- Masters the **Skills** of defensive driving and motor vehicle operation
- Gains **Experience** that allows her or him to easily recognize and effectively cope with hazardous situations

### **Teens and Unsafe Driving**

Teenagers have the highest fatality rate on the roadways today. According to the Insurance Institute of Highway Safety, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teens in the United States.



- Almost **40% of all deaths** for 16- to 19-year-olds occur in motor vehicle crashes.
- 16- to 19-year-olds are **four times** more likely to be involved in a crash than older drivers.
- Over 75% of teens who were involved in fatal crashes and had been drinking alcohol prior to the crash were **not wearing seat belts**.

- Male teen drivers account for almost two out of every three fatal crashes involving teens.
- 83% of male teen drivers had been drinking at the time of a fatal crash.

Elderly drivers make up the next highest age group for fatalities. Per mile driven, drivers aged 75 years old and older have higher rates of fatal motor vehicle crashes than drivers in all other age groups except teenagers.

### **Understanding B.A.S.E.**

As statistics show, teen drivers are especially at risk. Teen drivers who improve their Behavior, Attitude, Skills, and Experience will become safer drivers. We will examine each of the aspects of B.A.S.E below and introduce techniques to assist you in training your teen to be a safe driver.

#### **Behavior**

Studies show that teenage drivers are likely to engage in risky driving behaviors such as speeding, tailgating, low seat belt usage, and improper passing. Recent research from the National Institute of Mental Health indicates that the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain continue to develop during the teen years and into the early 20s. The frontal lobe of the brain is responsible for the functions of self-control, judgment and organization. The temporal lobes control functions of emotional maturity. **A teenager's brain, which is not fully developed, contributes to many of the high-risk behaviors of the teenage driver.** Other factors may include peer pressure and inattention. For more information on this study and differences between the teenage brain and the adult brain, visit <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain/>. A detailed review of this material will equip you with a strong foundation for teaching your teen to drive and for determining the parameters for their driving privileges.

#### **Attitude**

Attitude is closely related to behavior and sets the tone for how a person will drive. Examples of possible characteristics of teenage attitude include impulsiveness, rebelliousness, and little regard for personal safety. Attitude is frequently cited as a cause of teen motor vehicle crashes. Teens must learn to be in control of and responsible for their attitudes.

#### **Skills**

Teenagers need time to develop their driving skills. Statistically, they are likely to be at fault when involved in a crash. Many of these crashes are single-vehicle crashes, primarily run-off-the-road crashes involving high speed, driver error, and loss of control. Teenagers do not yet have skills that allow a fast, correct response in an emergency situation.

#### **Experience**

Lack of experience behind the wheel also makes it difficult for teens to identify and react to danger. When new drivers try to handle unusual driving situations or small emergencies, they are often unable to cope successfully. Teens cannot be effective problem-solvers without accumulating driving experience. This experience can be achieved by learning from their own mistakes or mistakes made by others. That's why education is a critical component of increasing the experience of a teen driver.

## Chapter 2: Teaching by Example

As your teen's driving instructor and as a parent, you want to motivate your teenager to be a safe driver. Your teen will observe your example. **It is not what you say, but what you do**, that your teen will imitate. Begin by conducting a thorough examination of your own B.A.S.E. If there is room for improvement in your behavior, attitude, skills, or experience, make changes now. Whether you are comfortable with the idea or not, you are the primary role model for your teen's driving behavior. Even when you are not conducting a formal driving lesson, you are teaching your teen to drive.

**Show your teen the importance of safety belts.** Ensure that all your passengers always wear safety belts regardless of where they are seated and be sure safety belts are worn properly.

**Respond appropriately to aggressive drivers.** Allow your teen to see you choose not to react to other driver's poor choices. Avoid becoming upset by other drivers or allowing them to influence your behavior. Show your teen how you increase your vehicle's space cushion when you see an aggressive driver.

**Limit distractions in the vehicle.** Make sure you change radio stations, talk on the cellular telephone, drink your soda, or pick up a fallen object only when the vehicle is not in motion. Point out clues that indicate that another driver may be distracted, such as a vehicle that drifts out of its lane or a vehicle that slows or stops abruptly and/or for no apparent reason.

**Demonstrate respect for your driving privilege** and responsible behavior for your teen. Show her or him how you avoid driving while drowsy or fatigued. Make sure your teen knows that drinking alcohol and driving a vehicle don't mix, and discuss how to avoid riding with someone who is under the influence. Explain why driving a vehicle while taking medications can sometimes lead to trouble. Be proactive about your teen's driver education by being a responsible driver.

### Teaching Tips

- Do it correctly the first time. It is much more difficult to "unteach" your teen bad habits than it is to take the extra time to instruct properly in the beginning.
- Keep your lessons within the ability of your teen. Don't rush lessons, overwhelm your teen with too much information during one lesson, or continue a lesson until your teen is overtired.
- Practice, practice, practice. Learning a new concept requires multiple repetitions. Repeat, restate, and reemphasize each point.

- Be consistent. Use each lesson to review the information from the previous lessons and build on that knowledge.
- Remember that learning is an active process. Knowledge cannot become skill (mental, physical, or motor) until it is put to use.

Your involvement and good example are integral to your teen's driving success!

### Chapter 3: Getting a Learner's Permit

Contact your local Department of Motor Vehicles for information about your state's requirements for a learner's license or permit. A written test will be required. Additional course(s) may also be required.

The National Safety Commission recommends the [DMV Exam Prep Course](#), a course that provides multiple tests of hundreds of randomly selected questions similar to those your teenager will see on the written test. This course will prepare them for the written examination and it is an excellent tool for learning road rules and signs.

**Consider this:** if your teenager wanted a license to be a nail technician, she or he would be required to complete hundreds of hours of school training in most states. If your teen wanted a license to cut hair, most states would require one thousand hours or more of training time. But in most states, earning a learner's license or permit requires only the completion of one four-hour course – or less.

Clearly, becoming a safe driver requires many more hours of training. And training shouldn't be limited to the initial training a teen receives in order to earn a driver license. It should be continued throughout the teen's high-risk years (ages 15-24) so initial training isn't forgotten and additional training is added to the teen's knowledge [B.A.S.E.](#) That's one reason we strongly recommend subscribing to the National Safety Commission's [Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin](#).



## Chapter 4: Parent-Teen Driving Agreement

Before your teen gets behind the wheel of a car, be sure that ground rules have been established and your expectations as a parent are clear, specific and understood. These expectations include active participation in hands-on driver training lessons, discussions about safe driving techniques, study time with the DMV's Driver Handbook, etc.

Be sure your teen understands what the consequences will be if your expectations are not met. A written [Parent-Teen Driving Agreement](#) detailing the ground rules, signed by both you and your teen can be quite helpful if and when a problem arises.

### Tips for planning your driver training lessons

1. Set limits. Talk to your teen about the parameters that you will set for their driving. Review any roads, circumstances or other drivers (such as risk-taking friends) that are off-limits. Be specific.

Since passengers are a dangerous distraction for teen drivers, limit the number of passengers you allow to ride with your teen. The Insurance Institute reports that the presence of another teen doubled the fatal crash rate compared with driving alone. When there were two or more teen passengers, the risk was five times greater.

Make sure your expectations are clear, specific, and understood. Be sure your teen understands what the consequences will be if your expectations are not met.

2. Develop a driver-training outline. Make a list of the training topics you will cover and note how you will reinforce them in subsequent lessons and during various times of day. Be sure you understand and comply with your state's time restrictions, if any. For example, your state may not allow your teen to drive at night until the learner's license has been held for a specified time frame.

When your teen is allowed to drive at night, hold numerous lessons in reduced visibility conditions. The majority of teens drive for recreational purposes at night. Research from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety indicates that over 40% of teenage motor vehicle deaths occur between the hours of 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. The more time your teen spends practicing driving at night, the better equipped she or he will be when driving without you as a passenger.

Structure your plan to exceed the minimum state requirements for driving.

Sample Lesson Plan:

- First 30 days - Practice driving in a parking lot during day. Introduce rural driving.
- 30 to 60 days - Daytime neighborhood driving. Emphasize open intersections, right of way, school crossings and buses, turns, blind spots and pedestrians.
- 60 to 120 days - All daytime driving. Begin dusk driving. Stress intersections, passing, and merging lanes. Introduce urban driving.
- After four months - Driving in parking lot at night, during both light and heavy rain. Practice driving in your neighborhood in all types of weather. Introduce rush hour driving.
- After six months - Driving on the expressway. Entering and exiting highways. Special precautions taken for trucks. Driving in all types of weather during both the day and night. Complex driving scenarios, including rush hour in the rain.
- After nine months - Review emergency procedures, including skids, breakdowns, tire blowouts, wet brakes, brake failure, off-road recovery, vehicle approaching head-on, a jammed gas pedal, and fire. Equip your teen with a list of important vehicle information and telephone contacts.

Keep a record of your teen's driving experience in the [Logbook](#) located at the end of this Handbook.

## Chapter 5: Driving with Your Teen

Implement your driver-training plan slowly and gradually. Set aside a few minutes prior to each lesson to introduce what you plan to accomplish during the session. Let your teen know where you will travel and what maneuvers will be practiced. Sketch an illustration on paper, if needed.

Keep your directions and explanations clear and simple and tone of voice calm. Explain how to perform a maneuver, then demonstrate the maneuver. Next, have your teen tell you what you did and perform the maneuver.



While your teen is driving, encourage her or him to provide a running commentary, describing what she or he sees, potential dangers, and how she or he could or will respond. Avoid being a distraction by talking too much during the lesson. As a driving instructor, create the best learning environment possible by providing positive reinforcement throughout and at the conclusion of each lesson.

If you encounter a dangerous situation during a training session, calmly help your teen through the situation. After the emergency situation has passed, ask your teen to pull off the road to a safe place. Allow time for you and your teen to calm down. Before continuing, carefully and quietly review the event. Without attacking your teen, discuss how the situation might have been avoided, whether the action she or he took was the correct one, and how to prevent a similar situation in the future.

At the end of each lesson, spend a few minutes reviewing maneuvers practiced and any safety considerations noted. Make your critique objective, constructive, and specific.

During the first three months, driver-training sessions should last forty-five minutes to one hour. Gradually increase the length of the lessons to two hours after the first three months. Take care not to overwhelm your teen driver. If she or he seems particularly tired or confused during a driving lesson, conduct your

summary critique, provide positive reinforcement and end the lesson early. Your teen may not retain the information you provide if the lesson is too stressful, which will result in frustration for both of you.

Allow two to three days between each session. Your teen needs time to process the information from each lesson. However, don't allow too much time to pass between lessons – if you do, your teen will have difficulty recalling and building on the information from the previous session.

If circumstances dictate that your teen is exposed to a concept earlier than you planned, simply continue with your schedule. Don't rush through your list of training concepts. Allow plenty of time and practice for your teen to master each skill during each phase of the driver-training experience. Insist on using correct techniques from the very first lesson so your teen will develop proper habits. Remember that each time you practice, your teen will learn driving habits that will be very difficult to change. That can work to your teen's advantage, but only if you train her or him on proper safe driving techniques during each and every lesson.

## Chapter 6: The Evaluation

The evaluation is one of the most important aspects of the learning process. It provides an opportunity to review concepts and provide feedback on the lesson. Ask your teen to evaluate her or his driving after the lesson. Use the [Checklist and Evaluation Report](#) and the [Checklist Instructional Guide](#) at the end of this handbook to provide a critique. Review previous checklists so you and your teen can acknowledge areas of improvement and determine areas where further discussion and practice is needed.

As you conduct the evaluation, **listen** to your teen.



Communication is an important part of the driver-training process. What you think your teen learned and what she or he actually learned may be very different. Remember to maintain a positive learning environment!

## Chapter 7: Monitor your Teen's Driving

Once a solid foundation of driving abilities and knowledge has been achieved, assist your teen in fine-tuning her or his skills. Monitor your teen closely, using the following guidelines:

### Safe Driver Behavior:

Does your teen regularly conduct pre-trip vehicle inspections?

Does your teen obey speed limits?

Is she or he wearing a safety belt consistently and correctly?

Does your teen keep her or his eyes moving?

Does your teen get distracted while the vehicle is moving?

### Safe Driver Attitude:

Is your teen focused on driving?

Does she or he effectively control emotions behind the wheel?

Is your teen a patient and courteous driver?

Does she or he indicate a willingness to improve?

Does your teen understand [B.A.S.E.](#), recognizing that executing the concept will help her or him to be a safe driver and that failure to do so may result in your teen becoming a highway statistic?

### Safe Driver Skills:

Does your teen operate the vehicle with little coaching?

Is she or he capable of safely responding to emergency situations?

### Safe Driver Experience:

Have your teen's skills become a natural reflex?

Does your teen react appropriately to risky situations?

Is she or he able to quickly analyze driving situations?

Is your teen proactive regarding possible hazards?

Does your teen learn from the mistakes of others?

Consider making a written [Parent-Teen Driving Agreement](#) with your teen. Document your agreed-upon expectations and your teen's commitment to follow the limits that have been established once they are driving unsupervised. Issues that you may want to address include:

- Vehicle care expectations such as cleaning, oil changes, fluid checks, and tire pressure and tread checks.
- Shared vehicle operating expenses such as insurance, repairs, and gas. A financial investment from your teen adds another level of responsibility.
- Behavior expectations. For example, when to call home, handling of awkward or peer-pressure situations, driving distractions, passenger restrictions, traffic citations, and zero tolerance for driving under the influence.

- Driving time limitations, frequency of use of the vehicle, vehicle curfews, and road and area restrictions.
- Consequences for violating the agreement.

If you are not sure your teen is capable of meeting the challenges of the driving environment, wait until you are certain that she or he is ready. It is impossible for your teen to be too prepared to drive alone, but having too little experience or an unsafe attitude could be deadly.

## **Chapter 8: Continuing Driver Education**

Continue to monitor your teen as she or he gains experience. Remember that your teen's brain will not be fully developed until her or his early 20s, and as your teen gains experience, she or he may become overconfident. Make sure that your teen is using a good [B.A.S.E.](#)

You do not have to be in a vehicle with your teen to watch for indications that she or he is developing unsafe driving habits:

- Does your teen put on a safety belt before she or he starts the vehicle and leave it fastened until the key is removed from the ignition?
- Does your teen check around the outside of the vehicle for obstacles before opening the vehicle's door?
- Does she or he allow plenty of time to get to school or rush out the door at the last minute?
- Does your teen delay driving when upset or drowsy, or arrive home looking stressed-out or half-asleep?

Occasionally, ride with your teen after she or he has earned a driver license. Take the [Checklist and Evaluation Report](#) and the [Checklist Instructional Guide](#) with you. If your teen doesn't achieve a score of excellent in every category on the checklist, discuss the problem areas and necessary corrections. Set additional limits in areas where improvement is needed or when you observe sloppy driving habits. Provide positive reinforcement when your teen meets or exceeds your expectations. You may wish to require a quarterly evaluation as part of your written driving agreement.

Remember to select newspaper articles about motor vehicle crashes, especially those involving teens, to review with your teen. If you subscribe to the National Safety Commission's [Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin](#), discuss the articles to make sure your teen has reviewed and understands the information. When your teen leaves home for college or a new job, make sure the Commission has an updated email address so she or he can continue to receive the Bulletin.



## Chapter 9: Summary

Teaching your teen to drive is one of the most important aspects of your teen's development. It is also one of the most dangerous. In 2003, 3,657 drivers aged 15 to 20 years old were killed and an additional 308,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Recognizing the risk involved in driving, setting an example of a safe driver, giving your teen plenty of practice, setting limits, making a written driving commitment, and monitoring your teen's driving are some of the most important things you can do as a parent. Throughout the process, keep communication lines open and listen to your teen. In doing so, you will provide your teen with a solid B.A.S.E. that she or he will use daily for life.



<b>Teen Checklist and Evaluation Report</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>Part 1 Basic Skills</b>			
Pre-trip vehicle inspection			
In-vehicle checks			
Starting vehicle			
Posture			
Moves and steers vehicle smoothly and accurately			
Maintains visual scan inside and out			
Stops vehicle smoothly and precisely			
Makes accurate turns			
Backing			
Parking			
<b>Part 2 Intermediate Skills</b>			
Maintains minimum two-second following distance			
Yields the right of way			
Communicates with other drivers			
Scans ahead 12 seconds			
Follows road signs and speed limits			
Signals well ahead when making a turn			
Identifies possible hazards			
Parking vehicle on curb			
Parking on an incline or hill			
Parking at an angle			
Straight-in parking			
Three point turn			
Adjusts vehicle for proper space cushion			
Adjusts defensive driving for rural areas, neighborhoods, & school			
Identifies and responds to bicyclists			
Properly enters and exits roundabouts			
Maneuvers through open intersections correctly			
Uses proper passing techniques allowing for time and space			
Keeps eyes scanning in and around vehicle			
Maneuvers through traffic controlled intersections			
<b>Part 3 Advanced Skills</b>			
Maneuvers in rush hour traffic			
Compensates for reduced visibility in night driving			
Compensates for weather conditions			
Expressway driving			
Enters and exits highways			
Applies precautions for trucks			
Parallel parking			
Identifies and responds to motorcycles			
Handles complex and multiple driving hazards			
Understands escape routes			
Versed in emergency procedures			

## Checklist Instructional Guide

### Part 1: Basic Skills

#### Pre-trip vehicle inspection

Include a visual inspection around the vehicle for obstacles, children, tools, and potential hazards (including strangers in the backseat). Check for fluid leaks and any loose or hanging objects. Visually inspect tires for proper inflation pressure and tire treads for excessive wear or bubbles. Inspect the windows, headlights and brake lights for dirt or mud that may obscure your vision or another driver's, especially the front window due to glare hazards that occur during sunrise and sunset.

#### In-vehicle checks

Place the key in the ignition and lock all doors. Ensure that the parking brake is engaged and that the gearshift lever is in park.

Adjust the seat position so knees are slightly bent. The heel of the right foot should rest on the right side of the brake pedal, allowing the heel to pivot between the brake pedal and the gas pedal quickly and easily. The left foot should rest on the floor.

The driver's body should be a minimum of 10 inches away from the steering wheel (your owner's manual may recommend an even greater distance due to airbag inflation hazards). Position the steering wheel and steering column for comfort. Position the inside and outside mirrors so that your viewing range is maximized, reducing blind spots as much as possible.

Position the head restraint for both driver and passenger directly behind the middle of the head. Fasten and adjust safety belt so that it fits low across the hips and snug. The shoulder strap should cross over the breastbone and rest across the collarbone. Adjust the side pillar to improve the shoulder strap fit. Placing the shoulder strap against the neck or under the arm can result in serious injury or death.

#### Starting the vehicle

Place the right foot on the brake pedal and start the vehicle. Check all gauges including oil, fuel, and temperature gauges. Adjust heating/air conditioning before you place your vehicle in drive.

#### Posture

Hand position on the steering wheel should be at the 9 and 3 o'clock position or the 10 and 2 o'clock position. The handgrip on the steering wheel should be firm but not tight. Care should be taken to avoid allowing your hand to rest over the steering wheel air bag. Arms should be slightly bent. Elbows should rest at the

side of body. Lower trunk of body should be in the upright position. A pillow may be used if it allows for a better view of the driving environment.

#### Moves and steers vehicle smoothly and accurately

Place foot on brake. Move gearshift selector into drive or reverse. Release the parking brake if engaged, check mirrors and visually scan area to make sure it is clear and safe to proceed. Steer and maintain the vehicle in the center of the driving lane.

#### Maintains visual scan inside and out

The driver should constantly maintain a visual scan of the driving environment including inside and outside mirrors and the upper half of the windshield and physically turn head to check blind spots.

#### Stops vehicle smoothly and precisely

Brake is applied with gradual and steady pressure. Vehicle can be stopped accurately at predetermined points.

#### Makes accurate turns

Look through the turn and reposition the vehicle correctly in the center of the nearest lane. For large turns, use hand over hand steering.

#### Backing

Keep right foot on brake and check mirrors and blind spots. Shift gear selector to reverse. Place left hand at the top of the steering wheel. Turn body to right and look through rear window. Slowly release pressure from brake, allowing vehicle to move at idle speed. If needed, slight acceleration can be made to allow for slow speed. Practice slight movements of steering wheel for accuracy. Practice backing in a straight line at least 50 feet. Brake smoothly to a complete stop. Return body to forward position. Hands return to 10 and 2 o'clock or 9 and 3 o'clock position on steering wheel.

#### Parking

Make sure area is clear. Bring vehicle to a complete stop. Set the parking brake if required. Place the gear selector to park. Turn off the ignition. Remove key and seatbelt. Check area before unlocking doors. If parked on the side of a street or parking lot, make sure no other vehicles are approaching before opening the door. Exit vehicle.

## **Part 2: Intermediate Skills**

### **Maintains a 2-second following distance minimum**

This is the minimum safe following distance. The two-second following distance is determined by selecting a fixed item such as a sign, a tree, or a shadow on or next to the roadway. As the vehicle ahead passes that spot, count two seconds – one thousand one, one thousand two. If your vehicle passes that spot before you have finished counting, you are too close. You must slow down and increase your following distance. Following distance should be increased by 1 to 2 seconds when traveling over 40 miles per hour. Following distance must be increased when conditions are not ideal, such as on wet or icy roads, behind a trailer or large truck, or when visibility is poor.

### **Yields the right-of-way**

Pedestrians always have the right-of-way. Motorists should also be on alert for pedestrians with a white cane, white cane with a red tip, or a trained guide dog, indicating that the pedestrian is visually impaired.

### **Communicates with other drivers**

Helps other drivers anticipate vehicle's actions via turn signals, brake movements, headlights, and the horn. Alert for clues to other driver's communications including hand signals and head movements.

### **Scans ahead 12 seconds**

Scan in front of the vehicle 12 seconds or the equivalent of one city block for pedestrians, car doors opening and closing, other traffic and potential hazards.

### **Follows road signs and speed limits**

Reduce speed for heavy traffic, poor weather conditions, construction zones, or other potential hazards.

### **Signals well ahead when making a turn**

Turn signal should be activated a minimum of 100 feet prior to making turn.

### **Identifies possible hazards**

Hazards include obstruction to visual scan such as fog, rain, dirty windshield, glare, etc., bicyclists, pedestrians or joggers, potholes, objects in the roadway, warning signs, school and construction zones, children, other drivers, etc.

### **Parking vehicle on a curb**

Check for other traffic and turn the vehicle toward the curb. The vehicle should stop within 1 foot of the curb. Place the gearshift in park. Apply the parking brake if required.

### Parking on an incline or hill

Turn wheels to the right when uphill without a curb. When parking up hill with a curb, wheels should be turned from curb. When parking down hill turn vehicles wheels to curb. Parking brake should be set. If driving a vehicle with a manual transmission, shift gears to first when parking uphill or to reverse if parking downhill.

### Parking at an angle

Identify desired space. Make sure traffic is clear. Signal the intention to turn. Look at the center of the empty parking space and slowly move forward. Steer sharply into parking space. When vehicle is centered in the space, straighten the wheels. Place the gear selector in park. Set the parking brake if required.

Prior to backing out of space, verify the area is clear. Place the gearshift in reverse. Back vehicle slowly, turning in desired direction. Ensure adequate bumper clearance. When front bumper clears the back of the vehicle on the side of the turn and there is adequate clearance to maneuver to the center of the lane, stop and shift gear to drive.

### Straight-in parking

Pull into a space so that the vehicle is centered in the space from the front, sides and rear of the vehicle.

### Three point turn

Move to the far side of the road. Make sure traffic is clear. Signal for a left turn. Move forward slowly while turning the steering wheel sharply to the left. Stop several inches from the curb or edge of the roadway. Place gearshift in reverse and back slowly, turning the steering wheel sharply to the right. Stop several inches from the curb or edge of the roadway. Drive forward moving slowly, turning the steering wheel to the left. Straighten your wheels and check traffic.

### Adjusts vehicle for proper space cushion

Keep the area around the vehicle clear of other traffic ahead, behind, and on the sides of the vehicle. Maintain a space cushion when stopped at a traffic light so if you're threatened (for example, by another driver or by a pedestrian), you can maneuver and escape.

### Adjusts defensive driving for rural areas, neighborhoods, and school zones

Anticipates problems with hidden driveways, pedestrians, bicyclists, extra children and animals. Identifies and reduces speed for narrow winding roads, railroad crossings, hills, speed bumps, parking lots, construction and school zones, and sharp blind curves.

### Identifies and responds to bicyclist

Allow three feet of space and reduce you speed when passing or approaching a bicyclist. Increase your following distance when traveling behind a cyclist. Yield

to bicyclists, and be alert for bike lanes. When parking, visually check for cyclists when opening doors on the sidewalk or roadway.

Properly enters and exits roundabouts

Enter in a counterclockwise direction. Yield to circulating traffic at low speed, obeying posted signs.

Maneuvers through open intersections correctly

Scan intersections left, right, left, before attempting to move into intersection. Yield right-of-way to traffic already in the intersection. Should two cars enter an open intersection at the same time, the driver to the left must yield to the driver on the right.

Uses proper passing techniques

Check traffic in both directions. Drivers should allow extra space between their vehicle and the vehicle that they are preparing to pass. Drivers must be able to have clear space ahead of the vehicle that they are preparing to pass. Check mirrors, apply turn signal, and check your blind spot with a visual head turn. When clear, ease out and move into the other lane. Accelerate to complete the pass. When you see the headlights of the vehicle you just passed in the rear view mirror, signal and move back into the proper lane. Adjust your speed to maintain a safe space cushion.

Keep eyes scanning in and around the vehicle

Check mirrors and dashboard every three to five seconds.

Maneuvers through traffic controlled intersections

When approaching an intersection, driver is prepared to move one hand to the horn. When approaching an intersection with a green light, determine if the light is a fresh green light or a stale green light. If it is a fresh green light, continue through the intersection cautiously, but do not linger in the intersection. Scan the area for cross traffic, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Look left, right, left as you travel through the intersection, allowing a space cushion on all sides of vehicle.

If approaching a stale green light, be prepared to stop as vehicle approaches intersection. Once commitment is made that vehicle will continue through intersection, accelerate as necessary through intersection smoothly and safely. Continue checking for cross traffic.

When approaching either a red light or a stale green light and the decision has been made to prepare to stop, brake smoothly. The first vehicle at the intersection should stop at the stop line of the intersection. Position vehicle so you can see the rear tires of the vehicle ahead touching the pavement. Continue to check mirrors and scan the driving environment. Be aware of any available escape routes. When light changes to green count one thousand one, one

thousand two. Check cross traffic left, right, left. Accelerate gradually and smoothly. Do not linger in the intersection.

When approaching a yellow light, prepare to stop if it is safe to do so. If it is not safe to stop, accelerate through the intersection, vigilantly checking for other traffic.

### **Part 3: Advanced Skills**

#### Maneuvering in rush hour traffic

Adjust driving for stop and go traffic. Maintain and stabilize space around vehicle. Identify and respond to aggressive drivers.

#### Compensates for reduced visibility in night driving

Increase the following distance and space around the vehicle, adjusting eyes and mirrors for glare, and utilizing high and low beam headlights correctly. Stay alert for increased risk factors at night, including impaired, tired, and distracted drivers.

#### Compensates for weather conditions

Increase your following distance by two seconds for light rain and fog. Increase your following distance to six seconds for heavy rain and hail. Turn on headlights, be extremely alert and reduce speed.

#### Expressway driving

Maintain proper space margin. Travel in right or middle lane, changing lanes as necessary. Be alert for cars entering and exiting expressway. Avoid other driver's blind spots. Allow extra space to maneuver for vehicles parked on shoulder of expressway. Adjust speed as needed. Move to the side of travel lane when being passed. Maintain visual scan. Apply precautions to reduce fatigue, highway hypnosis, and distracted blindness.

#### Enters and exits highways

Identify entrance ramp, apply turn signal, and look for gap in traffic. Use acceleration lane to build speed for merging. Adjust speed to merge safely in gap of traffic. Yield the right of way to other traffic. Avoid stopping in merge area of expressway. When behind another vehicle preparing to merge, be alert for the car in front of you to come to a complete stop after appearing to be accelerating for the merger.

When exiting the expressway, position your vehicle in the exit lane. Apply your turn signal and move onto the exit ramp. Pivot right foot from accelerator to covering the brake to reduce speed. Apply brake smoothly to comply with exit ramp speed. Maintain safe following distance from other vehicles.

### Applies precautions for trucks

Increase the following distance behind a truck due to the truck's increased stopping distance. Avoid traveling in the side or rear blind spot of the truck. Avoid sudden stops in front of a truck. Be aware of the maneuvers a truck makes when turning or backing and the amount of space the maneuvers require.

### Parallel parking

Identify a space large enough for your vehicle. Make sure the roadway is clear and signal your intentions. Position your vehicle alongside the vehicle in front of the empty space; you should be parallel with that vehicle. Place the gearshift lever in reverse and check for traffic. Slowly back up for two feet. Turn steering wheel all the way to the right or left as appropriate to the empty space. When the front of your vehicle has cleared the rear bumper of the vehicle of the car in front, stop. Check the angle of your vehicle as you enter the space, making sure that your rear wheel has not hit the curb. Move slowly back, turning steering wheel all the way in the opposite direction. Stop when close to the vehicle parked to the rear. Place the gearshift lever in drive and move slowly forward. Turn wheels sharply toward the edge of road. Stop when vehicle is centered in parking space. Make sure vehicle is within one foot of curb. Set the parking brake if required.

### Identifies and responds to motorcycles

Allow for an additional one-second following distance behind motorcycles.

### Handles complex and multiple driving hazards

Assess hazards and apply low-risk decision making to hazards. When confronted with multiple hazards, identify hazard with the highest probability of occurring. Handle hazards one at a time.

### Understands escape routes

Continually expect problems and plan reaction. Escape routes include escape left, escape right, brake and accelerate. Always look in the direction you want the vehicle to travel. Generally escaping right will provide the softest way out. Always avoid a head on collision. It is better to hit a vehicle moving in the same direction than a vehicle traveling in the opposite direction.

### Versed in emergency procedures

Including breakdowns, tire blowouts, off-road recovery, skidding, hydroplaning, brake-failure, engine instrument warnings, fire, gas pedal jam, emergency vehicle traffic, and procedures for handling a crash or getting a ticket. Know where the owner's manual, insurance information, and registration are located.



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