

Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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Teen Killed in One-car Crash

A 17-year-old boy was killed in a single-vehicle crash that occurred when he overcorrected after failing to safely navigate a curve. The car left the road and hit several trees.

Source: *WLTX.com* ♦

Lessons Learned

Though teens receive [driver training](#) prior to being licensed and are subject to [Graduated Driver Licensing](#) laws to protect them from high-risk driving situations, training shouldn't end when teens get their licenses:

1. *Newly licensed teenage drivers are often giddy with newly acquired freedom.* They will assimilate more information once they have become accustomed to the increased level of independence they've earned.
2. *Teens may pick up bad driving habits, such as carelessness and recklessness, from [riding with other teens](#).*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Teen Killed in One-car Crash
- 2 Police Say Man Admits Hitting Boy on Bike
- 3 Teen Injured by Car-surfing
- 4 Four Ways Teens Benefit from Following Graduated Driver Licensing Laws
Teens and Seat Belt Use



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3. Teens who received defensive driving lessons prior to gaining driving experience often have difficulty applying those lessons until they are licensed.

4. New drivers often suffer from information overload; spreading driver training lessons out over time means they will retain more in the long run.

5. Though drivers are statistically less likely to be injured or killed in motor vehicle crashes as they leave their teens, the overall risk remains high throughout the teenage years when compared to other age groups.

Taking a defensive driving course six to twelve months after licensure is very helpful for new drivers. Teens can take the course [online or in a classroom](#).

Typical topics include:

- Crash statistics and the physics of vehicle crashes
- Crash prevention techniques
- Driving under the influence of alcohol
- How to share the road with large trucks, motorcyclists, and pedestrians
- Dealing with stress and drowsiness while driving
- The [hazards of speeding](#)

When teens take a defensive driving class, they have the opportunity to apply concepts that may have seemed abstract prior to licensure. For example, crash prevention techniques are easier to appreciate once the driver has experience in maneuvering a vehicle; unlicensed teens are unlikely to understand how much stress and sleepiness negatively impact their driving abilities. However, as newly licensed drivers, teens haven't been driving long enough to have ingrained driving habits, so they still have an opportunity to eliminate unsafe practices and become safe drivers.

Police Say Man Admits Hitting Boy on Bike

An 18-year-old man has admitting hitting a nine-year-old boy on a bike and then leaving the scene, police say. The man faces charges of leaving the scene of an accident causing personal injury.

Source: *EagleTribune.com* ♦

Lessons Learned

Teens are often urged to "drive defensively." This is an excellent suggestion for any driver and is of particular importance to new drivers, who have limited experience in dealing with emergency situations and who are developing driving habits they may have for the rest of their lives. But what is defensive driving, exactly?

Driving defensively means driving in such a way that you reduce the risk of a crash, which will in turn prevent injury to yourself and others. It means going beyond following the rules of the road to put safety first. For example, if another driver is supposed to yield the right-of-way to you but fails to do so, as a defensive driver you will yield the right-of-way to that driver to avoid a collision.

Defensive driving isn't just important in emergency situations, however. **Using defensive driving techniques will help you:**

- manage stressful driving conditions
- avoid traffic tickets
- keep your vehicle in good mechanical condition
- keep your driver's license

There is no doubt that driving can be stressful, especially when traffic is heavy. One element of defensive driving is to maintain an adequate following distance from the vehicle in front of you. This decreases the risk of a rear-end collision if the vehicle ahead stops suddenly. **Other ways to manage stress by driving defensively include:**

- driving at a speed that is appropriate for conditions (which may be lower than, but is never higher than, the posted speed limit)
- checking intersections for cross traffic when you have a green traffic light (in case another driver runs the red light or a pedestrian is in the crosswalk)
- keeping a space cushion on all sides of your vehicle so you have room to maneuver if necessary
- watching the road ahead of your vehicle and checking your mirrors every three to five seconds so you notice

hazards before they become a problem

Avoiding traffic tickets is especially important to drivers who are subject to a [Graduated Driver's Licensing](#) program; these programs often restrict advancement to the next stage of licensure unless very few or no points accrue on the teen's license. Traffic violations also mean hefty insurance increases for young drivers, who are already paying high rates because they are in a high-risk category. But following the rules of the road only when you're worried about [getting a ticket](#) is not sufficient; *if you're not concentrating on driving defensively, you're likely to make mistakes due to your reduced level of alertness.* These mistakes could result in a ticket or even a crash, and even a minor fender-bender can result in points on your driving record.

Part of defensive driving is making sure that your vehicle is in good mechanical condition. Don't wait for a breakdown to get your vehicle checked out; your owner's manual offers a schedule of suggested maintenance tasks. Tires with low air or worn tread reduce your traction and make skids more likely. Your brakes need to be in top condition at all times. Even something as simple as not having windshield wiper fluid in the reservoir can impair your visibility and increase your chances of a crash. *Don't just put gas in the car and drive; take responsibility for ensuring that your vehicle is ready for the road.*

As you've probably learned from your driver handbook, having a driver's license is a privilege, not a right. This means that your driver's license can be taken away, including for some non-driving offenses. **Driving defensively is part of an overall pattern of responsible behavior that will help you keep your license and the increased level of independence that comes with it.**



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Teen Injured by Car-surfing

A 17-year-old girl was injured after she was hit by a car in the parking lot of her school. Police say the teen was lying on her stomach on the hood of the vehicle when she slipped off the hood and into the vehicle's path.

Source: KDVR.com♦

Lessons Learned

One important aspect of driver training is the development of a **safe driving attitude**. The reason a **safe driving attitude** is so important is because you will make many choices as you drive, and *your driving choices have consequences*. There are many benefits to a safe driving attitude, including:

- limiting stress while on the road
- saving you money on tickets and increased insurance costs
- helping you keep your driver license
- reducing your chances of being in a crash

To have a **safe driving attitude**, you must have control of your emotions and behavior, practice defensive driving techniques, and accept responsibility for all of your driving decisions.

Emotion is a word used to identify feelings such as anger, fear and joy. If you allow them to, emotions can change the way you assess risk and make driving decisions. *When strong emotions such as anger affect you, your ability to make wise decisions may be reduced, increasing your chances of making a mistake.* You may be so preoccupied with your anger that you misjudge the risks involved or don't even notice important events in a particular driving situation.

Always be aware of your state of mind. Look at yourself objectively and decide if you really have the focus and alertness you need to safely use a motor vehicle. If you have any doubt, wait. Give yourself time to calm down and concentrate on safe driving.

You can expect some emotional stress in your everyday driving. Learning to manage it is important for your safety and the safety of others:

- If you are angry and excited, take a short walk, write your feelings down or talk to a friend before you get behind the wheel.
- No matter what is going on in your life, when you get behind the wheel, *make a decision that until you arrive safely at your destination, you*

will focus on driving.

- Always allow plenty of time to get to your destination so you won't get impatient with red lights or heavy traffic.
- Realize that many aspects of driving, such as heavy traffic and the actions of other drivers, are beyond your control. *Stay calm when faced with stressful road conditions.*

Part of having a **safe driving attitude** is consistently practicing defensive driving techniques:

- Make sure your vehicle is properly maintained
- Wear your safety belt and make sure your passengers do the same
- Choose a [speed](#) appropriate for conditions
- Make sure you have a space cushion all around your vehicle whenever possible
- Be alert and aware of the actions of all other road users, including motorcyclists, bicyclists, and pedestrians
- Watch the road ahead, behind and on both sides of your vehicle
- Anticipate problems early and select the best course of action in case the worst happens
- *Give other drivers the benefit of the doubt when they make mistakes*

Accepting responsibility for our decisions is an important part of becoming an adult. Willingness to do so demonstrates maturity and trustworthiness.

When you drive, you must make sure you are willing to accept responsibility for all of your driving decisions. Other drivers cannot "[make](#)" you behave in one way or another; your reactions to their behavior are within your control. *You must discipline yourself to put safety first no matter what any other driver does.*

Developing a **safe driving attitude** is an important component of driver training; doing so from the beginning of your driving career will help keep you and others out of harm's way on the road.



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Four Ways Teens Benefit from Following Graduated Driver Licensing Laws

It isn't uncommon for teens to rebel against Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) laws. But there are many benefits to obeying GDL laws for teens, such as:

1. **They're a chance to prove your maturity and trustworthiness.** One of the basic requirements for functioning in our society is the ability to follow the rules. Showing that you're willing to abide by certain restrictions lets adults, specifically your parents, know that you are grown-up and dependable enough to handle additional privileges.

2. **They can help you get out of risky situations with your pride intact.** You may have the best intentions of following GDL laws, but sometimes friends make that a challenge. You can explain that you don't want to get caught breaking the law because you might lose your license and/or your parents might ground you from driving if you get a traffic ticket.

3. **They're the law.** If you get a ticket for breaking a GDL law, you will have to pay a fine and your insurance rates, which are already high, could increase. After accruing a certain number of points on your license, you could lose it for a specified period of time and have to pay more fines to get it back. Ignorance of the law is no excuse, so be sure to familiarize yourself with the GDL laws in your state.

4. **They really do keep you safe.** According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), sixteen-year old drivers have crash rates that are about three times greater than 17-year-old drivers, five times greater than 18-year-old drivers, and approximately twice the rate of 85-year-old drivers. We know that GDL laws work, because there has been an overall decrease in fatal crashes involving teens nationally since GDL laws began to be implemented. GDL laws work because they help teens increase their driving skills while minimizing the risks of being on the road with limited experience.

You can probably see how these four factors tie together. When you choose to follow GDL laws, you have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

Source: SafeDriver.com ♦

Teens and Seat Belt Use

In 2006, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reported that 76% of drivers aged 16 to 24 used their safety belts; this figure was lower than for any other age group. Perhaps more telling, in 2006 the NHTSA also reported that 58% of 16- to 20-year olds who were involved in fatal motor vehicle collisions were not wearing seat belts.

Why don't teens wear safety belts? A Utah Department of Health study reported that teens offer the following reasons:

- Forgetting to buckle up
- Wanting to be cool
- Peer pressure
- Seat belts are uncomfortable
- Traveling only a short distance
- A feeling of invincibility

What can we do to increase the seat belt use rate among teenagers? Initiatives include:

-Parents who want their teens to buckle up must wear their own safety belts and use child restraints and seat belts on their children from birth. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety reports that teen seat belt use increases over time when strict parental limits are set. In the Utah Department of Health study, *about half of the unbelted students observed at 12 high schools were riding with adults who were wearing seat belts.*

-Education and outreach are important methods of encouraging safety belt use. Many teens do not understand the physics of a car crash. Teens also tend to extrapolate urban legends to a statistical majority, so they need to learn how to apply critical thinking skills to traffic safety concepts.

-Graduated Driver Licensing programs in many states have seat belt use requirements. Teens need to be educated on their state requirements and the penalties for violating them; parents need to enforce GDL laws as part of their house rules.

-Schools have the opportunity to increase seat belt use by requiring student drivers and passengers to be buckled up when entering and leaving campus. Penalties can be tied to restriction of and eventual loss of parking privileges.

-A primary enforcement safety belt law is effective in increasing safety belt use among teens, particularly among those who absolutely refuse to wear them otherwise. The NHTSA reports that teens are more likely to wear seat belts in states with primary enforcement laws versus in states with secondary laws.

Source: SafeDriver.com ♦

