

## Car Talk's Fact Sheet for Parents of Teen Drivers

### What Parents Need to Know

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 15- to 20-year-olds, causing roughly one-third of all deaths for this age group. Teenagers are overrepresented in traffic crashes both as drivers and as passengers. The high crash-involvement rate for this age group is caused primarily by their lack of maturity and driving experience coupled with their overconfidence and risk-taking behaviors. High-risk behaviors include failure to wear safety belts, speeding, driving while impaired (by alcohol or other drugs) and drowsy or distracted driving. This age group is particularly susceptible to distractions caused by other passengers in the vehicle, electronic devices and music.

- In 2006, 3,490 15- to 20-year-old drivers were killed and an additional 272,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2006, 25 percent of 15- to 20-year-old drivers who were killed in crashes had a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08g/dL or higher.<sup>1</sup>
- Drivers are less likely to use their seatbelts when they have been drinking. In 2006, 65 percent of the young drivers of passenger vehicles involved in fatal crashes who had been drinking were unrestrained. Of the young drivers who had been drinking and were killed in crashes, 77 percent were unrestrained.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2006, 39 percent of the male drivers ages 15 to 20 who were involved in fatal crashes were speeding at the time of the crash.<sup>2</sup>
- The presence of teen passengers increases the crash risk of unsupervised teen drivers; the risk increases with the number of teen passengers.<sup>3</sup>
- The risk of motor vehicle crashes is higher among 16- to 19-year-olds than among any other age group. In fact, per mile driven, these teen drivers are four times more likely than older drivers to crash.<sup>3</sup>
- Crash risk is particularly high during the first year that teenagers are eligible to drive.<sup>3</sup>
- Teens are more likely than older drivers to speed and allow shorter headways (the distance from the front of one vehicle to the back of the next). Male teenage passengers increase the likelihood of these risky driving behaviors among teen male drivers.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2005, half of teen deaths from motor vehicle crashes occurred between 3 p.m. and midnight and 54 percent occurred on Friday, Saturday or Sunday.<sup>3</sup>

1. Young Drivers, Traffic Safety Facts, 2006 Data, NHTSA's National Center for Statistics and Analysis, DOT HS 810 817.
2. Speeding, Traffic Safety Facts, 2006 Data, NHTSA's National Center for Statistics and Analysis, DOT HS 810 814.
3. Teen Drivers: Fact Sheet, Centers for Disease Control <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/teenmvh.htm>

## What Parents Can Do

Parents should be aware that their active support and awareness, including helping with skill building and making driver education available, are critical to helping reduce injuries and fatalities among teens.

Tips for parents of teen drivers can be found in “*Beginning Teenage Drivers*” (DOT HS 810 651), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:  
[www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/newdriver/beginndrivers/index.htm](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/newdriver/beginndrivers/index.htm)

The Spanish language version is available at:  
[http://www.iihs.org/brochures/pdf/beginning\\_drivers\\_sp.pdf](http://www.iihs.org/brochures/pdf/beginning_drivers_sp.pdf)

## Resources to Help Your Teen

### AAMVA.org

AAMVA is an association representing its U.S. and Canadian membership by working collaboratively to support and improve motor vehicle administration, safety, identification security and law enforcement.

Click on [www.aamva.org/MembershipLeadership/Regions/](http://www.aamva.org/MembershipLeadership/Regions/) to gain access to resources in your state such as the department of highway safety, state police and DMV.

### State DMVs

Check your state’s DMV Web site for some excellent resources for parents and teens:

- **Parent-Teen Training Guide ([www.dmv.ca.gov/pubs/dl603/dl603.pdf](http://www.dmv.ca.gov/pubs/dl603/dl603.pdf)):**  
Available in eight languages, this 25-page downloadable handbook gives directions for practice sessions with your teen, information on driving skills, advice on emergencies and a safe driver checklist.
- **Florida Drivers Guide for Teens and Parents ([www.hsmv.state.fl.us/teens/teenguide.pdf](http://www.hsmv.state.fl.us/teens/teenguide.pdf)):**  
This 28-page guide includes a skills mastery checklist and supervised driving logs.

Georgia, Illinois, Maine and North Carolina are among many state DMVs that offer a parent-teen safe driving contract.

### Insurance Institute for Highway Safety

Know the law. Become familiar with restrictions on beginning drivers and enforce the rules. To learn about the laws in your state, go to <http://iihs.org/laws/default.aspx>

### Driving Skills for Life: Safer Driving Tips (Videos)

([www.drivingskillsforlife.com/content/view/79/35/lang,en/](http://www.drivingskillsforlife.com/content/view/79/35/lang,en/))

The site has information for parents, teens and educators. For teens it offers lessons on hazard recognition, vehicle handling, space management and speed management along with a final quiz. It also offers safe driving tips, car care tips and eco-driving tips.

## **Teen Unsafe Driving Behaviors Focus Group Final Report**

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

([www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/newdriver/teenunsafedriving/index.html](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/newdriver/teenunsafedriving/index.html))

In this 2004 report, focus groups of teens considered problems such as distracted driving.

The results show:

- Teens do not seem to see the relationship between the numerous things that distract them in their cars and their high rate of fender bender type crashes. A high percentage of crashes reported by the teens involved rear-ending a car that had stopped while the teen driver was looking away from the road.
- Teen drivers need to be empowered to impose some rules on their passengers. They all recognize the risks caused by lots of passengers: tickling them, covering their eyes, shouting out directions and egging them on to do stupid things. However, they do not seem to have the confidence or strategies for keeping their passengers under control.
- Cell phones are not perceived as a serious risk by most teen participants, yet they complain about other drivers who do stupid things while talking on their cell phones. They do not seem to connect the many close calls that they have had while driving when using their cell phones. They need to be reminded what conditions make it too risky to answer or make a call.
- Music plays a huge part in a teen's life, especially when they are driving. Yet teen participants acknowledge that adjusting the radio or switching CDs causes them to look away from the road and that crashes can occur in those milliseconds of inattention.

This campaign ([www.urthespokesperson.org](http://www.urthespokesperson.org)) to Speak Up Against Reckless Driving is sponsored by the Ad Council and a coalition of state Attorney Generals and consumer protection agencies. It encourages teens to speak up when a friend is driving recklessly.