



2022 National Teen Driver Safety Week

FACT SHEET/TALKING POINTS – TEEN TARGET AUDIENCE

Driving is a life-long learning process, and the beginning years are critical to building a solid foundation of safe driving habits. A key component to building on those early teen driving years is plenty of one-on-one conversations with your parents. No matter how tedious the education and conversations may feel, a safer driving experience benefits you and everyone else on the road.

October 16-22, 2022, is National Teen Driver Safety Week, a great time to review safe driving habits with family members and other teen drivers. Data shows that, for your age group (15-18 years old), the greatest dangers in the vehicle while driving include alcohol consumption, inconsistent or no seat belt use, distracted driving, speeding, and driving with passengers.

During National Teen Driver Safety Week, do your part to help the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) spread the word about teen driving safety.

Know the Facts About Teen Driver Fatalities

- Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death for teens (15-18 years old) in the United States.
- In 2020, there were 2,276 people killed in crashes involving a teen passenger vehicle driver (15-18 years old), of which 748 deaths were the teen passenger vehicle driver.
- Others may influence your driving choices, but it's ultimately up to you to make the right decisions when you're in a vehicle. Here are some of your biggest risks when behind the wheel.
 - **Impaired Driving:** While you're too young to legally buy, possess, or consume alcohol, 19% of teen passenger vehicle drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2020 had alcohol in their system. But alcohol isn't the only drug that can impair your driving ability: Marijuana, like other drugs, affects a driver's ability to react to their surroundings. Driving is a complex task, and marijuana slows reaction times. Illegal, prescription, or over-the-counter drugs can impair driving and have deadly consequences. Be aware of possible side effects before you take any medication.
 - **Seat Belts:** Seat belts are designed to keep everyone in the vehicle safer, whether you're sitting in the front or back seat, by preventing you from being



ejected from your vehicle in the event of a crash. But they only work if you use them correctly. In 2020, almost half (52%) of the teen passenger vehicle drivers who died in crashes were unbuckled. Even more troubling, when the teen driver involved in the fatal crash was unbuckled, nine out of 10 of the passengers who died were also unbuckled.

- **Distracted Driving:** Distractions while driving are more than just risky – they can be deadly. In 2020, in the most recent data available, among teen passenger vehicle drivers involved in fatal crashes, 7% were reported as distracted at the time of the crash. The use of mobile devices while driving is a big problem, but there are other causes of teen distracted driving that pose dangers as well, like adjusting the radio, applying makeup, eating or drinking, or distractions from other vehicle passengers.
- **Speeding:** In 2020, almost one-third (31%) of all teen drivers of passenger vehicles involved in fatal crashes were speeding at the time of the crash, and males were more likely to be involved in fatal crashes than females.
- **Passengers:** Teen drivers transporting passengers can lead to tragic results. Research shows that the risk of a fatal crash goes up in direct relation to the number of passengers in a motor vehicle. The likelihood of teen drivers engaging in risky behavior triples when traveling with multiple passengers.

Make Smart Decisions When You're Driving

Driving is a new and exciting step toward independence and adulthood. When parents discuss the importance of safe driving habits, it's important to listen. The rules, advice, and lessons they share could prevent you from being in a crash. Keep the following in mind when discussing driving safety with parents:

- From October 16-22, join other teens and parents across the country in a national dialogue for National Teen Driver Safety Week.
- Get the facts and use them to make sure your friends are safe drivers and respectful passengers. Your influence could save their lives.
- Be sure you are aware of your state's graduated driver licensing (GDL) laws regarding transporting passengers, driving at night, and other key safety areas.
- Remember that driving is a privilege, not a right, and must always be taken seriously.
- Know the rules of the road before you drive.



Remember the Rules of the Road:

1. Don't Drive Impaired.

Drinking before the age of 21 is illegal in every state, and alcohol and driving should never mix, no matter your age. Marijuana slows a user's reaction time and affects a driver's ability to drive safely. Remember that drugs – illegal, prescription, or over-the-counter medications – can impair driving and have deadly consequences.

2. Buckle Up – Every Trip, Every Time. Everyone – Front Seat and Back.

It's important to buckle up on every trip, every time, in the front and back seats. Before you start your motor vehicle, check to make sure everyone is buckled correctly.

3. Keep Your Eyes on the Road, Hands on the Wheel, and Mind on the Task of Driving.

You should never text, dial, or use mobile apps while driving. Place your phone out of reach when you're on the road. Turn on your phone's "Do Not Disturb" or similar feature to help avoid the temptation of checking the call or text. Remember that distracted driving isn't limited to phone use. Other passengers, audio and climate controls in the vehicle, and eating or drinking while driving are all examples of dangerous distractions when driving. Loud music is distracting, too. Always take your headphones off before driving. You need to be able to hear another vehicle's horn, or the siren from an emergency vehicle, so you can safely move over and out of their path.

4. Follow the Posted Speed Limit.

Speeding is a critical issue for all drivers, especially for teens who lack the experience to react to changing roadway circumstances. Obey the posted speed limit and remember: The faster you drive, the longer it will take to stop.

5. Limit Passengers.

With each passenger in the vehicle, your risk of a deadly crash goes up. Many states have laws for new teen drivers about how many passengers can be in the vehicle, or who is allowed to ride with a teen driver. Know the law before you hit the road; it may prohibit you from having any passengers in the vehicle with you.

Talk to Your Parents/Guardians About Safe Driving Year-Round

If parents are discussing safe driving habits, make sure you listen – don't tune them out. Parents' constant reminders about these powerful messages will positively impact your driving habits.



Get creative! Talk to your parent or family members about safe driving habits. You can also create a parent-teen driving contract that outlines the rules and consequences set by your parents. Hang the signed contract in a visible place as a constant reminder about the rules of the road.

If you and your parent are going somewhere together, ask to drive. Listen to their advice and guidance. Make sure you are following the rules set by your parent.

Remember, driving – for everyone, teen and adult alike – is a privilege, not a right. If you are having a difficult time following the rules, it may be time for your parents to take away the keys and review the basics. Your safe driving can mean the difference between life and death – for you, your passengers, and other roadway users.

For more information about National Teen Driver Safety Week and to learn more safe driving tips, please visit www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving.