



TEACH YOUR TEEN TO BE A SMART PASSENGER

Motor vehicle crashes are the No. 1 cause of death for adolescents. Teen drivers (ages 16 to 19) are involved in fatal crashes at four times the rate of adult drivers (ages 25 to 69). Most of these crashes are preventable. That's why The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and State Farm® have joined to develop tools that will help families reduce the risk of teens being involved in a serious crash.

Many parents worry about the risks teens face as new drivers, but how about as passengers? More than half of teens who die in car crashes are not behind the wheel, and teens' chances of getting in a fatal wreck rise sharply if they ride with a teen driver.

According to recent research of teen views on driving, parents play a crucial role in teen driving safety. Teens who say their parents set rules and pay attention to their activities in a helpful, supportive way are half as likely to be in a crash. This same research shows that most teens do not consider themselves to be inexperienced drivers and do not view passengers as potentially hazardous. These misperceptions can be deadly.

Teen passengers can lower this risk by limiting distractions, respecting the driver and always wearing a seat belt. Here are six quick tips for teaching your teens to be safety-minded passengers:

1. **Talk about how to be a safe passenger.** Distractions are a major cause of crashes, and passenger distractions are particularly dangerous for new drivers. Discuss helpful passenger behaviors, such as reading directions when asked and respecting the driver by not talking loudly, chatting on a cell phone, playing loud music, or acting wild.
2. **Insist on seat belts.** Most adolescent passengers who die in wrecks are not wearing seat belts. Explain that by buckling up, they'll help protect their friends' lives as well as their own. In a crash, an unrestrained body can hurt others in the car.
3. **Don't let your child ride with a driver who has less than a year of experience.** Most teen crashes are the result of "rookie" mistakes. Even the most mature teen needs time to gain driving experience through adult-supervised driving.
4. **Pay attention.** To help them make good safety decisions, keep the lines of communication open. Know where they are going and why and discuss how they will get there and when they will be home. Provide alternatives, like rides, to allow them to avoid unsafe driving situations.
5. **Create a code word.** Help teens get out of unsafe situations by calling or texting you with a previously agreed-upon code word that signals trouble. When you hear or see the word, pick them up right away.
6. **Lead by example.** Always wear a seat belt. Don't talk on a cell phone while driving. Don't speed. Follow the rules of the road.

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Learn the facts and get advice about teen driver safety at www.teendriversource.org and www.statefarm.com/teendriving.

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