



## **When Should I Let My Teen Drive?**

My son will be 16 soon and wants to learn to drive. I'm scared to let him drive so young when I hear about so many accidents lately. When should I let him learn to drive and how do I know if he is ready?**Q.**

**A.** Most parents worry about their teens driving and whether they are ready, especially because teens are a high risk group of dri

vers! It is so sad to hear about teens that have lost their lives while driving, due to careless mistakes. Every child is different and parents should be very serious about when, how much, with whom and at what age their teen can drive. If a teen has a learning disability that affects their maturity level and attention span

, like ADHD or autism, he/she should not drive until age 19 or older research shows! If teens do drugs or alcohol their chances of having an accident increase significantly! According to the Wall Street Journal article September, 2008, in the past decade, almost all states have adopted graduated licensing requirements that impose staged limits on new drivers; these restrictions have helped sharply reduce teen

highway fatalities, says the study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, in Arlington, Va. But in most places, teens are still allowed to start driving at 16 or even younger. Given that motor vehicle crashes are still the leading cause of death for 13- to 19-year olds, "Raising the licensing age is a logical next step!" the institute says. The report notes that in Connecticut, for example, where the minimum driving age is 16-1/2, raising the age to 17 could reduce fatal crashes among 16- and 17-year-olds by an estimated 66%.

## **Parents May Have to Take Matters into Their Own Hands!**

Regardless, of what your state says, parents have to take charge and make the hard decisions about when their teen can drive. Some feel "there is no reason good enough to allow your child to operate a motor vehicle that has been shown to be beyond the emotional and decision-making abilities of young drivers. Parents who delude themselves into thinking that their child is exceptional can quite often be seen kneeling next to a grave at the local cemetery. There is no reason good enough to allow children to endanger themselves and others on the road. There just isn't. Every single day young drivers crash and injure and kill

people. They do so at an alarming rate and for a variety of reasons, but it all comes back to their innate immaturity." Other parents feel that their teen is mature enough and like the freedom of not having to drive them everywhere. Parents must realize however, that many teen accidents have nothing to do with maturity but rather driver experience! Also remember teens notoriously think that they are invincible.

## **Things Parents Must Consider!**

- 1. Does your child**
- 2. d fully understand the rules of the road?** Many teens pass the written test given at the DMV but do they really know all of the rules? There's only one way to know and that is to let them drive you around locally and on the highways.
- 3. Does your child obey the rules in your home for the most part?** Teens who generally obey their parents' rules even if they don't agree with them, are more likely to have respect for the rules of the road.

4. **Is your teen responsible?** Does your teen follow through on his/her obligations? Can you depend on him to do his chores? Is he doing well in school? Does she have a part time job? Teens with responsibilities tend to be more mature and responsible.

1. **Are your teen's friends mature and responsible?** Even the most responsible child can get caught up in the 'mob' mentality and make silly mistakes on the road.

2. **Does your teen understand the 'mistakes' others make while driving that cause accidents?** Your teen must understand that texting, changing CD's, talking on his cell phone, looking for something, eating, putting on make-up, talking loudly with friends in the car, loud music, using drugs or alcohol, having sex while driving, being tired and sleepy, having too many people in the car and not paying attention can all cause fatal accidents for them and others!

3. **Does your teen deserve to drive?** Any teen who is causing discipline problems and is totally disrespectful to his/her parents does not deserve to drive! Period!

4.

**Does your teen do drugs or alcohol or do you suspect that he/she does?** Never allow a teen whom you even suspect of using drugs or alcohol to drive!

5. **Restrict which teens your child can drive with!** If your teen has friends whom you don't trust, forbid them to drive with them.

6. Monitoring Systems Improve Teen Driving Safety
7. Speed Governor Systems
8. Enforce Driving Discipline
9. Be a Good Example to Your Teenage Driver
10. Don't let your teen drive if he/she is not ready!

## What can parents do?

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