

SO, YOUR TEENAGER IS LEARNING TO DRIVE...

A simple guide to what you
can do as a parent to help
your teenager become a
more responsible driver



Road Safety
SCOTLAND





**LEARNING TO DRIVE
IS ONE OF LIFE'S
MILESTONES**



If your son or daughter is thinking about the day he or she passes the driving test then this booklet is for you.

Learning to drive is one of life's milestones. Driving brings freedom and independence, and your teenager no longer needs to rely on you for a lift.

In a very short space of time, your son or daughter is expected to learn skills which will last them for the rest of their lives so, while it may be a worrying time for you, you can be certain that most of them look forward to this stage of their lives with enthusiasm and longing.

Many parents want to help their children become safe and confident drivers, capable of handling any situation on modern roads but, as parents, you need to be aware of the risks and help your teenager manage them, especially in the early years of his or her driving career.

Research informs us that the best way to develop safe and competent drivers is through both professional tuition and private practice. However, before looking at the time when they actually get behind the wheel, we need to look at when the process of learning to drive actually begins.

BABY DRIVER

Psychologists who specialise in driver behaviour have shown that the process of learning to drive starts at a very young age. Children enjoy imitation, and it is one of the crucial ways in which they learn.

During their early experience as passengers, children begin to develop the attitudes which will influence later driving behaviour. Studies have shown that parents' driving style and collision risk will be reflected in their children. In short, your child has a very good chance of becoming the type of driver you are! For many, that may be a positive influence, but everyone develops bad habits. In some ways, these may even appear more exciting and appealing, and will be absorbed somewhere in the back of children's minds for a later date.

So, knowing that you have the ability to influence their driving behaviour from infancy, consider this when driving with your children in the car. Your good example in front of your very young child may save his or her life many years later. Visit: dontriskit.info/kids-in-the-car/ for more information.

Road safety education is available to children throughout their school career. Road collisions present the single biggest danger to our young people so, if you are involved in school life, make sure the road safety resources are being used. There are even qualifications available in many schools, but it's important this theory is supported by good practice when they are with you and other people on the road.

Remember that, no matter how much road safety education your children undertake, or how many driving games they play on games consoles, nothing will fully prepare them for getting behind the wheel, and that's why your role as a parent is vital.

Furthermore, do not assume that early driving lessons or off-road pre-driver practice will make your children safer. There is no evidence that it does. In fact, this can increase the risk as it often makes young people take and pass the driving test sooner and be exposed to risk as a solo driver earlier than they would otherwise be.

As passengers, watching you and others behind the wheel, children begin to develop the attitudes which will influence their driving later in life. When you have children, it may be a good time to get your own driving reassessed.





GOING FOR

The training and testing process is managed by the Driving and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA). Before applying for the test, you should make sure your son or daughter has an appropriate mix of professional tuition and private practice, and be confident that he or she is not only ready for the test, but also a safe driver.

However, it is money well spent. Driving is a lifelong learning process and needs investment, particularly at the early stages.

A fully-qualified driving instructor displays a green octagonal certificate fixed to the car windscreen. A trainee instructor displays a pink triangular certificate, and both are permitted to charge for lessons. All instructors are assessed against the 'National Standard for Driver and Rider Training' at least once every four years and will be graded as one of the following: A Grade (an overall high standard of instruction); B Grade (a sufficient level of competence); or Fail (an unsatisfactory performance). All may continue to charge for lessons whilst undergoing any retraining needed; however, three consecutive fails could result in an instructor being removed from the ADI Register.



PROFESSIONAL TUITION

Remember, a good driving instructor will not just teach your teenager to pass the test but will also help him or her develop safer driving behaviour – a life skill which new drivers can build on and develop throughout their driving career.

Here is a checklist of some key considerations:

- Has the instructor been recommended by someone you know?
- Is the instructor a trainee or fully-qualified?
- What grade is the instructor?
- What further training/continuing professional development has the instructor taken to enhance his/her skills?
- Would a male or female instructor make him or her feel more at ease?
- Will it be the same instructor for every lesson?
- Will the instructor allow you to sit in and observe current teaching methods?
- Does the instructor use a log book to demonstrate progress and give advice on areas which require further practice?
- Does the instructor give advice on theory tests, and further training?
- How long, and how much, are the lessons? ('cheap' is not the same as 'good')
- Are there discounts available for block bookings?

PRACTICE

Private practice is also very important. It would be good to ask the instructor if you can sit in on one of the lessons, as current teaching methods may have changed. Make sure you have your son's or daughter's consent before you do so. For further information on practice sessions, visit: <http://www.rospa.com/rospaweb/docs/advice-services/road-safety/parents/helping-young-people-learn-to-drive.pdf>

When undertaking private practice, always remain calm and communicate clearly, allowing plenty of time, as learners cannot process information in the same way as experienced drivers.





Here are some suggestions for making the best use of private practice:

- Talk to the instructor about progress and take advice about when to begin private practice
- Ask the instructor if he or she uses a log book. If so, ask if you can use it to assist with private practice. Some instructors may have their own private system which they may not share. In these circumstances, you could ask if they would also record the information in a logbook which you would provide. A sample can be found at: assets.dft.gov.uk/dsa-bl/dsa-drivers-record.pdf
- Consider hiring a dual-controlled car until your son or daughter is more confident
- Ensure the car is properly insured and fully road worthy (See: www.getinlane.co.uk)
- Do not try to 'fool' the insurance company in any way as this will have serious repercussions on both you and your son or daughter in the event of a claim
- Plan the sessions in advance, and discuss the route with your son or daughter
- Consider beginning in a deserted car park, moving to quiet streets to help the learner gain confidence before graduating to busier roads
- Make sure you have spent some time revising the latest edition of the Highway Code and always set a good example, remembering not to pass on any bad habits: www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code

- Always remain calm and communicate clearly, allowing plenty of time, as learners cannot process information in the same way as experienced drivers. Furthermore, remember to encourage rather than criticise
- Use ordinary, everyday journeys to build up their experience and confidence in traffic by letting them drive
- If you are supervising a learner driver, you are the person in charge of the vehicle when in the driving seat but you are also culpable as you would be causing or permitting the offence to take place. The learner is in charge of the vehicle when in the driving seat but you may be aiding and abetting any offence committed
- If you don't know where to start, the Cockpit Drill on the inside back cover is as good a place as any
- Finally, take the instructor's advice about when your son or daughter is ready to sit the test. Presenting someone for the test too early may affect his or her confidence, so it is important to do it at the right time. Around 40% of people who take the theory test do not pass it, and only 47% of those who sit the practical test pass first time.

A good rule of thumb is: if your son or daughter is not getting it right every time without the instructor's help, then he or she is not ready for the test.

THE TEST

The test will probably have changed considerably since you took yours. Being familiar with the current test will help you to give the best guidance to your son or daughter.

There are two distinct parts – theory and practical: to find out more, visit: www.gov.uk/driving-theory-test, and www.gov.uk/practical-driving-test-for-cars

THEORY

The theory test has two separate parts and, in addition to your appointment letter (in paper or electronic form), you MUST bring your driving licence with you. Candidates should also bring their appointment letter, either in paper or electronic form (e.g. an email on a mobile phone).

The first part involves 50 multiple-choice questions, the last five of which relate to a case study. These must be completed in 57 minutes and candidates must score at least 43 out of 50.

The second part is a hazard perception test consisting of 14 video clips during which the learner has to identify hazards as they appear – each hazard is worth a maximum of five points and a score of at least 44 out of 75 is required.

Both parts must be passed to achieve an overall pass and, if either part is failed, both parts have to be retaken.

Once candidates have completed this part of the test, they have two years in which to complete the practical test.

The DVSA, with the Scottish Qualifications Authority, has developed a 'Safe Road User Award' and people who complete this may be entitled to sit a reduced-length theory test. More information can be found on the SQA website at: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/35046.html

PRACTICAL

Candidates must bring their driving licence, a theory test pass certificate and appointment letter or email. It is also the candidate's responsibility to make sure there is an appropriately-insured and licensed car, with L plates, that is suitable for the test. You can only use a hired car if it has dual controls and there are some cars which are considered unsuitable for the test. For more information, visit: www.gov.uk/practical-driving-test-for-cars/rules-for-cars-used-for-driving-tests

Before being allowed to sit the practical test, the candidate's eyesight will be checked. He or she will need to read a number plate from a distance of 20 metres. Two vehicle safety check questions will also be asked: one will be "Show me..." and the other "Tell me...". The instructor will be able to help the candidate with these.

The test will last approximately 40 minutes and your son or daughter will have to demonstrate he or she can drive safely, and that he or she knows the Highway Code. Candidates will also be asked to complete one reversing manoeuvre (around a corner, into a parking bay, turning in the road, or a reverse park).

Candidates will also have to complete a period of independent driving, where they will be asked to make all their own decisions by following traffic signs or a series of directions, or both.

During the test, candidates may make a number of faults but still pass; however, 16 driving faults or one serious or dangerous fault will result in a fail. The candidate will be told immediately after the test whether he or she has passed or failed. It is now possible to have the instructor present during the test, but the candidate should discuss this with the instructor before the test date.

A POSITIVE ATTITUDE



Young drivers may drive safely with you in the car, but perhaps not so safely when they are out with friends.



The types of behaviour which lead to collisions and injuries have not changed much over the years: the most notable ones are inappropriate and excessive speed, drink-driving and drug-driving, and failure to wear seatbelts. The use of mobile phones while driving is a more recent addition, but a very dangerous one too. You should take every opportunity to advise your son or daughter of your concerns about this sort of behaviour.

Neuroscience also helps our understanding, and informs us we need to treat new drivers as **having** a problem, rather than **being** the problem. For example, the area of the brain that warns us of risks and our limits does not fully develop until we are in our mid-20s – that is why young people take more risks in general, not just when driving. Young, new drivers are at a disadvantage when it comes to anticipating and recognising hazards and reacting to them at the appropriate time.

Investigations into collisions involving young and/or new drivers shows they are often very competent at handling a car, with a high standard of skill and good reaction times. They believe these will get them out of even the tightest of spots. However, no matter how 'good' they are, the problem is one of inexperience, coupled with the fact that they are still young. They just haven't spent enough time behind the wheel on the road to gain the experience and maturity they need to learn how to anticipate and avoid danger.

Research suggests this lack of experience can be overcome by around 1,000 miles of solo driving. By the end of these 1,000 miles, new drivers should have experienced most of the situations they will face in their future driving life.

However, **one-in-five** new drivers will be involved in a **collision** in their **first six months** of driving. So, it is important you find the right way to help your son or daughter to try and make sure he or she is 'one of the other four'. Unfortunately, many of these collisions prove to be very serious, and a number involve multiple fatalities. A young novice driver driving with other young people in the car increases the risk substantially.

Young people often take risks, believing that nothing serious (collision, injury or death) will happen to them, or that they won't get caught. Research tells us young people are more likely to change their behaviour if they consider the following: loss of licence, increased insurance premiums, fines, social stigma, loss of job, or struggling to get to work or college daily.

If they get six or more penalty points within two years of passing their test, they will lose their licence, go back to being a learner, and have to go through everything again. For more information, see page 22.

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Choosing a car for your son or daughter is also something in which you should play a part. Style and price may be uppermost in your and their minds. However, make sure you also check the safety features and ratings for cars you are considering. For more information visit: www.euroncap.com. Insurance costs will also be an important factor in choosing a car. Be careful not to do anything illegal, such as 'fronting', that is, giving false information about who is the main driver of the vehicle. It is likely that, in the event of a claim, anyone guilty of fronting will be considered uninsured, which can result in more serious consequences including losing the vehicle for good.

Many more insurers are using technology to help new drivers in the early part of their driving career, and the use of 'black box technology' can reduce premiums significantly. You should consider this as an option, not only to reduce premiums, but also to monitor your son's or daughter's driving style and corresponding collision risk. More information should be available from the specific insurance company, but the Association of British Insurers also gives a good overview. You can find more on this, as well as other valuable information about car insurance, on the ABI website at: www.abi.org.uk/Insurance-and-savings/Products/Motor-insurance/How-to-cut-the-cost-of-motor-insurance

EXPERIENCE COUNTS



During the learning period, your son or daughter will have been in the car with one other person. Make sure you give them the opportunity to drive under your supervision with others in the car.



Many people will have heard, or used, the phrase, “Well, you’ve passed your test, now you can learn to drive”, and the 1,000 solo miles mentioned earlier would suggest there’s a lot of truth in that.

After the test, please don’t assume your responsibility is over, or you no longer have any influence over your son or daughter in relation to safe driving. This stage is as important as your pre-test role.

In some ways, the early period of driving is similar to the days when young children first start to walk. You want them to master the skill, but you still keep them from hurting themselves with, for example, a stairgate. Therefore, getting to grips with the driving experience under some level of supervision and/or restrictions is ideal. This assists your son or daughter through the most dangerous period of his or her driving career by gradually relaxing the level of supervision. In some countries this process is mandatory and Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL), as it is known, is the single most effective way of preventing the high casualty rate among novice drivers. While it is not mandatory in this country, you should consider introducing it on a voluntary basis. Some examples of what you can do are outlined in the next section ‘Encouraging Good Practice’. Agreeing them with your son or daughter may save his or her life and the lives of friends.

One essential thing which they need to be aware of is how differently a car behaves when carrying passengers. Lack of experience of this can often lead to disaster.

The instructor may have offered your son or daughter further training dealing with situations not normally covered in the learning process. Extra sessions on motorway driving, out-of-town driving, etc. could be very useful and should be positively encouraged. Ask the driving instructor about further training or visit www.gov.uk for more information.

Advanced driver training is also available from organisations such as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) and the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM), and presents a great opportunity to learn techniques to keep them safer on the roads. This training is suitable for all so even you, as an experienced driver, should consider it. More information can be accessed at: www.roadar.org.uk and www.iamroadsmart.com



New drivers find it difficult to 'do the right thing' when confronted by pressure from their peers.

ENCOURAGING

There are no guarantees, but here are some tips to help ensure your son or daughter stays as safe as possible after passing their test. If you work with your son or daughter to put these measures in place, you are effectively implementing a graduated licensing scheme:

- **Accompany** them on the occasional journey or, if you are travelling somewhere together, let them drive
- Motorway driving, night driving and adverse weather conditions are all very **different driving experiences**. Accompany your new driver to offer practical advice and support. This should include different types of road, particularly single-carriageway rural roads which are subject to the national speed limit. Bends on these types of roads are over-represented in collisions involving new drivers
- Consider restricting **night-time driving**, limiting the number of **passengers** in the car and insisting they only carry passengers who agree to wear **seatbelts**. These are critical factors in fatal and serious collisions involving new drivers. Statistics show that having two passengers in the car doubles a young driver's collision risk and driving with three passengers trebles it



GOOD PRACTICE

- Set strict rules in relation to speed and also alcohol and drugs (including prescription drugs) as even small amounts of drink and drugs can affect someone's ability to drive safely so it must be clear this is totally unacceptable. Try to enforce this and certainly make sure these are agreed before any use of the family car
- Encourage them to switch off **mobile phones** (even hands-free) and put them out of reach so they are not tempted to check it while driving. Distraction and driver inattention is also a major factor in collisions
- RoSPA has a Parents/Young Drivers Agreement which gives very good advice: www.rospa.com/rospaweb/docs/advice-services/road-safety/parents/parents-youngdrivers.pdf

It is important to remember young people often behave differently depending on who is in the car with them. New drivers may need to be very strong to 'do the right thing' when confronted by pressure from their peers. It is absolutely vital that you discuss how to handle **peer pressure**, helping them develop coping strategies which will not cause them to 'lose face' but keep them safe. Further information on this can be accessed at:

www.crashmagnets.com

Remember, encouragement works better than criticism, and also that the most dangerous collisions involving young people happen at **night**, at the **weekend**, and when they are **driving socially**, rather than commuting. The severity of these collisions is often related to inappropriate (not excessive) speed choices, and not wearing seatbelts.

BACK TO SQUARE ONE

The New Driver's Act is like being 'on probation'. For the first two years after passing their test, new drivers have to be very careful not to pick up penalty points. Six penalty points will result in their licence being 'revoked', which can be catastrophic for someone who has just spent a considerable amount of time and money getting a licence. It puts them right back to square one. They have to go through the whole process again, from the point where they apply for their provisional licence.

Make sure your son or daughter understands this and how much it will affect his or her new-found freedom, independence, and possibly even career. Making the wrong speed choice is a major factor in collisions and the resulting casualties. Speed detection is carried out in a number of ways and speeding offences carry a range of penalties up to and including mandatory disqualification in certain circumstances.

Drink-driving accounts for around one in nine deaths in Scotland. Any drink-driving offence, whether 'very drunk' or 'just over the limit' is treated the same, and results in a minimum 12-month ban, a fine of up to £5,000 and up to six months in prison. It also gives offenders a lengthy criminal

record which has serious implications for employment, foreign travel and car insurance.

The police have a series of tests which are very successful in detecting drug-drivers, with penalties exactly the same as those for drink-driving. Drink-driving and drug-driving are included in the Scottish Vehicle Forfeiture Scheme which means that offenders' vehicles can be taken away by the Court and crushed or sold.

Driving without insurance is considered a very serious offence and will result in 6-8 penalty points. You should also note that it is now possible to be charged and have your vehicle seized and forfeited under tough new anti-social behaviour legislation.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The websites below provide further useful information:

www.getinlane.com

www.roadsafetyscotland.org.uk

www.dontriskit.info

www.crashmagnets.com

www.rosipa.com

www.iamroadsmart.com

www.gov.uk/browse/driving

COCKPIT DRILL

DOORS

Check that all doors are firmly closed.

SEAT

Make sure it's in the best position for you. You should be able to see clearly in all directions and reach all the controls easily. You can test this by putting your left foot firmly on the floor in front of you (whether a manual or automatic car) – your knee should be slightly bent. Your elbows should also be slightly bent when your back is resting against the back of the seat. Remember also to adjust your head restraint to the correct height, so it is as close to the back of your head as possible and the top of the restraint aligns with the top of your head.

MIRRORS

You should be able to glance in your mirrors without moving your head too much.

Your interior mirror should be adjusted to give you the best view through the rear window.

The exterior mirrors should be set up so you can see a small part of your own car, but mostly the road behind.

HANDBRAKE OR PARKING BRAKE

Check that the handbrake is on: if it is a mechanical one, try pulling it up further; if it is an electrical one, check for the warning light.

GEARS

Make sure the gear lever is in neutral by shaking it left and right. If an automatic, follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Finally, start the engine. Some vehicles require you to depress the clutch and some may need a little pressure on the accelerator. Release the key/button as soon as the engine starts.

SEATBELT

Always wear a seatbelt, making sure it is comfortable and not twisted, and ensure all other occupants are suitably restrained.

The information in this booklet is correct at the time of going to print.

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