

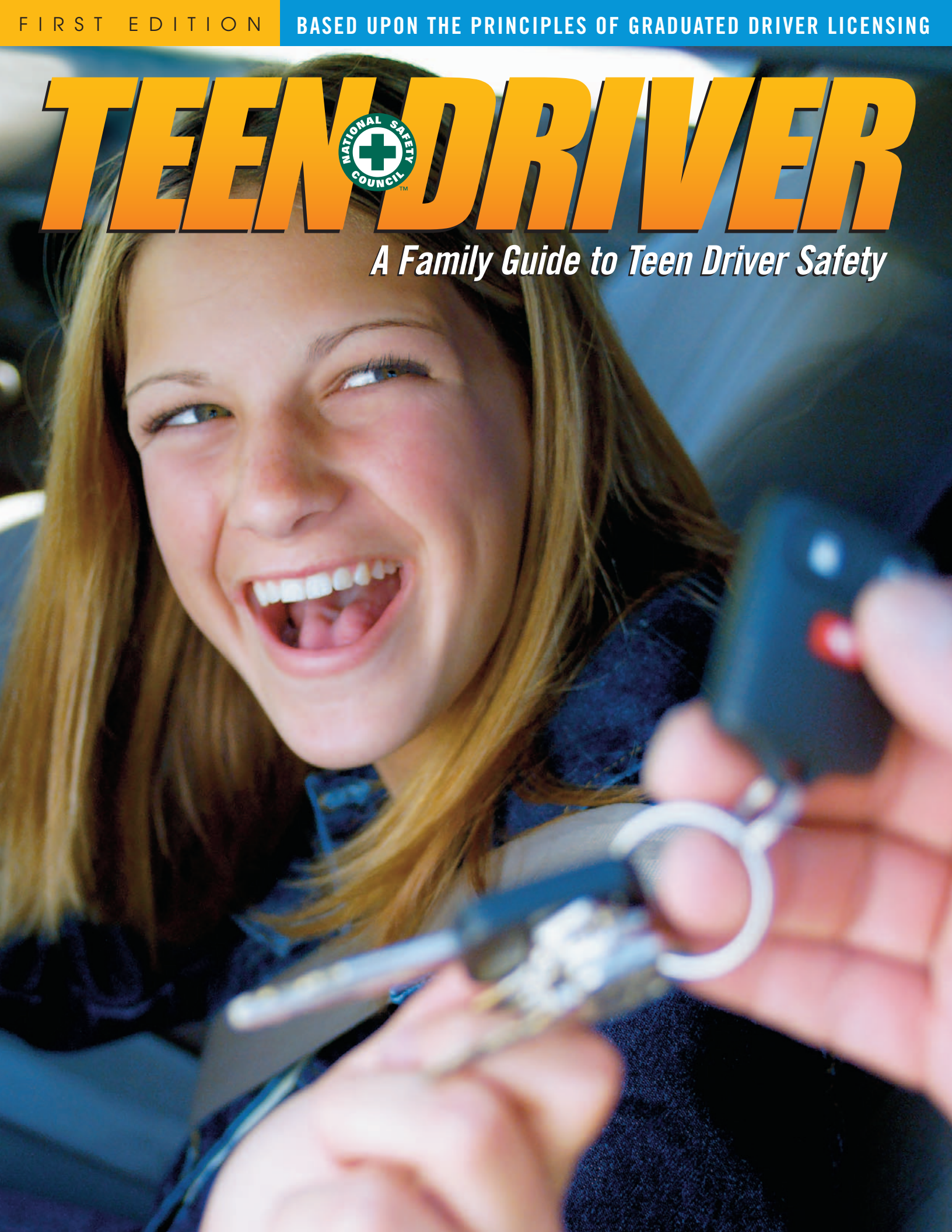
FIRST EDITION

BASED UPON THE PRINCIPLES OF GRADUATED DRIVER LICENSING



TEEN DRIVER

A Family Guide to Teen Driver Safety





To the Family of a Soon-To-Be Teen Driver:

We have learned much about Teen Driver Safety during the past decade. We can now say with confidence there are specific, proven safety benefits from a variety of best practices that together make up what we know as Graduated Driver Licensing or GDL.

This Family Guide began with a symposium sponsored by the National Safety Council that brought together leading researchers and acknowledged experts from the United States and other countries to document what we knew about the measurable benefits of GDL and GDL-like programs. That comprehensive evaluation of available research was published in the *Journal of Safety Research*, and is the most authoritative review of GDL ever produced. It delivers convincing evidence that GDL practices have resulted in substantial reductions in crashes, injuries, and fatalities for novice teenage drivers.

The next step was clear – to develop the programs and products that will increase compliance with these practices.

The National Safety Council's Family Guide to Teen Driver Safety will assist families in understanding and managing the journey their teens will travel from beginner to independent driver. This "First Edition" of the Guide is a beginning, and an opportunity to share what we consider a work-in-progress with families whose teen driver experience is upon them. This is a collaborative effort of scores of dedicated highway safety professionals, researchers, and activists. And now, we welcome the comments and suggestions of both parents and teens who use this guide to prepare their teen driver. We are anxious to hear from you and use your contributions to improve subsequent editions of the guide.

The Council is grateful to those who have provided funding for our Teen Driver Safety Programs. General Motors, Nationwide and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration provided the financial support for the symposium, "Documenting the Science of GDL," whose proceedings have become a vital foundation and resource for a number of efforts for Teen Driver Safety. DaimlerChrysler, General Motors and Nationwide provided the initial and continuing funds for this "Family Guide." In addition, there are many individuals and organizations in the highway traffic safety community who are making significant contributions to the development of the Guide. We deeply appreciate the support and good counsel of all of our colleagues who have participated in this effort.

Again, we welcome your reactions. Please direct any questions or comments to: Teen Driver Safety Programs, National Safety Council, or email the TeenDriverSafetyDesk@nsc.org.



Alan C. McMillan
President and CEO
National Safety Council

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OUR PURPOSE

NATURALLY, THE FIRST ADVISORS WE WENT TO WERE THE SCIENTISTS and highway safety research experts who presented their research findings at the Symposium. We then expanded our advisor group to include experts in each of the areas addressed in the Guide. We consulted with law enforcement officers, Driver Education instructors, people who design and build cars, public safety officials, and professionals in the insurance industry. Each added his or her insights to particular passages in the Guide — some are quoted directly, while others helped shape the overall message to families.



THIS GUIDE IS THE LOGICAL NEXT STEP

for the research findings from the “Symposium on GDL” held by the National Safety Council. The Guide takes ten years of scientific data reviewed there and translates it into practical information for parents and teens to use in reducing teen crash risk.

Whether you’re a parent who is anxiously anticipating your teen’s novice driving experience, a family looking for guidance during the minimum two-year process a new driver goes through, or a teen unfamiliar with the surprisingly high risks that teenagers face behind the wheel, this Family Guide is intended to be helpful to everyone involved. Our purpose is to take any anxiety and uncertainties you may feel and replace them with specific actions you can take to manage the risks of teen driving in your family.

In addition, we have three specific goals for this Guide:

- Inform family members about the risks of teen driving based on solid, scientific evidence,
- Provide practical advice about ways to reduce that risk, also based on solid, scientific evidence, and
- Encourage parent-teen cooperation and involvement throughout the entire process from learning to drive through independent driving.

Our overall objective is to provide our readers with helpful information and advice about teen driving based on the most updated evidence available to us. We want to share with families the proven methods that help diminish the serious dangers teens face in the first months and 1,000 miles after they begin to drive.

KNOW YOUR RISKS

How risky is novice teen driving? Is there anything that can be done to reduce risks? Families know driving involves risk, but they often don’t know how much or how best to react to it. Some parents may think, “We all made it through okay,” but many others rightly wonder, “Are there new ways to reduce the risks teenage drivers face behind the wheel?”

The first goal of this Guide is to provide a realistic picture of the risks of teen driving. Family members should be anxious about teen driving, because driving comes with substantially higher risks for novice teenage drivers than it does for adult drivers. In fact, driving may represent the highest exposure to risk that most teenagers will face in their

lifetime. However, there are ways to reduce the risk. We can turn our concerns into concrete steps to protect the teen driver, and that’s what this Guide is intended to help you do.

THIS GUIDE IS GROUNDED IN SCIENCE

Scientific evidence is the foundation for all the recommendations, charts and advice in this Guide. The information provided is based on the latest research and evidence used by the highway safety community. It comes from tried-and-true practices for teaching teens to drive and the newest approaches to structuring teen driving privileges currently being incorporated into traffic laws around the world.

The scientific facts do two important things for us. First, they dispel the myth that only “troubled” or “daredevil” teens are in danger of crashing. In fact, all teens are in danger, simply because of their youth and lack of driving experience. Second, the scientific facts show us which methods actually help reduce driving risks for all novice teen drivers.

PRACTICAL ADVICE FROM EXPERTS

The second goal of this Guide is to provide practical, how-to advice on ways families can reduce teen driving risks. Parents have to be actively involved in the teen driving process. Equipped with the scientific evidence and specific suggestions from our advisors, parents can make a real impact on the odds that their teen drivers will come home safely.

The design, content, and writing of the Guide were based on consultation with a

wide range of experts, including scientists, researchers, highway traffic safety professionals, doctors, public health workers, driver education instructors, automotive manufacturing safety experts, law enforcement officers, and insurance officials.

All of these individuals have dedicated their careers to promoting teen driver safety and most of them are or were parents of teen drivers themselves. The cumulative expertise of these men and women represents thousands of hours of time and attention

devoted to understanding the risks facing teen drivers and ways to improve their safety. This Guide is rich with their personal experiences and professional knowledge.

At the end of most sections, you'll find "Advice" boxes filled with practical suggestions for ways to reduce teen driving risks. Many of the points in the "Advice" boxes have been chosen based on their effective use in states implementing new approaches to structuring teen driving privileges.

WORK TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

Our third goal is to promote parent-teen involvement and cooperation in teen driving. We strongly encourage your family to map out the timing of the teen driving process that meets your family's unique needs. We refer to this process as your Family's Plan. This plan has several important parts, including setting rules and limits for learning to drive and for driving independently. We discuss all the parts of your Family's Plan at length in upcoming sections.

To better navigate the road to teen driving, both parent and teen need to have a broad overview of the entire driving process right from the start. This includes knowing your state's requirements for teen driving and determining the timing of the process for your family. In addition, you'll need to work as a family. You will need to talk to each other, set expectations, and anticipate steps along the way.

We've designed the sections in the Guide so you can tailor a "road map" for teen driving in your family. In each section, we explain information you need to know about teen driving using scientific data. Then we offer specific "how-to" advice for ways to manage your teen's driving experience.

The Guide follows the timeline of the journey your teen will take from learning to drive to becoming an independent driver. It

A NOTE ABOUT "THE SCIENCE SAYS":

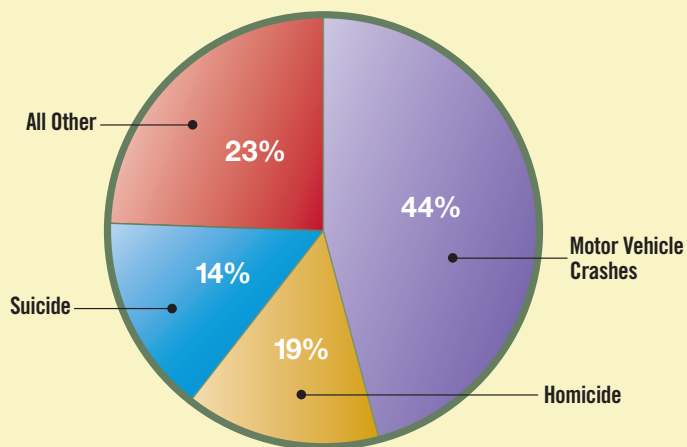
Throughout the Family Guide, you'll find boxes labeled, "The Science Says." These facts come from studies and research evidence and are included to highlight important points in both the discussions and the advice contained in the Guide.

Many of these "science boxes" measure risk in terms of fatalities. That is because the data about highway traffic fatalities is the most complete and the most accurate information available for scientific analysis. But keep in mind that for every traffic fatality, there are scores of additional crashes that result in injuries, property damage, increased insurance costs, etc. The risks of teen driver crashes and their consequences consist of much more than fatalities.



THE SCIENCE SAYS

Traffic Crashes are the Leading Cause of Fatalities for Teens



Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) — 2003 DATA
NSC Family Safety & Health, Summer 2004

includes everything from getting ready to apply for a learner's permit, going through the licensing process, and on to driving independence.

We want you to be able to use this Guide as a comprehensive resource throughout your teen's driving experience, whether you read from beginning to end or simply pick and choose the sections that are relevant to your family at any point during the process. The next section, "Quick Start," summarizes key concepts in the guide. "Quick Start" will give you an idea of the new evidence about the risks of teen driving, and the new techniques being developed to reduce those risks. It's a good place to begin your teen's journey to driving independence. ▼

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

We wanted to be inclusive in addressing our readers, but had to develop some shorthand to make it more readable.

We're talking to families — teens and parents alike. When we say "your teen" we mean "the teen in your family." Sometimes there is a message with special meaning for a parent or teen, but most often we are talking to both.

We alternate using "she" and "he" to describe the teen, section by section, rather than using "he or she" or "s/he" throughout.

When we say "parent" we mean both parents or guardian, or the responsible adult.

Terms vary from state to state. We've tried to use the most generic words as a common shorthand. For instance, we call the temporary learner's driving license a "learner's permit"; the state bureau that issues licenses the "Department of Motor Vehicles" (DMV) or the "Motor Vehicle Administration" (MVA); and the charge for drinking and driving "Driving While Intoxicated" (DWI). Your state may use different words, but we're all talking about the same thing.

A NOTE ABOUT "ADVICE":

Most sections of the Family Guide conclude with a box that contains specific advice about how the information contained in that section can be put into practice by your family.

Families, communities and state laws are different and make it difficult to establish "rules" that are appropriate or useful for all families or all teens. Yet both research evidence and extensive experience do provide the information and practices that each family can use to best manage their teen driver's experience. The advice in the Family Guide is intended to do that for your teen.

Here is some advice about an important subject that you should think about even before your teen starts his journey:

ADVICE

Even before your teen begins the process of getting his learner's permit, parents should think about what vehicle their teen will use during his novice driving experience.

A good deal of the risk teen drivers face depends upon what kind of vehicle they are in — including size and safety features. This is one area that parents have near total control of, yet think little about.

VEHICLE SELECTION

For guidance from the National Safety Council on how to select a safer vehicle for your teen driver, see the NSC Web site at www.nsc.org (search for "vehicle selection and maintenance"), and also the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety Web site at www.iihs.org.

QUICKSTART



THE TWELVE POINTS listed are here to help you get started. They summarize the key messages contained in the **Family Guide to Teen Driver Safety**. Research shows teens have a higher crash risk for many reasons. We now know a lot about the patterns of teen crashes – the when, where, and why. They are not random events. The good news is the same research has guided us in developing proven ways to reduce that risk. This is the information that families need to know. How to adopt the solutions mentioned here, and a more detailed explanation of the facts listed here, are available in the rest of the Guide.

1

All teens' risk of being in a car crash is at a lifetime high in their first 12 to 24 months of driving. Novice teen drivers are at greater risk simply because of their youth and lack of driving experience. Risky behavior only raises the stakes that every teen faces:

- The scientific evidence tells us two conditions are more dangerous for a teen driver just because he's a teen: driving with passengers, and driving at night.
- Risky behavior — not wearing a seat belt, drinking and driving, speeding — is a choice a driver makes, which adds to the high risk teens face behind the wheel. These behaviors raise the stakes in what's already a high-risk situation

2

There are proven ways for families to reduce their teen's crash risk. The greatest safety benefit comes from parents and teens working together to manage the teen driving experience.

3

Developing a Family Plan for the entire process of learning to drive builds on the cornerstone of teen driving safety — parental involvement. (We call this your Family's Plan.)



4

A good deal of the risk teens face depends upon what kind of vehicle they are in, including size and safety features. This is one area that parents have near total control of, yet think little about. For guidance from NSC on how to select a safer vehicle for your teen driver, see the NSC Web site at www.nsc.org (search for “vehicle selection and maintenance”) and the IIHS Web site at www.iihs.org.

5

Too few parents realize what a critical safety difference they can make as role models, guides, and partners during the teen driving experience. They have the final say as to their teen’s readiness for each stage of learning to drive and becoming an independent driver. What parents do and what they say, does matter.

6

The gradual introduction of greater driving challenges and exposure to risk over time is a key element of the Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) system, adopted in some form by most states.



7

Restrictions on driving with passengers and driving at night during the first 12 to 24 months after a teen gets a license, combined with extensive driving practice before the license and ongoing parental involvement throughout, reduce exposure to crash risk and save lives, money, and property.

8

Your state’s driver licensing regulations may not deliver the greatest safety measures to your teen driver — you can’t just assume that’s enough. Review your state law and the research evidence and decide if you need to add restrictions to your teen’s driving guidelines.

9

No single regulation or procedure, Driver Education program, state law, or extended supervised practice can, by itself, make your teen a safer driver. There’s no silver bullet. Only a combination of practice, gradual exposure to higher risk situations, and ongoing parental involvement, can reduce a teen’s chance of crashing.

10

Driver Education can teach a teen to operate a vehicle and the rules of the road, but the science tells us that traditional Driver Ed doesn’t reduce a teen’s exposure to crash risk.



11

A written Parent/Teen Agreement is an essential part of managing a teen’s driving experience. It sets clear expectations for everyone by listing privileges, restrictions, and what a teen must do to show his parent he’s ready for increased driving independence.

12

We all want the same thing: a teen driver who has been crash-free and violation-free for months after getting a license, has had his restrictions lifted gradually over that time, and is now ready for full driving independence. ▼