



# CAR LIFE

PROFESSIONAL AUTO SERVICE

## Teen's First Car – Parent & Teen Checklist

Choosing your teen's first car is exciting—but it can feel overwhelming too. As both a mother, grandmother, and auto professional, I want to share what I've learned from years in the shop and at home. This checklist will help you feel confident that your young driver is safe and prepared on the road.

---

### 1. Safety First

- ☐ Vehicle includes anti-lock brakes (ABS)
- ☐ Electronic Stability Control (ESC) is installed
- ☐ Multiple airbags are present
- ☐ Strong crash test ratings (check IIHS, NHTSA)
- ☐ Bonus: Blind-spot monitoring or backup camera available

### 2. Reliable—Not Flashy

- ☐ Choose a model known for reliability, reasonable gas mileage, and low-cost repairs
- ☐ Prefer a trustworthy make like Toyota or Honda over flashy luxury/European brands

### 3. Hidden Costs Budgeted

- ☐ Monthly insurance premiums estimated
- ☐ Fuel, registration, and maintenance (tires, oil changes, etc.) factored in
- ☐ Encourage your teen to contribute to some ongoing costs for responsibility and respect

### 4. Pre-Purchase Inspection (PPI)

- ☐ Schedule a Pre-Purchase Inspection before committing to a used car
- ☐ Confirm brakes, suspension, tires, fluids, and warning lights are vetted

### 5. Teach Car Basics

- ☐ Show how to pump gas and understand fuel types
- ☐ Explain what dashboard warning lights mean
- ☐ Teach how to check tire pressure and oil levels
- ☐ Set expectations about when to ask for help—no fear of questions

## **Bonus: Emergency & On-Road Essentials**

### **A. Safety Kit Must-Haves**

- ☐ First-aid kit (bandages, antiseptic wipes, ointment)
- ☐ Flashlight with fresh batteries
- ☐ Seatbelt cutter & window breaker tool
- ☐ Reflective triangle or road flare for visibility if stranded

### **B. Emergency & Maintenance Tools**

- ☐ Jumper cables or an emergency battery booster
- ☐ Spare tire, tire inflator/sealant, and tire pressure gauge
- ☐ Emergency contact list (insurance, roadside assistance, parent numbers)

### **C. Comfort & Practical Items**

- ☐ Charging cable/phone charger
- ☐ Blanket for warmth during breakdowns
- ☐ Water bottle kept in the car

*“At CarLife Auto Repair, we treat every car like family—because that’s exactly what’s riding inside. As a mother and grandmother, I created this checklist to help you protect your most precious passengers as they begin their driving journey.”*

— Elsie Alford, Owner & Operator, CarLife Auto Repair