

DRIVEN BY EXAMPLE: HOW PARENTS SHAPE SAFE TEEN DRIVING BEHAVIOR



Teens begin learning to drive long before they ever touch the steering wheel, and as a parent, your habits behind the wheel serve as a powerful example. From the moment their car seat faces forward, your passengers are watching—and learning. Teens often mimic their parents' driving behavior, which means unsafe habits like texting, speeding, or displaying road rage can send the wrong message. By modeling safe, consistent driving and aligning your actions with the expectations you set, you build trust and reinforce the importance of responsible behavior on the road.

Take time to assess your own driving habits and ask yourself: Would you want your teen to drive like you? Narrate safe driving decisions as you go, such as saying, "I'm slowing down early here because I see brake lights ahead." Consider creating a Family Driving Contract to set clear expectations, privileges, and consequences together. Finally, talk regularly—whether it's debriefing after rides, sharing stories from the news, or simply keeping the conversation open, ongoing discussions will help reinforce safe driving habits.

5 BEHAVIORS TO MODEL FOR YOUR TEEN:

- 1 ALWAYS WEAR YOUR SEAT BELT...
EVERY PASSENGER, EVERY RIDE, EVERY TIME.
- 2 NEVER TEXT, SCROLL, OR TAKE CALLS WHILE DRIVING.
- 3 OBEY POSTED SPEED LIMITS AND TRAFFIC LAWS.
- 4 STAY CALM AND COURTEOUS...EVEN IN
FRUSTRATING TRAFFIC.
- 5 NEVER DRIVE IMPAIRED OR OVERLY TIRED.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT WWW.SADD.ORG.

PARENT RESOURCES



SADD'S TEEN SAFE DRIVING TOOLKIT:

<https://www.sadd.org/saddplus>

TRAFFIC SAFETY EDUCATION FOUNDATION PARENT RESOURCES:

<https://www.tsef.org/parent-resources>

PARENT/TEEN DRIVING CONTRACT:

<https://www.cdc.gov/teen-drivers/parents-are-the-key/index.html>

CHOP'S TEEN DRIVER SOURCE - PARENTS AS ROLE MODELS:

<https://teendriversource.research.chop.edu>

TEEN DRIVING PRACTICE GUIDE VIDEO WALKTHROUGH:

<https://youtu.be/nyvcmaKNWDg?si=QPhBNlipDATFK9vC>

MADD'S POWER OF PARENTS:

<https://madd.org/power-of-parents/>

UPCOMING TRAFFIC SAFETY EVENTS:

National Teen Driver Safety Week raises awareness about the risks teens face behind the wheel and the importance of safe driving. It's a time for schools, families, and communities to encourage smart choices, open conversations, and safe habits that last a lifetime.



National Passenger Safety Week, observed January 19–26, 2026, empowers passengers to take an active role in road safety by speaking up when they feel unsafe due to reckless driving behaviors such as impairment, distraction, or speeding.



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WHAT EACH GROUP CAN DO: PARENTS, SCHOOLS, AND COMMUNITIES



PARENTS:

Model Consistent, Safe Driving Habits:

Buckle up, put the phone away, follow traffic laws, and manage emotions — every ride, every time.

Engage in Two-Way Conversations:

Move beyond rules and lectures — ask open-ended questions, listen without judgment, and revisit expectations as your teen gains experience.

Use Tools and Agreements:

Implement written Parent-Teen Driving Contracts and revisit them regularly; proactively use teachable moments from daily drives or local incidents.

COMMUNITIES

Support Youth-Led Prevention Work:

Fund, celebrate, and give a platform to SADD chapters, youth coalitions, and student safety councils.

Maintain Consistent Messaging Across Agencies:

Align public health, law enforcement, and school district messaging around distracted and impaired driving.

Create Safe Driving Cultures:

Enforce traffic safety laws fairly, advocate for parent education, and normalize prevention strategies at community events and through local media.

SCHOOLS:

Incorporate Driving Safety Across Curriculum, Assemblies, and Student Expectations:

Schools can play a powerful role in shaping a culture of safe mobility that reaches beyond classroom lessons. Integrate traffic safety education across health, wellness, and life skills curricula. Ensure regular inclusion in advisory periods and school-wide assemblies — particularly around high-risk times like prom, graduation, and back-to-school.

Embed Safe Mobility Expectations Campus-Wide:

Establish and communicate a clear expectation that all individuals on school property — students, faculty, staff, and visitors — model safe and lawful driving and mobility behavior. This includes:

- Wearing seat belts in all school parking areas
- No phone use while driving on campus
- Adhering to posted speed limits and traffic signs
- Yielding to pedestrians in crosswalks and designated loading zones
- Not idling vehicles near school entrances or in pick-up/drop-off zones

Partner with Parents and Law Enforcement:

Host driving safety nights, simulation events, and involve parents and local officers in programming to build a united message.

Amplify Student Voice:

Empower students to lead peer-to-peer education, PSA contests, or prevention campaigns that reflect real experiences and solutions.