

What are the risks?

As a parent, you are probably only too aware of the risks faced by young drivers today. Driving is a complex task often done in a challenging environment in which driving skills, abilities and experience all play an important role. Lack of experience, however, is the largest risk factor for new drivers at any age.

But did you know:

- Car crashes are the #1 killer of young people ages 13 to 25.
- Drivers in the Novice stage are almost 45% more likely to be involved in a crash than more experienced drivers. (Source: ICBC)
- Crashes involving Novice drivers tend to be more severe; one in four crashes involving Learner or Novice drivers results in an injury or fatality. (Source: ICBC)

Key points

- You are not alone. Each year in BC almost 50,000 teenagers enter the licensing process.
- As a parent, you have a profound influence on what kind of driver your teenager will be. Children, even when they are very young, learn a lot about driving from watching the way you drive.
- There are steps you can take to make the learning process safer, less worrisome and more enjoyable for you and your young driver.
- BC's Graduated Licensing establishes certain restrictions for Learner and Novice drivers. You can set additional rules or limits that are appropriate for you, your family and the safety of the new driver.

Strategies

- **Plan ahead** – Consider the “what ifs” and plan how you would handle them (e.g., What if my young driver violates the licensing restrictions for learning drivers?)
- **Brush up on your own driving skills** and show your young driver how to do it properly – Demonstrate safe driving behaviours at all times.
- **Establish, maintain and encourage open communications** – This will help build a level of trust that will make things go more smoothly.
 - Talk with your young driver and ask for their input.
 - Lay out your expectations clearly in advance.
 - Be clear about consequences.
 - Let your son or daughter know when they are not meeting your expectations and carry through with the consequences.
 - Listen to what your son or daughter has to say.
- **Observe other drivers** – This is a great way to learn. Go to www.tsf-bcaa.com and use the Traffic Safety Foundation's learning tool *You be the Judge*.
- **Learn by watching each other drive** – By “testing” each other, you and your young driver can learn from each other. Go to www.TeenDrivers.ca and use the Traffic Safety Foundation's learning tool *Test Each Other*.
- **Establish “house rules”** – BC's Graduated Licensing places restrictions on new drivers. Your particular circumstances may warrant additional limits for the new driver. It's important that you and your young driver agree on the rules and on the consequences for breaking the rules.
- **Develop a family driving contract** based on your family's “house rules”. Remember, it's a contract; you also have to agree to uphold your responsibilities. Go to www.TeenDrivers.ca to find out more about family driving contracts.

Tips

Learning to drive is not a single event – it takes place every time your young driver is in a car. As your teenager learns, you will take on many different roles: teacher, coach, trainer and parent. Consider the following tips:

- Be involved** – Even if your young driver is taking lessons, spend time talking and going out for practice sessions with your young driver.
- Make time for practice sessions** – Giving your young driver plenty of opportunities to practice gives you a chance to follow their progress and judge when they are ready for the road test and for driving alone.
- Establish the rules and limits up front** – It’s also important to be clear on the consequences for breaking the rules.
- Read the licensing manuals and discuss them** – BC’s licensing manuals, *Road Sense for Drivers* and *Tuning Up* are excellent resources for your young driver and for you.
- Take it easy** – Wait until you’re safely at home if you need to have a serious discussion with your teenager about their driving. Remaining calm is the best approach.
- Stay involved** – You can continue to learn from each other by talking about how to handle difficult traffic situations – even after your young driver has moved on to the Novice stage of licensing or is fully licensed.

For more information

Visit our website at www.TeenDrivers.ca.

- Develop a **family driving contract**.
- Use the learning tools *Test Each Other* and *You be the Judge*.
- Check out our **Links and Resources** page.