



## A smart tool for parents and teens: Phased-in driving privileges

### *There's no substitute for experience*

Teenagers consider their driver's license as their ticket to independence. It's a big moment for parents, too. Though they know about 16-year-olds' high crash risks, they're relieved not to have to drive their children around anymore. But the price is steep. Crashes are the leading cause of death among American teens, accounting for more than one-third of all deaths of 16- to 18-year-olds.

An effective way to reduce this toll is by adopting phased-in driving privileges in your household. This is done on a voluntary basis by parents. Driving privileges are phased in to restrict beginners' initial experience to lower-risk situations. The restrictions gradually are lifted, so teenagers are more experienced and mature when they get their full, unrestricted privileges.

### **What parents of teenagers can do:**

When parents understand the risk factors involved in letting teens get behind the wheel, they can act to improve the situation for their own children.

- **Don't rely solely on driver education:** Teens often think they're immune to harm, which is why they don't use safety belts as much and why they deliberately seek thrills like speeding. Training and education don't change these tendencies.
- **Restrict night driving:** Most nighttime fatal crashes among young drivers occur between 9 p.m. and midnight, so teenagers shouldn't be driving much later than 9 p.m.
- **Restrict passengers:** Teen passengers in a vehicle can distract a beginning driver and/or lead to greater risk-taking.
- **Supervise practice driving:** Take an active role in helping your teenager learn how to drive.
- **Remember you are a role model:** New drivers learn a lot by example, so practice safe driving. Teens with crashes and violations often have parents with poor driving records.
- **Require safety belt use:** Don't assume that seatbelt use when you're in the car with your 16-year-old means seatbelts will be used all the time, especially when your child is out with peers.
- **Prohibit driving after drinking:** Make it clear that it's illegal and highly dangerous for a teenager to drive after drinking alcohol or using any other drug. Even small amounts of alcohol are impairing for teens.
- **Choose vehicles for safety, not image:** Teenagers should drive vehicles that reduce their chances of a crash and offer protection in case they do crash.

**Remember, 5 minutes a week is all it takes  
to establish and reinforce phased-in driving privileges.**