How parents can help prevent teen distracted driving.



Research shows that teen drivers are the highest risk group for distracted driving. One alarming survey result found that 39% of high school students who drove in the past 30 days texted or emailed while driving on at least one of those days. And students who text or email while driving are more likely to participate in other risky driving behaviors, such as not wearing their seat belt or driving after drinking alcohol.

Clearly, distracted driving puts your teen at risk on the road. You can help them drive more safely by offering these tips to avoid the most common forms of teen distracted driving:

1. Prohibit cell phone use. Teach your teen from day one that their cell phone should be stored in the console or glove compartment while driving. To further reduce temptation, have them put their phone in Do Not Disturb mode while driving. Also, remind them that they could be ticketed; in most states, texting while driving is against the law, and in some states — Vermont, for example — all handheld use of phones is prohibited.

Want to be extra sure your teen is off the phone? A variety of parental control apps are available that can prevent them from using their phone behind the wheel.

2. Limit the number of teen passengers. The graduated driver's licensing (GDL) programs in many states already limit the number and type of passengers that may accompany an unsupervised teen driver. However, this restriction is dropped at the age of 17 or 18 (depending on the state). Ask your child before they drive anywhere if they are picking up anyone on the way. Make it clear that no more than one passenger is allowed in the car with them.

Learn more about GDL restrictions in your state and make sure your teen follows them.

3. Make "just drive" your teen's new mantra. Tell your teens: When you drive, just drive. Though friends and phones are the two top distractions, plenty of teen distracted driving crashes are caused by things like trying to eat while driving, getting distracted by music controls, or trying to fix hair and makeup at the wheel. Teach your teen to set music and temperature controls in the driveway before they leave, not on the road. If they must eat in the car, instruct them to do so in a parking lot. As for personal grooming, they can do a better job of that once they arrive at their destination.

4. Set a good example. Don't fall into the "do as I say, not as I do" trap. You can't expect your teen to take your advice seriously if you're using your phone or doing other things while driving.

Do you have a teen ready to get behind the wheel? Giving them clear safety guidelines (and a good auto insurance policy) can give you a little more peace of mind.

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