

STEERING TEENS CLEAR OF

DANGER

Join Newspapers In Education as we learn valuable safety rules for the road from State Farm®. This 10-week program is designed to help teenagers prepare to be safe drivers and passengers and reduce accident risk for everyone on the road. This program will continue in *The Seattle Times* through May 22.

Week Four: **TAKING PARENT CUES**

Agree on house rules

Your parents will want to set some ground rules for your time behind the wheel. These must start with obeying the state's GDL laws, which include limits on peer passengers, use of wireless devices and driving times. Your parents may want to take these a step further with house rules like no driving past 9 p.m. Try not to take these limits personally! Your parents aren't setting rules to control you or because they don't trust you. They just want to make sure you know the law and stay safe.

Getting your license can be challenging. We know that teens who slow down, take learning to drive step-by-step, and let their parents into the process have lower crash rates. In fact, our research shows that teens with involved parents are half as likely to crash.

The best way for you to stay safe and earn driving privileges is to work with your parents, not against them. They may want to create a parent-teen driving agreement where you work together to define your driving rules. This is your opportunity to ask questions about why certain rules are in place and to have your opinions be heard. You can help create limits that work for everyone.

Keep in mind that driving rules can change as time goes on. For example, if you and your parents agree to no driving past 9 p.m. and you maintain a clean driving record for a year after getting your license, talk to your parents about rethinking this rule. Proving responsibility is the best way to earn new privileges.

Many great examples of parent-teen driving agreements already exist. Below are some resources to get you and your parents started:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Parent/Teen Agreement
Search driving agreement at cdc.gov

State Farm Parent-Teen Driving Agreement
statefarm.com/_pdf/SteerClear.pdf



Parent-teen driving agreements work!

- Teens with involved parents (who set rules and monitor) are twice as likely to wear seat belts.
- Teens with supportive, involved parents are 70 percent less likely to drink and drive.
- Teens with involved parents are half as likely to speed.
- Teens with involved parents are 30 percent less likely to use a cellphone while driving.

Make the car a nag-free zone

Learning to drive isn't easy. That's why it takes commitment — from you and your parents (or another trusted adult). Even after the supervised behind-the-wheel practice is logged and you get your probationary license, your parents will need to monitor your driving activities for the first year and help you practice new skills. With their help, you will become an experienced, skilled driver.

To help reduce the stress and arguing that can develop during this period, we propose making the car a "nag-free" zone where you can concentrate on learning to drive, not on other issues. What's important is keeping the lines of communication open. To be successful, it's crucial to create the right learning environment. In the past, the car may have seemed like the right place to discuss a wide range of topics with your parents. It still can be — but not when you're behind the wheel. Heavy topics are best left for around the dinner table. In the car, try to restrict the talk to driving-related topics. Keep this in mind when you and your family develop house rules.

Establish a safe space to talk outside the car.

Agree to discuss anything sensitive or important somewhere calm outside the car — the front step, living room or backyard swing. Be sure to follow through. You'll have to talk about it sometime. Don't put it off.

It's okay to tell your parent to keep calm.

An angry parent is one of the worst distractions. Politely encourage your mom or dad to count to 10, save the criticism for later and stay focused on teaching.

Learn to accept constructive criticism.

When your parent gives you focused and specific feedback on your driving performance, accept it and learn from it.