

Parent/Teen Driving Contract

By The Driving Skills Institute

This CONTRACT is between _____, Teen Driver, and _____, Parents. The parties understand that today's driving environment has a very high level of risk for all drivers, and especially the new and inexperienced driver. More than 6,000 teen drivers are killed and more than 300,000 teens seriously injured in car crashes in the U.S. each year. More teens are killed in car crashes than the total of the other five top causes. It is therefore very important to have a clear and complete understanding between Parents and Teen Driver, to establish the expectations, agreements and consequences surrounding this process.

1. Alcohol and Drugs.

- a. There will be absolutely no driving of any vehicle while the ability to drive is impaired by ANY substance, alcohol or other drugs. There will be no drinking in a family car by any other persons. **Consequence:** All driving privileges are forfeited until the teen reaches the age of 18.
- b. At no time will alcohol or drugs be put into any car belonging to the teen or parents. **Consequence:** Loss of driving privileges for one year.

2. Judgment and Decision Making.

- a. The teen agrees to call parents for advice and/or transportation at any hour, from any place, if there is ever a situation in which the teen has been drinking or a friend they are riding with has been drinking. There will be no questions asked nor arguments at the time of the call or ensuing actions to get the teen home safely. Discussion of the consequences related to the situation will be delayed until the following day.
- b. As a teen demonstrates the acceptance of greater personal responsibilities and a genuine sense of maturity, good judgment and decision making, parents shall grant more individual privileges, which may include short trips, entertainment, recreational activities, etc. *This will be periodically reviewed by parents and teen to assure that the teen is able to earn more privileges - IF the teen is demonstrating maturity. But it is understood that these are privileges, not rights, and must be earned!*

3. Risk reduction.

- a. It is understood that the teen will NOT allow any other person to drive a family vehicle at any time, unless there has been specific prior permission given by the parents to do so.
- b. It is understood that there are specific state laws regarding the number of passengers while the teen is driving. It is therefore understood that any violation places the family at substantial risk in regard to financial responsibility. **Consequence:** For violating the passenger restriction provisions as reported to the parents by anyone, regardless of whether a ticket was issued, loss of driving privileges for _____ months.
- c. It is understood that there are specific state laws in regard to the use of a cell phone by a teen while driving. In addition to compliance with the law, the teen understands and agrees that they will NOT use a cell phone while driving. The teen also understands that any use of "texting" while driving is absolutely forbidden. **Consequence:** Loss of driving privileges for _____ months.
- d. The teen will wear a seat belt in any vehicle in which they are riding or driving, and when driving they will be responsible for any other passengers wearing a seat belt. **Consequence:** for lack of ANY seat belt use, loss of driving privileges for _____ days.
- e. The teen understands that driving a car is not an appropriate place or time to "horse" around, and that friends can be killed and injured while "horsing" around. **Consequence:** Loss of driving privileges to be determined by the seriousness of the specific situation.

4. Violations.

- a. If the teen receives a traffic violation of up to 10 mph over a speed limit, the teen will be responsible for all costs associated with the violation including additional insurance costs. If the violation is more than 10 mph over the posted speed limit, and/or reckless or careless driving, the teen's driving privileges are suspended for _____ months, and the teen will pay for all increased costs of insurance. *The teen understands that these traffic violations will be on his/her record for three to five years, and will represent **several thousands of dollars** in additional costs.*
- b. Any and all violations of law, rules of the road or provisions of this contract reported to the parents from ANY source (police, school, security service personnel, friends, neighbors, etc.), will be dealt with in a timely manner. The teen will have an opportunity to explain any mitigating circumstances, but the decision of the parents will be binding.

5. Grade Point Average.

- a. The teen agrees to maintain a grade point average of at least _____. **Consequence:** A portion or all of driving privileges will be lost until grade point is reestablished.
- b. Other specific agreements to become a part of this contract: _____ -

I promise to abide by the conditions and consequences of this contract, and I understand that my driving is a privilege and not a right. I promise to always drive in a responsible manner; to never play dangerous games in a vehicle; to never drive after drinking nor to ride with another driver who has been drinking. I will not place my life nor the life of friends or family at risk, nor will I place my family at financial risk.

Teen Signature Date: _____

I (we) understand that we are signing for financial responsibility for our child to obtain a driving permit and license, and that this places great financial risk upon our family. I (we) promise to focus upon the preparation of our child, and to do what is necessary to reduce the risks to our teen driver. I (we) agree to become a mentor to our teen driver, and understand that yelling and screaming at our teen while driving is not an appropriate response, and that our teen will learn much more by a calm, instructional strategy.

Parent Signatures Date: _____

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Recommended Guidelines for the Parent's use of the Parent/Teen Contract

The use of the Parent/Teen Contract can help to make the “learning to drive” process a very meaningful “Rite of Passage” process for a new teen driver. This is a great opportunity to use the contract as a basis for clear communication, up front at the time of permit and/or licensing, without using verbal “threats” by parents and attitudinal “whatevers” by teens. We recommend that parents and teen literally sit at the kitchen table and go over the contract in detail, and discuss exactly what it means. And also, that the consequences are taken seriously and will be enforced as it is agreed.

We believe the use of this contract is one of the most effective strategies to help a teen driver become aware of the process of becoming a responsible human being through the process of becoming a driver!

It is extremely important that parents (or guardians) keep in mind that when you sign for a teen to get a license, you are signing for financial responsibility. **(Many parents believe that they are signing for “permission” – this is NOT the case. You are signing for financial responsibility, and every asset of the family is at risk!)** The teen is a minor until age 18, and they cannot get the permit or license by themselves. In addition, parents have the ability to withdraw their signature, and the license is automatically rescinded. This control given to the parents is absolutely necessary to protect the family assets.

Too many parents today seem to be looking for the easiest way for their child to get a permit or a drivers license. Parents should make absolutely sure that the new teen driver has received the preparation and training necessary to become a competent and skillful driver - and that, in the parent's opinion, the teen is mature enough to make good decisions while driving. Is s/he really ready to drive? Teens need to understand that they are responsible to the family for their actions, and that **the teen will not risk the assets of the family.** Otherwise, the parents will withdraw their signature. Obviously, this is more effectively done as an up front agreement rather than as a threat. **(THIS MUST BE DISCUSSED!)**

As to the elements of the contract: The elements in regard to drinking and driving should be obvious. Teens need to understand up front that this behavior is NOT acceptable. At the time of licensing, parents must understand the state laws in regard to the conditions of the teen's license. As an example, many teens (and some parents) seem to think that the odds of a teen being caught driving with other teens in the car (which in some states is not permitted for a specific period of time) are not good, and even if caught, the price of the ticket is not that much. Parents **MUST** understand that the price of the ticket is not the “big deal”. **The most important thing is that if the teen has a crash while other kids are in the family car, and other kids should not be in the car, the parents of the driver are in an almost indefensible position.** (That is, the other kids should **not** have been in the car – **period.** This is true even IF another driver was the cause of the crash!)

It is particularly important that, as a parent, you begin the process with the teen that “driving is NOT a right”. It is a privilege. And that you, as a parent, are in charge of “granting” the privileges. So it might be “wise” for the teen to **get on your good side** by acting responsibly. This is a particularly good time for parents to stress that responsibility in ALL areas and good judgment in ALL areas of life **WILL** be evaluated as indicators of what will happen in the car when they are alone.

In our opinion, the single most dangerous thing that teens are doing in a car today – is “texting”. This is something that most parents have not had to deal with. There is tragic story after tragic story in regard to teens texting and being in head-on collisions, or running off the road and hitting a tree, etc., and being killed or horribly injured. This is a situation that is going to have to be managed by the family. It is therefore our

strong recommendation that one of the elements of the contract is that the consequence of the parent even HEARING about a teen texting, that the driving privileges are “done”! Period !! End of discussion !!

Parents might also consider requiring the teen to pay for specific things relative to driving. I.e., the additional costs of insurance now that they are driving; or the additional costs if they get a violation; or a portion of their gas; etc. Parents can get very creative in regard to this, and it has a huge impact upon the attitude of the teen. (The teen should also be regularly “detailing” the parents’ cars! Good idea!)

Being involved in the safety business of teen drivers nationally, we hear about the incidents of teens who have been given new sports cars, or collector “muscle” cars, etc. by parents who really want to give their kids something special. As parents, we can all understand that. However, let me give you an actual situation that happened recently. A new 17 year old teen driver is given a new ultra high performance car. The car has over 400 horsepower, and has all the tricks for high performance. With four friends in the car, he hits a tree at triple digit speed, and all are killed. Can you imagine how the father of the driver would feel, after that experience? Can you imagine how the other families feel? Enough said! A high performance car, or in fact most of the nicer sedans available today, can be defined as high performance cars. After a few years of responsible driving, you can consider a high performance vehicle.

Parents, be sure to give your teen a copy of the face of the contract – for them to keep and read! And you might want to just mention it to them periodically. (They could forget all about it after a while. It will be good to remind them.) We want to wish you good luck through the process.

What are you willing to do to save your kid’s life? Most of us would say “anything”!

The most important question is, “what are you GOING to do to save your kid’s life”? Your future grandchildren are waiting to hear your answer

“Some people might think I am being a little tough in regard to the “grandchildren”. Let me tell you I’m not. I think about the grandchildren that I don’t have quite often, because my daughter was killed in a crash at age 19. I hope you do think about it!”

***Ronn Langford
President and Founder of
The Driving Skills Institute***

