

Vermont Parent-Teen Driving Agreement

What is a Parent-Teen Driving Agreement?

A Parent-Teen Driving Agreement is a formal agreement between parents and their teen driver that outlines specific guidelines that parents and teens agree to follow. The agreement also establishes consequences and provides discussion points for not following the agreement. The agreement includes elements of Vermont's Driver Licensing Law to ensure that teens follow state law.

Why Use a Parent-Teen Driving Agreement?

Did you know that motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers in the United States? In 2014, Vermont had 5 fatalities for ages 16-21. Unfortunately, teen drivers put everyone at risk including friends, other drivers, pedestrians and family members. Recent studies show that two-thirds of the people killed in fatal crashes by teen drivers are persons other than the teen driver.

Why Do Teens Crash?

A number of studies have looked at why teens have such high crash rates. The top reasons teens crash include:

- **Inexperience**—teen drivers are new drivers and lack experience behind the wheel.
- **Poor Visual Search**—teen drivers have difficulty knowing when and where to look to identify potential hazards on the roadway.
- **Inattention or Distraction**—teens are often distracted from the driving task, which can put them at increased risk for crashing.
- **Speed Management**—teens often have difficulty choosing the appropriate speed for driving conditions, including wet weather and other hazardous road conditions.
- **Space Management**—teens have difficulty judging how much time and space is needed to maneuver safely when driving.

Other factors that put teen drivers at risk include: other passengers in the vehicle, speeding, aggressive driving, alcohol or other drugs, nighttime driving, and lack of seat belt use.

How Should Parents and Teens Use the Parent-Teen Driving Agreement?

The agreement communicates that driving is a privilege that parents and teens should take seriously. It spells out the rules, responsibilities and consequences for both the parent and teen driver. **Parents and teens should talk about the driving agreement and enter into the agreement together.** After all, driving is the most dangerous milestone in a teens' life. **Parental involvement and enforcement are key to reducing teens' risk.**

Parents and teens should dedicate enough time to thoroughly read and discuss the agreement. It is important to talk about each item and make sure that both the parent and teen understand the risk and consequences for breaking the agreement before signing. Be sure that both the parent and teen initial after discussing each area. Parents may want to consider imposing additional restrictions including taking away video games or social privileges for breaking the agreement or consider keeping restrictions in place longer than Vermont law requires. After the agreement and consequences have been discussed and initialed, both the parent and teen should date and sign at the bottom of the agreement. The agreement should be kept in a location that is easily accessible for future discussions. It is a good idea to bring out the agreement on a regular basis to review as your teen gains more driving experience.

What is Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL)?

The Parent-Teen Driving Agreement includes detailed information on Vermont's Graduated Driver Licensing. The Vermont Graduated Driver Licensing Law and its restrictions are designed to ease teen drivers into the driving environment and encourage parent involvement. **All teens under age 18 are subject to a graduated driver licensing system to obtain a license in Vermont.** Vermont's GDL mandates a three-stage approach for young, novice drivers by limiting their exposure to dangerous driving situations by using passenger restrictions. Vermont does not restrict teens from driving at night. However, AAA recommends newly licensed teens not be allowed to drive after 10 p.m.

Most teen crashes happen early in the teen's driving career. Therefore, it is important that all stages of driver licensing be followed to help minimize crash risk. Restrictions imposed by the law certainly help, but the best combination is a knowledgeable parent working through the learn-to-drive process with the new driver. **Parental involvement is a key part of a teen learning to be a safe driver.**



Night-Time Driving

THE RISK: During the first six months of independent driving, the risk of a fatal crash at night is about three times higher for teens than during the day.

Teen

initial

✓ Although Vermont does not restrict teens from driving at night, AAA recommends that newly licensed teens not be allowed to drive after 10 p.m. I will not drive between ____ and ____ for a period of ____ months.

I understand this rule is for my safety. If I violate this rule, I endanger myself, my passengers and other drivers. If I violate our rules, I agree to lose my driving privileges for _____ (time period).

Additional penalties: _____

Parent

initial

Your safety is my #1 priority and I will be there when you need me. I will pick you up or arrange for safe transportation home, regardless of the situation or time of your call.

Aggressive & Reckless Driving

THE RISK: Speed-related crashes account for 44% of fatalities among 15–20 year olds.

Teen

initial

✓ I agree to ALWAYS obey the posted speed limit.

✓ I agree to consider the weather and road conditions and adjust my speed appropriately.

✓ I will not drive when I am angry, frustrated or emotional.

✓ I will not tailgate, speed, weave in and out of traffic or participate in any aggressive or reckless driving behavior.

I understand these rules are for my safety. If I violate any of these rules, I endanger myself, my passengers and other drivers and I may break Vermont law. If I violate our rules, I agree to lose my driving privileges for _____ (time period). Additional penalties: _____

Parent

initial

Your safety is my #1 priority and I will be there when you need me. I will pick you up or arrange for safe transportation home if you feel it is not safe for you to drive, or if you are in a car with someone exhibiting these behaviors. I also promise to be a role model, lead by example and demonstrate responsible and safe driving behavior at all times.

Driving Under the Influence

THE RISK: Driving under the influence is a factor in one of every four fatal teen crashes.

Teen

initial

✓ I agree that I will never drink or use drugs and drive.

✓ I agree that I will never ride in a car with someone who has been drinking or using drugs.

✓ I agree to call you if I am ever in a situation where I feel it is unsafe for me to drive, or unsafe for me to ride with someone else.

I understand these rules are for my safety. If I violate any of these rules, I endanger myself, my passengers and other drivers and I may break Vermont law. If I violate our rules, I agree to lose my driving privileges for _____ (time period). Additional penalties: _____

Parent

initial

Your safety is my #1 priority and I will be there when you need me. I agree to come and get you wherever you are whatever the time of day or night if you are not able to get home because you are following our rules AND the law regarding driving under the influence. I also promise to be a role model and lead by example, never getting behind the wheel after having even one drink.

Safety Belts

THE RISK: Teens have the lowest safety belt use of all drivers and are more likely to forget or decide not to buckle up when there are other teens in the car.

Teen

initial

- ✓ I agree to wear my safety belt at all times.
- ✓ I agree that I will not start the car until all passengers are buckled up. No exceptions.
- ✓ I agree that I will not ride in a car as a passenger without buckling up.
- ✓ I agree that I will not ride in a car where the driver and other passengers are not buckled up.

I understand these rules are for my safety. If I violate any of these rules, I endanger myself, my passengers and other drivers and I may break Vermont law. If I violate our rules, I agree to lose my driving privileges for _____ (time period). Additional penalties: _____

Parent

initial

Your safety is my #1 priority and I will be there when you need me. I will pick you up or arrange for safe transportation home, regardless of the situation or time of your call.

Passengers

THE RISK: The number of passengers is the most critical factor related to teen automobile fatalities. The risk of a fatal crash increases by 100% for each additional teen passenger when a teen is driving.

Teen

initial

- ✓ I will follow Vermont law and agree not to carry passengers (except for immediate family members after the first 3 months) unless accompanied by a licensed driver who is at least 25 years of age, and is sitting beside me, for the first 6 months I hold my Junior Operator's License.
- ✓ I will follow the law and will not be a passenger in a vehicle with a friend who is still subject to GDL laws.
- ✓ I agree not to be a passenger in any vehicle where I do not feel comfortable or safe.

I understand these rules are for my safety. If I violate any of these rules, I endanger myself, my passengers and other drivers and I may break Vermont law. If I violate our rules, I agree to lose my driving privileges for _____ (time period). Additional penalties: _____

Parent

initial

Your safety is my #1 priority and I will be there when you need me. I will pick you up or arrange for safe transportation home, regardless of the situation or time of your call. As your passenger, I will share observations and coaching in a calm, respectful manner.

Cell Phones

THE RISK: Teen drivers are vulnerable to driving distractions such as talking or texting on cell phones, which increase the chance of getting involved in serious vehicle crashes. Vermont law prohibits all drivers from texting while operating a moving motor vehicle on a highway, and prohibits drivers under the age of 18 from using a cell phone, a hands-free device or other electronic communication while operating a motor vehicle.

Teen

initial

- ✓ I agree that if I need to use my cell phone, I will pull over to a safe location away from traffic before I use my phone.
- ✓ I understand that Vermont law prohibits drivers from texting while driving, and drivers under the age of 18 may not use a cell phone or other electronic device, even if it's "hands-free."

I understand these rules are for my safety. If I violate any of these rules, I endanger myself, my passengers and other drivers and I may break Vermont law. If I violate our rules, I agree to lose my driving privileges for _____ (time period). Additional penalties: _____

Parent

initial

I understand that cell phones present a distraction to all drivers. I also agree that if I need to use my cell phone, I will pull over to a safe location away from traffic before I use my phone.

Distractions

THE RISK: Teen drivers are especially susceptible to distractions. Distractions impair judgment and decision-making abilities. Talking to passengers, changing a CD, eating, and personal grooming are all distractions that divide attention and take the focus off driving.

Teen

initial

- ✓ I will not participate in any behavior that makes me look away from the road or distracts me from driving.
- ✓ I agree to check myself for readiness to drive before driving.
- ✓ If I am not able to focus on the driving task due to lack of sleep or if I am emotional, I will not drive.
- ✓ I agree to set rules for my passengers so they don't distract me, and will pull over to a safe location until they have stopped distracting me and I am able to drive again.

I understand these rules are for my safety. If I violate any of these rules, I endanger myself, my passengers and other drivers and I may break Vermont law. If I violate our rules, I agree to lose my driving privileges for _____ (time period). Additional penalties: _____

Parent

initial

Your safety is my #1 priority and I will be there when you need me. I will pick you up or arrange for safe transportation home, regardless of the situation or time of your call.

I, the Teen Driver Agree: I promise to abide by the rules outlined above. I understand that driving is a privilege, not a right and that I will only drive the car with permission. I understand that I am responsible for my driving actions and there are many consequences for my behavior. If I break any rules we have agreed to, I will accept the consequences that we have discussed. I also understand that the terms of this agreement may be changed based on how I handle the responsibility of driving.

teen signature

date

I, the Parent Agree: I will approach the process of teaching you to drive with patience and support. I promise to be a positive role model by demonstrating safe driving, following all the traffic safety laws and regulations that I have asked you to follow. I agree to establish a schedule of training and to honor that schedule by providing you with 40 hours of supervised driving practice, including 10 hours at night. I also agree to make myself available to discuss progress on a regular basis. I will also consider your requests for changes to our agreement with respect and careful consideration. **I will be involved in your driving!**

parent signature

date

**For more information on Vermont's Driver License Law and other driving tips,
please visit TeenDriving.AAA.com**