



## 2021 National Teen Driver Safety Week

### FACT SHEET/TALKING POINTS – TEEN TARGET AUDIENCE

Teen Driver: The moment you have been waiting for has arrived - you'll finally be able to drive! However, like most things, there is a process and a learning curve. While you're eager to hit the road, your parents may be hesitant to hand over the keys, and TBH, with good reason. Driving is a big responsibility. No matter how much you learned in Driver's Ed, these conversations provide valuable information that will create a safe driving experience for you, your passengers, and others on the road.

National Teen Driver Safety Week is October 17-23, 2021. This is the perfect time to review safe driving habits with your friends and family members. Take this time to refresh your knowledge about safe driving habits and driving laws. Data shows that the greatest dangers for teen (15-18 years old) drivers include alcohol consumption, inconsistent or no seat belt use, distracted driving, speeding, and driving with passengers.

During National Teen Driver Safety Week, let's all work together to help the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) spread the word about teen driving safety.

#### Know the Facts About Teen Driver Fatalities

- Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death for teens (15-18 years old) in the United States.
- In 2019, there were 2,042 people killed in crashes involving a teen passenger vehicle driver (15-18 years old); 628 of the deaths were the teen passenger vehicle driver.
- Others may influence your driving choices, but it's ultimately up to YOU to make the right decisions. Here are some of your biggest risks when behind the wheel:
  - **Impaired Driving:** While you're too young to legally buy, possess, or consume alcohol, 16% of teen passenger vehicle drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2019 had alcohol in their system. Alcohol isn't the only substance that can impair your driving ability: marijuana affects a driver's ability to react to their surroundings. Driving is a complex task and marijuana slows the reaction time. Illegal, prescription, or over-the-counter drugs can also impair driving and have deadly consequences.



- **Seat Belts:** Seat belts are designed to keep you safe, whether you're sitting in the front or back seat. They prevent you from being ejected from your vehicle in the event of a crash, but they only work if you use them correctly. In 2019, almost half (45%) of the teen passenger vehicle drivers who died in crashes were unbuckled. Even worse, when the teen driver involved in the fatal crash wasn't wearing a seatbelt, nine out of 10 of the passengers who died were also unbuckled. Remember to Buckle Up. Every Trip. Every Time.
- **Distracted Driving:** Despite popular opinion, no one is good at multitasking. Distractions while driving are more than just risky – they can be deadly. In 2019, among teen passenger vehicle drivers involved in fatal crashes, 10% were reported as distracted at the time of the crash. The use of mobile devices while driving is a big problem but there are other risks, like adjusting the radio, applying makeup, eating, drinking, or distractions from other vehicle passengers.
- **Speeding:** In 2019, more than one-quarter (27%) of all teen passenger vehicle drivers involved in fatal crashes were speeding at the time of the crash. Males were more likely to be involved in fatal crashes than females.
- **Passengers:** Teen drivers transporting passengers can lead to tragic results. Research shows that the risk of a fatal crash goes up in direct relation to the number of passengers in a motor vehicle. Meaning you're more likely to act up in front of your friends. In fact, teen drivers engaging in risky behavior triples when traveling with multiple passengers.

### **Make Smart Decisions While Driving**

Driving is a new and exciting step toward independence and adulthood. When parents discuss the importance of safe driving habits, it's important to listen. Their rules, advice, and lessons learned could prevent you from being in a crash. Keep the following in mind when talking about driving safety with parents:

- National Teen Driver Safety Week is October 17-23 this year. Be part of the change and join other teens and parents across the country in a national dialogue.
- Be the best kind of influencer - the kind that could save lives. Get the facts and use them to make sure your friends are safe drivers and respectful passengers.



- Know your [state's graduated driver licensing \(GDL\) laws](#) about transporting passengers, driving at night, and other key safety areas. Find your state using the link above.
- Take driving seriously - it's a *privilege*, not a right.
- Know the [Rules of the Road](#) before you drive.

### Remember the Rules of the Road:

**1. Don't Drive Impaired.**

Drinking before the age of 21 is illegal in every state, and alcohol and driving should never mix, no matter your age. Marijuana slows a user's reaction time and affects a driver's ability to drive safely. Remember that drugs – illegal, prescription, or over-the-counter medications – can impair driving and have deadly consequences.

**2. Buckle Up – Every Trip, Every Time. Everyone – Front AND Back Seat.**

It's important to buckle up on every trip, every time, in the front seat and in the back. Before you start your motor vehicle, check to make sure everyone is buckled correctly.

**3. Keep Eyes on the Road, Hands on the Wheel. All the Time.**

You should never text, dial, or use mobile apps while driving. Place your phone out of reach when you're on the road. Turn on your phone's "Do Not Disturb" or similar feature to help avoid the temptation of checking a call or text. Remember that distracted driving isn't limited to phone use. Additional passengers, audio and climate controls in the vehicle, eating, or drinking while driving are all examples of dangerous distractions. Loud music is distracting, too. Always take your headphones off before driving. You need to be able to hear another vehicle's horn or the siren from an emergency vehicle, so you can safely move over and out of their path.

**4. Follow the Posted Speed Limit.**

Speeding is a critical issue for all drivers, especially teens. Obey the posted speed limit and know that every time the speed you're driving doubles, the distance your car will travel when you try to stop quadruples.

**5. Limit Passengers.**



With each passenger in the vehicle, your risk of a deadly crash goes up. Many states have laws for teen and novice drivers about how many passengers can be in the vehicle or who can ride with you. Know the law before you hit the road; it may prohibit you from having any passengers in the vehicle with you.



## **Talk to Your Parents/Guardians About Safe Driving Year-Round**

If parents are discussing safe driving habits, make sure you listen – don't tune them out. Parents' constant reminders about these powerful messages will positively impact your driving habits.

Get creative when talking to your parent or family members about safe driving habits. Create a parent-teen driving contract that outlines the rules and consequences, but also includes incentives for good driving behavior. Hang the signed contract in a visible place as a reminder to everyone in the family.

If you and your parent are going somewhere together, ask to drive. Equally important, don't be afraid to remind your parent about the Rules of the Road. Sometimes adults are guilty of breaking the rules themselves.

Remember, driving – for everyone, teen and adult alike – is a privilege, not a right. If you can't follow the rules, your parent can take away the keys and send you back to basics. Your safe driving can mean the difference between life and death – for you, your passengers, and other people on the road.

For more information about National Teen Driver Safety Week and to learn more safe driving tips, please visit [www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving](http://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving).