

## 50 Hours in the car with your teenager

The graduated licensing law requires you to spend 50 hours (at least 10 or more of those hours at night) in the car with your teen behind the wheel. Why? Because supervised practice over an extended period of time makes teens better, safer drivers. Be sure to keep track of driving time on the attached 50-Hour Certification sheet. You'll need to turn it in when you go for the license test.

Don't worry, you are not expected to replace the Driver Education teacher. Your job is to help your teen practice what he/she learns and encourage him or her to develop safe habits and skills. Keep in mind, 50 hours is a minimum state requirement. We recommend at least 50 hours as a benchmark but you the parent are the best judge of your teen's progress.

**Here are a few tips for supervising your teen's driving practice:**

- **Plan routes that allow your teen to practice different skills.** Driving to and from the grocery store every week will not adequately prepare your teen to be a skilled, licensed driver.
- **Take your teen out for practice under as many different conditions as possible.** Safe drivers are experienced in responding to changing weather, visibility, traffic volume and speed.
- **Take your teen to get a license only when you and your teen feel the time is right.** Even though they are eligible to get a license after nine months of holding an instruction permit, many teens may not be ready for a license that quickly. You need to decide when your teen has demonstrated the skills and attitude to be able to drive without an adult.
- **Set a good example when you drive.** Your teen is much more likely to be a calm and courteous driver, wear a safety belt and obey the speed limit if you do it first.
- **Provide a safe motor vehicle for practice sessions.** If your car needs a tune-up, take your teen along for a lesson in car maintenance. Now is the time to talk about costs of having a car and whether or not your teen needs to contribute.
- **Fill out a contract with your teen that makes all your rules and consequences very clear.** Be sure to enforce the rules, even when your teen protests. Offer your teen praise and rewards for responsible driving.
- **Work with your teen's Driver Education Instructor.** Find out how your teen is performing in class and which skills he or she needs to work on.
- **Meet with your insurance agent.** Your agent should discuss the costs, responsibilities and safety issues of driving with you and your teen. Research shows that teens who pay for a portion of the maintenance and insurance of the family car are more likely to be safe drivers.
- **While your teen is driving:** Give simple and clear instructions. Use a calm tone of voice. Encourage your teen to talk about what he or she sees and plans to do while driving. Talk about the driving session after it is over.