

Safe-Driver Checklist

A guide for parents teaching their teens to drive.

Pre-Inspection/Discussion			
Check Around Vehicle	Tires	Gas/Oil/Washer Fluid	
Gauges	Battery	Alcohol/Medication	
Maintenance Schedule	Weather/Road Conditions	Emotions/Health/Sleepiness	
Precautions Getting in and Out	Be a Thinking Driver	Tailgaters/Honkers	
Walk Around Back			
Locate Ancillary Controls – Your teen should be able to locate the controls and explain how they work.			
Seat Belt + How to Fit	Passenger Seat Belts	Headlights + Settings	
Mirrors + How to Adjust	Emergency + Parking Brakes	Headrest + Proper Placement	
Odometer	Speedometer + Tachometer	Windshield Wipers + Settings	
Hazard Lights	Ignition Key/Button	Turn On w/Out Starting	
Signal Lights	Steering Wheel + Gears	Fuel Gauge	
Horn	Heater/Defroster	Oil Pressure Warning Light	
Temperature Controls	Sit 10in (25cm) from Air Bag	Cruise Control	
Starting the Vehicle			
Vehicle in Park	Foot on Brake	Prepare, Observe, Move	
Able to Regulate Speed	Note Gauges – Gas/Servicing	Starts Vehicle Smoothly	
Moving Forward			
Prepare, Observe, Move	Checks Mirrors/Over Shoulder	Signals	
Checks Mirrors/Shoulder x2	Steers Straight	Maintains Directed Speed (10, 15, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60)	
Uses Both Hands – Correct Position	Checks Mirrors – Before Signalling, Changing Direction, Changing Speed	Scans for Hazards (People in Parked Cars, Children, Animals)	
Wheel Always Turns to Correct Direction (forward/backwards)	Travels Center of Lane	Slows When Vision Blocked	
Handles Space Conflicts	Follows Signs & Speed Limits		
Stopping			
Correct Foot on Pedal	Controlled Stop	Stops Behind Crosswalks or Stop Line	
Distance Between Vehicle	Comes to Full Stop		
Backing Up			
Checks Surroundings	Looks Over Right Shoulder	Checks Mirrors and Sides	
Position of Hands/Body	Straight Line	Reverse to the Left	
Reverse to the Right	Walking Pace Speed	Front End Swing Out	
Parking			
Signals	Signals & Checks Shoulder	Straight-in Parking	
Reverse Parking	Parking at Angle	Sets Parking Brake	
Curbs Wheels Properly Up Hill (with/out curb)	Curbs Wheels Properly Down Hill (with/out curb)		
Parallel Parking			
Signals	Looks Over Shoulder	Yields to Other Traffic	
	Start with one car then two		

Turns			
Figure 8 Turns	Begins and Ends Turn in Correct Lane	Signals in Advance and Slows for Turn	
Ready to Brake	Sees and Reacts to Hazards	Yields to Pedestrians	
Practice Right Residential Turns First	Practice Left Residential Turns	Yields Right-of-Way	
Safe Approach in Intersection	Space Between Vehicles	Accepts Legal Right-of-Way	
Blocked Intersection Traffic	Look L, R, L	Judge Traffic	
Stay Straight on Left Turn	Center Left Turn Lane		
Defensive Driving			
Checks Mirrors Frequently	Checks Mirrors Before Braking	Checks Cross Streets Before Intersections	
Checks Signal Lights and Signs	Keeps Eyes Moving (Sides-Middle)	"Space Cushion" around Vehicle	
Follows at Safe Distance	Scans ahead 12 seconds		
Intersections			
Be Ready to Brake	Assess Risks (Traffic, Pedestrians, etc.)	Yellow Light	
Blind Intersections	Roundabouts	Flashing Lights	
Changing Lanes			
Signals	Checks Mirrors	Checks Over Shoulder/Blind Spot	
Does not Drift Out of Lane	Identifies Break in Traffic	Safe Distance from Vehicles in Front	
Changes Lanes Safely	Passing Stationary Vehicles/Hold Back Position	Traffic Calming Measures	
Freeway			
Checks Traffic Flow	Signals	Times Entry	
Checks Over Shoulder	Accelerates into Gap	Signals Early and Slows Down on the Exit Ramp to Posted Speed	
Adjust to Road Conditions	Avoid Blind Spots of Other Drivers	Checks Mirrors	
Solid Lines	3-sec Space Cushion	Watch for Merging Traffic	
Responds to Traffic Slowing	Proper Passing Techniques	Scans Road/Vehicles	
One-Way Streets			
Look at road signs to help identify			
Four-Way Stops			
Full Stop	Identifies Order	Communicates to Other Drivers	
Emergency Procedures			
Responds to Siren	Pulls to Right Side	Stops for Emergency Vehicle	
Does not Stop in Intersection	What if in a Collision	What if Witness a Collision	
School Bus Lights	Speed Past School Bus	Railroad Crossings	
Brakes Fail	Tire Blowout	Stuck in Snow/Mud	
Stuck Accelerator	Hand Signals		

Miscellaneous			
Gravel Roads		Potholes	Hills
Weather Conditions – Snow, Rain, Fog, Sun, Wind, Extreme Heat, Hydroplaning, Extreme Cold		Night Driving	U-Turns
Motorcycles & Bicyclists		Road Markings	Construction Zones
Reflections off of Windows/Vehicles			

ADDITIONAL TIPS TO REVIEW:

WHEN YOU CAN'T SEE BECAUSE OF **FOG, RAIN, OR SNOW**

- The best advice for driving in the fog is "DON'T." But if you have to, don't use your high-beam headlights in the fog because they create glare and reduce visibility. Only use your low-beam headlights in the fog. Consider postponing your trip until the fog clears.
- If you must drive, then slow down and turn on your low-beam headlights. Never drive with just your parking or fog lights. Increase your following distance and be prepared to stop within the space you can see in front of your vehicle. Avoid crossing or passing lanes of traffic unless absolutely necessary. Listen for traffic you cannot see. Use your wipers and defroster as necessary for best vision.
- Turn on your lights when visibility is poor-even in the daylight hours.
- **Note:** You must turn on your headlights if snow, rain, fog, or low visibility (1,000 feet or less) require the continuous use of windshield wipers.
- In a very heavy rain or snowstorm, you may not be able to see more than 100 feet ahead. When you cannot see any farther than that, you cannot safely drive faster than 30 mph. You may have to stop from time to time to wipe mud or snow off your windshield, headlights, and taillights.
- When you drive in snowy areas, carry chains in case you find yourself in conditions where you cannot drive without them. Make sure you carry the correct number of chains and that they will fit your drive wheels. Learn how to put the chains on before you need to use them.
- Slow down at the first sign of rain, drizzle, or snow on the road. This is when many road pavements are most slippery because oil and dust have not been washed away.

DRIVING ON **SLIPPERY ROADS (Wet, Icy, gravel, or dirt roads)**

- Drive more slowly and stay farther behind the vehicle ahead.
- Slow down as you approach curves and intersections.
- Avoid quick stops. "Pump" the brakes to slow or stop.
- Avoid fast turns.
- Shift into a lower gear before going down a steep hill.
- Avoid especially slippery areas, such as ice patches, wet leaves, oil, and deep puddles.

DRIVING IN **WIND**

- Drive slower than normal when it is very windy.
- Lighter vehicles, vans, and trucks with broad, high sides are sometimes blown out of their lane. House trailers are in special danger of shifting.
- If possible, avoid driving next to other vehicles.
- Grasp the steering wheel firmly. Be prepared to correct steering as wind force changes.
- Keep the windows closed.

QUICK STOPS AND SKIDS

Avoid sudden stops. If your vehicle has four-wheel ABS, apply firm pressure on the brake pedal.

Note: To determine if a vehicle has ABS, review your owner's manual. There may also be an illuminated ABS symbol on your dashboard immediately after starting the engine.

If you stop quickly or your vehicle begins to skid, and your vehicle:

- Has just rear-wheel ABS (common in light trucks), ease up on the brake pedal with just enough pressure to allow the front wheels to roll again so you can steer.
- Has rear-wheel drive and goes into a skid, stop braking and turn the steering wheel into the direction of the skid.
- Has front-wheel drive, steer where you want to go and carefully accelerate to keep the vehicle moving.
- Does not have ABS, lightly and briefly "pump" the brakes. To pump the brakes, you should:
 1. Push the brake pedal hard.
 2. As the vehicle begins to skid, quickly let up on the brake. Push it down again quickly.
 3. Use this quick, pumping action until the vehicle is stopped.

IF YOUR BRAKES FAIL

If your brakes fail, you should:

1. Downshift into a lower gear.
2. If your vehicle:
 - Has four-wheel ABS, apply firm pressure on the brake pedal.
 - Has just rear-wheel ABS (common in light trucks), ease up on the brake pedal with just enough pressure to allow the front wheels to roll again.
 - Does not have an ABS, pump the brake pedal.
3. Apply the parking brake, but be ready to release it if the vehicle begins to skid.
4. Remember you can still steer and swerve. You could steer into bushes or something soft.
5. Sound your horn and flash your lights to warn other drivers.
6. When you no longer need to change direction and have stopped, turn off the ignition. (Turning off the key locks the steering wheel of many vehicles, - so do NOT turn off the ignition until you come to a complete stop.)

DRIVING IN EXTREME HEAT

- Watch the temperature gauge for overheating.
- Avoid driving at high speeds for long periods.
- Use low gear in "creeping" traffic.
- Turn off the air conditioner, if the engine is overheating.

HYDROPLANING

If water on the road is deeper than the tread of the tires, a fast-moving vehicle may glide over the water and not touch the road surface. This condition is called hydroplaning. If you can see reflections on the pavement, or the vehicle ahead leaves no tracks on the water, your vehicle could hydroplane.

To avoid hydroplaning:

- Drive slowly.
- Maintain good tire tread.
- Have your tires properly inflated.
- If possible, steer around water.
- If you hear a sloshing sound from the tires, especially when changing directions, slow down.

DRIVING IN EXTREME COLD

If you have not added antifreeze, the water in the radiator may be freezing. Your engine will overheat if this happens. After starting the engine, watch the temperature gauge for signs of overheating. Use the defroster or slightly open your windows to keep them from "fogging up."

TIRE BLOWOUT

Teach your teen to always keep both hands on the wheel. If a tire goes flat suddenly, you need both hands to control the vehicle. If you have a sudden tire blowout, you should:

1. Hold the steering wheel tightly and steer straight ahead.
2. Slow down gradually. Take your foot off the gas pedal slowly, but do not hit the brakes.
3. Let the vehicle slow to a stop, completely off the road.
4. Apply the brakes when the vehicle is almost stopped.

WHEN YOU ARE STUCK IN SNOW OR MUD

1. Shift into a low gear and keep the front wheels straight.
2. Gently step on the gas pedal.
3. Avoid spinning the wheels. Drive forward as far as possible.
4. Shift into reverse and slowly back up as far as possible. Do not spin the wheels.
5. Shift into a low gear again and drive forward.
6. Repeat a forward-backward motion until the vehicle rolls free.
7. In deep mud or snow, put boards, tree branches, etc., under the tires. Never do this when the tires are spinning.

You may avoid getting stuck if you always carry chains in your vehicle. Put chains on the tires before driving in snow or mud.

STUCK ACCELERATOR

If your accelerator becomes stuck, you should:

1. Shift to neutral.
2. Apply the brakes.
3. Keep your eyes on the road.
4. Look for a way out.
5. Warn other drivers by honking and flashing your emergency lights.
6. Try to drive the vehicle safely off the road.
7. When you no longer need to change direction and have stopped, turn off the ignition. (Turning off the key locks the steering wheel of many vehicles, - so do NOT turn off the ignition until you come to a complete stop.)

Disclaimer: This checklist was created by myself as a parent looking for a structured way to teach my teens to drive. It has not been vetted by a professional and does not claim to be the correct information to support correct procedures when learning to drive. This checklist may not be all-encompassing with everything you should cover with a new driver. It is only offered as a starting resource. It is intended to accompany any training you plan to do with a new driver and we encourage you to register your child/new driver for professional driving lessons. Do your own due diligence to ensure that your new driver not only has the skills required to pass their road test, but that they also have the skills to handle all situations on the road. We wish you luck and hope you find this helpful.