COACHING YOUR NEW DRIVER
An In-Car Guide for Parents

**DOs**

- Share your driving wisdom and experience!
- Stay cool when your teen says “Don’t yell at me!”
- Drive in different conditions (weather, lighting, road type)
- Aim for smoothness—pretend there’s a cup of water on the dash and you don’t want to spill a drop
- Take breaks—every 25 minutes or so, and discuss progress

**DON’Ts**

- Don’t take the same route twice; use a slightly different route each time
- Don’t view your teen as your chauffeur—they need your eyes, attention and coaching
- Don’t focus too much on basic maneuvers (turning, etc.)—your teen will pick those up quickly
- Don’t say too much, but offer immediate feedback when appropriate; debrief fully after the session

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**KEYS TO SAFETY**

- Drive the way you want your teen to drive—be a good role model.
- Let them sleep! Biologically, teens need about 9½ hours of sleep daily.
- Adopt a Parent-Teen Driving Agreement.
- When you are coaching your teen, say aloud the actual and potential (hidden) hazards along the road.
- Visit AAA’s Keys2Drive website at TeenDriving.AAA.com.
- Take the StartSmart Online Parent session, visit: TeenDriving.AAA.com

**StartSmart...**

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LESSON 1: Your Vehicle

- Adjust the vehicle to the driver (seat position, steering wheel, head restraints, mirrors, etc.)
- First, start in a large parking lot and drive around the outside edge: 10–15 mph, practicing steering and braking
- Second: a short drive on an uncrowded residential street, focus on being smooth, and looking ahead

⚠️ WATCH OUT FOR: ⚠️

Overconfidence, driving too fast

LESSON 2: Parking & Braking

- When braking, be smooth, and check traffic behind
- Practice parking in an empty lot
- Mainly look directly over your shoulder when backing
- Always keep your foot on the brake when backing
- Focus on precision, not speed

⚠️ WATCH OUT FOR: ⚠️

Not looking directly to the space into which you are backing
Over-relying on backup camera, and entering or leaving the space too quickly

LESSON 4: Looking Ahead for Potential Hazards

- Goal: see all current hazards
- Practice anticipating what might become a hazard, such as:
  - Pedestrian stepping into road
  - Car pulling out from parking lot
  - Cars hidden behind larger vehicles
- Maintain a “Visual Control Zone” by looking 12–15 seconds ahead

⚠️ WATCH OUT FOR: ⚠️

Not scanning in all directions
Not looking far enough ahead

LESSON 5: Following Skills & Space

- Drive 3–4 seconds behind vehicle ahead (+1 second for nighttime, rain, etc.)
- Keep open space to at least one side at all times
- Stop behind car ahead so you can see that car’s rear tires plus some pavement

⚠️ WATCH OUT FOR: ⚠️

Causing another driver to have to change speed or steer around you

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LESSON 3: Speed Selection

- Practice adjusting speed based on the three main factors:
  1. Visibility (day, night, fog, etc.)
  2. Amount of nearby traffic
  3. Road conditions (dry, wet, etc.)

- Always know the speed limit

WATCH OUT FOR:
Allowing other drivers to cause them to drive faster

LESSON 6: Driving in Different Conditions & on Different Types of Roads

- Goal: Identify current hazards
  - Darkness
  - Rain
  - Snow, etc.
- Variety is key—practice on:
  - City streets
  - Country roads
  - Interstates
  - Suburban roadways, etc.

WATCH OUT FOR:
Not driving different roads on next practice session
Driving too fast at night/in rain

Note that these lessons should build upon each other

EXAMPLES OF WISDOM PARENTS HAVE SHARED:

- “I find it useful to look through the car ahead—to see how traffic is moving (or not).”
- “When turning, I try to turn my head first, and then turn the wheel—that way I’m looking where I want to go, instead of where I am now.”
- “I expect every driver to take the action that puts me at the most risk.”
- “I find it’s best to assume other drivers have no idea I’m there—they don’t see me at all.”
- “To get more space around me, I just adjust my speed a bit.”
**START OF EACH DRIVE:**
- Check yourself! Be mentally and physically ready
- Walk around to inspect the car
- Review the last drive, and future focus areas
- Buckle up, focus, phones off!

**DRIVING LOG**
*Remember—every trip counts!*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>DRIVING TIME</th>
<th>DRIVING CONDITIONS</th>
<th>SKILLS PRACTICED</th>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>FUTURE FOCUS AREA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/16</td>
<td>1.0 hr</td>
<td>Nighttime</td>
<td>Turns in city traffic, following distance, smooth steering</td>
<td>Keeping back far enough from car ahead</td>
<td>. Smoother steering . Looking farther ahead</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**END OF EACH DRIVE:**
- Teen to self-rate their anxiety from 1–10
- Teen: What three things went well?
- Teen: What one thing could be improved on?
- Schedule the next practice session

To print additional copies of this driving log, please visit AAA.com/teendrivinglog.

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