

BANCHORY ACADEMY
SAFE TEENAGE DRIVERS CAMPAIGN

**An Essential Guide to Encourage
Safe Driving for Teenagers**

**Supported by
Banchory Academy Parent Teacher Association
Banchory Academy Parent Council**

NOW THAT YOUR CHILD IS NEARLY 17!

An Essential Guide for Parent/Carers to Encourage Safe Teenage Driving

Introduction

Your child is fast approaching 17 and may soon be learning to drive. We have compiled this information leaflet to help you and your child make safe driving choices. If we all work together (parents, teenagers, teachers, police, and driving schools) we can reduce the number of accidents and deaths on our roads.

This Guide aims to help parents support their teenage children to become safe and responsible drivers. It is divided into 3 Sections

1. An overview of statistics to raise awareness of the issues that affect safe driving
2. What you can do to help improve road safety for your teenager and for the community
3. An example of a "Parent-Teenager Safe Driving Contract" that can be used as a guideline in setting boundaries for your child as they learn to drive safely.

1. Statistics You Can Stop

Young drivers out-number, out-travel, out-crash and die more frequently in crashes than any other group of drivers. Fortunately, there's a lot you, as a parent/carer, can do to prevent this now.

The following statistics were compiled by Brake, an independent national road safety charity.

- In Scotland, road crashes are the **leading cause of death** for 15-24 year-olds.¹
- One 15-25 year-old driver or passenger is killed or seriously injured **every hour**.² A serious injury is one that can change a life forever, and includes brain damage, paralysis, loss of limbs, severe burning or facial disfigurement.
- 2 in 3 teenagers who die in car crashes are **male**.
- 1 in 5 teenage drivers has a crash in their **first year** of driving.
- The presence of one **passenger** almost doubles the risk of a fatal crash compared to the teenager driving alone. With two or more passengers, the fatal crash risk is five times as high as driving alone.
- You are 3 times more likely to die in a car crash on a rural road.
- Over half of driving fatalities occur on rural roads.

Did you know (Brake's 2006 survey of young drivers):

- 3 in 10 have driven without a licence
- 1 in 9 has been a passenger with a driver who they knew was unlicensed, uninsured, or who had stolen the car
- 1 in 3 has been a passenger in a car driven by a driver on drink or drugs
- 1 in 4 don't always belt up in the back

Young people surveyed admit that:

- 1 in 2 break 30mph limits by 10mph or more
- 1 in 8 has overtaken at speed while unsure of what is coming in the opposite direction. Of these, 3/4 are male
- More than 1 in 4 have driven at more than 70mph on a rural road
- 1 in 4 have driven after drinking alcohol
- 1 in 14 has driven on illegal drugs

Why Teenage Drivers are at Risk

- Operating a complex motor vehicle is a brand-new experience for most teenagers.
- Their search, scan and reaction abilities are not very well developed.
- They see hazards as less dangerous than they really are.
- Teenagers like to drive with other teenagers, which can be distracting and lead to thrill seeking.

¹ Figures from the General Register Office for Scotland, 2004

² Figures obtained by Brake from the Department for Transport, 2006

2. Get Involved, Stay Involved ... Your Involvement is the Key

The best person to teach your teenage son or daughter how to become a safe, responsible driver is **you**. Your wisdom, guidance, and continued involvement will make a big difference, and could save lives. When parents/carers get directly involved in helping their teenage children to develop safe, responsible driving skills, something amazing happens: the likelihood for crashes, injuries, and deaths decreases. It continues to do so even after your teenager has passed their test – as long as you continue to offer guidance and supervision. Your influence can literally be a lifesaver, both for your teenager's life and the lives of other drivers and passengers.

What You Can Do

1. **Set a Good Example:** Your young driver will copy your driving habits. If you don't obey traffic laws, wear a seatbelt, keep your cool in traffic, keep to speed limits, or stay off your mobile phone, they won't either.
2. **Be a Teacher:** Teach your new driver about driving and the technology behind it. Point out what to look for – traffic signs, bad drivers, emergencies, etc., as you drive with them.
3. **Supervise Practice Driving:** Give your teenager as much supervised practice as possible on different roads, in different weather, and in all kinds of driving conditions – even after your teenage driver passes their test.
4. **Reduce Risks:** Understand the possible risks that may tempt your teenage driver. Driving with other teenage passengers, driving at night, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, speeding, and being inattentive are all dangerous actions that must be avoided.
5. **Think Safety First:** Your teenager's safety should be your first concern, so consider buying a new or used car with good safety features. Think sensible, safe, and un-fun vehicle, and check crash test data. Don't let your teenager "own" a car. Instead, allow your teenager to "drive a family car". Research suggests that teenagers drive more safely with a car they don't consider to be their own.
6. **Don't Rush It:** Parents sometimes rush their teenagers into passing their test to free up their own time, or to run errands for them. Don't rush it - inexperience is the number one contributing factor to unsafe and potentially hazardous driving situations.
7. **Monitor and Restrict:** Studies show that teenagers with lenient parental driving restrictions are more likely to have more traffic offences and crashes.
8. **Use a Parent-Teenager Safe Driving Contract. No contract=No driving:** A formal agreement between you and your teenager can be a useful tool to encourage safe driving habits, especially in the early days of driving. Ideally, it should cover all driving rules and agreements, plus the consequences for breaking those rules. It should spell out everything from vehicle usage, financial responsibility, and geographic driving limits to the number of passengers, and the prohibition of the use of alcohol and drugs. Set firm rules and stick to them. Start very strict and relax rules as time passes and your teenager does well. Tighten them up if she/he does poorly.

Why is a Parent-Teenager Safe Driving Contract Useful?

A Safe Driving Contract signals to the teenager that driving is a serious and potentially deadly activity, and helps you, the parent/carer, set clear guidelines and rules to develop safe driving habits.

The first step as a parent/carer is often the most difficult: take time to reflect carefully about the issues, and resolve to do all you can to prevent any accident from happening. It is essential at this stage to establish with the teenager, in advance, your firm determination to reach an agreement prior to their driving. You must be willing to state (and mean) that you will not allow them to drive

until an agreement is reached and signed. Do this...and then be willing to ride out the storm of teenage protest.

Use the enclosed agreement as a starting point. Revise it to suit you and your teenager. To avoid confusion, make sure that all parents/carers involved are in agreement about the contract before it is discussed with the teenager.

Consider this approach: make a draft of the contract before you present it to your child and include some items you are willing to adjust, negotiate, or even give up. Instead of giving the child a finished contract, offer to go through it with him or her item-by-item and invite the teenager to make a revision. It's OK to make some rules non-negotiable.

Sign the contract, and provide a copy to your teenage son or daughter. Set a date to revise it after the teenager has been driving for a period (say a couple of months). On this review date, go through it and change the agreement a little (or a lot) based on experience to date. Make it stricter if the teenager's behaviour with the car warrants that. Make it more lenient if the teenager is doing well. Start with a fairly strict contract (see enclosed).

Do not allow a teenager to drive independently until the agreement is negotiated, written, revised, and signed! It is never too late to do this – if your teenager has already been driving independently for some time, still go ahead. You will increase their awareness and safety consciousness, and could prevent a tragedy. You could also consider using this for all members of your household.

“Getting it.” Teenagers may quickly sign this type of document, without really “learning” the rules. Even if they do learn them, they may forget them. So, we encourage you to think of creative ways to assure that they have really understood and retained the rules. Some suggestions:

- a. **Require your teenager to read the entire contract to you, aloud.**
- b. **Require your teenager to sit while you read it to them.**
- c. **Before signing, sit down together, read each item together, and discuss.**
- d. **Occasionally ask questions. Ex: “What does the contract say about curfew?”**
- e. **Feeling really mean? Require your teenager to re-type the entire contract.**

3. Example of a Parent-Teenager Safe Driving Contract

Ask your teenage driver to initial each point to show they have read and understood it.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

___ **The UK Driving License is evidence that I have met the *minimum requirements to drive.***

I understand that I will only be allowed to drive when I am willing to abide by the rules and regulations agreed with my parents/carers.

I recognise that driving a car is a very serious matter. I recognize that...

___ Car accidents are the **leading cause of death** of people 15-24 years old.

___ I am **more likely to die** in a car accident than from any other cause.

___ Recklessness or mistakes that I make while driving **could kill or hurt me**, passengers in the car I drive, and/or people in other cars and pedestrians.

___ I will **abide by the laws** regulating driving. I will observe and abide by speed limits. I will abide by rules established by my parents/carers. I recognise these are for my protection and the protection of others.

___ I understand that the car I drive is the **property of my parents/carers**, only to be driven **with their permission**.

___ I understand that my parents/carers and I must be able to reach a written agreement in order for me to be permitted to drive.

___ I understand that the terms of this agreement may be changed based on how I handle the freedom and responsibility of driving - the rules will get stricter if my parents/carers judge that I am not doing well. The rules will become less strict if my parents/carers judge that I am doing well.

___ I must study and be aware of the terms of this contract. "Forgetting" any part of this contract is no excuse.

___ If my parents/carers deny me permission to drive, for whatever reason, I will abide by this and give them my keys immediately with no argument or debate.

___ If I drive in defiance of my parents' order not to drive, this contract is cancelled and no driving will be permitted for at least one year.

RULES - Category A.

This is the most serious set of rules. If violated, it will lead to an indefinite suspension of driving privileges.

1. **Seatbelts.** I will wear my seatbelt at all times and require all passengers to wear them.
2. **No thrill-seeking or stunts.** I will not take part in any thrill-seeking behaviour while driving. Driving too fast, racing of any kind, and any kind of "stunt" involving a car is NOT ALLOWED.
3. **No alcohol use/abuse.** I understand that it is illegal for me to drink alcohol and drive. If I drink, I will not drive for 24 hours after my last use of alcohol in ANY amount. I will not allow alcohol in the car.
4. **No drug use/abuse.** I will not use any illegal substance, nor will I allow them in the car.
5. **I will not be a passenger driven by someone who has or could have used alcohol or drugs.** I will not accept a lift with any driver who has, or could have used alcohol or any illegal substance. If I find myself in this situation, I will contact my parents or designated adult to arrange for a lift. I understand that my parents/carers will respect my privacy and avoid asking me a lot of questions about it.
6. **No mobile phones** I will not use my mobile phone whilst driving. I will pull over in a safe place to make or receive a call.
7. **Informing parents about accidents & police encounters.** I must inform my parents about any accidents, and encounters with the police.

RULES - Category B.

Violations will lead to suspension of driving privileges for up to three months.

1. **Permission to Drive.** I must ask permission to drive each time I drive. Exceptions to this rule will be given for regular trips, e.g. to work, regular activities, etc. I will ask permission to drive to specific locations and will discuss the route planned. I will be certain that my parents/carers know where I am. I will not make unscheduled stops or side trips.
2. **Curfew.** I may not drive after 11:00 p.m. This curfew will be reviewed and possibly revised when I meet my parents/carers on _____ (scheduled date to revise contract). *Some people believe this is too strict and unrealistic, however this has been added to the contract after research established that a 11:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. curfew on driving reduces the risk of accidents*
3. **Limit on passengers.** During the first month of driving, I will not be allowed to have any passengers. I may ask permission for specific exceptions. This will be adjusted, if things go well, when we revise the contract. I will, however, continue to have limits on passengers. **This is an essential rule. There is a very direct relationship between the number of passengers in the car with a teenage driver, and the likelihood of an accident. It also, of course, increases the number of potential deaths or injuries.**
4. **Off-Limit Areas.** I will not drive on roads, motorways, or in areas that are designated as off-limits. I understand that greater flexibility in these matters will come as I gain experience and show that I am honouring the agreement. For the time being, the following roads and areas are to be avoided (e.g. Cairn of Mount road).
5. **No one else drives vehicle.** I will not permit any other person to drive the car without my parents/carers' explicit permission for each specific case.

RULES-CATEGORY C.

Violations may lead to suspension of driving privileges for up to six weeks.

1. **Weather/road conditions.** I will respect weather and road conditions, slowing down as needed for safety. I will contact my parents/carers to discuss weather or poor road conditions when I am out driving.
2. **Emotional upset.** I will not drive when I am upset or angry, as I understand that this may impair my judgment and driving skills. If upset, I will contact my parents for a lift and I reserve the right to maintain my privacy regarding personal matters. My parents agree not to ask a lot of unnecessary questions.
3. **Taking care of vehicle.** It is my responsibility to protect the car I drive. I will keep it reasonably clean and maintained. My responsibilities regarding the maintenance of the car are...(DEFINE)
4. **Passenger behaviour.** I will not allow my passengers to behave in such a way as to distract me while driving or damage the car.
5. **Friends travel with me only with their parents' permission.** When giving a lift to my friends, I will be reasonably sure that they have their parents' permission to ride with me.
6. **No Smoking.** I will not allow smoking in the car. I will not smoke in the car.
7. **No eating & driving.** I will not eat or drink while driving.
8. **Car audio system.** For the first month I drive, I will not have the car stereo on. After the first two months, I will be allowed to have the stereo on but will make no adjustments to it other

than changing the volume while driving. I will only change a CD/cassette/radio channel when stopped or pulled over.

9. **Other electronics.** I will not use MP3 players or other electronic devices while driving. I will pull over to use any electronic equipment including setting destinations on sat nav's.
10. **No rushing.** Accidents are more likely to happen when I rush. I am more likely to rush when I leave late. Therefore, my parents/carers reserve the right to not allow me to drive unless I leave enough time to get to my destination safely.
11. **Attention to Driving.** I will not do things while driving that distracts me from the road. No applying makeup, getting things in and out of a handbag or backpack, shaving, etc.

SPECIAL ITEMS:

1. **Speeding or parking tickets** will result in suspension of my driving privileges for a period to be determined by my parents/carers. They have no obligation to pay my fines for driving-related tickets.
2. **Financial.** I will make certain financial contributions to the purchase of the car, maintenance of the car, and/or insurance, and fuel. My contributions are currently as follows.... (DEFINE)
3. **Family obligations.** I agree to give lifts to family members if asked by my parents/carers, provided this doesn't conflict with any of the rules above. Fulfilling these obligations is a condition of my use of a car. Sometimes these responsibilities will override my own desires and interests in using the car.
4. **General attitude.** In allowing me to drive, I agree that that my parents/carers may take into account my general attitude, e.g. how I handle my responsibilities, including schoolwork, employment, and household duties. I will not ask my parents/carers to allow me to drive when I am disrespectful to them or others.
5. **Changes in this agreement.** I understand that this contract will be made stricter at any time my parents/carers believe that is the best thing to do. I understand that as I gain experience and if I consistently abide by these rules that my parents/carers will make the contract less strict. However, I understand that it is my parents/carers' choice and responsibility to change or not change the contract. **We will review this agreement and perhaps make changes to it on _____ (date) or earlier.**

Summary: I agree to abide by the rules in this contract and I accept the consequences and penalties if I do not. I recognize my parents/carers' authority in deciding if I may drive. That authority is final until I am an adult living independent of my parents/carers.

Signatures DRIVER _____ (date)
PARENT(s)/Carer(s) _____ (date)