

Circle of Safety: Over 100 Safe Driving Tips For Young Drivers

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Driving a car looks like it should be so easy. It isn't. Every day people get in accidents caused by errors in judgment and mistakes.

On the following pages, you will find many suggestions to help you become a better driver. Drive careful.

Driving Around School

- Get to school five to ten minutes early and leave five minutes late to avoid the mad dash into and out from the parking lots. Many accidents happen when kids are rushing around.
- If your school lot has perpendicular spaces (not angle parking), park in a space you can pull straight out of instead of having to back out. Backing out in a crowded lot is tricky.
- Watch for kids getting on and off school buses--and don't run into the school bus, either.
- Go slow
- Don't leave valuables like wallets, shoes, and leather jackets or sports equipment in your cars where they can be seen because they invite break-ins. Lock valuables in the trunk.
- Always stop for school buses with flashing lights. The flashing lights mean that students are either getting on or off the bus--and may be crossing the street. Their safety depends on cars obeying this law.

Driving Around Town

- Avoid making left hand turns across busy intersections that don't have turn signals. It takes a while to learn how to gage the oncoming traffic. Better to go down a block or two until you come to a light, or plan a route that doesn't need this turn.
- Don't make assumptions about what other drivers are going to do. The only thing you can assume about another driver with a turn signal on is that he has a turn signal on. He might not be turning at all and forgot to turn it off the last time he used it or has changed his mind.
- When there's an obstruction in your lane, wait for oncoming traffic to clear before you pull around. Just because someone's blocking your lane doesn't mean you have the right of way in the next or oncoming lane.
- Watch out for aggressive drivers and try to stay out of their way. They are the cause of a lot of accidents--especially on the highways.

- Watch out for anything that is connected to the U.S. Mail. Mailboxes, or Mail delivery vehicles.
- Don't do anything that will cause another car's driver to slam on the brakes such as pulling out in front of him or swerving into his lane.
- Driving in the country. It's a lot less congested, but still not without unforeseen dangers, such as hidden driveways.
 - Watch out for deer and other large and small animals. If you see a deer approaching, slow down and flash your lights repeatedly. Often, the deer will run away.
 - Also, if you see one deer, watch out for others close by--they often travel in pairs or groups.
 - Watch out for pigs, chickens, cows, and skunks, too.
- When driving in the desert, watch out for animals like camels. One visitor from Saudi Arabia wrote in that a relative was severely injured in an impact with a camel.

Driving In Bad Weather

- Turn your headlights on anytime you need to turn your windshield wipers on—in rain, fog, sleet, freezing rain, or snow. It will help your visibility--and also help other drivers see you. Most cars today have lights that automatically come on when it get's dark, beware they don't come on when it's raining. Manually turn them on.
- In winter, keep an ice scraper with a brush in your car in case it snows or sleets. Also check that you have wiper fluid/de-icer in your car. If it gets messy while you are out, these will come in handy.
- Double the space you normally leave between you and the next car. You'll need more space to stop on slick roads.
- Brake gently
- Make sure your exhaust tail pipe is clear if you've had to dig your car out of snow or ice or if you've backed into a snow bank. If your tail pipe is blocked you could get sick or die from carbon monoxide poisoning.
- When driving on slippery surfaces like ice or snow use gentle pressure on the accelerator pedal when starting. If your wheels start to spin, let up on the accelerator until traction returns.
- Check that windshield washer works-you may need it in snow and sleet.
- Braking in bad weather can be tricky. When braking on wet roads: if you have ABS (anti-lock) brakes, do not pump brakes. If you skid with non ABS brakes and your wheels lock up, let up on the brakes to unlock the wheels, then brake gently.
- Listen to radio traffic reports and adjust your travel plans accordingly.
- Keep windows and windshield clear. Make sure wipers are working.
- Leave a window open a little bit to keep windshield from fogging up and to give you fresh air.

- Watch for danger spots ahead. You've probably heard that bridges and overpasses may freeze before the roads do.
- When starting out in bad weather, test your brakes to see how far it takes you to stop. Keep you distance from cars in front of you.
- If you are stuck in ice or snow, try putting your floor mats under the edge of the tires to give them traction.
- Wet roads can have built up grease from heat and can be slippery than you realize. Also puddles on the wet roads can lead to hydroplaning which can be very dangerous is the car is out of control.

General Tips

- Always wear your seat belt--and make sure all passengers buckle up, too.
- Adjust your car's headrest to a height behind your head--not your neck—to minimize whiplash in case you're in an accident.
- Never try to fit more people in the car than you have seatbelts for them to use.
- Obey the speed limits, going too fast gives you less time to stop or react. Excess speed is one of the main causes of teenage accidents.
- Don't run red lights.
- Use turn signals to indicate your intention to turn or to change lanes. Turn it on to give the cars behind you enough time to react before you take the action. Also, make sure the signal turns off after you've completed the action.
- When light turns green, make sure intersection clears before you go. Count to 5 and look both ways before proceeding, this could save you life.
- Don't drive like you own the road; drive like you own the car.
- Make sure your windshield is clean. At sunrise and sunset, light reflecting off your dirty windshield can momentarily blind you from seeing what's going on.
- Don't blast the radio. You might miss hearing a siren or a horn that could warn you of possible trouble.
- Make sure your garage door is completely open before backing out of it.
- Drive into your garage straight, not on an angle. Another teen thought her car would straighten out before she got inside, but instead she dented the car and broke the molding on the garage.
- Make sure your car has gas in it. Don't ride around with the gauge on empty—who knows where you might get stranded.
- Don't drink and drive, and don't ride with anyone who has been drinking. Call parents or friends to take you home if you need a ride.
- Don't take drugs or drive if you've taken any. Don't ride with anyone who has been using drugs. Even some over the counter drugs can make you drowsy. Check label for warnings.
- Don't drive with small children or even small teenage friends as passengers in a front seat that has a passenger-side air bag. They should be buckled up in the back seat.

Recent transportation studies show that small children may be injured by the air bags even in low impact collisions. (Actually, it's safer not to drive with friends and kids in the car when you're learning to drive. They can be distracting.)

- Don't talk on your cell phone, put on make-up, comb your hair, or eat while driving. People who talk on cell phones while driving are four times more likely to have an accident. If you need to make a call, pull off the road to a safe spot and park.
- Don't fiddle with the radio while you are driving. It's better to wait until you can pull over and stop because even taking your focus off the road for a few seconds could lead to an accident.
- Use good quality tires and make sure they are inflated to the right pressure (check your owners manual for what is right for your tires and car). Many visitors to this page have recommended radial tires and in some states, radials are ok to use in snow emergency conditions. Check your state to see what the requirements are for driving in snow.
- Maintain your car. Bald tires, a slipping transmission, or a hesitant engine could lead to accidents.
- Use headlights during daylight driving, especially on long stretches of desert highway and rural roads to make you more visible to oncoming drivers.
- Select a designated driver when going out for a night on the town with friends. This person does not drink and has the responsibility of getting people home safely. (Drinking and driving DO NOT MIX)
- Watch out for potholes, especially after bad weather
- Be on the lookout for motorcycles, bikes, and pedestrians – they may not obey the rules, but you would be charged with an accident if you them.
- When driving to a new place, get complete directions before you go. Figure out what exits you need to take before hand. One visitor hit a divider at an exit ramp location after being told too late that this was the place to get off the highway.

To Pass or Not to Pass

Don't Pass:

- When there is a solid yellow line on your side
- When you're uncertain there is enough time or space
- When you can't see around a curve or over a hill
- When behind multiple cars and passing one car doesn't really make any difference
- On two lane roads, don't pass tractors or trucks or other vehicles you can't see around
- In hazardous weather conditions
- When another car is coming toward you in the opposite lane
- When a car is passing you
- When there is construction or road work
- When the car in front of you is going the maximum speed limit
- When on narrow roads, on bridges, or in tunnels

- When you are unfamiliar with the car you are driving and its capabilities
- Don't play leap frog by passing a friend that just passed you
- Passing with Caution
- Only pass if there's a dotted line on your side.
- Check that the passing lane is clear.
- Make sure you have plenty of space to pass safely.
- Signal before you pass.
- Pass at least ten miles per hour faster than the car you're passing while not exceeding the speed limit.
- Make sure you have cleared the passed car with enough space before pulling back into your lane.

Major Factors In Accidents

- Speed
- Alcohol and drugs
- Ignoring right-of-way
- Tailgating
- Improper passing and driving to the left of center
- Fatigue
- Reckless Driving

Danger Signs For Fatigue

- Drowsiness can sneak up on you when you're driving. For teenagers, driving late at night, between eleven p.m. and two a.m. is particularly dangerous for falling asleep at the wheel. Here are some signs to watch for--and do something about before you run into a tree or another car.
 - Yawning a lot
 - Having trouble keeping eyes open
 - Not being able to concentrate
 - Not remembering the last few minutes or seconds
 - Jerking of your head or body from the brink of falling asleep
 - Car wanders from the road or into another lane
- What to do:
 - Slow Down
 - Pull off road into a safe parking space.
 - Call home if you can.
 - Talk to passenger if you have one

- Turn radio to a lively station, try singing
- Roll down window and get some fresh air for a few minutes, or turn vent on full blast
- Make a pit stop, use the bathroom and get a Coke or coffee to drink

Buying A Used Car

- Some older used cars have airbags. Many Chrysler cars 1990 (also a few from 1989) and later have airbags. Other makes and models have airbags in 1993, 94, or 95 models.
- The Consumer Guide Used Car Rating Guide has listing with good and bad points of used cars.
- Check the horn, lights, heat, air-conditioning, brakes, seat belts, steering, and seats out before you buy. Also look for evidence that indicates the car was in a major accident. Get a VIN check.
- Check with the previous owner for the car's accident and maintenance record. You may find the owner's name written on the owner's manual in glove compartment. Also for a fee, you may be able to get some information from your state department of motor vehicles if you have the car identification number (VIN) which can tell you if the car has been in previous accidents.
- Have a mechanic you trust go over the car and alert you to any potential problems.
- Check the car for evidence of tampering like any marks on the odometer or numbers that don't line up. Also see if the odometer miles are more than mileage entered on oil stickers, inspection stickers, or tire warranty cards.
- Look at the tires. If the odometer reads less than 25,000 miles, the car should have the original tires--and they should all be the same brand and probably radials.

The Dakkak Insurance Agency encourages young drivers to read and review these tips regularly. If you have any questions, call us at 941-926-2800.