

# **SAFER DRIVING**

## Parents and Young Drivers



# Young Drivers

Learner drivers have few accidents because they are always under supervision. But, once they have passed their test, and can drive unsupervised, their chances of crashing increase dramatically.

Young drivers are much more likely to crash than experienced drivers, and are at particularly high risk in their first year of driving.

Young drivers are more likely to be involved in:

- high speed crashes
- crashes caused by losing control of the vehicle
- crashes in the dark
- crashes when overtaking and negotiating bends.

Insurance figures show that 17 to 20 year old male drivers are nearly ten times more likely to be killed or seriously injured on the roads than more experienced drivers. They are also twice as likely to make an insurance claim than other drivers, and on average, their claims cost three times more. This is why motor insurance premiums for young drivers are much higher than for other drivers, and can easily run into several thousand pounds a year.

## Why?

### Lack of experience

This is one of the main reasons. As new drivers gain more driving experience their accident rate begins to fall.

### Age

Younger novice drivers crash more than older novice drivers, even after accounting for experience. For example, a 27 year old new driver is about 30% safer than a 17 year old new driver.

### Attitude

Young drivers, especially men, tend to be over confident and are more likely to drive in risky ways: too fast, too close to the vehicle in front and dangerous overtaking. They consistently rate their own performance as above average and are more likely to regard 'good' driving as the ability to handle the car at higher speeds.

### Hazard Perception

Young drivers often have excellent vehicle control skills and fast reactions. But, they are poor at identifying potential hazards and assessing risk, and tend to overestimate their ability to avoid the hazard and accident. New drivers take longer to react to hazardous situations than more experienced drivers.

### Peer pressure

When young drivers, especially men, carry their friends they are more likely to be distracted or to mess around and show off while driving.

### Gender

Novice male drivers have higher accident rates than novice female drivers, and are more likely to commit driving offences.

# How You Can Help

The good news is that there are some simple steps that parents and young drivers can take together that will help to reduce these risks, and possibly the cost of insurance.

## Pass Plus

Pass Plus helps new drivers improve their skills and widen their driving experience. It involves extra driving lessons in different conditions (at night and on urban and rural roads, dual carriageways and motorways). Once completed drivers might be able to obtain reduced insurance premiums from some insurance companies.

Only Pass Plus registered approved driving instructors (ADIs) can run Pass Plus courses. Contact the road safety department of your council to see if any subsidised courses are available.

## Telematics

Many motor insurers offer policies that involve the driver using telematics in their vehicle, usually by having a small device (a 'black box') fitted in the vehicle, or by using an app on a smartphone. Some policies begin with an app, as a way of trying the telematics, before having a black box fitted if the policy seems useful for the driver.

This is a very useful way of helping a new driver improve their driving and obtain reduced insurance premiums. It can significantly reduce risky driving. Typically, it monitors how the driver is driving and gives them a good driving score.

If the driver is driving responsibly and avoiding high risk situations (such as driving in the early hours) she or he gets a higher score, and possibly a discount on their premiums or another benefit (such as more miles). But, if the driver drives poorly (for example, speeding, or harsh braking), they get a lower score and their premiums may increase.

Telematics also shows the driver what's good and bad about their driving and provides advice about how they can change it to reduce risks and improve their score. Young drivers are more likely to improve their driving when they and their parents view this feedback.

## Let Them Drive You

When travelling with your son or daughter, let them drive to increase their experience. Offer constructive advice, but don't be a back seat driver!

## Safe Driving Agreement

Make a Safe Driving Agreement between you and your young driver.

In some countries, young drivers get a restricted driving licence for the first year or so after passing their driving test. For example, they cannot drive at night (often between midnight and 6am) or carry passengers of their own age, unless there is an experienced driver in the car. This is known as Graduated Driver Licensing, and helps to keep the new driver away from higher risk situations for a short period of time, while they develop their driving experience. Research shows it can be very effective at reducing young driver crashes.

This system is not used in the UK, but a voluntary parent/young driver agreement can create some of the effects. They are popular in some countries. The new driver is allowed to drive the family car (or their own car if you help to fund it) unsupervised, if they agree to certain conditions for the first year or so of driving.

This keeps them away from situations that are most likely to lead to crashes.

# Safe Driving Agreements

Safe Driving Agreements are flexible and tailored to individual circumstances. They can be verbal or written (an example agreement is on the next page). They are not about being over-protective or unreasonable but are promises between the parent and the young driver for safer driving during the initial high risk period while the new driver builds up their experience. They can be used to support telematics insurance if the new driver has such a policy.

Agree with your young driver some or all of the following:

## Driving at night

Young drivers are more likely to crash at night, so consider agreeing between you that the young driver will not drive between midnight and 6:00 am. The exact times can be relaxed as their driving experience increases.

## Carrying Groups of Friends

Consider agreeing a limit on the number of their friends they carry if you are not in the car. Passenger numbers can be increased gradually as experience is gained.

## Alcohol and drugs

Ask the young driver to stick to a zero limit when driving. Ask them not to take a lift with drivers who have been drinking or might have taken drugs. Set a good example yourself.

## Speed

Young drivers are particularly prone to approaching bends too fast and to dangerous overtaking. Even keeping within the speed limit can be unsafe, for example on wet or icy roads or on narrow, winding rural roads. Discuss these risks with your young driver.

## Mobile phones

Most young drivers have a mobile phone. Whilst it is reassuring for them to carry it with them (in case they need to contact you), it is dangerous to use it whilst driving. Ask your son or daughter to agree only to use their phone whilst parked.

Discuss other distractions, like playing loud music, eating, drinking and smoking to ensure they are aware of the increased risk of doing other things while driving.

## Seatbelts

Most drivers wear seat belts, but rear seat passengers are less likely to do so. They present a danger to themselves and to other people in the car. Drivers could agree to always ask their passengers to wear their seatbelts. Set an example and always wear yours.

## 'P' Plates

Green 'P' plates can be displayed to indicate to other road users that there is an inexperienced driver at the wheel.

## Penalty Points

Make sure your young driver knows that if they acquire six or more penalty points within two years of passing their driving test, their licence will be revoked. They must then obtain a provisional licence, drive as a learner (i.e., display an 'L' Plate and be supervised) and pass the theory and practical driving tests again. The penalty points will remain on their new licence.

For more details see [www.gov.uk/penalty-points-endorsements/new-drivers](http://www.gov.uk/penalty-points-endorsements/new-drivers)

Encourage the young driver to take further training.

## Useful Websites

[www.rospa.com/roadsafety](http://www.rospa.com/roadsafety)  
[www.helpingLdrivers.com](http://www.helpingLdrivers.com)  
[www.gov.uk/pass-plus](http://www.gov.uk/pass-plus)

[www.roadar.org](http://www.roadar.org)  
[www.gov.uk/highway-code](http://www.gov.uk/highway-code)  
[think.direct.gov.uk/](http://think.direct.gov.uk/)



# Safer Driving Agreement

## Young Driver

*I promise to:*

- Confirm my destination in advance
- Drive only during the following times of day..... to .....
- Only give a lift to 1/2/3\* passengers unless you are also in the car
- Never drink alcohol or take drugs and drive
- Never accept a lift from a driver who has drunk alcohol or taken drugs. I will find alternative transport or call you and ask you to collect me or pay for a taxi, no questions asked at the time.
- Always wear my seatbelt and ensure that my passengers do the same.
- Obey all traffic laws, including speed limits and parking restrictions.
- Never use a mobile phone while driving, only when parked
- Avoid distractions whilst driving – like fiddling with the stereo, smoking, eating and drinking
- Telephone you if I'm going to be later than expected

## Parent

*I promise to:*

- Always wear my seatbelt and ensure my passengers do the same
- Never drink alcohol or take drugs and drive
- Obey all traffic laws, including speed limits and parking restrictions
- Never use a mobile phone while driving, only when parked
- Accept a call from you at any hour and either collect you or agree to pay for a taxi for you to get home, no questions asked at the time
- Remain calm and constructive when travelling in the car with you and accept that mistakes are an important part of learning.

We will review this agreement on.....

**Signed:** (by parent) .....

**Signed:** (by son/daughter).....

**Date:** .....

*\*Delete as necessary*



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