

TEACHING YOUR TEEN TO DRIVE

A Handbook for Parents

Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles
2300 West Broad Street

Post Office Box 27412
Richmond, VA 23269-0001
(804) 367-0538

Dear Parents:

Thank you for taking the time to read our new booklet, "Teaching Your Teen to Drive." Radford University and the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) produced this publication to help you supervise your child's practice driving sessions.

In an effort to help reduce the number of crashes involving teen drivers, new legislation will take effect July 1, 2001 that will affect when teens may apply for driving privileges, the number of minor passengers they may transport and the hours during which they may drive.

Beginning July 1, 2001, teens may apply for a learner's permit when they turn 15 years and six months of age, but they will not be able to obtain a driver's license until they are at least 16 years and three months of age. In order to provide more practice driving time, teens under the age of 18 must hold their learner's permit for at least nine months before receiving their driver's license. In addition, until they reach age 19, they must provide proof of successful completion of a state-approved driver's education course which includes both classroom and behind-the-wheel instruction.

Also effective July 1, 2001, teen drivers are restricted to the number of passengers under age 18 they may transport (one passenger if the driver is age 16; three passengers if the driver is age 17). Passenger restrictions do not apply to family members.

New curfew laws will also go into effect July 1, 2001. The new laws prevent drivers under age 18 who hold a learner's permit or driver's license from driving mid-night to 4 a.m. Teens with a driver's license may drive during these hours in the case of an emergency, when traveling to and from work or a school-sponsored event when accompanied by a parent or other adult acting in place of a parent.

Your involvement in your child's driving education is critical. If your teen is under age 18, you must give your permission in order for him or her to obtain a driver's license. Plus, effective July 1, 2001, you must certify that your child received at least 40 hours of driving practice (10 hours completed after sunset) before receiving a license. Finally, you have ultimate control over your teen's driving privileges. You may take your child's license for any amount of time or direct DMV to cancel it for a six-month period.

I commend you for helping teach your teenager to become a safe and responsible driver.

Commissioner
Department of Motor Vehicles

FAX: (804) 367-6631
E-MAIL: commish@dmv.state.va.us

TDD: 1-800-272-9268
WEB SITE: www.dmv.state.va.us

This handbook was made possible through a Highway Safety Project grant from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles to Radford University.



According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, traffic crashes are the number one cause of death for young people. Teens between the ages of 16 and 20 have the highest traffic fatality and injury rates per 100,000 population, four times higher than that of adults. An estimated 6,046 teens died in automobile crashes in 2000 and 572,000 more were injured in over 1.6 million non-fatal crashes.



This 1997 crash resulted in the death of a 17-year-old female. Three other teens were seriously injured in the crash.

The first year of driving is a high-risk period for the beginner. New drivers lack important skills, particularly those needed to acquire and process information. They are not as good as experienced drivers at scanning the environment, recognizing potential hazards and making tough decisions quickly. They tend to underestimate the danger of certain risky situations and overestimate the danger in others.

Inexperience and lack of skills means that one in five 16-year-old male drivers and about one in ten females will have a crash during their first year of driving. Some of the worst crashes occur at night and with a group of young people in the car. If alcohol or any other kind of impairment is involved, the level of risk is greatly increased.

As a parent, you care the most about your teen's driving ability and

safety. Research shows that parents have the potential to influence their children's driving habits. If nothing else, adults model for new drivers through their own driving behaviors.

You can do more than any other

The teen driver of this vehicle survived the crash, but was charged with involuntary manslaughter, driving under the influence of alcohol, and speeding.





*You must take
the time to
become involved
as your child
learns to drive.*

person to reduce your child's risk of injury and death by teaching safe driving habits. *Teaching Your Teen to Drive* is a handbook designed to help you participate in the process of educating your teenager behind the wheel. It can help you express your feelings about responsible driving to your child while you become a better coach and perhaps correct unsafe habits in your own driving.

This handbook is divided into four sections. The first section will help you become a better coach while supervising your child's practice driving sessions. It will give you insight into Virginia's license and vehicle requirements, planning driving sessions and important topics to discuss with your child. The second section provides detailed instructions for basic driving skills such as: visual scanning, spacing and timing decisions, handling high-risk situations and managing mistakes. The third section contains a parent-teen driving agreement that will help you set ground rules that you and your child can both follow. The final section is a driving log to help you keep track of practice sessions. The log will help you determine which skills your child has mastered and which skills need improving.

If you read this booklet carefully and take the time to talk with your child while supervising their driving, you will help them make responsible decisions and develop safe driving habits. A continued effort to educate you and your child is the best way to develop safe drivers and reduce the number of teen traffic deaths.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. How to be a Good Coach	6
Virginia license and vehicle requirements	6
Planning practice sessions	7
Important topics to discuss with your child	11
Wearing safety belts	11
Speeding	12
Violating laws	12
Dealing with fatigue	12
Operating cell phones	13
Other distractions	13
Drinking and driving	13
Driving while under the influence of drugs	16
Controlling emotions and avoiding aggressive behavior	16
What to do when a crash occurs	17
II. Driving 101	18
Scanning the road ahead	20
Basic skills: Backing and parking	21
Driving in traffic	23
Spacing and timing decisions	27
High risk conditions	29
Managing mistakes	31
III. Parent-Teen Driving Agreement	33
IV. Driving Log	35

HOW TO BE A GOOD COACH

The information provided in this section will help you become a better coach while you are supervising your child's practice driving sessions. It will give you insight into Virginia's license and vehicle requirements, how to plan driving sessions and how to discuss important topics such as drinking and driving and wearing safety belts with your child.

LICENSE AND VEHICLE REQUIREMENTS

Your child must possess a valid learner's permit before you begin in-car instruction. He or she must be a resident of Virginia, have parental permission, and be at least 15 years, 6 months to get a Virginia learner's permit. To obtain a driver's license, your child must be at least 16 years, 3 months of age, and hold the learner's permit for at least 9 months. In addition, teens under age 19 must provide proof of successful completion of a state-approved driver's education course which includes both classroom and behind-the-wheel instruction. As a parent or guardian, you must certify that your child has spent 40 hours behind the wheel in planned practice driving. Ten of these hours must have been spent driving at night.

New curfew laws prohibit drivers under age 18 who hold a learner's permit or driver's license from driving from midnight to 4 a.m. If you hold a driver's license you may drive during these hours in case of an emergency, when traveling to and from work or a school-sponsored event or when accompanied by a parent or other adult acting in place of a parent. You are also restricted to the number of passengers under age 18 which may travel with you when you drive (one passenger if you are 16; three passengers if you are 17). If you hold a learner's permit you may carry only one passenger under 18. Passenger restrictions do not apply to family members. You and your teen should review the driving laws listed in the *Virginia Driver's Manual*.

Before you or your teen get behind the wheel, it is your responsibility to ensure that the vehicle you are driving is properly registered, insured and in good working condition. Tell your teen about these requirements as you check them so that he or she is aware of the responsibilities of vehicle ownership. If the vehicle is registered in Virginia, plates must be displayed on the front and rear of the vehicle. Decals indicating the month and year that the registration expires must be placed in the designated areas on the plates. You must have the vehicle registration card while operating the vehicle; so, it is a good idea to keep the card in the glove compartment. The vehicle must be insured by a company authorized to do business in Virginia. It must have a valid safety inspection sticker and working brakes, safety belts, lights, turn signals, mirrors, windshield wipers, horn, good tires and a speedometer.

We recommend that initial lessons take place in a vehicle with an automatic transmission. Then the new driver can focus on controlling the vehicle and mastering new driving skills. Once the basic skills are accomplished, learning how to coordinate the clutch, gear shift, and accelerator of a manual transmission vehicle can be addressed.

PLANNING DRIVING LESSONS WITH YOUR TEEN

It is important to plan practice sessions. The more structured driving practice your teen experiences, the safer he or she will be after getting a license. We have included a driving log at the end of this handbook to help you keep track of practice sessions.

At the beginning of each driving session, make sure your child understands the lesson goals and reviews skills from previous lessons. It is helpful to remember the driving situations your teen has experienced and gradually work in new ones. Make sure bad habits such as failing to signal, sloppy turns, speeding, sudden changes in speed and lack of alertness are not forming.

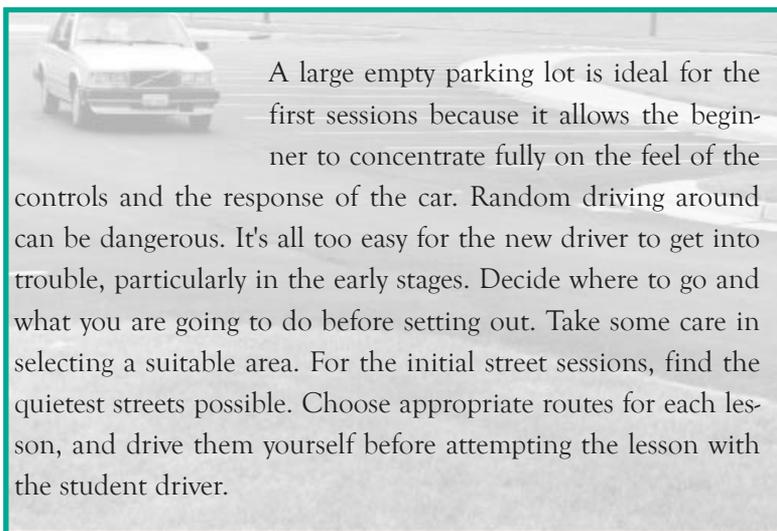
Your job is to provide a safe environment and encourage your teen to practice safe driving procedures. The following are useful tips to help you

coach your teen.

Be patient. When you introduce a new skill, guide the new driver through two or three practice trials. Then allow the driver to perform the task without assistance. If the driver makes a mistake, repeat the lesson and guide them again step by step. Remember that a simple right-turn involves several steps-checking mirrors, signaling, checking blind areas, braking, positioning, checking for traffic before the turn, steering and recovery. To expect a beginner to follow all of these correctly during the early sessions may be asking too much.

Speak clearly. Give directions well in advance and always use the same terms. For instance, don't say "accelerator" and then "gas pedal." Tell where the action will take place and then describe the action. For example: "At the next stop sign, turn right." Use the word "right" to mean a direction only. In confirming a question, say, "That is correct." This will prevent confusion.

Be Alert. Some beginners may give the impression of being in control but may, in reality, be unable to handle any sudden changes in conditions. They rely on you for guidance and even assistance in control. You should



A large empty parking lot is ideal for the first sessions because it allows the beginner to concentrate fully on the feel of the controls and the response of the car. Random driving around can be dangerous. It's all too easy for the new driver to get into trouble, particularly in the early stages. Decide where to go and what you are going to do before setting out. Take some care in selecting a suitable area. For the initial street sessions, find the quietest streets possible. Choose appropriate routes for each lesson, and drive them yourself before attempting the lesson with the student driver.



ACTIVE LEARNING

Research shows that two things influence effective learning: time-on-task and involvement in the learning activity. This means that the amount of time spent practicing and the method in which skills are practiced impact how well your child learns to drive.

Talking is a key to active learning and understanding. As such, your use of active learning behaviors throughout the lessons in this guide will greatly benefit your new driver. Ask the new driver to tell you what he or she sees and what actions should be taken. Encourage the driver to comment on driving situations before encountering them and to explain the proper procedure for that situation. For example, when changing lanes, your child should state aloud that he or she has checked the rear -view mirror, checked the side-view mirror, checked the blind spot, signaled and has determined whether it is safe to change lanes or not.

Other important things to ask the new driver to comment on are speed limits, traffic signals, road signs and road conditions. Making a habit of noticing these things in time to adjust and react is the basis of good visual scanning habits. As the new driver shares observations, the coach will gain a better understanding of what the driver is seeing and how well he or she is evaluating driving conditions. The coach also has the opportunity to discuss the

always anticipate problems and be ready to react. Do not eat, read or listen to music while coaching a new driver. Sit in a position that allows you to place your left hand on the steering wheel to guide the beginner, if necessary. Monitor traffic ahead, to the sides and behind the vehicle while observing your teen's driving. Always check the mirrors before giving directions.

Don't overload. A big part of being a good coach is reminding the driver to check traffic, to signal and to bring attention to potential hazards. Remember that everything you say is a distraction for the driver. Be sparing in your comments, and avoid letting the beginner get into situations he or she can't handle. Allow new drivers to learn from mistakes if the mistake does not present any risks. Never allow your teen to get into a dangerous situation. Maintain control or give specific directions.

Stop and discuss. When your teen makes a mistake, he or she may not understand what went wrong. Explaining and discussing while on the move is not very effective. The beginner is too busy driving. Stop as soon as you can, while the mistake is still fresh in the memory, and sort out the problem. Don't jump on every mistake and make a big thing of it. This will affect the beginner's confidence and concentration. Try to stay calm. If you get anxious, your teen probably will too, which can affect performance.

Don't contradict what the professional instructor teaches. If your teen is doing something that you think is incorrect and says that the driving instructor teaches this way, be sure to talk to the instructor. Your teen may not understand the directions.

Be a good role model. Your biggest contribution to your teen's safety and driving performance is your example. Insist on a ground rule of mutual respect and understanding. Patience, courtesy and a willingness to improve will be your best assets. Now review your driving habits and explain the importance of consideration for others.

IMPORTANT TOPICS TO DISCUSS WITH YOUR CHILD

Nearly twice as many unrestrained youths die in car crashes than those who wear safety belts. Twenty-five percent of drivers who die as a result of speeding are under age 20. And more than 20 percent of



teens killed in traffic crashes die in alcohol-related crashes. These statistics show the need to increase teen awareness about the potentially fatal results of unsafe and irresponsible driving behavior. It is important that you and your teen discuss these bad actions so that he or she is aware of the consequences of irresponsible behavior. Also use the parent-teen driving agreement on page 33 to make rules you can both live with.

Wearing safety belts

Wearing safety belts can double your child's chances of surviving a crash and more than double his or her chances of avoiding serious injury. In Virginia, in the year 2000, 60 percent of teens killed were not wearing their safety belts.



Virginia law requires that drivers

and front seat passengers use safety belts when traveling in a vehicle. And anyone under the age of 16 must wear a safety belt, regardless of where seated. Make sure your teen understands that the number of safety belts determines the number of passengers. And belts should be worn properly with the lap belt low on the lap and against the thighs and the shoulder belt over the shoulder and across the chest. The shoulder and lap belts should be snug. Improper use of seat belts may increase injury if a crash occurs.

Speeding

Speeding is one of the leading causes of teenage traffic crashes. A speed limit is the maximum legal speed one can travel on a road under ideal conditions. Remind your child that it is illegal to drive any faster than the posted speed. In addition, if conditions make the posted speed unsafe, drivers may be required by law to go slower. The speed limit is 25 mph in a school zone when indicated by a sign or signal and in residential areas. Otherwise, maintain the posted speed limit.

Violating laws

Your teen's driving privileges may be restricted or lost if they violate state traffic laws. When a driver under 20 receives a demerit point conviction (including safety belt and child restraint device) they are required to go to a driver improvement clinic. Your teen will not receive safe driving points for attending this clinic. If they do not complete the clinic within 90 days, their driving privileges will be suspended until the clinic is completed. If you are under 18, after your second demerit point conviction, DMV will suspend your permit or license for 90 days. A third conviction results in the loss of driving privileges until the age of 18 or for one year, whichever is longer.

Dealing with fatigue

Three types of fatigue may affect driving. The first is lack of rest or sleep. The second—operational fatigue—is brought on by driving long hours, heavy traffic or adverse weather conditions. The third type of fatigue is the personal circadian rhythm. Circadian rhythm is the body's natural "down time." It affects nearly everyone between 1 and 5 p.m. and around normal bedtime. Some tips to avoid fatigue include taking breaks or rest stops every two hours, occasionally adjusting the seat position, varying the speed of travel, keeping the vehicle cool with air conditioning, opening windows and being aware of your "down time."

Operating Cell Phones

Cellular phones can provide a distraction, especially for new drivers, causing them to lose their concentration and possibly resulting in a crash. As a result, cell phones should be avoided unless an emergency dictates their use. While communicating to your child about the dangers of operating cell phones while driving, be sure to tell him or her that if he or she must use the phone, be sure to pull completely off the road to a safe and appropriate location.

Other Distractions

Distractions are a major cause of crashes. It's highly important that you talk to your child about the following behaviors which increase his or her risk of being in a crash:

- Focusing attention on other passengers in the vehicle.
- Eating, drinking or smoking while they drive.
- Changing the radio, CD or tape while driving.
- Reading a road map or taking notes while driving.

It is also important for you to talk to your teen about becoming familiar with a vehicle before getting behind the wheel. Topics such as learning how to adjust the mirrors and seat, knowing how to select entertainment options, locating the lights, turn signal and windshield wipers are all important subjects that need to be addressed.

Drinking and driving

Alcohol-related crashes are a leading killer of teenagers who are inexperienced with both alcohol and driving. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says that about 3 in every 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol related crash at some time in their lives. In Virginia, in the year 2000, 40 percent of teen fatalities were alcohol related. It is essential that young drivers know the facts about drinking and driving and be aware of the dangers. The following section contains information you and your teen should read and discuss thoroughly.

JUST ONE ALCOHOLIC DRINK CAN AFFECT YOUR DRIVING ABILITY. Even a small amount of alcohol affects the brain's functions, particularly judgement, coordination and vision. Because alcohol affects judgement and driving ability, your chances of being in a crash are seven times greater if you drive after drinking than if you drive sober.

Driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs is a **criminal offense**. Conviction can result in heavy fines, loss of license and a jail sentence. Even juveniles may receive a DUI conviction on their driving records. Because of Virginia's family insurance laws, one driver's blemish can affect your family's automobile policy. The group "Save Your Insurance" says that if your teen is convicted of an alcohol or other drug violation and loses his or her driver's license, the family's auto policy could be canceled. And at best, it's likely to cost you hundreds of dollars more in insurance premiums each year. For more information about Virginia's family insurance laws, the "Save Your Insurance" group may be reached by phone, (540)432-4999, ext. 8999, or through its web page, <http://narnia.emu.edu/pub/commun/syi/brochure.htm>.

A 12-ounce glass of beer, a five-ounce glass of wine and a shot of liquor all have the same amount of alcohol. It takes about one hour for the blood stream to rid itself of one ounce of alcohol. Alcohol concentration in the body depends on the amount of alcohol consumed, the time you spent drinking and your body weight. Only time can decrease intoxication. Coffee, cold showers or exercise do not have sobering effects

Legally, you are considered to be driving under the influence (DUI) if your blood alcohol content (BAC) is 0.08 percent or higher. If your driving is impaired, you can be convicted of DUI with a blood alcohol content lower than 0.08 percent. If you register a 0.08 BAC or refuse to take a breath test, your driver's license may be suspended for seven days immediately after arrest. Your vehicle will be impounded immediately for 30 days if you are caught driving after your license has been suspended for an alcohol-related offense. **However, if you are under the age of 21 and you drive with a BAC of at least 0.02 percent, but less than 0.08 percent, you can be fined as much as \$500 and have your driver's license suspended for six months.** In addition, you can be charged with a misdemeanor if you knowingly allow someone to drive your car whose

license has been revoked or suspended for an alcohol-related offense.

People 18-20 years of age who buy, possess or drink alcohol can be fined as much as \$2,500, lose their driver's license for as long as one year and possibly go to jail. People 13-17 years of age caught for public intoxication, buying, possessing or drinking alcohol, can lose their driver's license for six months or lose the right to apply for a driver's license until age 18. Penalties for possession of a false driver's license, fraudulent use of a driver's license or use of false or deceptive identification to purchase alcohol can result in fines as much as \$500 and loss of a driver's license for as long as one year. Drinking alcohol on school grounds can result in fines of \$1,000 and a jail sentence as long as six months.

Alcohol-related crashes are not accidents. They can be prevented. If you are planning a night on the town, decide before you start drinking that you are not going to drive. Use the following tips to keep from drinking and driving and still have a good time.

Responsible Drinking Tips if over 21:

- Drive to events in groups and have the driver agree not to drink.
- Plan to ride with a friend who is not drinking.
- Before you start drinking, give your car keys to someone who isn't drinking and who won't let you drive after drinking.
- Plan to stay overnight at the place where you are drinking.
- Call a taxi or use public transportation.
- If someone offers you a drink and you plan to drive, simply say, "No thanks, I'm driving."

Driving while under the influence of drugs

Almost any drug can reduce one's ability to drive safely. It's not just illegal drugs that cause problems. Many over-the-counter medications and prescription drugs for headaches, hay fever, cold, allergies or nervous conditions can cause drowsiness and dizziness. This includes syrups, drops, sprays, pills and tablets. They often affect driver alertness and slow reaction time. Discuss the importance of reading the label before taking any drug or medicine. Stress the importance of checking for possible side effects. No drug is harmless, and the effects of drugs vary among users. Taking any drug against medical direction or without a doctor's supervision is dangerous. Driving impairment from taking prescription drugs if convicted carries the same penalties as a DUI conviction.

Information to get when a crash occurs:

- Name, address and driver's license number of other drivers.
 - License plate numbers of other vehicles.
 - Name and address of anyone who was injured.
 - Name and address of each witness.
 - Name, address and insurance policy number of other vehicle owners.
- * Notify your insurance company immediately.

Controlling emotions and avoiding aggressive behavior

As a new driver, it is important that your child be responsible, mature and maintain self-control in difficult situations. When behind the wheel, the ability to think clearly and make sound responsible driving decisions are just as important as the driving skills one possesses.

What to do when a crash occurs

Your child should know what to do if a crash occurs. When involved in a crash, the driver must:

- Always stop at the scene of the crash or as close to the scene as possible without blocking traffic. The vehicles must be moved before the police arrive if they create a traffic hazard.
- Give any help possible if someone is injured. Do not attempt to move an injured person unless you have the necessary training or there is an immediate danger.
- Report the crash to the police as quickly as possible. All motor vehicle crashes must be reported to the police.
- Exchange information with other people involved in the crash as soon as possible.



The driver must make a reasonable effort to find the owner of an unattended vehicle or other property damaged in a crash. If no one can be located, leave a note that can be found easily at the scene of the crash. Include the driver's name, address, telephone number, license number, the date and time of the crash and an estimate of the damage. In addition, the crash must be reported to the police within 24 hours.

Strong emotions can affect thinking and lead to inattention, lack of concentration and the inability to process information. It is important that teens take steps to avoid or minimize problems relating to emotions. Your teen should learn to have a mature attitude, show respect for order and safety and take responsibility for his or her actions. Identify troublesome situations that may upset or annoy a young driver, and teach your child to deal with them in a mature manner. When a situation is likely to cause trouble, such as bad weather or a traffic problem, tell your child to take a few deep breaths and say aloud, “I won’t let this get to me.” Stress the importance of patience and courteousness.

Research shows that aggressive driving is a growing problem that increasingly results in crashes that otherwise could have been avoided. It is important for your child to learn how to avoid being an aggressive driver and to avoid others who are driving aggressively.

Aggressive driving includes behaviors such as impatience with slower drivers, tailgating, frequent lane changing, honking the horn, speeding, not coming to a complete stop at stop signs, and making gestures. Aggressive drivers cause crashes. Warn your child against being an aggressive driver by explaining to them that everyone has a right to the road, and that slower drivers may be going only as fast as they should. They may be older or they may not be as skillful or as experienced as others.

Tell your teen that when confronted by an aggressive driver, it is best to avoid conflict. Tell your child to assume other drivers’ mistakes are not personal and to be polite and courteous even if the other driver isn’t. Also tell your teen to avoid making eye contact with aggressive drivers. Eye contact may increase aggressive behavior.

It is also important to take steps to reduce stress before driving because driving under stress can lead to aggressive driving behaviors. Advanced planning reduces stress. Remind your teen to always allow

enough time to reach the destination and to avoid driving when upset or depressed. Discuss the importance of reducing distractions that may take attention away from driving and increase risk. Talk to your child about the dangers of loud music, cellular phones and driving with passengers in the car.

Blind Spots

Blind spots are danger areas that cannot be seen in your mirrors. Before making any sideways movements, such as changing lanes or passing another vehicle, quickly turn your head to check for other vehicles. Avoid driving in someone else's blind spot. This can be just as dangerous as not checking your own. Speed up or drop back, but don't stay in the other driver's blind spot.

When sharing the road with large trucks, be particularly aware of their blind zones. As a rule, if you can't see one of the trucks side mirrors, the truck driver can't see you. In addition, when merging in front of large trucks, be sure to allow substantial distance between you and the truck. This is because large trucks require greater braking distance to maneuver and stop.

Most importantly, actively teach your child to use safe procedures no matter what emotional state he or she experiences. Together, you and your child can form good driving habits that will ensure many safe years behind the wheel. This section contains information about specific driving skills that have increased risk and require more practice. You should read and understand the skills explained in this section before attempting to coach your child. This section is written for the student driver, and the skills outlined here should be read by both of you and then discussed before, during and after practice sessions. Your job is to explain the skills for the driver in a clear and understandable way.

SCANNING THE ROAD AHEAD

When driving, we gather 90 percent of the information about the road and our surroundings through our eyes. Scanning means looking at the entire scene for anything that might come into your path. As you scan the road, avoid a fixed stare. Keep your eyes moving, and learn to read the road. Look ahead, to the sides and behind you. Looking ahead will help you see things early and will allow you more time to react. Expert drivers try to focus their eyes 10 to 15 seconds ahead. In the city, that equals approximately one block. Avoid staring at the middle of the road, however. Scan from side to side, checking for signs, other vehicles or people that might be in the road by the time you reach them.

Watch for clues in the road. Look for exhaust smoke, brake or back-up lights and turned wheels on vehicles. Clues like these tell you that a vehicle may pull into your path. Watch for pedestrians, bicyclists and other slow-moving vehicles that may be in the road ahead.

When driving in rural areas, watch for hidden intersections and driveways, curves, hills and different road conditions. Watch for



other vehicles, especially oversized trucks and slow-moving farm vehicles. Check from left to right before entering an intersection. Whenever you reach a place in the road where other vehicles, people or animals may cross your path, look to both sides to be sure that the way is clear. These include intersections, crosswalks, shopping centers, construction areas and playgrounds. At any intersection, look to the left first, since vehicles coming from the left will be closer to you. Then look to the right, and take one more quick look to the left before you drive through.

Look behind as well. Use your rear-view mirror to check the traffic behind you frequently, about every 10 seconds. This will alert you if someone is moving up too quickly or tailgating you. Check the traffic behind you when changing lanes, backing up, slowing down quickly or driving down a long, steep hill. But don't take your eyes off the road for more than an instant.

BASIC SKILLS: BACKING AND PARKING

Backing. The most common mistake that drivers make when backing is failing to look both ways behind them. Mirrors do not give you a full view. To see as much as possible, turn your body and head to the right and look out through the rear window. Back slowly, and check for pedestrians and approaching traffic by glancing quickly to either side.

When backing, you must keep careful control of the vehicle's direction and speed. When you are in reverse, the rear of the vehicle moves in the same direction you turn the steering wheel, and the front of the vehicle swings in the other direction. To steer in reverse, follow these steps:

1. Keep your foot on the brake and shift the vehicle into reverse gear. If you are backing straight, place your left hand on the top of the steering wheel and your right arm across the top of the seat. Look over your right shoulder. If you are backing to the right or left, keep both hands on the wheel and look over your shoulder in the direction you want to move.
2. Ease pressure off the brake slowly. Give yourself plenty of time to judge the rear and front of the vehicle.
3. Look where you want to go so that you can identify and correct steering errors early. Turn the wheels as needed.
4. Concentrate your visual scanning out the rear window, with quick repeated glances out the front window. Make sure the front end of the vehicle will not strike anything. Continue to look out the rear window as you bring the vehicle to a complete stop.

Three-point turn. Even the most skilled drivers sometimes miss a street or building. If this occurs, you may have no choice but to make a turnabout.

One of the most difficult turnabouts for a new driver is the three-point turn. To minimize risk, make a three-point turn only when the street is narrow, there are no driveways to turn into, you have good visibility, traffic is light and you can't drive around the block. Follow these steps to make a three-point turn.

1. Stop as close to the right edge of the curb as possible. Check for traffic in both directions. Wait until you have a 20- to 30-second gap to complete the turn.
2. Signal a left turn. Look over your left shoulder for any cars in your blind spot. Then move the vehicle slowly while turning the steering wheel rapidly to the left to bring the vehicle into the opposite lane. Hold this position.
3. When the front wheels are almost to the curb, turn the wheels rapidly to the right. Stop the vehicle just short of the curb.
4. Check traffic to the left, then over your right shoulder. Shift the vehicle into reverse and, while slowly backing up, turn the wheel to the extreme right position. About 4 feet before stopping, turn the wheel rapidly to the left. Keep looking back until you have come to a complete stop.
5. Shift into drive. Check traffic. Signal your intent and accelerate to normal speed.

BACKING

Dates Practiced: _____

Parking. Learning to parallel park is one of the most difficult skills for new drivers to master. The following tips will make parallel parking easier:

1. Select a space that is at least six feet longer than your vehicle. Flash your brake lights and put on your turn signal before you pull in. Always look back to check traffic. Take it slow and ease into the spot.
2. Signal and pull up approximately three feet from the car you want to park behind, aligning your rear tires with the other vehicle's rear

bumper.

3. Put the vehicle into reverse and turn the wheels all the way to the right.
4. Slowly back up until you are at a 45-degree angle. Stop.
5. Turn the wheels all the way to the left.
6. Slowly back up until you are parallel with the curb. If this is done correctly, you should be less than 12 inches from the curb. Practice will improve your judgement.
7. To exit a parallel parking space, back-up straight as far as you can go without touching the vehicle behind.
8. Turn your wheels all the way to the left. Then make sure that you put your car in drive, and put on your turn signal.
9. Check traffic, including your blind spot and make sure your right fender has enough room to clear the vehicle in front of you.
12. Turn wheels slowly to the right when you are halfway out of the parking space.

When **parking on a hill**, turn the front wheels of your vehicle to prevent it from rolling into the street. If there is a curb, turn the wheels of the vehicle so that if it rolls it will be stopped by the curb. If there is no curb,

PARKING

Dates Practiced: _____

turn the front wheels so that if the vehicle rolls, the rear of the vehicle will roll away from traffic.

DRIVING IN TRAFFIC

Entering traffic. To enter traffic from a curb, you must plan your strategy in advance, taking visibility, time and space into consideration. Once you develop a plan of action, follow these steps:

1. Use side and rear-view mirrors to check traffic around you.
2. Turn to your left and look over your shoulder to check traffic in your blind spot.
3. When you have decided it is safe to move into traffic, signal your

intention to leave the curb.

4. Steer away from the curb and directly into the nearest lane of traffic, accelerating moderately.



ENTERING TRAFFIC

Dates Practiced: _____

Merging. To merge onto a freeway safely, a driver must blend into high-speed traffic smoothly. This requires drivers to adjust speed and position accordingly. To enter a freeway, follow these steps:

1. Identify the desired entrance ramp well in advance.
2. Check mirrors for following traffic, signal your intent and position your car appropriately.
3. Adjust speed and check traffic ahead on the entrance ramp and the joining freeway.
4. Select a safe gap in traffic, signal and adjust speed.

MERGING

Dates Practiced: _____

5. Merge and adjust speed to join the flow of traffic.

Changing lanes and passing. Before changing lanes, check your side and rear-view mirrors for traffic approaching you from behind. Then, give a turn signal to show your intention to change lanes. Check for other drivers who also may be moving into the same lane. Just before you begin moving into the other lane, quickly glance over your shoulder and check for any vehicles that may be in your blind spot. Remember, whether you are changing lanes, passing, entering or exiting an expressway, always use

your turn signals and check traffic to the rear and sides.

Follow these steps to safely change lanes:

1. Maintain a safe following distance from the vehicles in front of you.
2. Check traffic ahead, behind and to the sides.
3. Signal your intention to change lanes.
4. Select a safe gap in traffic.
5. Check blind spots in the direction of the lane change.
6. Adjust your speed, steer into the lane and cancel the turn signal.

CHANGING LANES

Dates Practiced: _____

Passing another vehicle. Always check the traffic ahead of you, behind you and in your blind spot before you attempt to pass. Signal and then accelerate to pass. Return to the right lane as soon as you can see the front of the passed vehicle in your rearview mirror. It is against the law to exceed the speed limit as you pass. Complete the pass before you reach a no passing zone. If you're still in the left lane when you reach the zone, you're breaking the law. You may pass on the right if the vehicle you are passing has signaled and is making a left turn. Be cautious because the car you are passing may be blocking your view or the view of others.

You may not pass on the right if you must drive off the pavement or main portion of the roadway to get around the other vehicle. Passing is not allowed whenever a solid line marks the left side of your lane, on hills, curves, at intersections or railroad crossings, except on roads with two or more lanes of traffic moving in the same direction. You may not pass when your vehicle will go off the pavement or shoulder of the road or if you are within 100 feet of a bridge or tunnel. In addition, passing is not allowed when a school bus is stopped to load or unload passengers, unless a physical barrier or unpaved median separates traffic going in

either direction. When being passed don't speed up. Maintain a steady speed or slow down.



PASSING

Dates Practiced: _____

Leaving traffic. After you have planned your move and decided it is safe to move out of traffic to a curb, follow these steps:

1. Signal your intent to make a lateral move.
2. Tap the brakes lightly, letting others know that you're going to stop.
3. Apply gradual pressure on the brakes to reduce speed.
4. Steer out of the traffic lane to where you want to go, using the brakes as needed to stop the vehicle.

LEAVING TRAFFIC

Dates Practiced: _____

Exiting a freeway. To exit a freeway, the student driver should explain the actions he or she will take with respect to traffic conditions and road signs. Keep in mind that a new driver is likely to make the mistake of slowing down before reaching the deceleration lane. Take the following steps to safely exit a freeway:

1. Identify the appropriate exit two or three exits in advance.
2. Check side and rear -view mirrors for following traffic.
3. Signal your intentions 3 to 4 seconds in advance.
4. Select the proper lane and enter the speed change lane as soon as possible.

5. Enter the exit ramp at the posted speed, and check traffic ahead and behind you as you proceed onto the ramp.

EXITING THE FREEWAY

Dates Practiced: _____

SPACING AND TIMING DECISIONS

Space around your vehicle gives you time to react in emergencies and avoid a collision. Create a space cushion around your vehicle by staying in the middle of your lane. Make sure there is enough room ahead of your vehicle and behind it for another car to pass or stop safely.

Help the driver behind you maintain a safe following distance by maintaining a steady speed. Use a hand signal or tap your brakes to let the driver behind you know in advance when you plan to slow down or stop. If the driver behind you is following too closely, do not brake suddenly. If possible, move over to another lane. Or, when the way ahead is clear, flash your brake lights and slow down. This should encourage the tailgater to pass you. In city traffic, slow down to increase the amount of space between your vehicle and others ahead.

Avoid driving in another driver's blind spot. If you can't see the inside rear view mirror of the vehicle ahead, the driver probably can't see you. Once you've established a space cushion, if a vehicle cuts into the space ahead of you, just slow down and re-establish a safe following distance. Increase your following distance when driving behind a large vehicle that blocks your vision. You should also increase your following distance when driving in bad weather, heavy traffic or when exiting a freeway. Increase your following distance if you are behind a motorcycle or being tailgated.

Spacing between cars. Use the two-second rule to determine if you are far enough behind the vehicle ahead of you. To use the two second rule:

Watch the car ahead pass a fixed point, such as an overpass, sign, fence, corner or other marker. Begin counting off the seconds it takes you to reach the same place in the road. If you reach the mark before you have counted off two seconds, you're following too closely. Slow down and increase your following distance.

Remember, the two-second rule applies only in good weather and depends on the condition of your vehicle and the road. In bad weather conditions, heavy traffic, poor pavement or poor vehicle conditions, add extra seconds to the two second rule.

SPACING

Dates Practiced: _____

Stopping distances for various speeds. Two things determine the distance that it takes to stop your vehicle: reaction distance and braking distance. Reaction distance is the distance your vehicle travels between the time you recognize a problem and the time you apply the brake. Braking distance is the distance your vehicle travels after you apply the brakes and before the vehicle stops. If you are traveling at a speed of 55 mph, it will take your vehicle approximately 216 feet to come to a complete stop. Weather, visibility and your mental and physical condition affect both reaction distance and braking distance. Braking distance is further affected by the speed at which your vehicle is traveling, the condition of your brakes, tires and the pavement. For example, wet pavement can double your braking distance. When driving on wet roads, reduce your speed by one-third. For example, slow down from 55 to 35 mph. When driving on packed snow, reduce your speed by one-half. No matter how quickly you react, on the average, it takes 288 feet-nearly the length of a football field-to stop an automobile going 65 mph on a dry, level, hard-surface highway. It's not a matter of luck or skill, it's a law of physics. If your vehicle has antilock brakes, be sure that you understand how they work. Never pump anti-lock brakes.

Check your owner’s manual and practice braking before you go out on the road.

STOPPING DISTANCES

Dates Practiced: _____

HIGH RISK CONDITIONS

Driving becomes hazardous when visibility is reduced, when the wind is blowing, or when the road surface is covered with rain, snow or ice. Reducing your speed should be your first response to decreases in visibility and dangerous road conditions. Other vehicles to the rear and in blind spot areas are especially difficult to see through rain-spattered windows. Use your low beam headlights to see and be seen. Increase your space cushion by doubling the normal following distance from two seconds to four seconds.

Night driving. Night driving is especially dangerous. Under normal conditions, your headlights let you see only about 350 feet ahead. At twilight, as soon as light begins to fade, turn on your headlights to make your vehicle more visible to others. You must use headlights from sunset to sunrise. Use low beams when driving in cities and towns, except on streets where there is no lighting. Switch to low beams whenever you meet oncoming traffic to avoid blinding the other driver.

When following, use low beams whenever you are within 200 feet of the vehicle ahead. Use high-beam headlights on highways when no other vehicle is approaching within 500 feet. If the high beams of an oncoming vehicle are not dimmed, avoid looking directly at the bright lights. Glance toward the side of the road, then look quickly ahead to determine the other vehicle’s position. Keep doing this until you have completed the pass. Even though the other driver does not dim his headlights, do not retaliate by turning on your high beam headlights.

Fog. Fog reflects light and can reflect you own headlights back into your eyes. Use low beam headlights only and look for road edge markings to guide you. Even light fog reduces visibility and your ability to judge distances, so slow down.

Rain. Driving in heavy rain can be as hazardous as driving in fog, especially if the wind is blowing. Other vehicles to the rear and in blind spot areas are especially difficult to see through rain-spattered windows. Use your low beam headlights to see and be seen, even in the daytime. Wait a short time after the rain begins before using your windshield wipers because the blades may smear. Be extra careful during the first half-hour after rain begins. Grime and oil on the road surface mix with water to make the road hazardous.

Snow and ice. Before you start driving, remove snow and ice from your entire vehicle, including the roof, hood and rear of the vehicle. Be sure to clear all your windows, side-view mirrors and front and rear lights of snow or ice so you can see and communicate with other drivers. Make sure your vehicle has all-weather snow tires or chains to help prevent skidding and reduce stopping distance. Slow down before stopping or turning. Driving on packed snow is similar to driving on ice. When you brake, apply the brakes gently on slippery surfaces, you have the most traction and control when the front tires are rolling. Therefore, your vehicle will respond more effectively to steering and braking. Watch for ice on bridges and in shady areas. Bridges freeze before other road surfaces.

HIGH RISK CONDITIONS

Dates Practiced: _____

MANAGING MISTAKES

In this section, you will find information and coaching hints on helping a new driver manage mistakes that often occur because of less than ideal road conditions. It is important that new drivers learn how to cope with loss of traction, skidding and off-road recovery skills.

Managing skids Understanding the natural laws that affect the motion of your car can help you regain control when you lose it by skidding. Skidding is the loss of control over the direction the car is moving because of reduced traction. Skids are usually caused by one of three things: loss of traction, changing speed too quickly or changing directions too quickly.

A loss of traction can be frightening and is dangerous for even the most experienced driver. When traction is reduced, your tires lose their grip on the surface of the road and the car begins to slide. When you are on a slippery road and you want to slow down, if you step on the brake too quickly or too hard, the car will likely start to skid. Traction cannot overcome the car's momentum when you try to change speed too quickly.

In addition, if you are driving at a high speed, your car has a tremendous amount of momentum, and inertia will try to force the car to move in a straight line. Tire traction may not be great enough to maintain control when you turn or enter a sharp curve.

Hydroplaning

One of the greatest risks for new drivers is **hydroplaning**. This is the total loss of vehicle control. Even with properly inflated tires that are in good condition, a vehicle can hydroplane at 35 mph if water on the pavement reaches a depth of only 1/12 inch. Standing water on pavement is always a risk factor for hydroplaning. A good indication of standing water is when rain drops bubble as they strike the road surface.

It is important that new drivers become familiar with skids and learn how to maintain vehicle control should skidding occur. To provide con-

trolled experience with skidding, schedule a practice session in snow, ice or rain in a parking lot or lightly traveled roadway. Start at slow speeds of 5 to 15 miles per hour. Apply brakes and steer gently. Only when the driver has the feel for these conditions should he or she increase speed. Try to allow the new driver to recognize the point at which he or she is about to lose control of the vehicle. Follow these steps to manage a skid:

1. If you have time, ease off the gas pedal and shift into neutral. Do not use the brake pedal.
2. With your foot off the pedals, steer in the direction you want to go. Keep your eyes focused in the direction that you want the car to drive.
3. Each time the skid changes direction, turn the wheel smoothly and quickly in the direction you want the car to go. Keep steering until you are out of the skid. **Remember to keep focused on where you want to drive.**

Off-road recovery Many traffic crashes occur because of loss of control when a new driver runs off the road and fails to correct his or her mistake properly. In Virginia, in the year 2000, 56 percent of teen fatalities involved running off the road. Frequently when two or all four of the vehicle's tires drop onto the shoulder of the road, the driver panics and oversteers when trying to get back onto the pavement or inadvertently locks the brakes.

Tires rolling on different surfaces have different amounts of traction. The tires on the paved area have more traction than the tires on the unpaved area. Applying the brakes in this situation may cause the car to skid. Turning the wheel too sharply could cause the car to skid out of control, flip over the road or shoot back across the roadway.

MANAGING MISTAKES

Dates Practiced: _____

PARENT-TEEN DRIVING AGREEMENT

In Virginia, a parent has the right to control the driving privileges of children under the age of 18. You allow your child to drive, and if you choose, you may take that privilege away. Parents and teens must take the time to review the issues, privileges and responsibilities associated with driving. Remember that safe driving habits are achieved through active learning. You must take the time to become involved as your child learns to drive. Use the outline below as a framework for discussing important topics with your child. State how each topic will be handled in your household, then make an agreement about following that rule. For example:

Issue: Curfew
Rule: Weekday evening curfew of 10 p.m., and a weekend evening curfew of midnight.
Agreement: Coming home after the curfew will result in the curfew being set one hour earlier for one week.

Issue: Curfew
Rule: _____

Agreement: _____

Issue: Safety belt usage
Rule: _____

Agreement: _____

Issue: Use of alcohol and drugs while driving
Rule: _____

Agreement: _____

Issue: Crashes, tickets or violations
Rule: _____

Agreement: _____

Issue: Number of passengers in vehicle
Rule: _____

Agreement: _____

Issue: Attendance, conduct and effort in school
Rule: _____

Agreement: _____

Issue: Car phone, music and food
Rule: _____

Agreement: _____

I, as a new driver, will be responsible for the following:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Cost of vehicle _____ | Keeping interior clean _____ |
| Cost of fuel _____ | Collision damage _____ |
| Fines and penalties _____ | Maintenance costs _____ |
| Damage due to abuse _____ | Wash and wax vehicle _____ |
| Costs due to driving record _____ | Reporting fuel level _____ |
| Insurance costs _____ | Other _____ |

I, as a new driver, understand that driving is a privilege, not a right. I am legally responsible for my actions as a driver. We, as parents, are legally liable for damages done by you as a driver.

Signed on the _____ day of _____, 20____
Son/Daughter _____
Parent _____

YOUR FEEDBACK IS GREATLY APPRECIATED!

Teaching Your Teen to Drive: A Handbook for Parents is designed to help you become more involved as your teen learns to drive. The information contained here provides a starting point for communicating with your child about important topics that have an impact on his or her life. In order to reduce teen traffic fatalities, parents and guardians must become more involved in student driver education and take a role in teaching teens safe driving habits.

We are very interested in any comments or suggestions that you, the parent of a teenager, may have concerning the effectiveness of this publication. Please send e-mail to vhazleto@radford.edu, or write to:

Dr. Vincent Hazleton
Department of Communication
Radford University- Box 6932
801 Norwood Street
Radford, VA 24141-9984

(Revised on July 5, 2001)

Traffic crashes are the number one cause of death in teens, ages 16 to 19 years.



- Vehicles kill more teens than cancer, gang violence, suicide or drugs and alcohol.
- More teenage passenger deaths occur when a 16-year-old is driving than when a person of any other age is at the wheel.

These are horrifying facts. However, you have the power to help your child survive these statistics. *Teaching Your Teen to Drive* is a handbook designed to help parents and guardians increase their child's chance of surviving his or her teen driving years.

Just because your child is a teenager does not mean that he or she is irresponsible or a reckless driver. It means that inexperience and lack of skills increases your child's chances of being involved in or even killed in a car crash.

It is your responsibility as a parent to decrease that risk by providing the proper knowledge and skills that will help your child develop safe driving habits and make responsible decisions behind the wheel. *Teaching Your Teen to Drive* will help you become a better coach, develop important topics to discuss with your teen, express your feelings about responsible driving, plan driving sessions and understand Virginia driving requirements.

By reading this handbook carefully and taking the time to talk with your child, you can help develop safe drivers and reduce the number of teenage traffic fatalities.