



DEVELOPING DRIVING EXPERIENCE

Experience counts when it comes to driving safely. Research shows that passing a driver's test alone does not mean that a young driver is "experienced." There is no magic number of miles or hours that signals experience. We do know, however, that a teen driver's greatest lifetime chance of crashing occurs in the first six to 12 months after receiving a license. After that time, crash risk diminishes but remains twice the rate of adults until drivers reach their 20s. This is a very risky time for teen drivers, largely due to their lack of driving experience.

Every teen is unique in how long it takes to become an experienced driver. The goal is for a driver to be able to maneuver a vehicle and make good driving decisions with a minimum of effort in a wide variety of environments (highways, cities, rural roads) under a wide variety of conditions (weather and time of day). These skills and decision-making abilities come only after many hours behind the wheel.

Based on review of others' research, experts at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia have identified three basic stages that a teen moves through in developing driving experience:

Stage One: Novice – Learning to drive is often characterized by knowing the rules of the road. However, simply following the rules of the road, or knowing how to steer, reverse, make turns, and park the car is not enough to be a safe driver. Drivers must also know when, and how, to interact with other road users. That's why new drivers need adult supervision, not only to explain the mechanics of driving, but also to provide specific guidance to navigate various road conditions.

Stage Two: Advanced Beginner – New drivers who have completed the minimum state-required practice hours to acquire a license generally know how to deal safely with a few traffic situations. For instance, many will lower their speed in

congested zones and residential areas. These teens often overestimate their driving competence, putting themselves in situations beyond their ability. During this stage, they need rules and close supervision. Continued adult-supervised practice helps them gain experience.

Stage Three: Developing Competence – With more experience, reflection and guidance, young drivers begin to build a broader base of on-road, behind-the-wheel experiences which allow them to:

1. Monitor the environment around the vehicle, scanning far ahead to identify risks and to adjust driving accordingly.
2. Always wear a seat belt as the driver and make sure that passengers do, too.
3. Recognize and avoid distractions inside and outside the vehicle, including those related to passengers, cell phones, or other electronic devices.
4. Never drive impaired (drugged, drowsy or drunk).
5. Control emotions when driving.
6. Recognize and avoid driving in conditions that are too challenging.
7. Never take intentional risks while driving.
8. Respect other road users, including motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians, and adjust driving behavior accordingly.

Motor vehicle crashes are the No. 1 cause of death for adolescents. Teen drivers (ages 16 to 19) are involved in fatal crashes at four times the rate of adult drivers (ages 25 to 69). Most of these crashes are preventable. That's why The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and State Farm® have joined to develop tools that will help families reduce the risk of teens being involved in a serious crash.

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Learn the facts and get advice about teen driver safety at
www.teendriversource.org and www.statefarm.com/teendriving.

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