

# When Your Teen is in the Driver's Seat



## A Guide for Parents

TEEN DRIVING AND GRADUATED DRIVER  
LICENSING LAWS IN COLORADO



# What's your role for your teen driver?

## DID YOU KNOW?

Teens face the greatest risk of crashing during the first year of their license. One out of every five licensed 16-year-olds will be in a motor vehicle crash.

## When your teen is in the driver's seat, you're far more than just a passenger.

Your job is to steer your teen into a lifetime of safe driving. As a team, the two of you can navigate Colorado's laws and safety guidelines. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death and injury for teenagers because they lack driving experience. That's why your role during your son's or daughter's first year behind the wheel is so critical.

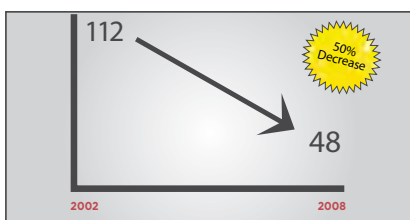
## What parents should do:

- Learn Colorado's Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) laws.
- Enroll your teen in driver education.
- Supervise your teen's driving.
- Set family rules and limits by creating a Parent/Teen Driving Contract.
- Impose consequences for violations.

## What is GDL?

Colorado implemented Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) laws to help teenagers gain important driving skills gradually while limiting dangers by restricting the number of passengers, banning cell phone use and setting a curfew. Whereas the GDL laws aren't always convenient for busy parents and teens, their impact on saving young lives is indisputable.

**Colorado Motor Vehicle Deaths, age 15-20**



**Below are definitions and details about the types of training that your teen may be required to complete before getting their license:**

**Driver's education:** An approved 30-hour classroom, internet or home study course.

**Instruction permit:** All new drivers under age 18 require parent/legal guardian's signed "Affidavit of Liability and Guardianship" to get an instruction permit. Whoever signs the Affidavit is responsible for the supervision of the minor's driving and for any financial liability.

**50 hours of logged driving time:** Completed under the supervision of the Colorado-licensed parent or legal guardian who signed the Affidavit of Liability or a Colorado-licensed alternate permit supervisor appointed by the parent/guardian. Ten of the fifty hours must be at night.

**Behind-the-wheel training:** 6 hours of driving, in traffic situations, with an instructor employed or associated with an approved driver education course.

**Driver awareness program:** A 4-hour classroom course on safety and driver education.

**Driver's license:** Teens can apply for a license after having a permit for a full 12 months.

**All drivers under age 18 must follow restrictions outlined in this brochure. Restrictions apply for all drivers under age 18.**



# The Parent/Teen Driving Contract

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

Parents can cut their teen driver's crash risk in half if they set driving rules and monitor them in a supportive, non-controlling way.

By creating a Parent/Teen Driving Contract, you are actively engaged in keeping your teen safe behind the wheel.

The contract in this booklet can guide you and your teen in creating a mutual understanding of the rules and consequences of breaking them.

Visit [www.coteendriver.com/parent](http://www.coteendriver.com/parent) for more tools and tips for encouraging safe driving.



# Teen driving restrictions

## DID YOU KNOW?

For 16-17 year olds, carrying just one passenger increases the crash risk by about 50 percent.

The rules of the road apply to drivers of all ages, but there are certain additional restrictions that all teen drivers need to know because violating them could not only cost them money and their driver's license, but maybe even their life.

## Passenger restrictions

When your teen is behind the wheel, attention to driving must take precedence. Passenger restrictions help ensure his focus remains on the road. Teens with a permit may not drive with anyone other than a driving instructor, parent, legal guardian or a licensed adult 21 years of age or older who is authorized by the parent or legal guardian.

Restrictions for licensed teen drivers ease gradually as they become more experienced. For the first six months, your teen cannot have any passengers under age 21, unless a parent or another licensed adult driver is in the vehicle. If after the first six months you feel your teen is responsible enough to drive unsupervised with friends, he or she may do so with only one passenger under age 21 for the next six months. Siblings and passengers with medical emergencies are exceptions.

At any time, no more than one passenger is allowed in the front seat.

## Mandatory seat belts

By law, ALL teen drivers and passengers must wear seat belts (no sharing!). Driving without wearing a seat belt is a primary offense—teens can be pulled over and ticketed for not buckling up. Make sure they know they are also responsible for the safety of their passengers and can be ticketed if they are not properly wearing seat belts.



### **Power Down!**

Distracted driving can have deadly consequences. Help protect your teen by enforcing the current cell phone law: teens under age 18 are prohibited from texting or talking on a cell phone while driving. Teens can be fined and may risk losing their license. Exceptions include emergency calls to the police or fire department.



### **Curfew**

For the first year as a licensed driver, your teen must abide by a curfew—no driving between midnight and 5 a.m. unless accompanied by an instructor, parent or legal guardian. Exceptions include driving to and from school or work (signed statement from school or work is required), medical emergencies and emancipated minors. Curfew laws may vary by city or county. To properly follow the curfew in your area, please confirm restrictions with your local government.



### **Zero tolerance for drunk driving**

Talk with your teen about the dangers of driving drunk or riding with someone who has used alcohol or drugs. Driving under the influence of alcohol—even a trace of alcohol on minor drivers—is punishable by law. Together, devise a back-up transportation plan if necessary to make sure your son or daughter arrives home safely.

**For a refresher on all traffic laws, review the Department of Revenue's Drivers Handbook [www.colorado.gov/revenue/dmv.com](http://www.colorado.gov/revenue/dmv.com).**

# Fines and points



The last thing teens want is to lose their newly acquired driving privileges. Insist that they understand all the nuances of traffic laws—including GDL restrictions. Violating any one of these can result in a revoked license and lost driving freedom. Each violation costs two points; it takes only three violations (six points) through age 18 for a license suspension. Penalties vary, but in general, violations carry steep fines and include community service.

## Penalties for seat belt, curfew and passenger restriction violations

| Violation          | Fine          | Hours of Community Service | License Suspension Points |
|--------------------|---------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1st Offense        | Minimum \$65  | 8 to 24                    | 2                         |
| 2nd Offense        | Minimum \$100 | 16 to 40                   | 2                         |
| Subsequent Offense | Minimum \$150 | 16 to 40                   | 2                         |

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

Under Colorado law, parents can have their teen's license revoked.

# Tips to keep teen drivers safe

## **Be a good role model**

Your teen may not admit it, but he or she is watching you when you drive and learning by your example. That's why it is so important to practice what you preach by buckling up, putting down your cell phone and not driving aggressively.

## **Pay attention**

Know where teens are going and why. Discuss how they'll get there and when they will be home.

## **Talk with your teen**

Keep the lines of communication open so your teen feels comfortable talking with you. This builds trust and respect.

## **Take deep breaths**

Remember, new drivers need a lot of practice. Making mistakes is part of learning. Remain calm and focused. Teens will show the greatest improvement in the first 1,000 to 5,000 miles of driving.

## **Get up to date**

Driving guidelines and laws have changed since you learned to drive. For example, "10 & 2" are no longer recommended hand positions on the steering wheel (it's now "9 & 3"). Share in the driver education experience with your teen.







Visit [www.coteendriver.com/parent](http://www.coteendriver.com/parent) for up-to-date information on teen driving laws and links to other resources.

## Teen Driving Resources

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| AAA Colorado  | <a href="http://www.aaacolorado.com">www.aaacolorado.com</a>   |
| Colorado Department of Transportation                     | <a href="http://www.coteendriver.com">www.coteendriver.com</a><br><a href="http://www.coloradodot.info">www.coloradodot.info</a> |
| Colorado State Patrol                                     | <a href="http://www.csp.state.co.us">www.csp.state.co.us</a>   |
| Colorado Department of Revenue Division of Motor Vehicles | (303) 205-5646<br><a href="http://www.colorado.gov/revenue/dmv">www.colorado.gov/revenue/dmv</a>                                 |
| Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association          | <a href="http://www.rmiia.org/teen">www.rmiia.org/teen</a>   |
| Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment      | <a href="http://www.coinjuryprevention.org">www.coinjuryprevention.org</a>   |
| DriveSmart Colorado                                       | (719) 444-7534<br><a href="http://www.drivesmartcolorado.com">www.drivesmartcolorado.com</a>                                     |



The Driver's Seat campaign and this brochure were developed by the Colorado Teen Driving Alliance, a coalition of state agencies, law enforcement and private partners concerned about teen driving safety.