

Teen Driving SOS Program

Tips for Parents with Teens

- I. General Advice
 - a. Open lines of Communication to Discuss Teen Topics
 - i. Family Dinners Build Tradition and Provide Opportunity
 - ii. Take Teen to Breakfast or Hot Chocolate before School
 - iii. Use Scheduled Time for Learner Permit Driving and Then Go for an Ice Cream
 - b. Ensure That Teens Understands that Freedom and Independence will be Based on Trust
 - i. Trust Means Your Teen Consistently Meets or Exceeds Expectations
 - ii. Examples: Complying with law, curfews and agreed driving contract
 - iii. Teens Establish Trust with Parent Just Like Teen Does with a Coach in a Sport
 1. Coaches let students play if they are reliable and deliver as expected
 2. If you make mistakes or flaunt the rules you don't play
 3. Same for Parents and Teens: Teens should lose privileges if they break rules or violate trust
 - c. Both Parents Have to Be on Same Page
 - i. Get solid agreement on key issues: driving, curfews, dating, etc.
 - ii. Agree on consequences and agree to enforce
 - iii. Put them in a driving contract you both agree with (see below)
 - iv. Don't let your kids use you one against the other
 - v. If multiple households involved, need for agreement even greater
 - vi. Key Mission
 1. Be a Parent, not a friend
 2. Don't Avoid Conflict with Teen if Necessary to Resolve Problem
 - d. Establish Clear Rules and Consequences with a Driving Contract
 - i. Rules Clear
 - ii. Consequences Clear Before Breach
 - iii. The Consequences are Agreed in Advance Because of the Driving Privileges; This Takes the Ambiguity and the Anger out of the Consequences; They knew what the consequences were before they broke the rules set forth in the contract
 - iv. Web has several sample driving contracts; one sample is attached.
 - v. Simple Concepts for Contract
 1. Alcohol:

- a. No drinking and driving
 - b. No alcohol in car
 - c. Never a passenger in a car when driver under influence
2. Give them a financial interest in good behavior and driving habits
 - a. If they get a ticket, they pay for it
 - b. If the insurance goes up as a result, they pay for the difference
 - c. If they have an accident and it's their fault and the insurance goes up, they pay for the increase
 3. They Have to Agree to Help the Family
 - a. Run Carpool
 - b. Run Family Errands
 4. Help Maintain the Vehicle
 - a. Keep it Clean and Wash once or twice a month
 - b. Keep at Least $\frac{1}{4}$ a tank of gas at all times
 - c. Check the tires and oil, etc.

e. Always Ask the Key Questions

i. The Basics:

1. Who will be there (parents and which teens)?
2. What will you be doing?
3. Where will you be?
4. When will you be leaving?
5. Are you going anywhere else?

ii. Other Good Ideas

1. Call in Advance Rule: Call the Parents a Few Days in Advance

- a. Ask if you can bring something (food, etc.)
 - i. You may find they know nothing about because they're going to be out of town, or because the kids will really be going to a field party or camping trip, etc.
 - ii. Make sure the Parents will be there to chaperone, etc.
 - iii. And, the parents you know who were able to handle their 5th grader a few years back, may not be able to handle them now, or have significantly different ideas from yours on how to handle them now (e.g. boys will be boys, etc., or the crazy concept of preferring them to drink in their home instead of somewhere else)

2. Landline Rule: When your Teen arrives, have them call from the landline at the house; that way you know the number where they actually are. This should help eliminate the unknown field party, the unknown camping trip, etc.
3. The Call if Anything Changes Rule: if they want to leave where they're supposed to be they have to call to get approval. This helps eliminate the fact that they were at location A, but then decided to go to a party at location B, which you would not have approved for all kinds of reasons.
4. No Boys Night Out Rule: After 8th grade there is no compelling reason for boys to have sleep overs. Parents will tell you that beginning at 9th grade these are simply an invitation for boys to get into or cause trouble. Camping Trips without adults almost always involve alcohol.

II. Curfews

- a. Somewhat Age and Maturity Dependent But...
- b. Cinderella Rule: Nothing Good Happens After Midnight
 - i. Graduated System of Curfews Works Best for each grade to factor in maturity and make them prove entitlement to staying out later; if you start them out at midnight rest assure they will tell you that their curfew in 10th grade was midnight and they want something later in the future
 - ii. Reasonable Graduated System for Weekend Curfews:
 1. 10th Grade: 11:00PM
 2. 11th Grade: 11:30PM
 3. 12th Grade: Midnight
 - iii. If your teen tells you her best friend can stay out later...
 1. Call her parents and ask
 2. If you stick up for your curfew you may find they agree with you; and you may find out the other parent agreed to the later curfew because they were told you agreed to it for your teen
 - iv. Think About it: if Everyone Adopted the Cinderella Rule, all highschoolers could be off the streets by midnight
- c. Parents' Strategies for Enforcing Curfews
 - i. Best Way is Toughest: Stay Awake and Wait for Them
 1. Big Deterrent to Drinking to know Parent Will Be There when they arrive
 - ii. Other Alternatives
 1. Teen Must Wake you up and hug you and give you a kiss
 2. Set Alarm Clock for 5 Minutes Past Curfew; Teen has to come into or near your room to turn off alarm; downside of this one is you are not monitoring for alcohol use unless you do something further

III. Dating

a. General Rules

- i. Most parents say no dating until 16
- ii. Other possible rules
 1. Can date at 16 but can only double date until 17
 2. Can never date someone more than one grade above you in school (i.e. 9th grader if 16 could date 10th grader but not 11th grader; or 10th grader could date 11th grader but not 12th grader)
 3. Only 1 night out per weekend to ensure keep time for family events

IV. Alcohol

a. Drug of Choice

- i. 6 Times More Teen Killed from Alcohol than all other Drugs combined

b. Driving Under Influence

- i. In Alabama for 16-20 year olds (underage), the legal definition of DUI is not .08 like it is for adults; it's .02 for this age group; that's the equivalent of one beer
- ii. So, think of what a DUI will do to their insurance rates
- iii. If you think they're going to drink and drive, then you need to take the car away from them until you get a commitment from them you can trust, or they have earned that trust back from you. It's really that simple.

c. Eliminating Opportunities to Get in Trouble

- i. Sororities and Fraternities a Big Problem
 1. Get a commitment from them before they join
 2. If alcohol becomes an issue then they drop out
- ii. Field Parties: See the steps above about asking key questions and calling ahead, etc.
- iii. Parents Out of Town: If there's a party in your neighborhood, call the parents or call the police. You'll be doing everyone a favor.
- iv. Beach House: Variation of Parents Out of Town; Know where they are, get a landline number; if you know or suspect there is a problem, make the appropriate calls
- v. Camping Trips: If no adult will be with them, then you as a parent should know better than to fall for this one.
- vi. Make the point with your teen: if they go to that party, they may be arrested whether they were drinking or not; everyone tends to get busted, the details tend to get worked out later.

d. Taking Aggressive Steps

- i. At least one local school now breathlyzes all students entering proms

1. Schools previously searched students to prevent them from bringing alcohol into prom
 2. Then students started leaving it in their cars and going back and forth to vehicles to drink
 3. So, now the schools are using the breathalyzer
- ii. If Schools are breathlyzing students then why should you be embarrassed to make sure that your teen is not risking criminal and civil liability for your entire family by driving under the influence?
1. Breathylzers are now cheap and being used by parents regularly, particularly when the trust starts eroding away.
 2. Numerous Models Available for around \$100
See, e.g. www.breathalyzer.net or call 1-877-334-6876
- iii. Alcohol sometimes causes the accident of produces the speed
1. If tickets are a problem then try a computer monitor
 2. See, the following website for a device that installs in 5 minutes by connecting 3 wires
 3. http://www.drivehomesafe.com/speedcontrol/control_teendriver_speeding_driverlicense.htm
- iv. Kids Make Curfew Then Sneak Out
1. If you suspect a problem then set your alarm clock again and bust them
 2. And, if you have an alarm system, try setting it so that every time a door or window opens the system beeps
 3. But remember, the punishment must make sneaking out again clearly not worth it