

Is Your Teen Ready for the Road?

What you and the state of NJ can do to prepare young drivers.

Is your teen preparing to get their driver's license? Are you ready for this important stage in your child's life? The DMV has developed a system of requirements and restrictions to help ease young adult drivers into the world of driving. With any luck, it will help ease your mind, as well!

As a parent, you will play an integral role in teaching your child how to drive. The first step is to be a positive influence in your teen's learning experience. Lead by example - by wearing your seatbelt, obeying the speed limit and keeping your attention on the road. Practice driving as often as possible and when you are alert - not tired, angry or distracted. Expose them to different situations, like driving at night or on wet roads. Finally, use positive reinforcement and let your teen driver know when they are doing well. It's up to you to make this learning experience an exciting one.

Now that your preparation is done, it's their turn to take the wheel. Studies show that a young driver's risk of having an accident is highest during the first 12-24 months of driving. NJ's Graduated Driver License program is designed to provide the instruction and driving experience teens need to become safe drivers for life. The more practice they have during the permit phase, the better prepared they will be when they are alone on the road.

Under NJ State Law, your teen can start driving at age 16 with a Special Learners Permit. As first-time drivers, they will be required to follow Special Learners/Probationary Drivers restrictions: They must be accompanied by a licensed NJ driver who is at least 21 years old and has been licensed for 3+ years, they may transport only 1 passenger at a time, they are not allowed to drive between 11:01pm and 5:00am and may not use cell phones while driving. Finally, they must practice for at least 6 months.

Once they reach age 17, they may receive a Probationary Drivers License. The same restrictions apply as listed above, only they will have to practice driving for at least 12 months.

By age 18, your teen will have enough driving experience under their belt to receive a Basic Driver License. As long as there are no suspensions or postponements on their record, all restrictions (save for the cell phone use!) are lifted and they are ready to drive on their own.

This can be both an exciting and scary time for parents, but rest easy knowing that you've done your homework. By taking the time to teach your child safe driving practices, as well as the experience gained under NJ's GDL Program, your teen is no doubt - ready for the road!