

For New Drivers, Playing It Safe Means Playing It Smart

Young adults gain independence through a series of milestones throughout their youth. But few such milestones are more anxiously anticipated than the day when teenagers earn their drivers' licenses.

For teenagers, drivers' licenses mean the difference between being at the mercy of adults for transportation and being able to set off on their own. Even though a license to drive indicates a teen has passed the written and road tests necessary to drive without adults present, newly minted licensed drivers may still not be ready to drive without supervision. In fact, statistics indicate that teenagers may benefit from a little extra instruction and guidance before they're given the keys to the family car.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say that motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among American teens. According to State Farm, young Canadians represent only 13 percent of the licensed driving population, but account for approximately 20 percent of the motor vehicle-related deaths and injuries across the country. The highest per-driver and per-distance fatality rates are found among drivers between the ages of 16 and 19.

One in five 16-year-old drivers has an accident in their first year of driving.

Teenagers who want to drive and stay safe on the road can employ these safety tips.

• **Keep an open attitude.**

Consider increasing road time under the instruction of an adult and learn from their guidance. Ask for help if there is a driving skill you haven't mastered, such as merging onto a busy



highway or parallel parking.

• **Limit other teen passengers.**

The CDC says the presence of teen passengers increases unsupervised teen drivers' crash risk. Until you are secure behind the wheel, avoid the temptation to give a bunch of friends a ride.

• **Stick to daylight driving.**

Geico says the risk of a fatal crash is three times greater at night for every mile driven. Reduced visibility and reaction time can contribute to crashes. Gain ample experience driving during daytime hours and make sure you are completely comfortable behind the wheel before setting out at night.

• **Practice in all conditions.**

Safe driving involves making smart decisions even when driving conditions are poor. With an adult in the passenger seat, practice driving in

inclement weather, only venturing out in such conditions on your own when you feel ready to do so.

• **Turn your phone off.**

Smartphones put all motorists at risk of accident. In the time it takes drivers to look at incoming texts, they may have driven several hundred feet without their eyes on the road. Make it a policy to turn smartphones off while driving.

• **Slow down.**

Speed is a common factor in automotive crashes involving teens. Follow posted speed limits at all times.

• **Drive unimpaired.**

Do not take drugs or consume alcohol or other substances that impair your ability to drive. Teens can stay safe behind the wheel by playing it smart.

Simple ways to extend the life of your vehicle

Automobiles are significant investments. The decision to spend tens of thousands of dollars on a new vehicle is not one consumers should take lightly.

Once drivers purchase their new vehicles, they can protect their investments and get greater returns on those investments by prioritizing maintenance and taking simple yet effective steps to extend the lives of their cars and trucks.

1. Drive defensively.

Aggressive driving is dangerous and can have adverse effects on a vehicle. When driving, always obey posted speed limits and avoid accelerating and decelerating quickly. Such a style of driving can strain vehicle engines and drive trains while negatively affecting fuel efficiency and wearing down brakes, states the National Institute of Automotive Service Excellence.

2. Maintain a clean vehicle.

Car washes do more than just clean a vehicle. Routine washing and waxing can remove dirt that, if left on a vehicle, can gradually scratch paint and contribute to chips and rust. Over time, rust can affect vehicle performance and may even compromise the safety of drivers and their passengers if bad enough frame rust affects structural integrity. Routine washing also can remove road salt from vehicles. Salt can build up during winter when roads are routinely treated during and after snowstorms. Road salt can be extremely corrosive and, if left unremoved from a vehicle, can contribute to rust that ultimately can cause extensive damage to a vehicle.

3. Routinely check tire pressure.

Many of today's new vehicles alert drivers when tire pressure is low. Drivers should not ignore such warnings, as low tire pressure can affect engine performance by forcing it to work harder than should be necessary. Engines that are forced to work harder than they need to likely won't last as long as those that run efficiently. Low tire pressure also negatively affects fuel efficiency, potentially costing drivers substantial amounts of money over time. Drivers of older vehicles without tire pressure alerts should routinely check tire pressure and keep tires adequately inflated. Vehicles that are slow to accelerate from resting



positions may not have enough air in their tires.

4. Adhere to maintenance guidelines.

Drivers may have heard that today's vehicles were built to go longer periods of time between oil changes and tuneups than the vehicles of yesteryear. But drivers should still adhere to manufacturer-recommended maintenance guidelines. Upon buying new vehicles, drivers should read their owners' manuals to determine

recommended maintenance intervals, and stick to those intervals for as long as they have their vehicles.

Cognizant of the sizable investments they're making when buying new vehicles, many drivers want to get as many miles out of their vehicles as possible. Simple maintenance and safe driving habits can go a long way toward keeping vehicles on the road for years to come.

Wax At Least Twice Yearly To Protect Your Vehicle

One way to protect vehicles against environmental damage is waxing. Bird droppings, rain, salt, and sun can take their toll on a vehicle, and waxing can help combat these often inevitable environmental factors.

Experts say that, even though modern paint jobs have improved considerably in recent years, wax formulations have improved as well. Both can work wonders with regard to defending against color erosion, scratches and dullness.

Furthermore, waxing increases resale value at trade-in time and can make it easier to clean vehicles.

Consumer advocates recommend that vehicles be waxed not less than twice a year.

