

**Shepherd's Driver Consulting's
Parent's Guide To Teenage Driving in Pennsylvania**



www.shepherdsdriverconsulting.com

Email: info@shepherdsdriverconsulting.com

Phone: 717-503-9344

The purpose of this guide is to assist parents with getting some information about teenagers learning to drive in Pennsylvania. It's taken from real life everyday driving scenarios. Derived from my many years of behind the wheel training and experience. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation reports show that teenagers are among the highest in number of crashes.

Parents are ultimately responsible for preparing their sons and daughters how to drive safely. To quote a proverb, "Train a child in the way he or she should go, and when he or she is older, will not depart from it". If I wrote it, it would sound something like this, "train a driver in the right way, and when he or she gets older, they shouldn't depart from it either."

This guide is an effort to reach parents and teenagers before they get behind the wheel of a car. Teenage driver laws may vary from state to state. The mission of Shepherd's Driver Consulting is to educate the entire family about driver safety. Statistically: from 2000-2006, 15-19 year old females 19,076 were killed in car accidents (12,475 males-6957 females).

It helps parents who are faced with getting driver education for their teenagers. Shepherd's Driver Consulting provides up to date and accurate information for the new driver's of today. We are the resource for parents to get the proper perspective when educating teenager's to drive safely.

Parent's Perspective

Many parents find themselves extremely nervous about teaching their teenagers to drive. Here are a few reasons why:

First, parents often have hectic work schedules. Working a lot of hours due to a struggling economy. Several of us are working more than one job in order to make ends meet. Teenagers are also working part-time jobs after school and don't have adequate time to practice driving.

Secondly, many teenagers are involved in after school activities such as sports, summer jobs, church events and other scheduling conflicts.

Parents may feel nervous because they know their teenager doesn't have enough driving experience. Their cars are not equipped for driver training with a dual-braking system. This causes a serious dilemma.

Driver laws have changed and they may be unaware of the new laws and regulations.

These things make it difficult for parents meeting the state requirements for teenage drivers. Pennsylvania requires teens under age 18 to have 65 hours of behind the wheel practice driving experience before taking a Pennsylvania driver's test. Driver's under the age of 18 also must wait for a period of six months before scheduling the road test.

As a trainer, parents tell me that I must have nerves of steel. But I really do have a lot of patience which allow students to gain the experience. In the past, parents relied somewhat on the high schools for driver education. In most cases, it simply just wasn't enough time. State legislatures across the country are constantly trying to find ways to making sure that teenagers get more time behind the wheel. In 2011, Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett signed new teen-driving safeguards into law.

Driving schools are a great solution to these problems because they support families by making sure teenagers get the right amount of training to drive safely.

Obtaining a Pennsylvania Learner's Permit and Parental Consent Form

In Pennsylvania, you must complete a physical examination from a physician, vision screening, and knowledge test. Young drivers may begin their behind the wheel practice driving.

The cost of a non-commercial Pennsylvania driver's license is \$34.50. This is the initial permit and four year license fee. There is a \$5 renewal or extension fee. This will only be accepted by cash, check or money order made out to PennDOT. You will also receive a booklet and a parental consent form to sign in front of an examiner prior to taking the test. The **Parental consent form** can be notarized and brought to the exam center. Or can be signed in front of the examiner by the parent at the PennDot exam center in Harrisburg or Carlisle. If a student is under 18 yrs. and fails the drivers exam. They must wait at least seven days before retaking the exam.

Teenagers under the age of 18 yr. are required to have at least six months of practice driving. Licensed drivers aged 21 or older must accompany the young driver at all times. Pennsylvania mandates that young drivers obtain at least 65 hours of practical, adult-supervised driving experience. Parents or Guardians are required to sign a Parent or Guardian consent form at the end of the six month training process. The form can be notarized or signed in front of an examiner at Penndot after the time has elapsed.

After the six months training period is completed and when students are ready, they may schedule a driver's exam on the phone or online scheduling. Appointments can be made online at www.dmv.state.pa.us or call 1-800-423-5542.

Pennsylvania Learner's Permit Restrictions

Night time driving restrictions begin at 11pm. Teens are not permitted to drive between 11pm-5am. They are allowed to travel for employment or volunteer or charitable service. And must always have their learner's permit on them when operating a vehicle.

The number of passengers must not exceed the number of seat belts in the vehicle. This applies to all drivers under age 18. Extensions are also granted up to one year. Violators of the law could receive a \$75 ticket. The bill known as "Lacey's Law" was sponsored by Rep. Kathy Watson. It represents Lacey Gallagher, where she was one of the six teens riding in a SUV. None were wearing seatbelts.

A licensed driver who is at least 21 years of age or a spouse, guardian or parent who is at least 18 years of age and holds a drivers license. The supervising driver must sit in the front seat.

If a teen with a learner's permit violates a driving law without having a licensed driver, it can result in a 90-day suspension and accumulate 6 or more points. Speeding more than 26 miles per hour or more over the posted speed limit is an offense.

After completing the learners permit process. It's time to start learning to drive. It's critical to get off to the right start. Having a solid foundation behind the wheel can increase your teenager's driver safety. Developing the wrong habits can be very costly in the future.

Getting Started

As a trainer, I always make sure that students understand where controls are located and how they operate. I give a brief description of the standard features and purposes.

I suggest starting off in an open parking lot. With the teenager in the driver's seat. Point out turn signals, low-high beams, windshield wipers, operating the horn without being aggressive. Stereo controls, pedals, gear shift (manual vs. automatic) and parking brake. As well as power window controls and mirror settings. Mirrors should be adjusted so the driver can view the rear passenger door handles in the bottom. Parents may overlook explaining the features properly since they know what they do and where they are, it will be easier to concentrate on safe driving. Students will need to become familiar with them for the driver's exam.

International Students

Parents of foreign teenagers are faced with even more difficulty when it comes to training them to drive. They often struggle with language barriers. Pennsylvania driver manuals are published in English and Spanish.

In comparison, the roads are very different in other countries than American roads. Such as rough vs. smooth terrain, manual vs. automatic vehicles and one of my favorites is driving on the left side of the road.

International students rely heavily on professional driving schools because they need to have the right information with the right amount of experience. A clear and concise instruction makes learning to drive a lot easier in the U.S.

There are more Spanish speakers in the U.S. than in the Chinese, French, Italian, Hawaiian, and native Indian languages combined. Spanish speaking is becoming more and more necessary for driver trainers today. Students who speak Spanish mostly understand basic English instructions. On the other hand, it is important for trainers to become familiar with Spanish in order to communicate effectively. Here are a few key words I use to train Spanish speaking students:

Despacio- Slow
Vamos- Let's go
Frena- Brake

Muy Bueno- very good

Muy Malo- very bad

Esquierda- left

Derecha- Right

Mira- look

Aqui- here

Ahora now

Esquina- Corner

Si- yes

No- No

Mia per Hora- Miles per hour

Otra ves- Repeat, again

Note for Trainers: It really helps when you know a few words in Spanish to break the ice and establish rapport. Most driver examination centers where I live do not have Spanish speaking examiners.

Therefore, students should eventually be prepared to interpret commands in English. Examiners will allow someone to translate during the test. They must make the necessary arrangements at the exam center prior to taking the test.

This portion of the handbook covers a series of examples that I have collected over the years. I would like to share them with you. It's almost impossible to put into words every situation that people encounter behind the wheel of a car. Here are some of the most recent ones that I have noticed as a trainer.

Please read carefully and share the following scenarios with your teenager to help them get a better foundation.

Scenarios

Anticipating the lights

There are times when a driver is at a traffic signal and the light is red. You are headed straight in the correct lane. To your left, another driver is at the light waiting to turn left with a green arrow signal. When his light changes from red to a green light arrow and he begins to move. You almost began to take your foot off of the brake to roll forward and suddenly brake to stop yourself in error.

Lesson: Always be aware of the light when it changes. If you would have taken your foot off of the brake. They may have rolled forward and crashed into traffic approaching a left turn on the opposite side of the road. This could result in a moving violation, accident, injury, police report, car damages, and insurance costs. Many teens need to understand this situation.

Unaware of One Way Signs

I will never forget this one, because many drivers constantly violate it right at the Dept. of Transportation offices. The student and I were driving South on Front St. which is a one way in our direction. We were headed in the right direction on a 3-lane one way street in the left lane. As we observed traffic ahead of us, we noticed a car making a right turn from another one way street on our left. The driver noticed

very quickly that he was headed directly into oncoming traffic. Luckily, he realized the mistake in enough time to avoid a head on collision.

Lesson: You should always pay extremely close attention to all signs and road markings. It could be fatal if you don't. If the driver didn't recognize the mistake, he might have continued moving in the opposite direction. Leading to a potential head on collision.

It also notices this problem with students who are from countries where they drive on the opposite (or left) side of the road. Many times when the road changes when making a left turn from a one way street onto a two way street. (For example-near Harrisburg Hospital)

Drivers forget to use turn signal- they don't use turn signals when changing lanes.

This is very common for drivers today. They become so confident in their ability to drive; they become too relaxed and get lazy. It seems that they think, I checked my mirrors and see no one there, so I can change lanes.

I think this is a very dangerous thing to do because it only takes one time to make a mistake and it may cause a crash. I have experienced drivers moving from lane to lane without using turn signals to indicate. As if they were the only ones on the road.

Aggressive drivers are also guilty of forgetting to signal.

That's why I teach my students to use their signals when changing lanes every time, no exceptions. They need to be aware the consequences of not doing so, and how it puts others in harms way.

It's amazing how such a small thing can cause a major problem. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

However, forgetting to turn off the signal can be very confusing for other drivers. They're awaiting your decision to move over but you never do. They may even think you are about to turn at the nearest corner but you never do. So, just be on the safe side and use your signals properly. Becoming a great communicator with other drivers makes it safer for everyone. Use signals when necessary, but remember to turn them off when you're done.

The Use of Cell Phones When Driving

This is a very hot topic in today's world of driving vs. technology. Since many parents learned how to drive before cell phones came into existence. There is a lot of debate over the laws that prohibit drivers from using cell phone while driving. People have come to rely on cell phones for so many reasons, keeping in touch with loved ones, for work, and the list goes on.

Cell Phone Laws and Legislation

Senate Bill 314 is the most popular bill. It describes text messaging while behind the wheel will be subject to primary enforcement, which allows law officers to stop and cite offenders that reason alone. The fine is \$50.

Other senate bills include 518,635, and 749. All of which may vary but pertain to limiting the use of a cell phone while driving in some way.

House bills 8, 896,146,189,330,580, outline the fees for each offense. Fees range from \$50-\$100.

Although we have laws prohibiting the use of cell phones while driving. It seems almost impossible for many drivers not to use it as some point. The reality is that we need to look for solutions to using a cell phone when driving.

Here are a few suggestions that might make things a little easier:

- Pull over to the side of the road when talking on a cell phone.
- Use hands-free or wireless devices to concentrate on steering. Ear pieces, in dash speaker technology, cell phone speaker on.
- If it is not necessary to take the call, let it go to voicemail and check it later. Better to be safe than sorry.
- Become familiar with the driving laws in your state so you don't receive a citation. (I have provided a current list of states that prohibit the use of cell phone while driving).
- During training, I must remind students to turn off the cell phone before driving. Those ring tones can be very intrusive, distracting everyone in the vehicle. When practicing with your teenager, make sure the ringer is turned off.

Driving in Shopping Areas

New drivers in training need to become more aware when driving into public shopping areas. There are many obstacles to watch out for.

- Looking for stop signs marked on the streets of the parking lot.
- Backing out of a parking space either straight or angled.
- Safely looking for shoppers from either direction when backing.
Checking mirrors for pedestrians, carts, and strollers.
- Parking too close to other vehicles so when they open the door it hits the other vehicle, leaving a dent or scratch.
- Driving in dark areas with lights out.

Driving in School Zones

School zones are particularly important because of children and the buses they ride on. New drivers must remember to slow down and be familiar with warning signs indicating the area. These signs are permanently posted which means drivers can overlook them during the summer months. Also they can approach them too fast when school is back in session. The intersections may or may not have a crossing guard to protect children when it is safe to cross. Flashing yellow lights are a reminder to slow down and use caution. Fifteen miles per hour is a common speed limit for school zones. Many drivers don't know where the stops are when traveling through an unfamiliar neighborhood.

Fluorescent green signs mean

Yellow and black signs mean

Be aware of bus stop flashing yellow lights warning drivers in advance. Look for the small stop signs that swing out from the driver side or left side of a school bus.

Transportation companies train bus drivers to look for drivers who violate school bus laws.

Aggressive Drivers

Aggressive Driving is a form of automobile operation in which an operator will deliberately behave in such a manner as to increase the risk of an automobile accident.

This is a very serious issue because drivers are sometimes unaware that it's them. I always encourage my students to try to avoid road rage situations. I grew up with people bragging about how fast they could get to Philadelphia or Baltimore. I could never see the sense in that if you had an accident, speeding ticket, or worse.

Parents need to be an example for their teen to follow. They tend to imitate what they see their parents do. They may think that its okay to takeout your frustration on others while behind the wheel. Some of the nicest people can become aggressive drivers.

Back in the day, we used to say, "Check yourself before you wreck yourself"! Keep that in mind the next time you want to takeout your anger in the car. Be aware of your behaviour when driving. Try to be more patient and treat others with respect. I wish all drivers were courteous to each other. We have one common goal: to arrive safely to and from our destination. So try to remember this when you are

about to beep, yell, or throw up fingers when someone cuts in front of you and forgets to signal. Be a good example for your teenager driver, your family's lives depend on it.

Thanks for taking the time to read **Parent's Handbook to Teenage Driving in Pennsylvania**. We hope it was informative and useful. Shepherd's Driver Consulting hopes that this will help you and your family. For more information about our training programs, seminars, workshops, and resources, feel free contact us. And remember, driver safety first!

Shepherd's Driver Consulting (SDC)

Owner/ Instructor-Daryl W. Shepherd

717-503-9344

Email: info@shepherdsdriverconsulting.com