

AMA DRIVER EDUCATION

PARENT COACHING GUIDE

Dedicated practice time with a coach in specific driving situations will add to and reinforce the training and education a new driver receives. In this guide, we give you tools and methods to help you approach your role as driving coach.

CONTENTS OF GUIDE:

Practice is an Important Part of New Driver Training	3
Regulations and Insurance for New Driver Coaching	3
Understand the Proactive Approach to Driving	4
Your Role as a Driving Coach	4
Positive Coaching Techniques	4
Setting up Your Coaching Sessions - Have a Plan – a.k.a The Three T's	5
Rules of Conduct	6
Direction and Feedback	6
Intervening in Emergencies	6
Practice Sessions	7
Before Starting the Engine	7
Start Your Engine:	7
Steering technique:	7
Vision:	8
Mirror Checks:	8
Turns:	8
Following skills:	9
After Basic Vehicle Control Skills Established	9
Lane changes:	9
Backing	10
Parking	10
Intersections	10
Merging	11
Zipper Merge	11
Merging on a Freeway	11
Highway driving	12
Awareness Other Road Users	12
Getting their Licence	13
After Your New Driver Has Their Licence	13
Setting Progressive Boundaries - why set boundaries for driving for your teen?	14
Lack of Experience:	14
Maintaining the Good Habits	15
Bad driving habits to watch for:	15
Driving Practice Log	16
Log Sheet:	16
An agreement between a new young driver and parent/guardian on the use of a family car.	17



PRACTICE IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF NEW DRIVER TRAINING

Safe driving is near and dear to our heart at AMA, we've been training new drivers for over 80 years and have trained over 850,000 drivers.

With AMA Driver Training, setting up new drivers with the knowledge, practices, and manoeuvres to become safe and proactive drivers is what we do, but we need your help as a parent. Like learning anything new, practice outside of class time is an important part of learning to drive.

Our New Driver's courses are designed to help new drivers become more proactive drivers by practicing good driving habits. Many components of our course work include making key safe performance procedures automatic. Creating these good habits takes practice – and time spent practicing with you as a coach can be beneficial to your new driver's general abilities and confidence as well.

REGULATIONS AND INSURANCE FOR NEW DRIVER COACHING

WHOEVER COACHES MUST:

- ✓ Be over 18
- ✓ Hold a full Class 5 licence (not a GDL)

Legal Considerations:

- The student driver will be charged with any moving violations committed during practice sessions
- The accompanying adult is at least partially responsible for the vehicle from a civil liability aspect.

Insurance Considerations:

Your standard automobile policy provides coverage for practice sessions, provided both parties—the learner and coach—meet all legal requirements.

For further details, and especially if there are unusual circumstances, call your insurance agent or underwriter.

UNDERSTAND THE PROACTIVE APPROACH TO DRIVING

When you learned to drive, you probably heard the phrase “drive defensively”. Defensive driving means driving for, or reacting to, the other person in order to avoid an incident. Over the last while, there has been a change in this approach. Drivers are now encouraged to drive proactively. Proactive driving means looking and thinking well ahead while driving. This helps the driver identify problem situations early to avoid an incident altogether or prepare appropriately. Should an unexpected situation occur, students are taught when to use evasive maneuvers as required.

YOUR ROLE AS A DRIVING COACH

Your role as a driving coach is critical in helping your new driver become a responsible, proactive driver. Even with driver training, you still play a major role in helping your teen become a proficient driver. This guide is to help you and your teen work together, and help you set boundaries for driving practice sessions.

POSITIVE COACHING TECHNIQUES

One of the most important elements when acting as a driving coach is to set up a positive learning atmosphere. Whether your new driver shows it or not, he or she will likely be anxious enough without having to cope with a tense, emotionally-charged environment.

Providing a carefully managed, supportive learning experience, can contribute much to confidence levels and to the bond between parent and teen or coach and new driver. We also know that finding a good fit for driving coaching is very important.

This can be easier said than done. There is something about handing over the keys to the family car which can generate a lot of tension and some unexpected feelings. Some families have co-coaches – different parents handling different portions of the training. Some prefer grandparents to help with the coaching, or other trusted family members.

HELP YOUR NEW DRIVER:

SEE – THINK – DO!



SEE – Help the driver watch for possible hazards.



THINK – About the situation and what they might do and what you will do about it.



DO – Help the driver to execute the manoeuvre.



SETTING UP YOUR COACHING SESSIONS - HAVE A PLAN – A.K.A THE THREE T'S

A big part of any coaching is in planning – we recommend setting up your driving sessions with The Three T's in mind:



TIME

- Start with 30-minute sessions and progress to one hour.
- Know your route ahead of time.
- Give directions well in advance.



TOPIC

- Outline objectives of the lesson before leaving for the drive and review what was learned in the last lesson.
- Early sessions should be more structured and progress from simple to more complex skills and manoeuvres, e.g., shoulder checks, lane changes, right turns, left turns, merging.
- Practice locations should begin in parking lots, then neighborhoods, and on to light traffic, etc.



TALK

- When beginning, you should provide step-by-step instruction, e.g., turns, signals, shoulder checks, etc.
- In later sessions, your teen should be able to provide a commentary of what they are seeing and doing, e.g., "I'm looking at the intersection ahead and preparing to stop because the light is about to change".
- As they become more skilled, you may want to ask them questions, well in advance of their action, that will enhance their driving judgement, e.g., What do you think we should do at this uncontrolled intersection up ahead?



**RULES OF
CONDUCT**

Before driving with your teen or new driver for the first time, set time aside to explain how you will be coaching them and lay out the rules of conduct for both of you before entering the vehicle.

Make sure the message the new driver or teen is getting from you is consistent with what they were taught in driver education.

If your new driver is doing something you think is incorrect, talk to the driving instructor.

**DIRECTION AND
FEEDBACK**

Make sure each of you know the meaning of certain key words for giving directions:

- Left, right, correct, stop, slow down, go

It sounds silly now, but stress can make using too many different words hard to process. Especially for a new driver who is trying to focus on the road.

GIVE DESCRIPTIVE FEEDBACK:

Feedback should be precise, immediate and without judgement.

If a mistake is made –

- Point out the incorrect behaviour (switching lanes without shoulder checking)
- Explain why it could be dangerous (hidden car in blind spot)
- Repeat the manoeuvre by taking the driver step-by-step through the process (proper lane change process with shoulder checking)

REMARK ON THE POSITIVES:

If the driver shows improvement, tell them. If they handle a driving situation with skill, praise them.

KEEP YOUR EMOTIONS IN CHECK:

If the driver has made a mistake, ask them calmly to pull over, stop the car, and put it in park. Then calmly discuss the error and give some descriptive feedback.

**INTERVENING IN
EMERGENCIES**

Unlike the professional instructor who has a brake of their own, there are only three safe means of intervening in an emergency to assist your new driver:

VOCAL COMMANDS

Vocal commands are the first step in avoiding a collision. Ensure the new driver understands the importance of following commands like STOP, SLOW, or GO when spoken in a strong voice and that they are given well in advance.

GRAB THE STEERING WHEEL

Use your left hand at the bottom or side of the wheel and steady it or apply the necessary correction.

SHIFT THE TRANSMISSION INTO NEUTRAL

If the new driver freezes on the accelerator, you use the gearshift to shift the car to neutral. You might want to practice shifting the car into neutral yourself.

PRACTICE SESSIONS



The rest of this guide will focus on specific topics to use when setting out to drive. It addresses only the most common questions and concerns of the parent/coach. However, there are many resources available to support your coaching efforts.

The Student's Record of Driving Achievement is a valuable tool for practice sessions. It will determine your teen's readiness to practice and reveal areas of strength and weakness. It can also be used as a general outline for practice sessions using the Vehicle Check and Pre-Operational Habit areas.



BEFORE STARTING THE ENGINE

Ensure the driver has his Class 7 Operator's Licence. (New driver's can frequently forget their documentation as they are not in the habit.

- Have your teen explain and/or perform a vehicle check
- Identify all controls
- Have your teen explain/perform the Pre-Operational drill (see Record of Driving Achievement)



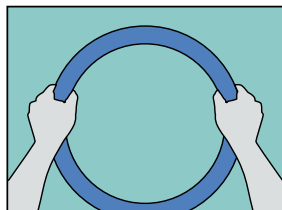
START YOUR ENGINE:

For the early sessions and especially with a true beginner, select a quiet area to practice basic control: starting, stopping, leaving the curb, returning to curb, signals, turns, lane changes, backing.

Repeat these basic control functions as often as necessary; resist the tendency to move on too quickly. You as a coach must be sure that your teen has adequate control skills. Having better vehicle control skills will make later practice much safer and more productive.



STEERING TECHNIQUE:



For optimum control, both hands should be on the wheel at the 9 and 3-o'clock position. In this position the driver is always ready to respond to an emergency situation.

The position is balanced, relatively comfortable, and maximum leverage can be applied in case of an unplanned driving event.



VISION:

Practice keeping vision up and constantly moving; scan one block deep, sidewalk to sidewalk; the car will tend to go where the driver is looking.

If steering straight is a problem, ask the student where he or she is looking. Guide their scanning by asking strategic questions: "What colour is the light or car at the next intersection?"



MIRROR CHECKS:

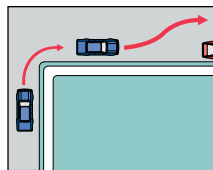
Associated with vision are the mirrors. The driver has a back mirror and 2 side mirrors. The mirrors assist the driver in seeing behind and on the side while driving. More importantly it helps identify vehicles, pedestrians and others in the driver's blind spot.

To determine blind spot locations with the driver sitting in the car and the mirrors properly adjusted, walk behind the car and then slowly around to the side. Have the driver wave their hand when they cannot see you in either their rear-view mirror or their side mirror. Repeat this procedure for the other side. These are the blind spots that the new driver needs to be aware of and check in certain manoeuvres.



TURNS:

RIGHT TURN:

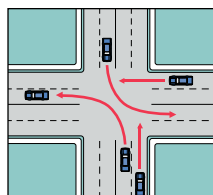


Right turns require more steering skill, left turns are more dangerous.

The law requires that right turns be made into the right curb lane (curb to curb).

The rule of thumb generally used by examiners is that the lane is available and there are no parked cars within half a block.

LEFT TURN:



The turning manoeuvre begins from a point one car length from the center of the intersection. If there are oncoming cars, this is also the stopping point.

Wheels and car should be kept straight while waiting due to the risk of a rear-end collision.

Before proceeding, the student must repeatedly check:

1. Oncoming traffic
2. The traffic lights
3. Pedestrian traffic in the crosswalk to the left

Left turns in traffic are demanding and should normally be attempted only when the student is sufficiently skilled and has done a good number of them with an instructor.



FOLLOWING SKILLS:

Managing the space ahead and to the side of the vehicle, for obvious reasons, is one of the most critical collision avoidance tasks. Maintaining an adequate cushion ahead reduces the likelihood of both frontal and rear-end collisions.

AMA students are taught to maintain an ideal following distance of 2-3 seconds for urban street speeds, and 4 seconds for speeds above 80 km/h according to the conditions (rain, snow).

Have your teen explain this if necessary, or refer to the The Driver's Guide to Operation, Safety and Licensing available from Alberta Transportation or their student handbook for more information about safe following distances.

Following distance should be increased when a vehicle behind is tailgating. Following distance should also increase if the driver sees a potential conflict developing with the vehicle ahead.



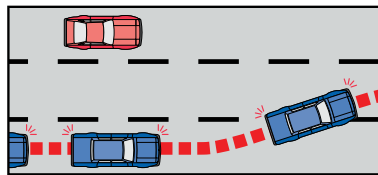
AFTER BASIC VEHICLE CONTROL SKILLS ESTABLISHED

When your new driver's overall vehicle control is established, and you are both comfortable, you can progress to more complex situations:

- Start driving in light to medium traffic, preferably in daylight.
- Practice ground search for pedestrians, jaywalkers, etc.
- Practice scanning, anticipation, and maintaining an adequate space cushion around the vehicle, as well as lane changes and turns.



LANE CHANGES:



Changing lanes involves steering, aggressive visual scanning (including checking your blind spots) and occasionally speed adjustment. Since you will be changing your vehicle's position from one lane to another, you must signal your intentions

Beginning students are taught the following sequence (MSSSM):

1. Mirror – check mirrors
2. Shoulder check
3. Signal (if clear)
4. Shoulder check again
5. Move (when safe)

The reason for doubling the visual checks is that most beginners take a long time to perform these checks.

On most modern cars the lane change signal is activated by moving the signal lever slightly up or down—not far enough to latch it. This avoids having to manually cancel after completing the manoeuvre.



BACKING

Steering in reverse is a critical skill which often gets too little attention in practice sessions. Backing should be practiced during every session as it is one of the riskiest manoeuvres.

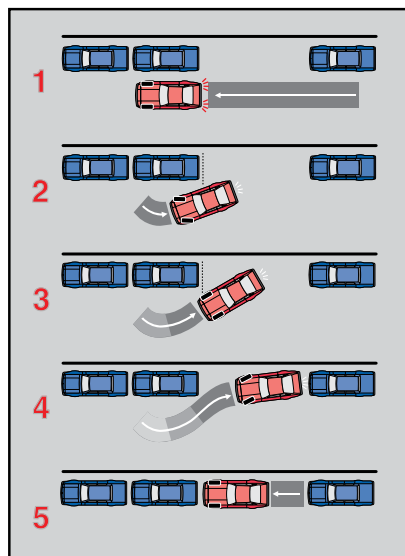
It is best to find an abandoned parking lot and practice backing straight, backing through left and right turns, and backing in a 3-point turn.

Stress the importance of turning fully around, looking out the back window and of going very slowly in reverse (because of severely restricted vision).

Practice backing out of a parking stall, ensuring that your teen checks their back right and back left, then straight back before moving the vehicle.



PARKING



Parking skills, especially those required for parallel parking, tend to take on an exaggerated importance in the minds of most beginning students.

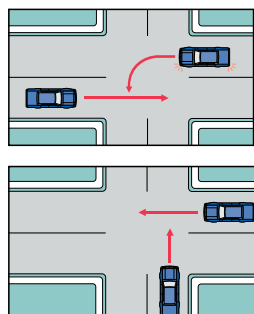
If basic car control and backing skills are good, parking will come easily. It is important not to start parking practice before these skills are well established. It is also important that you not stress parking practice at the expense of skills which have more survival value.

The step-by-step process for parking is available in The Driver's Guide to Operation, Safety and Licensing available from Alberta Transportation or the student handbook.



INTERSECTIONS

Not surprisingly, most serious collisions occur at intersections. Reinforce the proactive skills your new driver has learned by:



- analyze upcoming intersections beginning from a block away (controlled or uncontrolled, type of intersection, type of control, traffic volume, design, are there turning lanes, etc.)
- stress planning for the best lane position depending on the desired direction of travel.
- reinforce the need for covering the brake as you approach the intersection – checking left, then right to ensure that all cross traffic is stopping before committing the vehicle.



MERGING

ZIPPER MERGE

Drivers use both lanes fully to the point of closure (or defined merge area), then alternate, zipper-like, into the open lane. The technique maximizes available road space, fostering fairness and courtesy when everyone abides by it. In fact, research shows it can reduce congestion by as much as 40 percent.

Tips for performing a safe and successful zipper merge (when conditions allow):

- Drive consistently. Don't rush ahead.
- When ready to move over, signal your intent and merge in an alternating fashion.
- (Like the teeth of a zipper being zipped together.)
- If there is no bottleneck and an early merge makes sense, feel free to do so.
- If a lane closure is due to a crash or breakdown, be prepared and observe emergency workers and take the necessary precautions to ensure safety for all. You might need to reduce your speed and move over as soon as possible to avoid endangering emergency workers and/or tow truck operators.

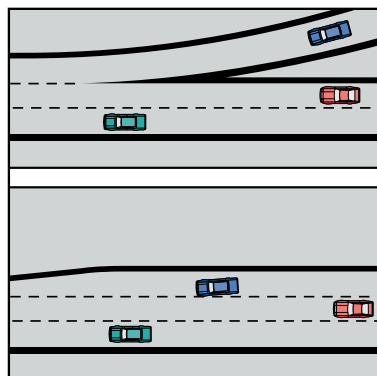
FREE FLOW LANES

Free flow lanes are designed to keep traffic moving – they are an added lane to accommodate the volume of traffic.

TIPS FOR ENTERING A FREE FLOW LANE (WHEN CONDITIONS ALLOW):

- **Drive consistently** – yield for any pedestrians in the crosswalk area, if the intersection is clear of pedestrians, enter the free flow lane. Don't slow down suddenly or stop within a free flow lane unless conditions warrant. To slow or stop suddenly in a free flow lane could cause an accident if other drivers are following too closely. They are not expecting you to slow or stop.
- **Do not change lanes quickly after entering a free flow lane** – be sure to pass the solid white line, and only change lanes when it is safe to do so.

MERGING ON A FREEWAY



This manoeuvre should not be attempted until your teen has done merging with their instructor.

Discuss in detail before practicing, the difference between merge and yield signs at the end of a ramp.

Many drivers are not aware that when merging, the law requires both the merging driver and the freeway traffic being merged with to cooperate with each other to ensure that the manoeuvre can be completed in safety. Neither has the right-of-way.



HIGHWAY DRIVING

After entering a highway or freeway it is important to adjust your speed to that of the traffic on the highway, up to the posted speed limit.

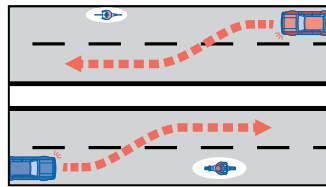
On a multi-laned highway it is best to have your new driver stay in the right lane to allow faster traffic an opportunity to pass. Have the student establish a 12 second visual lead time and a minimum 4 second following distance.

For negotiating curves at highway speeds, it is best to have your new driver slow slightly prior to reaching the curve. After entering the curve they can then accelerate gently to exit the curve.

Upon exiting the highway, have your new driver frequently monitor the vehicle's speed since all drivers can easily become "velocitized" (feeling that they are going slower than they are) after a period of high speed driving.



AWARENESS OTHER ROAD USERS



Cyclists should be given the same consideration as automobiles since they are considered a vehicle under the Traffic Safety Act. Don't squeeze past them, instead lane change around them (they have been known to fall over) giving them their full lane.

When stopping for pedestrians in a crosswalk, especially at mid-block, stop well back (at least 30m) to allow traffic in adjacent lanes a full view. Many drivers are not aware that it is illegal to pass a vehicle which has stopped for a pedestrian.

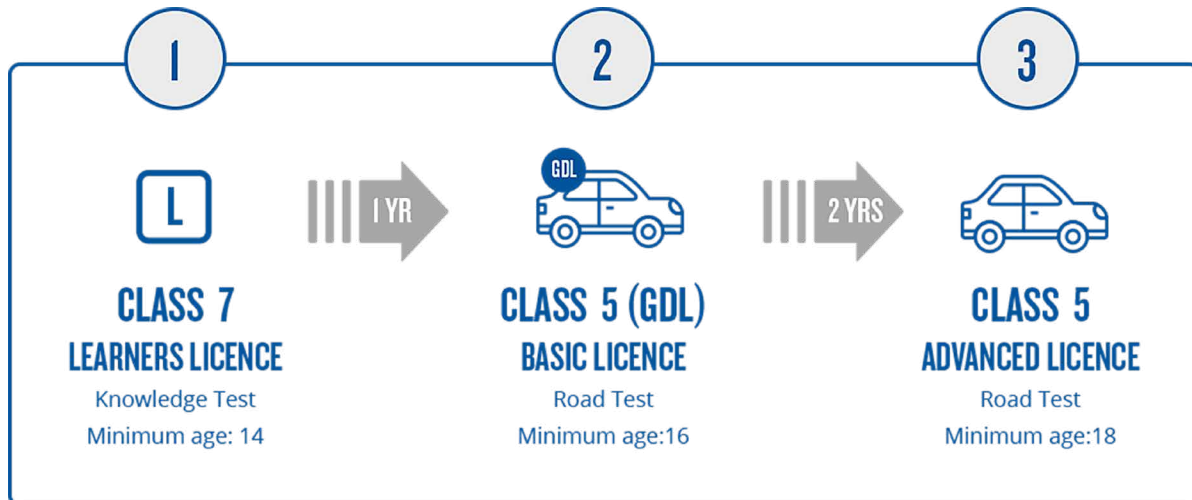
On a residential street where young children may dart out from between parked cars, a reasonable speed (as required by law) may be 20 or 30 km/h.



GETTING THEIR LICENCE

We find that at least 40 hours of driving practice creates the confidence for most new drivers to take their next step and do their Class 5 GDL road test. You would be the best judge regarding your new driver's readiness.

We recommend saving an in-car session or purchasing a brush-up in-car training session before the road test as it helps address any of the new driver's concerns or possible problem areas.



AFTER YOUR NEW DRIVER HAS THEIR LICENCE

SETTING PROGRESSIVE BOUNDARIES - WHY SET BOUNDARIES FOR DRIVING FOR YOUR TEEN?

The fact we can see from decades of driving and crash data, is that teens and young drivers have a lot more risk carried with driving. Young drivers need to master technical driving skills and develop a sense of good judgement in order to make wise driving decisions, and that only comes from experience.

FOUR FACTORS WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE NEW DRIVERS HAZARDOUS:

- 1. LACK OF EXPERIENCE:**

All young drivers start out with very little understanding of the complexities of driving a motor vehicle, let alone the knowledge and skills to do it.

Young drivers commonly underestimate risk in many driving situations. This factor combined with lack of driving skills is a deadly combination.
- 2. MATURITY:**

During the teen years, the brain is undergoing significant development, and, growth-wise, the brain is not considered to be in a mature state until one is in their mid to late 20's.

Teen decisions are typically based on emotion and are reactive rather than proactive in nature. Rational judgement requires adult level processing which for many of us, may not be fully developed in the teen years.

3. RISK-TAKING BEHAVIOUR:

While it is dangerous to over-generalize, studies show teens have a higher risk tolerance and are sensation seeking by nature. These two factors can result in poor driving judgement and participation in high-risk Behaviours.

These can include speeding, aggressive driving, drowsy driving, distracted driving, not using a seat belt, and in some cases drinking and driving.

4. GREATER EXPOSURE TO RISKY DRIVING TIMES AND ACTIVITIES:

Teen drivers are different from other drivers, and their crash experience is different. Teens often drive at night with other teens in the vehicle, often on the highway — factors that increase crash risk.

As they are still developing their driving focus, they can be easily distracted by passengers, radios, cell phones and other roadway items such as pedestrians, signage, other drivers, etc.

Teen drivers are still developing a sense of social responsibility, such as showing consideration towards other road users.

REDUCE THE RISK BY SETTING PROGRESSIVE BOUNDARIES:

With these risk factors in mind, you might want to set some progressive boundaries with your young driver to help them learn and gain experience in a staged way and reduce their risk exposure. This may include starting with only daytime driving, looking at restricting passengers and distractions, and keeping to shorter distances and known routes.



MAINTAINING THE GOOD HABITS

Some things you as a parent/coach can do to help your new driver maintain and further develop their driving skills:

- ✓ Drive with your new driver weekly and look for signs of relaxed attention, sloppy habits, etc. and set a good example of driving behaviours.
- ✓ Enroll the new driver in a defensive driving program such as AMA's Proactive Defensive Driver Course (a 6.5 hour classroom session), during the first year or two of driving.
- ✓ When the student has approximately 20,000 km of driving experience, they should be ready for the Winter Driving Course, where they will learn advanced winter driving manoeuvres conducted under controlled conditions.
- ✓ Establish a formal goal of collision-free driving; this could take the form of a contract similar to the "Contract for Life" included in the course materials) which specifies rewards or consequences for successful achievement over a specific time period.



BAD DRIVING HABITS TO WATCH FOR:

- Forgetting to signal
- Sloppy turns that cut across other drivers' lanes
- Following too closely
- Forgetting to reduce speeds when approaching potential hazards
- Having sudden changes in speed or direction that can catch other drivers unaware
- Backing up without checking behind and turning the head
- Accelerating through yellow lights
- Attention wandering more and more from the driving task
- Increasingly lax in obeying traffic signs and rules
- Not paying attention to other drivers' errors on the highway e.g., merging
- Rolling stops at stop signs
- Speeding
- Wandering in lane

DRIVING PRACTICE LOG

While Driver Education is an important part of a new driver's journey toward safe, independent driving, the importance of your example and good practice cannot be emphasized enough.

Dedicated practice time with a coach in specific driving situations will add to and reinforce the training and education a new driver receives.

A general log sheet with recommended practice situations and times has been included to help ensure that enough appropriate practice has taken place.

Each check box represents one hour of dedicated practice time. It is important that your teen practice and that you are satisfied with their performance in each of these recommended activities. Try to include some backing practice in each hour.



LOG SHEET:

TYPE OF DRIVING HOURS:

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

RESIDENTIAL DRIVING

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

URBAN DRIVING

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

DOWNTOWN DRIVING

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

HIGHWAY DRIVING

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

DRIVING IN RAIN

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

DRIVING IN SNOW

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

DRIVING AT NIGHT

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

RURAL (GRAVEL) ROADS

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

ICY/SNOWY ROADS



An agreement between a new young driver and parent/guardian on the use of a family car.

I, _____ being a licenced driver, do hereby agree
with my parent/guardian, _____ as follows:

That if I am permitted to drive an automobile which is registered in my parent's name, I do promise:

1. I will drive carefully and cautiously, at all times
2. I will not drink or use any type of drugs and drive
3. I will not allow the car to be driven by anyone other than myself
4. Knowing that the car is a machine with the power to kill or injure, I will not show-off with it
5. I will not drive in excess of the posted speed limit
6. I will slow down and look both ways at intersections and railroad crossings even if I have the right-of-way
7. I will not race with other vehicles regardless of how much of a temptation it might be to do so
8. I will not attempt to drive while distracted (cell phone, texting, eating, etc.)
9. I will not attempt to drive if I feel sleepy or in any way impaired (alcohol or medication)
10. I will obey all signs, street and highway markings, signallights, and other traffic regulations

I realize that if I violate these conditions, and a collision occurs through my carelessness or negligence, the cost of insurance coverage on the car could increase substantially... or the insurance company might be required to amend my parent's policy to remove me and that I would no longer be able to drive the car.

I further realize that this Agreement is not legally binding, but I hereby give my parent/guardian my word of honor that I will do what I have promised herein in return for the permission and privilege to drive the family car.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have signed this Agreement of my own free will and accord this day of:

Signed: _____

I, parent/guardian of _____ subscribe to what the new driver has promised herein, and have confidence that the Agreement will be kept. On suitable occasions, therefore, I hereby grant permission to the above-named driver to use, with my knowledge, this vehicle registered in my name.

Signed: _____