

# 10 Ways to Get Your Teen Driver Road-Ready

Auto expert Shahe Koulloukian shares the most important factors in teenage driving safety.



Having a child that's finally old enough to drive is nerve-racking – for the teen who's a novice behind the wheel, but perhaps more so for the parents! We asked our go-to car expert, Shahe Koulloukian, owner of Mazvo Auto Care, for his best advice on making sure your teen is ready to hit the road... safely and responsibly. Here are his pro tips:

1. Practicing with them honestly is the best way to start. Share the stories of your first experience driving, and how nervous you were, and the mistakes you continue to make... even today.
2. Remember, you are not the person to make your teen a great driver, they are! Accept the fact that you're not the master; you are just the introductory level.
3. Explain that distraction is the biggest reason for accidents. Teach them about the three types of distraction: **manual, visual, and cognitive**.
  - **Manual distractions** are those where you move your hands from the steering wheel.
  - **Visual distractions** are those where your eyes aren't focused on the road.
  - **Cognitive distractions** are when your mind wanders away from the task of driving.
  - **Remind them that texting involves all three types of distraction!**
4. Start with parking and turning before allowing them to drive on the road. Be sure to invest at least ten hours of just parking and turning, spread out over time. A good rule of thumb is to commit to two hours a week in 30-minute segments. After they master the parking and turning, you can slowly start the driving in low-risk situations for a minimum of 15 hours, then work up to more risky situations for at least ten hours.
5. No passengers in the vehicle other than parents. No radio or music for the first 20 hours of driving. They can sing and get jiggy with it any time in the future.

6. Teens whose parents drive distracted are two to four times likely to also drive distracted. Remember, teens see their parents as role models. That doesn't change when they get their license. When you are behind the wheel, don't do anything you wouldn't want your teen to do. If they catch you – admit to your mistakes. It shows your new driver that it is never too late to start driving safely.

7. Sign them up for driving school and leave them alone. They need to focus on learning by a third-party, non-biased person. You can judge them later.

8. This is the most important step. After they have completed a driving school course, Go to the B.R.A.K.E.S program website (<https://putonthebrakes.org/shop>) and sign your teen and yourself up for this amazing **FREE program**. Yes, it's free, and they travel all around the country teaching safe and defensive driving the right way. You simply sign up and give a credit card to hold your spot; if you show up, it's FREE! If you flake out and are a no show, then you get charged for your saved spot. It's really that simple.

9. When you're ready to purchase a car for them, stay away from vehicles that have too many bells and whistles – i.e., the backup camera, side motion sensors, and cruise control. These may seem helpful, but they're bad-habit-forming features that your teen will rely on, not actually doing the work of paying proper attention and becoming a good defensive driver.

10. Teach your teen the “nuts and bolts” of their vehicle: tire size, the type of oil it requires, what the warning lights mean. Get them familiar with their owner's manual and encourage them to keep a maintenance schedule. Make sure they know what to do in case of a flat tire or other roadside emergency.

Car accidents are the leading cause of death for ages 15-20, and teaching teens safe driving goes far beyond “Put your seatbelt on and be careful!” – especially given all the possible distractions that technology provides. But with proper education, you can rest a little easier knowing that your teen is prepared and responsible. Behind the wheel, at least.