

Is It Safe?



Choosing a Safe Vehicle for Your Teen

Owning a vehicle is a big step in a teen's life, allowing for a sense of freedom and independence.

Is your Teen Ready to Own a Car?

Before making this important decision, determine if your teen is ready for this adult responsibility. Newly licensed teens are at highest risk of being involved in a crash during the first six months of driving. Crash rates for young drivers are high because of their immaturity and driving inexperience.

Teens who are the main drivers of vehicles are also more likely to use cell phones while driving, speed, and be involved in car crashes than teens who share vehicle use with other household drivers. Therefore, consider waiting at least six months to buy a vehicle for your teen after he or she gets a driver's license. This will allow your teen time to gain more driving experience under safer circumstances using the family vehicle.

Choosing a Safe Vehicle

When you decide your teen is ready to own a vehicle, help him or her choose a safe one:

- ▶ **Size counts.** Later model mid and full-size passenger cars are better choices due to their size and safety features.
- ▶ **Look for certain safety features.** Side airbags add extra protection for the driver and passengers. Consider vehicles with electronic stability control, anti-lock braking and seat belt reminder systems.

- ▶ Check the vehicle's safety ratings. Go to **safercar.gov** for information about a vehicle's safety ratings.
- ▶ Talk with your teen about the type of vehicle he or she prefers. Make it clear that you have the final say about the purchase.

Avoid

- ▶ Sporty or high performance cars; they may encourage some teens to speed or take risks.
- ▶ Sport Utility Vehicles (SUVs) and pick-up trucks are more likely to roll over in a crash.
- ▶ Small cars offer less protection due to their size and weight.
- ▶ Older vehicles (generally six years and older) tend to have fewer safety features and may be more likely to break down on the road.

Useful Tips

- ▶ Make sure your teen knows how to safely operate a vehicle by spending time supervising his or her driving.
- ▶ Explain exactly what to do in the event of an emergency such as a flat tire or engine trouble.
- ▶ Talk about the costs of fines for traffic offenses and how these costs can affect driving privileges and insurance costs. Your teen may be more inclined to drive safely.
- ▶ Consider using a parent–teen driving agreement to manage your teen's driving. For example, you may agree to cover certain costs of driving or owning a car if your teen follows specific driving rules. For samples of parent-teen driving agreements go to **health.ny.gov/prevention/injury_prevention/teens.htm** or **dmv.ny.gov/youngerdriver/ParentTeenContract.pdf**

Funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) with a grant from the New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee