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For more valuable teen driving information, visit www.parentingteendrivers.com

PARENTING THE TEENAGE DRIVER: A CONTRACT

Only a written contract will ensure your expectations and rules are clear

Four Critical Reasons for a Driving Contract:

- Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death in young people
- Teenagers' judgment is less developed for situations, and more impulsive.
- Your teenage driver is in danger of killing or maiming himself or herself or other innocent people.
- The contract signals the teenager that driving is serious and potentially deadly.

The first step in this process is THE single most important and often the most difficult step to take. It is that you, the Parent(s), reflect carefully on the problem and firmly resolve to do all you can reasonably do to prevent your teen from becoming a statistic. **DO NOT SKIP THIS STEP.**

Establish with the teenager, in advance, your firm determination to reach an agreement prior to their driving. You must be willing to state (and mean) that **you will not allow the teen to drive until an agreement is reached and signed.** State this...and then be willing to ride out the storm of teenage protest.

If possible, if two parents are involved, parents should reach an agreement about the contract before it is discussed with the teenager.

DO NOT ALLOW A TEENAGER TO DRIVE INDEPENDENTLY UNTIL THE AGREEMENT IS NEGOTIATED, WRITTEN, REVISED, AND SIGNED! DON'T LET YOUR TEEN DRIVE WITHOUT AN AGREEMENT.

Sign it and provide a copy to the teenager. Set a date to revise it after a period of time during which the teen drives. Schedule the review date and put it on the calendar. On this review date, go through it and change the agreement a little (or a lot) based on experience. Make it stricter if the teen's behavior with the car warrants that. Make it a bit more lenient, perhaps, if the teen is doing well. **START WITH A FAIRLY STRICT CONTRACT.**

Driving Agreement

General Principles

The new driver must initial each point to show it is read and that they understand it:

____ I recognize that driving is a privilege, **not** a right. The State's role is to determine that I meet the *basic* legal requirements for a license. Permission to drive is **not** a legal right: It is granted to me by my parents, who are under no obligation to do so, and who may withdraw the privilege at any time. I understand that I will only be allowed to drive when I am willing to abide by the rules and regulations established by my parents.

I recognize that driving a car is a very serious matter. I recognize that...

____ Automobile accidents are the **leading cause of death** of people 16-20 years old.

____ I am **more likely to die** in an auto accident than from any other cause.

____ Recklessness or errors that I make while driving **could kill or hurt me, kill or hurt passengers in my car, and/or kill or hurt people in other cars and pedestrians**. Among those that could be victims of my driving mistakes are: Infants, children, my friends, my family members, parents of children, and many others.

____ I will abide by laws regulating driving. **I will observe and abide by posted speed limits**. I will abide by rules established by my parents. I recognize these are for my protection and the protection of others.

____ I understand that the car I drive is the **property of my parents**. I drive the car **only with permission**.

____ I understand that my parents and I must be able to reach a written agreement in order for me to be permitted to drive. I understand that the terms of this agreement may be changed based on how I handle the freedom and responsibility of driving. The rules will get stricter if my parents judge that I am not doing well. It will get somewhat less strict if my parents judge that I am doing well.

RULES-Category A (Teen Driver – Initial after each statement)

These rules, if violated, will lead to indefinite suspension of driving privileges. This is the most serious set of rules. I understand that I may lose my driving privileges indefinitely if any one of these is violated even once. _____ Initial

1. **No alcohol use/abuse.** As a minor, it is illegal for me to drink alcohol. I will not drive for 24 hours after my last use of alcohol in ANY amount. **No drug use/abuse.** I will not drive for 72 hours after my last use of any "substance." In this agreement, "substance" means any drug or chemical (including but not limited to marijuana, pills, inhalants, and other drugs) which would be expected *by my parents* to alter my ability to drive. There is no acceptable amount of any substance of this kind. If I use any drugs, I will not drive for 72 hours. This rule may include medications prescribed to me or over-the-counter medications. In the cases of legal medications, I will inform my parents of any such medications I have taken so that they can judge whether taking these medications will interfere with my driving ability. _____ Initial

- a. **No riding with others who have used alcohol or drugs.** I will not ride as a passenger with any driver who has used alcohol or any substance as defined above. I will not ride with any one who it would be reasonable to think may have used alcohol or drugs, when I am unsure if they have. _____ Initial
 - b. **Alternatives to riding with others** who have used alcohol or drugs. If I find myself in a situation as described above, I will contact my parents or another designated adult to arrange for transportation. I understand that my parents will appreciate that behavior and will make every effort to avoid asking me a lot of questions about it. _____ Initial
 - c. **No alcohol or drugs in car.** I will not allow alcohol or illegal drugs in the car. _____ Initial
2. **No thrill-seeking/stunts.** I will not engage in any thrill-seeking behavior while driving. I will not drive for recreation. Driving too fast, racing of all kinds, and any kind of "stunt" involving a car is NOT ALLOWED. Driving is for transportation ONLY. _____ Initial
 3. **Informing parents about accidents & police encounters.** I will inform my parents about any and all tickets, accidents, and encounters with police. _____ Initial
 4. **No firearms or other weapons.** I will not drive with any guns or other deadly weapons in the vehicle. _____ Initial

RULES-Category B

Violations will lead to suspension of driving privileges for up to three months.

1. **Permission to Drive.** I must ask permission to drive each time I drive. Exceptions to this rule will be given for regularly scheduled transportation to school, work, regular meetings, etc. I will ask permission to drive to specific locations. I will be certain that my parents know where I am. I will not make unscheduled stops or side trips unless I have asked my parents. _____ Initial
2. **Off-Limit Areas.** I will not drive on streets, highways, or in areas that are designated as off-limits. I understand that greater flexibility in these matters will come as I gain experience and show that I am honoring the agreement. For the time being, the following roads and areas are to be avoided (list below, if any): _____ Initial
3. **No one else drives vehicle.** I will not permit any other person to drive the car without my parents' specific permission for each specific case.
4. **Limit on passengers.** I will limit the number of passengers (not counting parents) to _____ (recommended: 0 or 1 for new drivers).

RULES-CATEGORY C

Violations may lead to suspension of driving privileges for up to six weeks.

1. **Weather/road conditions.** I will respect weather and road conditions, slowing down as needed for safety. I will contact my parents to discuss weather or poor road conditions when I am out driving. _____ Initial

2. **Emotional upset.** Knowing that judgment and driving skills are altered by emotions, I will not drive when I am upset or angry. Under these conditions, I will contact my parents for transportation and I reserve the right to maintain my privacy regarding personal matters. _____ Initial
3. **Taking care of vehicle.** It is my responsibility to protect the car I drive. I will keep it reasonably clean and maintained. I have some specific responsibilities regarding the maintenance of the car as noted below (if any): _____ Initial
4. **Passenger behavior.** I will not allow my passengers to behave in such a way as to damage the car or distract me while driving. _____ Initial
5. **Seatbelts.** I will wear my seatbelt and shoulder harness at all times and require all passengers to wear them. _____ Initial
6. **Friends ride only with their parents permission.** When transporting my friends, I will be reasonably sure that they have their parents' permission to ride with me. _____ Initial
7. **No Smoking.** I will not allow smoking in the car. I will not smoke in the car. _____ Initial
8. **Attention to Driving.** I will not eat while driving OR do other things that distract me while driving. No applying makeup, no getting things in and out of back-pack or purse, and no reaching to the floor or back seat to pick something up. I know that it only takes a split second distraction to cause an accident. _____ Initial
9. **Car audio system.** For the first two months I drive, I will not have the car stereo on. After the first two months, after clearing this with my parents, I will be allowed to have the stereo on but will make no adjustments to it other than changing the volume while driving. Under no circumstances will I change a CD or cassette while driving. I will change these only when stopped or pulled over. _____ Initial
10. **Cell Phones.** I will not use a cell phone while driving. I will ALWAYS pull over while operating a cell phone. _____ Initial
11. **No rushing.** Accidents are more likely to happen when I rush. I am more likely to rush when I leave late. Therefore, my parents reserve the right to not allow me to drive unless I leave by a time they specify. For example, if my parents tell me that I must allow 20 minutes to get to something that starts at 7:00 , ***I may not leave later than that without permission.*** In such cases, my parents will attempt to provide alternative transportation, to whatever extent possible. _____ Initial

SPECIAL ITEMS:

1. **Tickets and moving violations** will result in suspension of my driving privileges for a period to be determined by my parents. My parents have no obligation to pay my fines

2. **Financial.** I will make certain financial contributions to the purchase of the car, maintenance of the car, and/or insurance. My contributions are currently as follows (if any): _____Initial

3. **Grades.** Continued driving privileges are dependent upon maintaining good grades in school. Required GPA to retain driving privileges (if any): GPA_____ _____Initial

4. **General life responsibilities.** I agree that I must be responsible to drive safely and that my parents must believe I am relatively responsible in order to allow me to drive. They may, therefore, take into account how I handle my general responsibilities, including schoolwork, employment, household duties. I will also maintain a respectful attitude. I will not ask my parents to allow me to drive when I am rude and disrespectful to them or to others. _____ Initial

5. **Right to clear expectations.** My parents have a right to expect me to be responsible. I have a right to be told what this means. For this reason, I may ask my parents for clarification of their requirement that I "be responsible." _____ Initial

6. **Changes in this agreement.** I understand that this contract will be made stricter at any time my parents believe that is the best thing to do. I understand that if I consistently abide by these rules that my parents will work with me to make the contract less strict as I gain experience. However, I understand that--bottom line--it is my parents' choice and responsibility to change or not change the contract. **We will review this agreement and perhaps make changes to it on _____(date) or earlier if my parents or I wish to do so.**

7. **Other Special Rules:**

Summary: I agree to abide by the rules in this contract and I accept the consequences and penalties if I do not. I recognize my parents' authority in deciding if I may drive. That authority is final until I am an adult living independent of my parents.

Signatures

DRIVER _____ (date)

PARENT(s)/Guardian(s) _____ (date)

PARENT(s)/Guardian(s) _____ (date)

INSURANCE ADVISOR _____ (date)
THE O'NEILL GROUP