

COACHING THE NEW DRIVER

According to traffic and safety experts, good driving involves these key elements: knowledge, alertness, foresight, judgment and skill. It's easy to cover the rules of the road and driver etiquette in the classroom, but foresight, skill and good judgment can only be learned through practice. And this is where your help comes in.



TIPS FOR TEACHING A NEW DRIVER

If you're helping teach someone to drive, keep these tips in mind:

- Start training with a professional; it is often more effective than working with a friend or family member. Check the Yellow Pages under "driving" for courses. The professional can gauge the student's progress, and you can help the student practice the material covered by the instructor.
- Encourage the new driver to anticipate trouble. If he or she is about to make a left turn at a two-way stop sign and an oncoming vehicle is traveling very fast, ask: "Are you sure this vehicle is really going to stop?" Advise your student to wait and see before turning.
- Have the new driver practice difficult moves. If he or she is having a hard time merging into traffic, find a quiet road and practice.
- Show your student how to drive a safe distance behind other vehicles by following the three-second rule. Remind your student to check this distance frequently at different speeds.
- Teach your student to be wary of blind spots—both the student's and those of other vehicles. Have your student speed up or slow down to get out of other vehicles' blind spots.
- Buckle up. Let your student know that most of the brain injuries caused by highway crashes each year could have been prevented by wearing safety belts.
- Teach your student what to do in case of a collision, reviewing the steps suggested by the family's insurance company.
- Does your student know to carry a driver's license, insurance card and vehicle registration whenever driving? Does he or she know what to do if stopped by a police officer? Discuss these matters thoroughly.
- Stress the importance of attitude when behind the wheel. If your student recognizes the importance of protecting everyone's safety when on the road, he or she will be more likely to exercise good judgment in road decisions.
- Of course, learning to drive doesn't begin with a learner's permit. Children learn attitude and judgment from their parents throughout their lives. Set a good example for them with your own courteous driving.

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE IS CRITICAL

Every year millions of new drivers will venture out on our roads and highways. Many of them are teenagers, who in spite of required driver's education in many states, are often unprepared for the realities of driving.

Most educators believe teens and other new drivers need far more than the six hours of hands-of experience required by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, especially since young drivers are responsible for more than twice their share of fatal accidents. Your careful and patient coaching can help your student beat the odds and become a seasoned, skillful driver.

