

# The Parent Role In Teen Driving and Graduated Driver Licensing in Montana



## THE PARENT ROLE IN TEEN DRIVING

**Welcome** to the world of teen driving! Teen driving is an exciting time for families. Teenagers want to drive and parents want to reduce their “chauffeur” duties. However, teen driving is dangerous. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death and injury for teenagers because teens lack driving experience. Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) laws in Montana aim to decrease this risk by introducing teenagers to the “art of driving” in phases. Parents are also needed to help increase the safety of their teen drivers by knowing and fulfilling the “Parent Role in Teen Driving.”

## What is the Parent Role in Teen Driving?



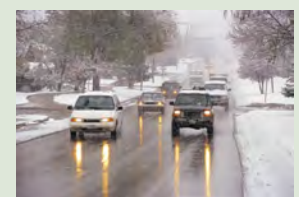
1. Know Montana's GDL laws
2. Enroll your teen in driver education
3. Supervise teen driving
4. Set family driving rules and limits
5. Impose consequences for violations



## Why is the Parent Role in Teen Driving So Important?



- **Because parents will know** that they are doing what they can to increase the safety of their teen drivers
- **Because parents will know** first hand how their teenagers are progressing toward becoming safe drivers
- **Because parents will know** where their teens are and what they are doing so that they do not take unnecessary risks for their safety



# KNOW MONTANA'S GDL LAWS

*The following summarizes Montana's GDL laws effective July 1, 2006.*

## STEP 1 — Instruction Permit

**Who:** Anyone under age 18

**When:** When TELL permit is obtained in a state-approved driver education program at age 14 ½ or without driver education at age 16

**How long:** Minimum of six months. TELL permit is valid for one year.

**Conditions:**

- 50 hours of **supervised driving at least 10 hours must be at night** with a licensed parent/guardian. Apply for a learner license at the MVD if parents want to approve other licensed adults to supervise teen driving during the GDL permit phase.
- Each occupant must wear a seatbelt
- NO traffic or alcohol/drug citations

## STEP 2 — Restricted License

**When:** When Step One is successfully completed

**How long:** One year or until age 18

**Conditions:**

- Each occupant must wear a seatbelt
- NO unsupervised driving between 11:00 pm and 5:00 am (limited exceptions may apply)
- For the first six months, no more than one non-family passenger under age 18
- For the second six months, no more than three non-family passengers under age 18

## STEP 3 — Full Privilege License

**When:** When Step Two is successfully completed or reach age 18



Visit the MVD website for more information at: <https://dojmt.gov/driving/driver-licensing/>

# SUPERVISE YOUR TEEN'S DRIVING

*Driver education is the beginning of the process of learning to drive, but teens need many, many hours of practice to become safe drivers. Thus, MT GDL laws require parents to provide their teens with a minimum of 50 hours of practice driving before they are eligible for a restricted license. Many teenagers may require even more.*

## Parent Tips for Supervising Driving

**PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!!** Practice as much as possible, *even after your teen gets a restricted license*

**Who:** Practice with teen and parent *only* in the vehicle. And, remember 3 things:

1. Remain calm and focused
2. Making mistakes is part of learning
3. Practice driving is serious, but should also be interesting and engaging

**What:** Practice the driving skills that your teen is learning. Begin with basic skills such as turning, parking, and backing up. Then, practice more complex skills such as changing lanes and merging.

**When:** In the beginning, practice in daylight and good weather. As your teen's skills increase, *gradually* expose your teen to different driving conditions, including a variety of roads, weather, and times of day.

**Where:** In the beginning, practice in safe, low-risk driving conditions. Start out in empty parking lots or low use roads. As your teen's skills increase, progress to quiet neighborhood streets and later to busier roads and highways.

**Why:** Learning to drive is a complex, ongoing process requiring responsibility and dedication from both parents and teens. New drivers need a lot of practice to gain enough experience to handle daily driving hazards and unexpected situations. Teens will show the greatest improvement in the first 1,000 to 5,000 miles of driving.

## Remember!

- **Be in the "practicing mood":** Practice when you are both ready, are in good moods, and have sufficient time
- **Adjust mirrors and seats before starting the vehicle**
- **Always wear your seatbelts and use your headlights day and night!**
- **Come to a complete stop:** At stop signs and for right turns at red lights
- **When proceeding from a stop:** Look left, then right, then straight ahead, and then left again before proceeding
- **Keep your eyes moving:** Use your mirrors to check around and behind the vehicle every 6-8 seconds
- Keep at least a 4 second space between your vehicle and others
- **Avoid the "No-Zone" with trucks or busses:** This is about 15 feet on all sides. If you cannot see truck drivers in their mirrors, they cannot see you either
- **Speed increases braking distance:** Double your speed / quadruple your braking distance
- **Vehicle weight increases braking distance:** Double your weight / double your braking distance

## Use a Driving Log

**It will take about 2 hours per week for 6 months to complete 50 hours of practice driving:**

- Use the driving log on the following pages to track your teen's practice driving and your teen's progress toward becoming a safe driver!

# SET FAMILY DRIVING RULES AND LIMITS

*Montana law sets guidelines for teen driving, but families need to determine other rules and limits for their teen drivers. Make sure that both state and family rules are very clear from the beginning. Talk to your teen about safe driving every chance you get.*

## Driving Rules/Limits for your Family

- **Require seatbelt use:** This applies to your teen and all passengers at all times
- **Prohibit driving after alcohol or drug use:** This applies to your teen as the driver of any vehicle
- **Prohibit riding with someone who has used alcohol or drugs:** This applies to your teen as the passenger of another vehicle
- **Require compliance to speed limits:** Stress that this applies at all times because crash forces at high speeds kill
- **Limit teen passengers:** Crash risk doubles with teen passengers. According to Montana's GDL laws, with a restricted license, your teen can have no more than one non-family passenger under 18 for the 1st six months, and no more than three non-family passengers under 18 for the 2nd six months
- **Limit unsupervised night driving:** Darkness increases risks for new drivers. According to Montana's GDL laws, with a restricted license, your teen cannot drive unsupervised between 11:00 pm and 5:00 am. However, you should consider setting an earlier driving curfew — between sundown and 9pm — especially on the weekends for the 1st six months
- **Require a full report:** Require information about each trip before leaving, including where your teen is going, with whom, and when they will return so that you know where your teen is (and when to worry)
- **Make few exceptions!** The purpose of limiting driving under high-risk conditions is to allow teens to get needed driving experience under safer conditions

## Limit Distractions and Driving

**Require your teen to limit distractions while driving.** Because driving is a new task for teenagers, they really need to focus. So, require your teenager to reduce or eliminate distractions while driving.

- **Prohibit texting & cell phone use while driving:** Require your teen to stop at a safe place, preferably a parking lot, to make or receive any call or message
- **Prohibit other “technical distractions” while driving:** Prohibit playing with the radio, CDs, two-way radios, computers, games, etc., while driving
- **Prohibit “horseplay” from passengers while driving:** Require your teen to keep passenger play to a minimum while driving
- **Prohibit eating and drinking while driving:** Prohibit your teen from consuming food and drink while driving
- **Prohibit drowsy driving:** Make sure your teen knows not to drive a vehicle if he or she is sleepy due to alcohol use, late nights, prescription medications, etc.
- **Prohibit emotional driving:** Make sure your teen knows not to drive when they are highly emotional, whether it be happy, mad or sad!
- **Talk about it!** Think about other driving distractions and discuss them with your teen

## Choose an Appropriate Vehicle

**Choose a safe, reliable vehicle for your teen driver:**

- Mid- to full-size sedans and station wagons with small engines and airbags are safest for teen drivers
- Under certain conditions, small trucks and SUVs may be more prone to roll-overs than other types of vehicles
- High-performance cars may encourage youth to drive beyond their experience level

# IMPOSE CONSEQUENCES FOR VIOLATIONS

The purpose of having state and family driving rules and limits is to increase the safety of your teen driver. However, rules and limits will not work if they are not enforced. The state will do its part to enforce penalties for violations of state laws. However, parents must do their part to enforce compliance to state and family driving rules and to enforce consequences for violating them.

## State-imposed Penalties

### Consequences for Step 1 offenses:

- Your teen will not be allowed to get a restricted license if any of the following offenses occur — fewer than 50 hours of supervised practice, a seat belt violation, a traffic violation or an alcohol/drug violation

### Penalties for Step 2 violations:

- With a restricted license, violations include a seatbelt violation, a night driving restriction violation, or a passenger restriction violation
- **First Offense:** 20-60 hours of community service
- **Second Offense:** community service plus suspension of driver's license for 6 months



## Parent-imposed Consequences

### Make consequences relate to losing driving privileges:

- For a day, weekend, week, month, etc., depending on the violation
- Other consequences will not be as effective in sending the messages: “You must be a responsible driver” and “I am serious about you following the rules and limits for driving”

**Make consequences known:** Set consequences for common violations *before they occur* so that your teen knows what to expect

- Getting a speeding ticket
- Coming home < 30 minutes after curfew
- Lying about their whereabouts
- Texting or using a mobile device while driving

## Additional Resources about Teen Driving

- ◆ CDC– Parents are the Key to Safe Teen Driving  
<http://www.CDC.gov/parentsarethekey>
- ◆ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov>
- ◆ Partners for Safe Teen Driving  
<http://www.safeteendiving.org/>
- ◆ National Safety Council  
<http://teendriver.nsc.org/>

Consider using a mobile application to log your driving practice. Some examples include “RoadReady” for IOS devices, and “Fast Track Driving Log Free” for Android devices.