# SafeDriver Monthly Newsletter

July 2021

# Safest Vehicles for Teen Drivers

Just in time for this year's graduations, Consumer Reports (CR) came out with a list of safe used vehicles for teens that cost less than $20,000.

In compiling the list of vehicles, the CR authors looked at several factors that they feel make a safe car:

- Standard electronic stability control that prevents a vehicle from veering out of control and flipping over.
- A dry braking distance of 145 feet at 60mph in braking tests.
- Average or better scores in CR emergency handling tests.
- Above-average reliability based on user surveys.
- Good ratings in four Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) crashworthiness tests — moderate overlap front, side, roof strength and head restraints.
- Four or five stars from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) if rated.

Vehicles that had substantially higher than average insurance claims for medical payments or personal injury protection coverage weren't considered for the list.

Other vehicles that failed to make the list were sports cars or vehicles with excessive power. Teens are natural risk takers and they don't need to be tempted by high performance vehicles.

The CR list of safe vehicles can be viewed at:
https://www.consumerreports.org/teen-driving/best-cars-for-teens/

Parents who are considering a specific vehicle that isn't listed in the CR report can check the vehicle's safety rating by visiting the IIHS website at https://www.iihs.org/ and plugging in the vehicle's make and model. Look at the results of crash tests and the vehicle's ability to protect the occupants in a crash.

Also look at the safety features such as lane departure warning, adaptive cruise control with brake assist when you approach vehicles ahead, blind spot warning, and backup cameras.

# Single Vehicle Crashes

A 19 year old Florida teen was killed in early June when the car he was driving left the road and overturned.

For teen drivers, this is one of the most common types of collision. Normally, a crash like this is initiated when the driver is distracted in some way and fails to watch the road ahead. The vehicle runs off the edge of the road and the teen driver overreacts, rapidly turning back onto the road. This throws the vehicle out of balance and it flips over, often going into the oncoming lane.

When training a teen to drive, the teen needs to learn how to safely recover a vehicle that has traveled off the road.

When you feel the vehicle leave the road, fight that urge to jerk the wheel back toward the roadway. Instead, grip the wheel, watch where you're going and gently apply the brakes. Once the vehicle has slowed to a safe speed, check the mirror to see if it is safe to return to the roadway and then turn the wheel. Once all four wheels are on the pavement, you can increase your speed up to the speed limit.

While training, if you can find a deserted roadway, practice leaving the roadway and safely recovering. If you have a plan for recovering the vehicle in mind, it will be easier to put that plan into action, when necessary, rather than reacting badly to an unfamiliar situation.


# Airbags Don't Work Without Seat Belts

Some people list the fact that their vehicle is equipped with airbags as a reason for not wearing seat belts. This is a big mistake because airbags are only effective when the vehicle occupants are wearing their seat belts and shoulder harnesses.

First off, you need to know that airbags won't work in every crash. Airbag sensors are located on the front bumper and, if they aren't hit directly, they won't activate to fill the airbags. They are meant to protect occupants in head-on collisions.

If you aren't wearing a seat belt, relying on the airbag to protect you in a head-on collision, here's what will happen. Your body, obeying the laws of physics, will continue traveling at whatever speed the vehicle was going before it was abruptly stopped by the crash. As your body flies forward, the airbags will activate and deploy at 200 mph in one-tenth of a second. With your body flying forward at, say, 45 mph, and the airbag approaching you at 200 mph, the crash forces are going to be tremendous and you may be killed.

If you are wearing a seat belt, your body will be held in place and your head will do a deep bow into the cushion of an airbag, preventing much more serious injuries.

If you've ever wondered what the letters "SRS" printed on the steering wheel airbag cover mean, they stand for "Secondary Restraint System" or "Supplemental Restraint System." Airbags were never meant to be the primary restraint system in a crash. Seat belts are the primary restraint system and, together with the airbags, they are very effective in saving lives.

To see a video of how airbags and seat belts work together, visit:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9OeA14Wzq7E