



Teaching Your Teen to Drive Safely Handbook[©]

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Introduction:

It's about that time ... the time for mixed emotions, the time for independence and the time for your teen to drive. It's become a rite of passage.

Where should you start and what should you do?

Start with a plan of action. Every teen is unique and each situation is different, so you will need to customize your plan. You will want to determine which stages of the plan to implement and when. In customizing your plan, you will have to account for your teenager's maturity, decision-making ability, and level of responsibility.

The first thing that you will want to consider is your own driving behaviors and patterns. This is because you are probably displaying behavior that is risky and will certainly influence the habits of your new teen driver. For example, do you ever eat a burger or drink a 32-ounce soda while you drive?



How about that cell phone? It's hard to keep both hands on the wheel at the 10 and 2 o'clock position when you're talking to another parent about an upcoming school event. Is your teen going to be able to maneuver a vehicle with a soda or cell phone as well as you do?



Stop and think about each of your driving habits. Ask yourself if your teen could be able to do the same things you do and still be a safe driver. If the answer is no, then stop the behavior. Remember, your teen will pick up many of your driving behaviors. Wouldn't it be better that they copy the safe ones? If it isn't the safest behavior for you after over 20 years

of driving experience and developed skills, then it certainly isn't the safest behavior for them.

Another important step to teaching your teen to drive safely is communication, so start talking about responsible driving with your teen as soon as possible. For example, the next time you and your teen get in the car together, go through all the things that are in your mind from A –Z, beginning with what you check for before even getting into the vehicle like checking for fluids that may be leaking under the car, a tire that may need some air, or a stranger that could be hiding in the backseat. Then discuss what you do as you put the vehicle in motion, pointing out the obstacles you are looking for like small neighborhood children that may wonder in the driveway.



Talk with your teen about the driving environment including weather conditions, traffic conditions, and residential vs. highway driving. Discuss when to pull out in traffic and the many factors that contribute to those decisions. Provide a running commentary each and every time you drive with your teen. Point out what you see, the potential dangers, and decision-making process that you encounter. This will help to guide them in their own decision-making skills.

Part of your discussion should also center on the cost of insurance. Call your insurance company and ask whether a driver education course or a good student discount is available. Also, find out how much the insurance increases after a single accident or ticket. Discuss these issues with your teen and enlist their help in keeping their insurance rates as low as possible.

You'll also need to obtain a copy of the Florida Drivers Handbook from the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles or online at DriversLicenseCourse.com. Review each section with your teen to make sure they are clear on the information provided. You can also enroll your teen in a DMV Test Prep course at DriversLicenseCourse.com. Enrollees are guaranteed that they will pass the DMV written test during their first visit to the DMV office or

they will get their money for the course refunded. This can save you time and save your teen the embarrassment of failing the test, while at the same time providing him or her with additional driver training. Also, look for newspaper articles that you can share related to driving with your teen. The National Safety Commission publishes the [“Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin”](#) to families for a very modest fee. It’s packed with valuable information that will continue to train your teen in becoming a Safe Driver after they receive his or her license. Teens are most susceptible to crashes when they have a little experience under their belt and are feeling confident in their driving ability. The Bulletin helps remind them that they are not invincible.

Have you noticed that, until now, we haven’t even placed your teen behind the wheel? There is a lot of preparation and training involved with teaching your teen to drive safely. **And now that Florida requires parents to accompany their teen for 50 hours of behind-the-wheel instruction before your teen can get their regular operators license, you’ve got a “captured audience” looking to you for the proper training. This handbook has been designed to assist the parent in accomplishing this goal.** We begin by asking the question; what is a Safe Driver anyway? Then we discuss the process for getting your teen’s Learners Driver License or Permit. Once this accomplishment is complete, we move on to discuss implementing a plan for teaching your teen to become a Safe Driver. We show you how to evaluate and monitor your teen’s progress, and provide a [Teaching Checklist and Evaluation Report](#) along with a [Logbook of Driving Experience](#). We even include a [Checklist Instructional Guide](#) that details the items various checklist items so **you will know how to describe and evaluate skills like pre-vehicles checks, parallel parking, and proper passing techniques.** Everything you need to begin Safe Driver training. Enjoy the Handbook and good luck with your teaching!

Part 1: What is a Safe Driver anyway?

The answer may depend on your source.

- According to the Florida Division of Drivers Licenses, a Safe Driver status is obtained when there have been no traffic citations in a 3-year period.
- According to the Insurance Information Institute, a Safe Driver is one that has three to five years of accident and citation free driving. Insurance companies use this general rule of thumb based on a driver’s experience.
- According to the National Safety Commission, a Safe Driver is a driver with an excellent **BASE**. Base is the acronym for:

Behavior, Attitude, Skills, and Experience

A safe driver weighs the consequences of their **Behavior**. They display a positive, alert, and safety conscious **Attitude**. They master the **Skills** of defensive driving and vehicle operation. Their **Experience** allows them to easily be able to recognize and effectively cope with hazardous situations.

Who are unsafe drivers and why are they unsafe?

Teens have the highest fatality rate on the roadways today. According to the Insurance Institute of Highway Safety, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for American Teens.



- Almost **40% of all deaths** for 16-19 year-olds occur in vehicle crashes.
- 16-19 year-olds are **four times** more likely to be involved in a crash than older drivers.
- Over 75% of teens involved in fatal crashes that had been drinking were **not wearing seat belts**.
- Male teen drivers account for almost two of every three teen fatal crashes.
- 83% of male teen drivers had been drinking at the time of a fatal crash.

Elderly drivers make up the next highest age group for fatalities. Per mile driven, drivers 75 years old and older have higher rates of fatal motor vehicle crashes than drivers in other age groups except teenagers.

As the statistics show, teen drivers are especially at risk. Teens are lacking in Behavior, Attitude, Skills, and Experience. We will examine each of these issues in the Teaching Your Teen to Drive Safely Handbook, and point out ways to help your teen be a safe driver.

Behavior: Studies show that teenage drivers are more likely to engage in risky driving behaviors such as speeding, tailgating, low seat belt usage, and improper passing. New research performed by the National Institute of Mental Health has found that the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain are still developing during the teen years and into the early 20's. The frontal lobe of the brain is responsible

for the functions of self-control, judgment and organization. The temporal lobes handle functions of emotional maturity. **Because a teen's brain is not fully developed, it contributes to many of the high-risk behaviors of the teenage driver.** Other factors may include peer pressure and inattention. For more information on this study and the how different the teenage brain is from the adult brain, go to: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain/> A detailed review of this material is strongly recommended and will equip you with a better foundation for both teaching your teen to drive and determining the parameters for their driving privileges.

Attitude: Closely interrelated to behavior, attitude sets the stage for the type of driving that will occur. Impulsiveness, rebelliousness, and the “whatever syndrome” are only a few examples of a teen's attitude. Attitude is commonly cited as a cause in teen motor vehicle crashes. Teens must learn to be in charge of their attitudes.

Skills: Teenagers need time to develop their driving skills. They are more likely to be at fault when involved in a crash. Many of these crashes are single-vehicle crashes, primarily off the road, involving high speed, driver error, and loss of control. Teenagers do not have the skills that allow their responses to be instinctive.

Experience: Lack of experience behind the wheel also makes it hard for teens to identify and react to danger. This is a common characteristic of teen crashes. When new drivers try to handle unusual driving situations or small emergencies, they are often unable to cope safely and successfully. Teens cannot be effective problem solvers without accumulating driving experience. This experience can be achieved by learning from their own mistakes or learning from the mistakes made by others. That's why education is a critical component of increasing the experience of a teen driver.

Part 2: Teaching by Example

As your teen's teacher, you want to motivate them to be a safe driver. Your teen will be observing your example. **It is not what you say, it is what you do** that will count. Begin by examining your own BASE. Is their room for improvement in any of these areas? If so, make changes now. A thorough self-examination can lead to improvement. Like it or not, you are the primary role model. Your teen is learning from you, especially when you're not looking.

Show your teen the importance of safety belts. Ensure that all your passengers always wear safety belts regardless of where they are seated and that they are worn properly.

Respond appropriately to aggressive drivers. Allow your teen to see how you choose not to react to other driver's actions. Show your teen how to give

aggressive drivers more space and avoid becoming upset by them or letting them influence your behavior.

Limit distractions in the vehicle. Make sure you change radio stations, cassettes, CDs, talk on the cell phone, drink your soda, or pick up a fallen object, only when the vehicle is not in motion. Point out clues to look for that indicate another driver may be distracted.

Demonstrate for your teen respect for your driving privilege and responsible behavior. Show them how you avoid driving while drowsy or fatigued. Make sure they know drinking alcohol and driving a vehicle don't mix, and ways to avoid riding with someone under the influence. Discuss why driving a vehicle while taking medications can sometimes lead to trouble. Be proactive and set the responsible example.

Teaching Tips:

- Do it right the first time. It is much more difficult to "unteach" your teen than it is to take the extra time to instruct correctly in the beginning.
- Keep your lessons within the ability of your teen. Don't rush or overwhelm.
- Practice, practice, practice. Being introduced and learning a new concept requires multiple repetitions. Continually repeat, restate, and reemphasize each point.
- Be consistent.
- Learning is an active process. Knowledge cannot become skill (mental, physical, or motor) until it is put to use.

Your involvement and good example are instrumental to your teens driving success.

Part 3: Getting started...what's the process?

How does my teen get their Learner License?

A Learner License allows a driver to operate a motor vehicle when accompanied by a licensed driver occupying the front passenger seat, who is 21 years of age or older. The requirements for a learner's license in the State of Florida are as follows:

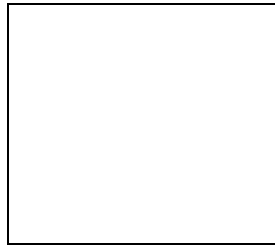
- The applicant must be 15 years old or older.
- Complete a four hour Traffic Law and Substance Abuse Education Course.
- Pass the tests for road signs, road rules, hearing and vision.
- Present two forms of proper official identification.
- Be in possession of their Social Security Number.

If under 18, your teen must also have:

- A consent form with the signature of a parent or guardian.
- Compliance with school attendance.

A waiver for the Traffic Law and Substance Abuse Education Course and written tests may be obtained through the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles approved Driver Education Licensing Assistance Program Courses at participating high schools.

Also, we recommend the [DMV Exam Prep Course](#), a course that provides multiple tests of hundreds of randomly selected questions similar to those they will see when they go to the DHSMV to take the written test. Not only will this course prepare them for the written examination, it serves as a terrific tool for learning Florida's road rules and signs.



Consider this. If your teen were trying to get a Florida license to be a nail tech, he or she would have to complete 260 hours of school training. To get a Florida license to cut hair, he or she would have to complete 1200 hours of training. But to get a Florida restrictive drivers license only requires completion of a 4-hour course. It seems Tallahassee is more concerned about getting a good hair cut than improving the safety of our roads and highways. Clearly there needs to be much more training provided. But it shouldn't be limited to initial training. It should be continued throughout the teen's high-risk years (ages 15-24) so that the initial training isn't forgotten and additional "re-current" training is added to their knowledge base. That's one reason we strongly recommend subscribing to the National Safety Commission's ["Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin"](#).

Part 4: The Plan

1. Set limits. Talk to your teen about the parameters that they will have driving. Review any areas and road restrictions that will be off limits. Keep a logbook of their driving experience in the [Logbook](#) located at the end of this Handbook. Determine whom they will be allowed to drive with. You should limit the number of passengers because they provide teens with a dangerous distraction. The Insurance Institute reports that the presence of another teen doubled the fatal crash rate compared with driving alone. When there were 2 or more teen passengers, the risk was five times greater. Make sure your expectations are clear, specific, and understood.

Also make sure your teen understands what the consequences will be if those expectations are not met.

2. Make a list of what training you will cover and reinforce over different time periods. While holding their Learners License for the first three months, they are restricted to driving between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m. Decide how you will utilize this time frame and make a schedule. For example:
 - First 30 days - Practice driving in a parking lot during day. Introduce rural driving.
 - 30-60days - Daytime neighborhood driving. Emphasize open intersections, right of ways, school crossings and buses, turns, blind spots and pedestrians.
 - 60-90days - All driving during day, begin dusk driving, stress intersections, passing, and merging lanes. Introduce urban driving.

After the first three months from the original Learner's License issue date, the operating hours for the teen accompanied by the 21years of age or older licensed driver in the front passenger seat, are permitted from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m. The added nighttime hours will allow you to plan training time with you teen in reduced visibility conditions. Your new driver is required to have at least 10 hours of nighttime driving experience. The majority of teens drive for recreational purposes at night, therefore the more time you spend with them practicing driving at night, the better equipped they will be when on their own. Research from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety indicates that over 40% of teenage motor vehicle deaths occurred between the hours of 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. Prior to midnight and the weekends posed the greatest danger.

Structure your plan to exceed the minimum State requirements for driving. For example:

- After 4 months - Driving in parking lot at night, during both light and heavy rain. Practice driving in your neighborhood in all types of weather. Introduce rush hour driving.
- After 6 months - Driving on the expressway, entering and exiting highways. Special precautions taken for trucks. Driving in all types of weather during both the day and night. Familiarize your teen with complex driving scenarios, including rush hour in the rain.
- After 9 months - Review emergency procedures, including skids, breakdowns, tire blowouts, wet brakes, brake failure, off road recovery, head-on vehicle approaching, a jammed gas pedal, and fire. Equip your teen with a list of important numbers and telephone contacts.

Part 5: The Implementation

When and How?

Implement your plan slowly and gradually. Set aside a few minutes prior to each session to introduce what you plan to accomplish during the session. Let them know where you will travel and what maneuvers will be worked on. Have paper and pencil ready to draw out an explanation, if needed.

Keep your directions and explanations clear, simple and your voice calm. Explain how to perform a maneuver, and then demonstrate the maneuver. Next, have your teen tell you what you did, then have them perform the maneuver.



While driving, encourage your teen give a running commentary as they drive, describing what they see, potential dangers, and how they will or could respond. Avoid becoming a distraction by talking too much during your sessions. Remember you are in a teaching capacity and you want to create the best learning environment possible. Give positive reinforcement through out each session and at the finish of each session.

If during a session, you encounter a dangerous situation, help your teen through the situation. Afterwards pull over to a safe place that gives both you and your teen a few minutes to collect yourselves. Before continuing, calmly review what happened and how to prevent it in the future.

Spend a few minutes at the end of the session reviewing maneuvers practiced and any safety considerations noted. Make your criticism objective, constructive, and specific.

Practice in smaller increments of time during the first three months. Start with 45 minutes to an hour a session. Gradually build to two hours after the first two months. You don't want to overwhelm them. Spread out your practice sessions so that there is time in between each session. Ideally you should want to spend an average of two to three hours a week on the road. Even if they were exposed to a something before originally planned, continue with your schedule. You want to allow them to pace themselves. Don't rush through your list. Give your teen the time and practice to really master each skill during each phase of their driving

experience. Insist upon using correct techniques from the start to provide proper habits. Remember that each time you practice, learning is happening.

Part 6: The Evaluation

The evaluation, of course, is one of the most important aspects of the learning process. It provides a time for review and feedback of the session. See the [Checklist and Evaluation Report](#) at the end of the handbook along with the [Checklist Instructional Guide](#) as they provide an easy way to provide a critique following each session. Also review previous checklists during the evaluation so you and your teen can see areas where there has been improvement and areas where there needs to be more discussion and practice.

As you go through the evaluation, be sure you LISTEN to your teen.



Communication is a two way street.

What you think they know or learned and what they actually know and learned may be two completely different things. You may even want your teen to provide a self-evaluation before you begin with your evaluation to help determine how much time you're going to need to spend on the session's evaluation. Remember to maintain a positive learning environment.

Part 7: The Monitoring

Once you feel comfortable that your teen has the basics down, you need to look at fine-tuning their skills. At this stage, your role should become less of a coach and more the role of a monitor.

From a **Behavior** aspect:

Are they regularly conducting pre-vehicle checks?

Does your teen follow the speed limits?

Are they wearing safety belts constantly and correctly?

Do they keep eyes moving?

Do they create distractions, i.e., tuning the radio or looking for items while the vehicle is moving?

From an **Attitude** standpoint:

Are they focused on driving?

Do they effectively control emotions behind the wheel?

Is your teen a patient and courteous driver?

Do they show a willingness to improve?

Do they understand **BASE** and recognize that they must execute the concept in order to be a Safe Driver and that failure to do so may result in them becoming a highway statistic?

Skills Mastered:

Assess your teen's skill level and determine what needs to be accomplished for improved performance.

Do they operate the vehicle with little coaching?

Are they able to safely respond to situations?

Experience:

Have their skills become a natural reflex?

Does your teen react appropriately to risky situations?

Are they able to quickly analyze driving situations?

Is your teen proactive to possible danger?

Are they learning from the mistakes of others?

This is the time to consider making a written driving agreement with your teen. You will want to document your agreed upon expectations and your teen's commitment to follow the limits that have been established once they are driving unsupervised. Items you may include:

- Vehicle care expectations such as car washing, oil changes, fluid checks, and tire pressure and tread checks.
- Agreed upon shared vehicle operating expenses such as insurance, repairs, as gas. A financial investment from your teen adds another aspect of responsibility.
- Behavior expectations. For example, when to call home, handling of awkward or peer pressured situations, driving distractions, passenger restrictions, ticket citations, and a zero tolerance for driving under the influence.
- Driving time limitations, frequency of use, vehicle curfews, and road and area restrictions.
- Consequences for breaking the agreement.

Remember you are training them for responsible and safe driving. If you are unsure whether they can confidently meet the challenges of the driving environment, then wait until they're ready. It's better to gain more experience

than to not have enough. In the state of Florida, driving is a privilege earned, not a right.

Part 8: Getting a regular (non-learners) Operators License

At 16 you may apply for Operators Licenses provided:

- Your teen has held a learners license for at least a year without a traffic conviction. If your teen does receive a ticket, adjudication may be withheld if he/she elects to attend a traffic school.
- A parent or guardian attests that your teen has received a minimum of 50 hours behind the wheel experience including 10 hours of nighttime driving.

The process will require:

- Test on road signs and rules
- Vision and hearing tests
- Behind the wheel driving test from your vehicle, proof of personal injury protection insurance, and a valid registration on the vehicle.
- The vehicle itself must be equipped with mirrors, horn, directional signals, brakes, brake lights, tires, adequate steering all in good working order.

The test examiner will be look for competency on the following maneuvers:

- Turn about -turn your car around in a 30' to 40' space
- Approach of crossing- get in the proper lane and look in each direction.
- Observe right-of-way- allow pedestrians to cross, pull over and stop for emergency vehicles, and do not enter an intersection when you will interfere with other traffic.
- Straight-in parking. Park your vehicle inside the parking space straight-in. When properly parked, the vehicle should be centered, inside the space with no part of the vehicle extending out of a traffic lane. This maneuver gives the examiner the opportunity to observe you ability to:
 - a. handle the vehicle in close quarters
 - b. judge distance
 - c. maintain control o he vehicle as you turn into a straight-in parking space
- Stop quickly- Drive at 20 miles per hour and make a quick, safe stop when the examiner instructs you.
- Backing. Back for a distance of 50 feet at a slow speed. Do not use the rear-view mirror when backing. Look to the rear instead.
- Obey Stop Signs- Give the proper signal if turning, approach in the proper lane, come to a complete stop before reaching the pedestrian crosswalk or stop line, and remain stopped until you can move safely without interfering with cross traffic.
- Obey Traffic Signals. Get into the proper lane and approach the light at a speed that will allow you to stop if the light should change. When you must stop, stop before the pedestrian crosswalk or stop line. When the light turns green, do not move forward until the other traffic has cleared the

intersection. Give the correct signal for stopping and turning. Watch for “no turn” and “one way” signs.

- Signal and Turn- Get into the proper lane and signal your turn for the last 100 feet. You may use either hand signals or mechanical signals. Slow before reaching the crosswalk and turn into the proper lane.
- Passing- Always look ahead and behind to make sure you can pass safely. Pass on the left, unless the car ahead is about to make a left turn or is in the left turn lane on a street wither than one lane in each direction. Do not pass on the shoulder (side of the road).
- Stay in Proper Lane. Drive in the right lane except on a one-way street. Do not change lanes until you may do so safely.
- Follow at a Safe Distance-Do not drive too closely behind other cars. Use the two Second Rule.
- Use Proper Posture. Keep both hands on the steering wheel and do not rest your elbow in the window.

The test examiner will review any mistakes made after test completion.

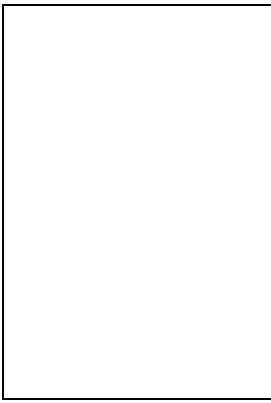
Once your teen has obtained their Operators License they will be restricted to driving during certain time intervals. Until they reach their 17th birthday, they will be limited to driving between 6 a.m. and 11 p.m. Exceptions are made for traveling with a licensed driver over 21, or traveling to or from work. Once 17, driving is restricted to the hours of 5 a.m. to 1 a.m., unless traveling with a licensed driver over 21 in the front passenger seat, or traveling to or from work.

Continue to Monitor:

You will want to continue to monitor your teen as they get older and more experienced. Remember, they're brain isn't fully developed until they are in their early 20's, and the more experience they have, the more likely they will become overconfident in their driving ability. Make sure that your teen is using a good BASE. Watch for clues. Does your teen allow plenty of time to get somewhere or are they hurried? Does your teen delay driving when upset? Does your teen check around the outside of the vehicle for obstacles before opening the vehicles door? Does your teen put on their safety belt, before the vehicle is even started and not unfastened it until the vehicle is completely stopped? These are behaviors and attitudes you can watch for with out being in the vehicle with them.

Ride with them from time to time and take the [Checklist and Evaluation Report](#) and [Checklist Instructional Guide](#) with you. If they don't fall in the excellent category throughout the sheet, then discuss the problem areas and necessary corrections. Set additional limits when there are areas that need improvement or sloppiness is observed. Provide positive reinforcement when they meet and exceed your expectations. You may want to require a quarterly evaluation as part of your agreement granting them the privilege to drive.

Don't forget to clip articles out of the newspaper that deals with crashes, especially those involving teens. If you subscribe to the [National Safety Commission's "Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin"](#), you may want to question or discuss some of the articles to make sure they're reviewing and understanding the information. When they leave for college, make sure the Commission has their new e-mail address so they can continue to receive the monthly bulletin.



Part 9: Summary

Teaching your teen to drive safely is one of the most important aspects of a teen's development. It's also one of the most dangerous. In the year 2000, there were 5,648 teen motor vehicle fatalities. Recognizing the risk factors involved, setting a good example, giving them an abundance of practice, setting limits, getting their commitment, and monitoring their driving, are some of the most important things a parent can do. Through the process, keep the communication lines open and always listen to your teen. Remember, you are providing them with a solid **BASE** that they will use daily for the rest of their life.



Teen Checklist and Evaluation Report	Excellent	Good	Poor
Part 1 Basic Skills			
Pre-vehicle checks			
In-vehicle checks			
Starting vehicle			
Posture			
Moves and steers vehicle smoothly and accurately			
Maintains visual scan inside and out			
Stops vehicle smoothly and precisely			
Makes accurate turns			
Backing			
Parking			
Part 2 Intermediate Skills			
Maintains 2 second following distance minimum			
Yields the right of way			
Communicates with other drivers			
Scans ahead 12 seconds			
Follows road signs and speed limits			
Signals well ahead when making a turn			
Identifies possible hazards			
Parking vehicle on curb			
Parking on an incline or hill			
Parking at an angle			
Straight-in parking			
Three point turn			
Adjusts vehicle for proper space cushion			
Adjusts defensive driving for rural areas, neighborhoods, & school			
Identifies and responds to bicyclists			
Properly enters and exits roundabouts			
Maneuvers through open intersections correctly			
Uses proper passing techniques allowing for time and space			
Keeps eyes scanning in and around vehicle			
Maneuvers through traffic controlled intersections			
Part 3 Advanced Skills			
Maneuvers in rush hour traffic			
Compensates for reduced visibility in night driving			
Compensates for weather conditions			
Expressway driving			
Enters and exits highways			
Applies precautions for Trucks			
Parallel parking			
Identifies and responds to motorcycles			
Handles complex and multiple driving hazards			
Understands escape routes			
Versed in emergency procedures			

Checklist Instructional Guide

Part 1: Basic Skills

Pre-vehicle checks

Include a visual inspection around the vehicle for obstacles, children, tools, and potential hazards (including strangers in the backseat). Check for fluid leaks and any loose objects hanging. Eyeball-check the tires for proper inflation pressure and tire treads for excessive wear or bubbles. Inspect the windows, headlights and brake lights for dirt or mud that may obscure your vision or another driver's, especially the front window due to glare hazards that occur during sunrise and sunset.

In-vehicle checks

Begin with placing the key in the ignition and locking all doors. Ensure that the parking brake is on and that the gearshift lever is in park. Adjust the seat position so as to keep knees slightly bent. The heel of the right foot should rest on the right side of the brake pedal allowing the heel to pivot between the brake and the gas pedals quickly and easily. The left foot should rest on the floor. The driver's body should be a minimum of 10 inches away from the steering wheel. Your owner's manual may recommend an even greater distance due to airbag inflation hazards. Adjust the steering wheel and steering column so that it is positioned comfortably. Position inside and outside mirrors so that your viewing range is maximized, reducing the blind spots as much as possible. Position the head restraint on both the driver and passenger sides so that it is directly behind the middle of the head. Fasten and adjust safety belt so that it fits low across the hips and snug. The shoulder strap should cross over the breast one and rest across the collarbone. Adjust the side pillar to improve the shoulder strap fit. Placing the shoulder strap against the neck or under the arm can result in serious injury or death.

Starting the vehicle

Place the right foot on brake pedal and turn the key in the ignition on. Check all gauges including oil, fuel, and temperature gauges. Adjust heat/air before your vehicle is placed in drive.

Posture

Hand position on steering wheel should be at the 9 and 3 o'clock position or the 10 and 2 o'clock position. The handgrip on the steering wheel is firm but not tight. Care should be taken to avoid allowing hand to rest over steering wheel air bag. Arms should be slightly bent. Elbows should rest at the side of body. Left foot should rest on left floor. Right heel should rest between right side of brake pedal and accelerator. Right foot should comfortably be able to pivot between both pedals. Lower trunk of body should be in the upright position. Pillow may be used if it allows for a better view of driving environment.

Moves and steers vehicle smoothly and accurately

Place foot on brake. Move gearshift selector into drive or reverse. Release the parking brake if engaged, check mirrors and visually scan area to make sure it is clear and safe to proceed. Steer and maintain the vehicle in the center of the driving lane.

Maintains visual scan inside and out

The driver should be constantly maintaining a visual scan of the driving environment including inside and outside mirrors, eyes scanning the upper half of the windshield, and physically turning head to check blind spots.

Stops vehicle smoothly and precisely

Brake is applied with gradual and steady pressure. Vehicle can be stopped accurately at predetermined points.

Makes accurate turns

Look through the turn and reposition the vehicle correctly in the center of the nearest lane. For large turns, use hand over hand steering.

Backing

Keep right foot on brake, then check mirrors and blind spots. Shift gear selector to reverse. Place left hand at the top of the steering wheel. Turn body to right looking through rear window. Slowly release pressure from brake, allowing vehicle to move at idle speed. If needed, slight acceleration can be made to allow for slow speed. Practice slight movements of steering wheel for accuracy. Practice backing-up in a straight line at least 50 feet. Brake smoothly to a complete stop. Return body to forward position. Hands return to 10 and 2 o'clock or 9 and 3 o'clock position on steering wheel.

Parking

Make sure area is clear. Bring vehicle to a complete stop. Set the parking brake if required. Place the gear selector to park. Turn off the ignition. Remove keys and seatbelt. Check area before unlocking doors. If parked on the side of a street or parking lot, look to make sure no other vehicles are approaching before opening the door. Exit vehicle.

Part 2: Intermediate Skills

Maintains a 2-second following distance minimum

This is the minimum safe following distance that Florida requires. The two-second following distance is determined by selecting a fixed item such as a sign, a tree, or a shadow on or next to the roadway. As the vehicle ahead passes that

spot begin by counting one thousand one, one thousand two. If your vehicle passes that spot before you have finished counting, you are too close. You must slow down and increase your following distance. Following distance should be increased by 1 to 2 seconds when traveling over 40 miles per hour.

Yields the right-of-way

In Florida the right-of-way must be given- not taken. Pedestrians always have the right-of-way. Motorists should also be on alert for pedestrians with a white cane, white cane with a red tip, or a trained guide dog, indicating that the pedestrian is blind.

Communicates with other drivers

Lets other drivers anticipate vehicle's actions via turn signals, brake movements, headlights, and the horn. Be alert for clues to other driver's communications including hand signals and head movements.

Scans ahead 12 seconds

Scan in front of the vehicle 12 seconds or the equivalent of one city block for pedestrians, car doors opening and closing, and other traffic and potential hazards.

Follows road signs and speed limits

Reduce speed for heavy traffic, weather conditions, construction zones, or other potential hazards.

Signals well ahead when making a turn

Turn signal should be activated a minimum of 100 feet prior to making turn.

Identifies possible hazards

Hazards include obstruction to visual scan such as fog, rain, dirty windshield, glare, etc., bicyclists, pedestrians or joggers, potholes, objects in the roadway, warning signs, school and construction zones, children, other drivers, etc.

Parking vehicle on a curb

Check for other traffic and turn the vehicle toward the curb. The vehicle should stop within 1 foot of the curb. Place the gearshift in park. Apply the parking brake if required.

Parking on an incline or hill

Turn wheels to the right when uphill without a curb. When parking up hill with a curb, wheels should be turned from curb. When parking down hill turn vehicles wheels to curb. Parking brake should be set. If driving a vehicle with a manual transmission, shift gears to first when parking uphill or to reverse if parking down hill.

Parking at an angle

Identify desired space. Make sure traffic is clear. Signal the intention to turn. Look at the center of the empty parking space and slowly move forward. Steer sharply into parking space. When vehicle is centered in the space, straighten the wheels. Place the gear selector in park. Set the parking brake if required.

Prior to backing out of space, verify the area is clear. Place the gearshift in reverse. Back vehicle slowly, turning in desired direction. Ensure adequate bumper clearance. When front bumper clears the back of the vehicle on the side of the turn and there is adequate clearance to maneuver to the center of the lane, stop and shift gear to drive.

Straight-in parking

Pull into a space so that the vehicle is centered in the space from the front, sides and rear of the vehicle.

Three point turn

Move to the far side of the road. Make sure traffic is clear. Signal for a left turn. Move forward slowly while turning the steering wheel sharply to the left. Stop several inches from the curb or edge of the roadway. Place gearshift in reverse and back slowly, turning the steering wheel sharply to the right. Stop several inches from the curb or edge of the roadway. Drive forward moving slowly, turning the steering wheel to the left. Straighten your wheels and check traffic.

Adjusts vehicle for proper space cushion

Keep the area around the vehicle clear of other traffic ahead, behind, and on the sides of the vehicle. You'll even want have a space cushion when stopped at a traffic light so that if you're threatened (driver in a road rage, hitchhiker, etc.), you can maneuver and escape.

Adjusts defensive driving for rural areas, neighborhoods, and school zones

Anticipates problems with hidden driveways, pedestrians, bicyclists, extra children and animals. Identifies and reduces speed for narrow winding roads, railroad crossings, hills, speed bumps, parking lots, construction and school zones, and sharp blind curves.

Identifies and responds to bicyclist

Allow three feet of space and reduce you speed when passing or approaching a bicyclist. Increase your following distance when traveling behind a cyclist. Yield to bicyclists, and be alert for bike lanes. When parking, visually check for cyclists when opening doors on the sidewalk or roadway.

Properly enters and exits roundabouts

Enter in a counterclockwise direction. Yield to circulating traffic at low speed, obeying posted signs.

Maneuvers through open intersections correctly

Scan intersections left, right, left, before attempting to move into intersection. Yield right-of-way to traffic already in the intersection. Should two cars enter an open intersection at the same time, the driver to the left must yield to the driver on the right.

Uses proper passing techniques

Check traffic in both directions. Drivers should allow extra space between their vehicle and the vehicle that they are preparing to pass. Drivers must be able to have clear space ahead of the vehicle that they are preparing to pass. Check mirrors, apply turn signal, and check your blind spot with a visual head turn. When clear, ease out and move into the other lane. Accelerate to make the pass. When you see the headlights of the vehicle you just passed in the rear view mirror, signal and move back into the proper lane. Adjust your speed to maintain a safe space cushion.

Keep eyes scanning in and around the vehicle

Check mirrors and dash board every three to five seconds.

Maneuvers through traffic controlled intersections

As a driver approaches an intersection, they should be prepared to move one hand to the horn. When approaching an intersection with a green light, determine if the light is a fresh green light or a stale green light. If it is a fresh green light, continue through the intersection guardedly, reducing your speed as necessary. Scan the area for cross traffic, pedestrians, and bicyclist. Look left, right, left as you travel through intersection, allowing a space cushion on all sides of vehicle.

If approaching a stale green light, be prepared to stop as vehicle approaches intersection. Once commitment is made that vehicle will continue through intersection, accelerate as necessary through intersection smoothly and safely. Continually checking for cross traffic.

When approaching either a red light or a stale green light and the decision has been made to prepare to stop, brake smoothly. The first vehicle at the intersection should stop at the stop line of the intersection. Space vehicle so that you can see the rear tires of the vehicle ahead touching the pavement. Continue to check mirrors and scan the driving environment. Be aware of any escape routes available. When light changes to green count one thousand one, one thousand two. Check cross traffic left, right, left. Accelerate gradually.

When approaching a yellow light, prepare to stop if it is safe to do so. If it is not safe to stop, accelerate through the intersection, vigilantly checking for other traffic.

Part 3: Advanced Skills

Maneuvering in rush hour traffic

Adjust driving for stop and go traffic. Maintain and stabilize space around vehicle. Identify and respond to aggressive drivers.

Compensates for reduced visibility in night driving

Increase the following distance and space around the vehicle, adjusting eyes and mirrors for glare, and utilizing high and low beam headlights correctly. Stay alert for increased risk factors at night, including impaired, tired, and distracted drivers.

Compensates for weather conditions

Increase your following distance by 1 second for light rain and fog. Increase your following distance to 4 seconds for heavy rain and hail. Turn on headlights, be extremely alert and reduce speed.

Expressway driving

Maintain proper space margin. Travel in right or middle lane, changing lanes as necessary. Be alert for cars entering and exiting expressway. Avoid other driver's blind spots. Allow extra space to maneuver for vehicles parked on shoulder of expressway.

Adjust speed as needed. Move to the side of travel lane when being passed. Maintain visual scan. Apply precautions to reduce fatigue, highway hypnosis, and distracted blindness.

Enters and exits highways

Identify entrance ramp, apply turn signal, and look for gap in traffic. Use acceleration lane to build speed for merging. Adjust speed to merge safely in gap of traffic. Yield the right of way to other traffic. Avoid stopping in merge area of expressway.

When exiting the expressway, position your vehicle in the exit lane. Apply your turn signal and move onto the exit ramp. Pivot right foot from accelerator to covering the brake to reduce speed. Apply brake smoothly to comply with exit ramp speed. Maintain safe following distance from other vehicles. When in line with another car to yield for oncoming traffic in a merger situation, be alert for the car in front of you coming to a complete stop after appearing to be accelerating for the merger.

Applies precautions for Trucks

Increase the following distance behind a truck due to their increased stopping distance. Avoid traveling in the side or rear blind spot of the truck. Avoid sudden stops in front of a truck. Be aware of the maneuvers a trucks makes when turning or backing and the amount of space the maneuvers require.

Parallel Parking

Identify a space large enough for your vehicle. Make sure traffic is clear, and signal intentions. Position your vehicle alongside the vehicle in front of the empty space; you should be parallel with that vehicle. Place the gearshift lever in

reverse and check for traffic. Slowly back up for two feet. Turn steering wheel all the way to the right or left as appropriate to the empty space.

When the front of your vehicle has cleared the rear bumper of the vehicle of the car in front, stop. Check the angle your vehicle is entering the space, making sure that your rear wheel has not hit the curb.

Move slowly back, turning steering wheel all the way to the opposite direction. Stop when close to the vehicle parked to the rear. Place the gearshift lever in drive and move slowly forward. Turn wheels sharply toward the edge of road. Stop when vehicle is centered in parking space. Make sure vehicle is within 1 foot of curb. Set the parking brake if required.

Identifies and responds to motorcycles

Allows for an additional 1-second for following motorcycles.

Handles complex and multiple driving hazards

Assess hazards and apply low-risk decision making to hazards. Identify which hazard has the highest probability of occurring and handle the hazards one at a time.

Understands escape routes

Continually expect problems and plan reaction. Escape routes include escape left, escape right, brake and accelerate. Always stare where you want the vehicle to travel. Generally escaping right will provide the softest way out. Always avoid a head on collision. It is better to hit a vehicle moving in the same direction than a vehicle traveling in the opposite direction.

Versed in emergency procedures

Including breakdowns, tire blowouts, off road recovery, skidding, hydroplaning, brake-failure, engine instrument warnings, fire, gas pedal jam, emergency vehicle traffic, and procedures for handling a crash or getting a ticket. Know where the owner's manual, insurance information, and registration are located.

Driving and Experience Logbook

Name	Address										Total Time
Date	Vehicle	Route	Maneuvers Practiced	Weather	Remarks	Brief Time	Actual Driving Time	Day Driving Time	Night Driving Time	De-Brief Time	Total Time
Totals this page:											
Amount forward:											
Totals to-date:											

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