

Teen Driver Tips for Parents



Info Sheet
Wet Weather

Purpose: To provide information and useful tips when driving in wet weather conditions.

Learning Space: Large empty space with no obstructions and no traffic.

Key Concepts

In driving, “traction” (or grip) refers to how firmly the wheels are connected to the road. There is a limited amount of traction available. Tires are not actually connected to the road – they are more like an eraser on a piece of paper.

Some traction is used by accelerating, turning or braking.

When two things are done at once – like accelerating and turning, or turning and braking – each one uses up a portion of the total available traction.

- When front traction is nearly used up, the car will travel in a wider turn than it should for the amount of steering used. This is called “understeering” and it can lead to hitting a curb or parked car.
- When rear traction is nearly used up the car will make a tighter turn than it should for the amount of steering used as the rear tires travel in a wider turn than the front. This can lead to “spinning out” or other loss of control.

If your car is equipped with traction control, it will allow you to go faster before these limits are reached but it will not fully prevent reaching them. If you do lose traction in a car equipped with traction control, it is likely that you are going fast enough to be seriously injured in a crash.

When stopping, the shortest distance is achieved by using most traction without allowing the car to skid. This is what anti-lock brakes do for us.

Driving in slippery conditions is just like driving in dry conditions EXCEPT that less total traction is available.

Advice for Parents

Remind your driver of these things...

- We are going to learn about the limits of grip.
- Follow my instructions exactly. When you have any doubt, follow the direction first, then ask about it.

- I may give short, firm directions so that you can do them quickly. I'm not mad at you when I do.
- Be safe at all times
- Traction is the amount of stick your car has to the road.
- Some traction is used by accelerating, turning or braking.
- When two things are done at once – like accelerating and turning, or turning and braking – each one uses up a portion of the total available traction.
- When front traction is nearly used up the car will make a tighter turn than usual.



I will stop the learning activity if I believe you become distracted, angry or agitated.

Teaching Tips

One of the realities of traditional driver education is that it usually doesn't offer practice in emergency maneuvers. Because of this, the first time your young driver experiences a skid or slide might be during an emergency. This is like playing professional baseball without ever having any batting practice.

The purpose of this exercise is for you to help your young driver to explore the idea that traction varies. But your child does not actually need to be out of control to understand this concept. What you want them to feel is a difference between slow driving traction and faster driving. In part one of the lesson, find a large, empty parking lot without obstructions. You'll use this space to demonstrate quick stops.

Demonstrate each one, and then have your young driver practice the exercise. Decide on a speed that is comfortable for you, but one that can show the difference between steering and traction at very slow speeds and at faster speeds. Always be careful not to exceed safe learning speeds.

Demonstrate a quick stop at low speed then a little faster. Be sure to demonstrate how harder application of brakes can cause anti-lock brakes to engage. Be sure to explain the importance of braking hard in emergency situations.

Afterwards, have your driver practice the maneuver while explaining what is happening using commentary driving.

When your driver has demonstrated an understanding of traction management, he or she is ready to practice driving on wet roads. Spend some time traveling local streets during wet weather to reinforce learning and give practice. **Do not practice skids on wet roadways.**

Slipping can be scary. Plan in advance how you'll respond to being scared so that you can minimize tension in the car, not add to it.

Safety Tips for Wet Weather/Low Visibility

(info from www.aaaexchange.com)

Start your trip earlier: Check the weather report before leaving and allow yourself more time for driving. You must be able to take your time and drive slower in bad weather; make sure you leave your house a few minutes earlier.

Apply brakes slower and earlier: Brake with less force and earlier than usual. This helps leave more room between your car and the car in front of you, and also signals the drivers who are behind you, so that they can be more cautious. Be thorough about giving turn signals so that other drivers know your intentions. Slow down even more so for curves and turns.

Accelerate and decelerate slowly. Applying the gas slowly to accelerate is the best method for regaining traction and avoiding skids. Don't try to get moving in a hurry.

Know your brakes. The best way to stop a vehicle with antilock brakes is threshold braking. Keep the heel of your foot on the floor and use the ball of your foot to apply firm, steady pressure on the brake pedal. If your car does not have antilock brakes, then it is better to pump the brake pedal on and off with your foot instead of applying steady pressure.

Don't stop if you can avoid it. There's a big difference in the amount of effort it takes you to get your car moving from a full stop versus how much it takes to get it moving while it's still rolling. If you can slow down enough to keep rolling until a traffic light changes in inclement weather, do it.

Don't power up hills. Applying extra gas on snow-covered roads just starts your wheels spinning. Try to get a little speed going before you reach the hill and let that carry you to the top. As you reach the crest of the hill, reduce your speed and proceed downhill as slowly as possible.

Don't stop going up a hill. There's nothing worse than trying to get moving up a hill on an icy road. Get some forward movement going on a flat roadway before you take on the hill.

Turn on low beams in fog: Whether it is day or night, turn on low beam headlights while driving in fog. Low beam lights not only help you to see, but also allows other motorists to see you. High beam lights may blur your visibility further. Maintain a larger distance between cars and drive slowly, as it is hard to see things like other cars, traffic signals or pedestrians until you come closer to them.

Wear seat belt: Confirm that all the passengers of your car are wearing seat belts before leaving. Seat belts must be worn at all times.

Don't hesitate to pull over: If you are tired or frightened, or if you want to clean off the car, pull over when it is safe to do so. If you can, pull into an available well lit facility (parking lot, shopping center, etc.) so as to avoid oncoming traffic. If the weather is extreme, it is better to pull over in a safe place until you receive help or until the weather becomes less harsh.

Drive around or choose another route if you see heavy water on the road to avoid water splashing up into the car engine which could damage the internal electrical system.