

Teen Driver Tips for Parents



Lesson 6

Hazard Recognition: Predicting Crash Situations & Planning for Them

Purpose: To learn how to analyze roadway risks, plan to react to things that happen, and avoid crashes.

Predicted Practice Time: 40 minutes per repeat

Learning Space: Slower, smaller roads with a variety of intersections, including unregulated (neighborhood,) stop signs, four-way stop signs, stoplight, and stoplight with turn light.

Key Concepts

Research tells us that almost all crashes are the result of several occurrences happening in the same time and space. One driver makes a mistake and another driver makes a mistake in responding to it.

So if most every crash involves more than one error, how does your young driver get an advantage? It is pretty simple actually – by playing the *What-If Game*. Teach your learner this simple driving activity: Whenever you are driving, imagine things that might happen in the future and imagine that choices you will have if they do.

- What if...that car on the cross street comes out in front of me? *I can slow down, or I can change lanes, for example.*
- What if...that bus turns left in front of me?
- What if...there is a child waiting between those two cars?
- What if...that car fails to stop for the yellow light?

After practice, the What-If Game becomes second nature. One of the first things a What-If player realizes is that there is usually more than one option for avoiding a crash. Moreover, while the actual options can be quite specific, they all fall into one of three categories: slow, speed up or steer. Over time, predicting risks and solutions becomes “second nature.” With experience, the driver can not only think of more than one solution, he or she can rank them from best to worst.

Skills Strategies and Best Driving Practices

Remind your driver of these things...

- Crashes almost always happen when two drivers both make a mistake in the same space.
- The intruding driver is legally responsible, but the other driver can usually prevent the accident by some action – slowing, speeding up, steering, or combination of actions.
- The best way to successfully avoid being a crash victim is to recognize risks and to already have a plan for dealing with them if they become actual hazards.
- If you devise a solution to most every potential road hazard – in advance – you will have good success in avoiding crashes.
- The reason to plan in advance is that very little time exists to do the correcting action. If you have to figure out what to do, you may not have time to do it.
- It seems hard to imagine and plan for every risk, but it actually becomes easy with practice.
- Types of hazards include: other vehicles; pedestrians and children; other road users like motorcycles, trucks, and bicycles; and pavement, signal, sign, and weather conditions.



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

Teaching Tips

One of the best ways to teach What-If gaming is to use a technique known as commentary driving.

Ask your young driver to “think out loud, saying aloud every risk you see and what you’d do if the risk you see happens.”

For example, the driver might say, “Car on right at intersection. If he pulls out, I’d quickly slow down and maybe swerve toward the right side. (Remember, if your driver swerves left, a common response, he or she is entering the path of the hazard rather than trying to go where it has already been and left.)

During the practice, you can switch roles with the driver and be the one who provides the commentary. This is a good technique for learning and is particularly a good idea if you believe that your young driver is missing many risks. Be sure to make an active choice. Say, “OK, you keep driving. But now I will take over the commentary task to show you how I do it.” You should trade back and forth as many times as you think are useful, but be sure to let the young driver get more of the practice.

Every fifteen minutes or so, ask your driver to pull over to a safe place and discuss what they have learned during the practice. At this time you may want to check off the skills you have observed as properly done and share your assessment with the driver.

Set your expectations realistically. Right now, your young driver is an amateur. Don’t expect them to perform like an expert. Stay relaxed.



Driving Checklist

Learning Summary

Tasks can be considered accomplished when they are explained properly or done routinely (a minimum of three times without reminder.)

Task	Accomplished	Needs More Practice
• Explain the What-If Game	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Explain how the What-If Game can help avoid crashes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Understand the actions a driver can take do to avoid crashes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Recognize a few hazards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Recognize some hazards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Recognize most hazards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Give a solution to some hazards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Give a solution to most hazards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• If a hazard presents itself, respond successfully according to plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Be safe at all times	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Remained calm without distraction, anger or agitation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Time spent on activity in minutes: