

Driving Instructors Remind Parents: Practice Practice Practice

Hamilton, Ontario, June 2004 - Teen driver car crashes remain the leading cause of permanent injury and death in youths and this year, the National Safety Council has declared this year's National Safety Month as "Crash Free June". (www.nsc.org/news/nr021204.htm)

"The timing is good", says Gary Direnfeld, executive director of the international teen safe driving initiative known as the I Promise Program (www.ipromiseprogram.com). "Summer is the season with the highest number of teen driver fatalities and if we can draw this to parents' attention, maybe, if there must be a dent, it will be in these crash statistics".

To this end, Direnfeld conducted a survey of 700 driving instructors across North America. He obtained a response rate of 6.5%, considered good for email surveys. Direnfeld asked them this question, "If there was one thing you could get parents of young drivers to do, what would it be?"

Collectively their responses were easy to divide into three categories reflecting pre-driving issues, instructional issues and issues once a licence is obtained.

Of the pre-driving issues, the instructors wanted to remind parents that their children learn driving attitudes long before they take the wheel of the car, by watching their parents. As such, driving instructors first want to remind parents to be good role models of responsible driving behaviour. As Direnfeld explains, "It is difficult for the instructor to instil good driving behaviour when parents consistently exceed the speed limit themselves. This becomes increasingly important when you understand that speed alone is the greatest cause of crashes in new young drivers."

During the instructional phase, the instructors wanted to remind parents that they cannot provide all the practice time necessary for their student's skill development. The instructors point out that with only an average of 6 to 10 hours of behind the wheel instruction, they cannot help students become proficient. As such, instructors want parents to see themselves as partners for practice. They have recommended anywhere from an additional 40 to 100 hours of practice time with their parents in their car. Direnfeld agrees, "We send our kids to years of lessons for music or sports, yet none of these activities are life threatening if not performed properly. Driving is and therefore deserves way more practice and only parents are in the position to provide this."

Lastly, the instructors point out that driving is a privilege and want parents to set clear expectations for the use of the car including sharing responsibilities for costs. This is where the I Promise Program is of service. The program promotes discussion between parents and teens through the use of a comprehensive safe driving contract. The contract was developed with the input of youth, parents, community members and stakeholders in traffic safety worldwide. The contract and other safe driving information are available at no charge from the website: www.ipromiseprogram.com Direnfeld reminds all parents, "Summer is just around the corner. It

is far and above the most risky time of year for car crashes. Our goal is to see all youths return home safely reach time they travel by car.”

Check out the website, after all, it is “Crash Free June”.

This survey was conducted by the I Promise Program – a teen safe driving initiative that promotes parents as role models by entering into a safe driving contract with their teen. Youth, parents, community members, police and interested stakeholders in traffic safety have participated in developing this program.

To view the entire set of replies by driving instructors, please scroll down...

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1	If there was one thing I could get parents to do it would be wait till after driver education started to start practicing with their teen. To at least start the btw before practicing and then actually practice what was prescribed by the instructor.
2	I would have parents give their students more time behind the wheel practice driving. Parents should also be asking their students what they learned in Driver training school and apply that knowledge to their every day driving. Have the student teach the parent. Adults CAN learn from their kids. We don't know everything. Driving is about attitudes.
3	BEFORE learning to drive, young people can prepare by engaging in team sports, bike riding, skiing and other activities which encourage the development of good peripheral awareness, visual tracking, multitasking. All new drivers, regardless of age, benefit from defensive driving skills training behind the wheel. AFTER learning to drive, I feel adequate parental support and supervision is crucial; they should not be afraid to take away driving privileges if their child is not demonstrating responsible behaviour behind the wheel.
4	Keep more control over use of the vehicle.
5	Change the attitude of parents thinking about drivers training and how important it is to know the background of the driving instructor and his or her qualifications. There are way too many non-qualified instructors that work for driving schools. Some barely speak English and drive cars that look ready for retirement. DMV is not closely monitoring the schools. I was a police officer for 20 years been to racing schools as participator and advisor and during my research found this alarming discovery. The parents don't really have an option but, I found that some parents don't even care. As long as the price is right.
6	In response to your survey, as a Driving Instructor I would

	<p>strongly recommend to parents taking time with their kids practicing on driving skills. According to the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario, a new driver should aim for at least 2,000 kilometres of driving experience before attempting their road test. When a new driver practices what he/she learned between lessons, I can move on to teach other aspects of the driving course. If for example the new driver does not practice his/her lane changes between lessons, I then have to cover that aspect of driving on the following lesson until they do proper lane changes. If not, I am limited to teach them in heavy traffic and highway driving since they need that skill to become safe drivers.</p> <p>Some of my students are prohibited from adjusting the side mirrors on the family car because when the parent gets behind the wheel, they need to re-adjust the mirrors. On the contrary, parents should be happy that the mirrors have been moved since it demonstrates that their kids are using them to see what's behind and to the sides.</p> <p>Finally, if their kids ask them to go out and practice, it's probably because they feel they need it. I understand that everyone has a busy schedule and with the soaring price of gas these days, makes good excuses for not going. Now is the time for the parents to pass on their driving experience, skills and knowledge to the new driver in order to become safe and responsible drivers for the rest of their driving career.</p>
7	<p>The one thing I wish that parents of young drivers would do is drive more with their child. Parents should start of provide an example when their child is small and then continue to help the child develop into a responsible driver as they get into their early teens and starting to drive. Too often, parents feel the job of educating their child on how to drive belongs to the driver education teacher and the teacher only has 6 hours to work with each child going through their program. Driving is a lifelong learning experience and we all need to do whatever it takes to keep our young drivers safe.</p>
8	<p>The one thing, off the top of my head, that I would like parents of young drivers to do would be to allow them driving time beyond just driving from point A to point B. Most of my student drivers are extremely capable of maintaining a safe speed and lane position but aren't able to park the vehicle when they get to their destination. Specifically, getting practice at being able to back up the vehicle.</p> <p>As for the making healthy choices and interacting with other people, I'd like to have parents teach their children to be courteous. Some young people are only concerned about themselves and how it will affect them. They don't have compassion and sensitivity.</p>
9	<p>Determine if their son or daughter is mature enough to drive and make them wait if not.</p>
10	<p>Go into the whole question of drivers Ed., and after getting a license in a business like manner, agree what the expected behaviour is and is not, what the rewards and punishment will be and what will terminate their driving privileges and for how long.</p>
11	<p>Parents no matter how busy must take an active part in the driver education process but not the teaching of driver education. They must learn to work with the instructor over an entire year or more in developing the new driver. The parent must set very clear rules and sternly warn that crossing those rules even the first time will have irrevocable consequences. Finally just because the child has a license does not mean they are just cut loose, on the contrary they should be let out on a leash little by little.</p>
12	<p>In Hawaii, before teenagers are issued their BTW completion certificates parents must sign a</p>

	<p>document (notarized signature required) stating they have given their teenager/s 40 hours of daytime and 10 hours of nighttime BTW training.</p> <p>Driver's Education is not just "cruising" for 6 hours with an instructor. Parents and teachers can work as a team to help develop good habits that a teenage can have for life.</p>
13	<p>Make sure they have them take a drivers education course</p> <p>Drive with them several times till they feel comfortable with them driving</p> <p>Talk to them about safety when being the driver with their friends in the car.</p> <p>Talk to them what may happen if they drive irresponsible and they kill one of their friends.</p> <p>Talk about paying attention to other vehicles and therefore, not driving with music blasting, etc.</p> <p>Talk to them about not taking a carload of friends along for a least a year till they have experience under their belt.</p> <p>Defensive driving techniques is a biggy.</p>
14	<p>One thing to get parents to do is to be a role model by using safe, correct driving habits in their effort to OBEY the laws that protect everyone. If this parent happens to be a judge, please give consequences for undisciplined driving behaviors.</p>
15	<p>Prior to and during the Driver Education experience, I would expect parents to provide opportunities for the young driver on the road. As their son or daughter's skills progressed, I would expect their experiences to change to more complicated driving tasks. After the Driver Education experience, I would expect the parents to continue to monitor and evaluate their son or daughter's driving behavior</p>
16	<p>I would have the child ride in the front seat so that they could observe Mom and Dad's driving habits and skills. Have the parents talk about why they are making driving decisions as they are. I would also have them practice with the child. Let the teenage drive and give them feedback (calmly) when stopped. But make them practice a lot. Expect them to be responsible.... enter into a contract of sorts to avoid drinking and driving. Even if that means that the teenager is committed to calling them for a ride when they are drinking underage. Do Not Drink and Drive.</p>
17	<p>The one thing I would want parents of young drivers to do is to make sure the driver is ready and willing to take responsibility for all aspects of driving." To do this:</p> <p>The parents would show how their young driver have been trained to make decisions based on cause and effect, demonstrate good judgment, know how to limit their own behaviors.</p> <p>Parents make sure the driver knows how to handle an emergency, get help, fill out paper work, how to read a map, and follow directions.</p> <p>The parents would have young driver earn \$\$ and contribute towards the auto insurance.</p> <p>Parents would have the young driver have to take time from their schedule to get gas, get repairs done and learn basic maintenance.</p>
18	<p>Drive with the student as much as possible and Stress that they <u>obey all traffic laws</u> each time they drive. Also it would be helpful if, when the student gets his license, the young driver is not "turned loose" to drive anywhere they want to go. The GDL helps to control this problem but parents still need to be aware of the kid's activity.</p>
19	<p>Put a "1-800-Hows my driving " bumper sticker on their car....</p>

20	Get the kids to pay for their portion of the insurance, gas and repairs. And understand distractions that typically result in incidents. Setting a good example while driving is critical. Children Learn What They Live.
21	Take the driver education course more seriously!! Many students that we have now (here) have parents who have moved here from mass. Where driver education is a joke; there are no tests, no accountability, no standards (except hours) and no educational requirements. Period-- it's a joke today and was yesterday.
22	Sit in on a few of their children's driving lessons.
23	Be good/consistent examples to them when they are young (12+). i.e., students I teach have a hard time understanding the benefit of driving at or under the speed limit when mom/dad consistently 10+ over it. They are watching what the parent is doing.
24	I would get parents of young drivers to use a system of graduated driving privileges which includes restricting night driving, restricting drivers to "business only" driving at first, limit the distance that young drivers would be able to travel, and restrict passengers to "approved passengers, only." Privileges would be increased as drivers prove their skills and privileges would be decreased if drivers demonstrate a lack of skill and caution.
25	If I could suggest only one subject matter of student drivers and what their parents should do, it would be to spend more time with their children practicing driving skill. Most parents rely on driving instructors in a ten hour period to teach their children all the safe driving skills needed to prevents them from serious problems when they become licensed to drive alone. More supervision prior to the road test would greatly decrease the risk factor after they pass a basic test.
26	What I would have parents do starts before their children are even of driving age - pre-driving teaching. This would have them do things to help their children be more aware of the driving environment, i.e. get them to help look for stop signs, red lights/green lights, speed limit signs; ask if they know how to get someplace/get the child to direct them when driving to a familiar destination; ask the child to help check traffic when exiting a parking lot or at a stop sign; talk about what they are doing when driving or what they see happening in the environment; etc. I believe this is especially important to do with young people who have learning issues and might not be as likely to pick up on what is going on around them. It is not something that should be done 100% of the time but thrown in here and there.
27	The big problem we have faced and will continue to face is this. Parents invest tons of money and an enormous amount of time for their children's dancing lessons, golf lesson's, soccer lessons, and they are satisfied and think a 40 hour Driver's Ed program is sufficient for their children. This is completely false! They must invest in a professional trainer in further training. Also, they in 99% of the cases are inadequate themselves to teach their children follow up training.
28	Get parents to set better examples while driving
29	Current driver education programs are limited (i.e., 30/6) in meeting the needs of first time drivers. Our young adults (and their parents) cannot rely on this alone. Parents need to be inspired and expected to become partners in the driver education of their teenagers. Parents need to know how this 'timely' requirement can make difference. Both the parents and teenagers will gain from an 'effective' involvement program (contact meeting setting direction and timeframe, work sheets or booklet, follow-up letters, review session...). A simple 'contract' will also establish specific consequences when any rules are violated - parents must still be

	'in-charge' for at least a year after he or she gets a license.
30	Let their son/daughters drive as much as possible and in adverse conditions.
31	If there was one thing I could get parents of young drivers to do it would be to let them be the driver every time they went anywhere together. I feel that new drivers often don't get the experience they need in a variety of situations and weather conditions while an experienced driver is with them. The basic driving required in driver training programs is a good base to teach proactive driving skills, but these need more enforcement, before young drivers are sent out to do it all on their own. The young drivers I deal with, that have parents who have let them drive often, are way ahead of their peers who don't have parents that let them drive often. It is amazing that I can learn things myself from my students, whose parents let them drive and discuss the different situations they encounter while driving. Driving is a life skill and so often parents don't have the patience or use the excuses as to why their teens can't drive. "We are in a hurry", "I don't want him driving my \$40,000 car", these are only some of the excuses I hear on a weekly basis. We want our young drivers to be safe and our roads to have drivers with the right attitude! Parents, drive with your kids! It is amazing what they will learn and what you will learn about them while you drive!
32	Give their son/daughter more home practice before the course begins, more specific practice during the course, and set a better example in their personal driving habits.
33	I wish parents of young people would realize that driving is the most significant responsibility (to date) in a young person's life. It should not be something that is solely price shopped, it needs to be considered with the same due diligence, if not more than their college education. Parents need to know that not all driving schools are "certificate factories," and there are schools that are truly interested in training a teen to think and drive. Finally, parents need to put the time and money that they put into their teen's sport or musical instrument training, into assuring that their teen will be able to take on life threatening decisions every second they drive!
34	One thing I would have parents do is "LISTEN" to their son or daughter when they say they are correctly performing a proper maneuver. The young driver does not need to be told how foolish their technique is when in fact the parent has been performing so many poor and incorrect maneuvers and ""THEY"" do not listen to the son or daughter who is performing the proper procedure. Kids have a tendency to be more correct when it comes to know the laws, rules and maneuvers.
35	If there was one thing I could do, I would get parents to set a better example: following distance, leaving plenty of time to travel, speed, attention to road etc. I strongly feel that young drivers are going to drive with similar habits as the adult they most ride with.
36	Trust them within reason, let them explore and be kids
37	Every single moment, from the first onwards, that your children watch you drive, be aware that you are setting an example that will either help or hurt them when they begin driving themselves. And, if you believe that violations and crashes are normal, unavoidable driving events, then do not seriously expect your children to believe or to act differently
38	I find that most parents simply do not allow their children to go driving! I would say that 80% of my students get no practice whatsoever. It's hard to believe. And, the ones who do go driving, never get a chance to practice VT turn arounds nor parallel parking. "My folks don't parallel park!" Parents seem to expect the 6 hours of driving time I have with their child to be sufficient for the student to learn new skills and become good drivers. No way.

39	to get first time teen license recipient to not be allowed to drive with more that one other non-adult in the car
40	I would ask ANY NOVICE DRIVER, regardless of age, and parents, because they are ultimately responsible for the newly licensed teenager, to have at least 100 hours of signed (by co-pilot) practise time before licensing.
41	The answer can be summed up in just two words, PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT. Attend a meeting at the driving school, prior to the student taking the classroom portion of the program, where they will be briefed on the program in general and Q & A. Then, as is the case in California, actually give their son or daughter the required 50 hours behind-the-wheel, over the six month waiting period. The California DMV did a survey of parents here, since the Graduated Licensing Law was put in effect on 7/1/98, and 83% of the parents admitted they had not give their son or daughter the required 50 hours and had perjured themselves when signing the affidavit, stating they had done so. They are lazy, indifferent, cowards and liars.
42	Parents, please take an active role in your son or daughter's driver education. Get them to explain what they're learning. Be interested in their progress. Give them some wheel time if that is appropriate. Communicate with the instructor if there is an issue to resolve, or just to let them know they're appreciated. Seriously consider the "I Promise Program"
43	Obtain more hours from a professional driving instructor and have more hours of BTW experience prior to licensing and "letting them go".
44	I would like to see parents put limits and stick to them on how often the teenager can take the family car and also have the teenager share in the cost of operating the vehicle, as this is the only way the teenager learns responsibility.
45	Send their kids to me so they can be taught properly. I have had hundreds if not thousands of student drivers (of ALL ages) who have been mistaught by parents, relatives, friends, and yes, other so-called driving instructors. Come to me first (sure, the money is good, but that is NOT the primary reason) so the correct information can be taught.