

# resources

Following is information about several resources cited in this brochure. AAA encourages parents and teens to take advantage of them as they shop for a vehicle and work together through the learning-to-drive process.

■ **AAA's "Welcoming Your New Driver" brochure series:** Geared to families with teens looking to become licensed drivers.

■ **AAA's "Teaching Your Teens to Drive":** A parental-involvement program that supplements driver education and supports supervised driving through user-friendly lesson plans and an interactive DVD. For more information, call (800) 327-3444.

■ **Parent-Teen Driving Agreement:** Specifies teen driving privileges and limitations. For more information, visit [AAA.com/PublicAffairs](http://AAA.com/PublicAffairs).

■ **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:** U.S. government agency that provides vehicle crash-test results and safety bulletins and monitors other vehicle safety concerns. Visit [nhtsa.gov](http://nhtsa.gov).

■ **Insurance Institute for Highway Safety:** Insurer-funded organization and a leading source of information on crash tests and vehicle safety. Visit [highwaysafety.org](http://highwaysafety.org).

■ **"Driver-ZED":** Interactive, computer-based driver-training program for teens. For more information, visit [aaafoundation.org](http://aaafoundation.org).

■ **AAA Exchange:** A public-access Web site that provides information about AAA advocacy efforts and state laws on issues such as graduated driver licensing. Visit [AAA.com/PublicAffairs](http://AAA.com/PublicAffairs).

■ **AAA.com:** Visit the AAA Web site for information about driver education and licensing, AAA Approved driving schools, car-care clinics, vehicle purchasing, costs of vehicle ownership, CARFAX vehicle history reports, auto insurance and loans, AAA Approved Auto Repair facilities and vehicle maintenance.



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## so your teen wants a car?



## a parent's guide to choosing a vehicle

## your teen's first vehicle

Buying a car is an important decision, especially for a teenager with limited driving experience. Because liberation and personal mobility may be of primary interest to a young person, it's imperative that parents help address practical considerations in choosing a first vehicle. What most new drivers need is safe, reliable and affordable transportation. Parents and teens should remember vehicle ownership is a process, not a one-time event.



## what parents should know

Before considering the purchase of any vehicle for a teen, keep these important points in mind:

- Safety behind the wheel should be a priority. Each year, more teens die in car crashes than from any other cause — including disease, drugs, suicide or homicide.
- Per licensed driver, teens are two to three times more likely to be involved in a crash than adult drivers, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.
- Passengers can influence driver behavior and compound distractions. With one peer passenger in the car, the crash risk for novice drivers increases 30 percent. The risk doubles with two peer passengers and triples with three.
- Young drivers have trouble managing distractions. Sending text messages and using cell phones or other electronic devices behind the wheel endangers drivers, passengers and others sharing the road. To better understand dangers imposed by such practices, ask your AAA club for a copy of the brochure *Drive Safer, Talk Later*.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among 15- to 20-year-olds.

# safety

It's critical to choose a vehicle with features that can help prevent crashes and minimize injuries. Your teen may be thinking "sporty," but you should think twice about buying a car that could tempt a teen to speed or drive recklessly. A midsize sedan is a better choice than a van or SUV because such "top-heavy" vehicles are more susceptible to rolling over in a crash. Consider a late-model vehicle equipped with modern safety features such as:

- **Antilock braking system, or ABS.** Helps drivers maintain vehicle stability and steering control during hard braking.
- **Daytime running lights.** Make vehicles more visible to other drivers.
- **Electronic stability control, or ESC.** Works to improve vehicle control on slick roads or at high speeds. This feature has been shown to reduce single-vehicle rollover crashes involving cars by 70 percent and other vehicle models by 88 percent, according to IIHS.
- **Airbags.** Frontal airbags work in conjunction with seat belts to minimize crash-related injuries. Found in many newer models, side-impact airbags reduce injury risk in side collisions and have been shown to reduce driver fatality risk by 37 percent in cars and 52 percent in SUVs.
- **Adjustable/lockable head restraints.** Provide head and neck protection during a crash. Adjusted properly, such restraints offer maximum protection against whiplash.



Ask your AAA office for a copy of *Buying a Safer Car*, which provides crash-test ratings for a wide range of vehicles. For more information, access [AAA.com](http://AAA.com) or [safercar.gov](http://safercar.gov).

You also should ensure the vehicle includes a user manual and emergency kit. The manual covers operation, maintenance, precautions and safety tips. Encourage your teen to read it and become familiar with the car he or she will be driving. It's also a good idea to discuss what to do in an emergency. AAA offers a free brochure on the topic titled *The AAA Guide to Trouble-Free Travel*.

A midsize sedan is a better choice than a van or SUV.

Side-impact airbags have been shown to reduce driver fatality risk.

# affordability

A new car may be the most desirable option, but it also may exceed your budget. In many cases, the solution is to purchase a previously owned model. Work with your teen to determine the best investment.

■ **Research insurance costs.** Coverage for a young person can be expensive, but teens may qualify for discounts by completing a driver-training program or providing proof of good grades.

■ **Don't pay too much.** Do your homework and investigate the market. AAA clubs also can provide pre-owned vehicle pricing information by year, make and model.

■ **Think twice about older vehicles.** Though relatively inexpensive to purchase, they can cost more to maintain in the long run and often get poor gas mileage. They also might not feature important safety systems.

■ **Consider a certified used car.** Many auto manufacturers have certification programs that offer low-mileage vehicles that previously were leased or had only one owner. This option typically is more expensive but could pay off in the long run with increased safety, reliability and resale value.

■ **Don't forget gas mileage:** Along with the vehicle purchase price, consider the cost of gasoline. Vehicles that get good mileage are easier on the wallet — and the environment. Ask your club for a copy of *Gas Watcher's Guide*, a AAA brochure that provides tips and other information for maximizing miles per gallon.



# reliability

Peace of mind is an important factor for parents as well as young drivers. Selecting and maintaining a reliable vehicle from the outset can prevent most breakdowns. When vehicle shopping, consider these tips:

■ **Look for a warranty.** Select a vehicle with a remaining warranty or purchase an extended warranty. AAA can help you find sources for extended warranties.

■ **Check the history.** Review all maintenance and crash-repair histories. AAA members can obtain a CARFAX vehicle history report at a discount through AAA.com. It can help you learn about possible past crashes and damage due to floods or other causes.

■ **Conduct a pre-purchase inspection.** Have the vehicle inspected at a repair facility to ensure it's roadworthy, mechanically sound and equipped with operational safety components. AAA Approved Auto Repair facilities offer this service for a nominal fee.

■ **Avoid excessive mileage.** A car driven beyond standard mileage for its age may mean heavy or abusive driving that could lead to abnormal wear on components.

Late-model used vehicles often provide the best balance between safety and price.

## your role as a parent

Selecting the right vehicle is only part of keeping your teen safe on the road. Parents also need to help their teen learn to operate the vehicle safely, which can be achieved by following through in three primary areas: selecting a quality driver-training program, conducting effective supervised driving and establishing a parent-teen driving agreement.



## training

A good training program can reinforce positive driving techniques and defensive driving practices. Driving schools shouldn't be selected solely on cost, course length or geographic convenience. Be sure to consider a program's quality as well. Driving may be the riskiest activity in which your teen engages, so getting the best possible training is vital.

To make the selection process easier, AAA offers a brochure titled *Choosing a Driving School*. Also, check with your AAA club for driving school references. Any school displaying the AAA logo has been thoroughly reviewed and meets stringent standards for quality and professionalism.



Driving may be the riskiest activity in which your teen engages.



# driving agreements

Many parents find teen-driving agreements helpful in establishing family rules and reinforcing state laws. Signed by both parties, the agreements feature protective guidelines designed to encourage good behavior behind the wheel and safe driving practices.

Such agreements offer many advantages. For starters, they help communicate to teens that their family takes the learning-to-drive process seriously. They also can help teens understand driving behaviors and habits that must be exhibited to gain additional driving privileges. Lastly, agreements can be used to maintain an ongoing dialogue between parents and teens about safe driving.

AAA encourages holding weekly “summit” meetings to review the previous week’s driving and discuss plans for the upcoming week. This also is a good time to schedule that week’s supervised driving lessons.

Visit [AAA.com/PublicAffairs](http://AAA.com/PublicAffairs) for a copy of AAA’s Parent-Teen Driving Agreement and other resources.

## supervision

Building on lessons learned in the classroom, teens need additional experience behind the wheel with parent-supervised driving, which is required by many states as part of the teen-driver licensing process. For those new to the concept of supervised driving, determining where to start and finish can be daunting.

For such situations, AAA offers “Teaching Your Teens to Drive,” a comprehensive program that provides parents everything they need to conduct supervised driving and more. From easy-to-use lesson plans to managing driving logs to using “commentary driving,” the program’s interactive DVD and handbook guide parents through the most frequent causes of teen crashes to help minimize risk behind the wheel.

To order Teaching Your Teens to Drive, contact your local AAA club or call (800) 327-3444.

Many parents find it helpful to establish a written driving agreement with their teen.