

TIPS FOR DRIVING "ABOVE THE INFLUENCE"

A POSITIVE ATTITUDE MAKES A DIFFERENCE.

Many teen crashes aren't caused by a lack of skills or knowledge, but by attitude and maturity. Be sure to develop and practice a responsible driving attitude.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT.

Work with your parents to get plenty of supervised practice for at least six months before you take the driver's license test - consider asking them to establish a set practice schedule with you. Practice driving in different conditions so you know what to expect in inclement weather, heavy traffic, urban and rural situations, and night driving. Ask your parents what tips they have for handling these situations. The more experience you have prior to your driving test, the more confident you will feel behind the wheel.

UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF DRIVING "ABOVE THE INFLUENCE" OF DRUGS AND ALCOHOL.

Drinking alcohol or using drugs when driving is totally unacceptable. Not only is it dangerous, it's also illegal and can cost you your license. Just one drink or one joint causes a chemical effect on the brain that can impair the senses and affect judgment and reaction time. Prescription drugs taken with a physician's order might also affect your senses, so be aware of any potential side effects before getting behind the wheel and never take a drug that wasn't prescribed for you.

LIMIT THE NUMBER OF RIDERS.

Limit the number of friends you drive in your car if you're a new driver and be aware of state driving laws that might limit the number of passengers you are legally allowed to drive. Your risk of a fatal crash increases with each additional passenger, and overcrowding your car can leave riders without seatbelts.

DRIVE WHILE THE SUN IS UP.

Stick to daytime driving when you first get started. Your risk of a fatal crash is three times higher at night per mile driven.

TAKE IT SLOW.

Save the highway and other fast-moving, heavy traffic situations until you've had plenty of supervised practice. Gradually take on more difficult driving situations - such as merge ramps, major urban areas, and rush-hour - once you're more comfortable with your driving capabilities. Don't forget, speeding is the #1 reason new drivers lose control of their vehicles.

TIME FOR STORMY WEATHER.

Rainstorms, snow, sleet, and ice can create scary and dangerous driving conditions, even more so for inexperienced drivers. Get as much supervised practice on the road during poor weather conditions as you can.

STOW AWAY THE CELL PHONE.

Talking or texting on your cell phone while you're driving is a dangerous activity and also illegal in many areas. If it's necessary to use your phone, safely pull over to the side of the road before even picking it up.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE RIDE.

Talk with your parents about what family vehicle you will drive. Larger cars with fully-equipped safety features such as airbags and anti-lock brakes will offer better protection in a crash. Seatbelts come standard in all vehicles and save thousands of lives each year. Plus, a majority of states have seatbelt laws that require drivers and passengers to buckle up. Play it safe - wear a seatbelt every time you get in the car and save your cash for something other than tickets.

