

Why have a contract anyway?

Driving is a high-risk activity; this is especially true for novice drivers who have had, by definition, limited exposure to the physical and mental experience necessary to safely navigate our highways.

Parents obviously play a pivotal role in helping their teens learn to lower risk as much as possible. You can do this by modeling good habits yourself, by providing ample practice time and by setting clear expectations for behavior once your teen has earned the privilege of driving on their own. A parent-teen driving agreement, or contract, is an excellent way to establish and record those expectations.



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THE PURPOSE (AND CONTENT) OF A PARENT- TEEN DRIVING CONTRACT

Number 4 in the "Frequently Asked
Questions" (FAQ) Series

What should or should not be included?

A good agreement will, for both teens and parents:

- Explain privileges
- Detail responsibilities
- Clearly outline consequences if responsibilities are not met
- Be customizable to fit the specific, unique situation of each family

Avoid agreements that:

- Are one-sided (e.g., only listing responsibilities for the teen)
- Include requirements that are unrealistic, immeasurable, or unenforceable

If possible, providing rationales, right in the document, for the various responsibilities is great; this can serve as a reminder that the rules exist to promote safety and not just to curtail a young driver's newfound freedom.

How do I write one? (or, why you don't have to...)

Though nothing says you can't or shouldn't create a document from scratch, there are already many contracts available for your use. If your teen is involved in a driver education program, ask his or her instructor, or have your teen ask for a sample. Several can also be found by searching the web – a few are listed below and followed by a comparison chart.

AAA - <http://teendriving.aaa.com/files/file/Parent.Teen.Driving.Agreement.pdf>

Allstate - http://www.allstate.com/content/refresh-attachments/teedriver_sheet_contract.pdf

	Explains Privileges	Teen Responsibilities	Parent Responsibilities	Clear Consequences	Provides Rationales	Customizable
AAA	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Somewhat
Allstate	No	User fillable	Somewhat	User fillable	Yes	Yes
CDC	Somewhat	Yes	Somewhat	Yes	No	Somewhat
Maine	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – Legal	Somewhat
YDS	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Oregon	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes



CDC - http://www.cdc.gov/Motorvehiclesafety/pdf/Driving_Contract-a.pdf

State of Maine - <http://www.maine.gov/sos/bmv/contract.pdf>

Youth Driving Safe - http://youthdrivingsafe.org/PDFs/Parent_Teen_Driving_Contract1.pdf

To Download Oregon's Fillable Contract:
http://cms.oregon.gov/ODOT/TS/docs/DE/ParentTeen_Agreement.doc

Now that I have one, what do I do with it?

First, use it to open dialogue between you and your teen. Driving is a huge responsibility – for all of us – and it's critical that parents and teens are able to discuss the related issues openly. Make sure all parties understand the requirements and the consequences of the agreement. Most importantly, once the agreement is in place, it needs to be followed completely by all parties. To let one piece "slide" sends the message that the entire agreement is only a suggestion.

Of course, if you find that the agreement isn't working for you, and changes need to be made – do it! As with the initial agreement, it is important to make sure all parties understand the new terms and the reason(s) for the change(s).