

## How you can Help your Learning Driver

The majority of people learning to drive are teenagers who have reached legal driving age. For the teenager, it's a time long awaited; the sweet smell of independence and freedom are in the air. For a parent, however, this time is one filled with trepidation. Your head is filled with horrific scenarios of late night accidents, where your new driver has made a mistake resulting in (at the very least) thousands of dollars worth of damage.

The stress involved when a family member is learning to drive is reason enough to sign them up for driving lessons, as well as take an active role in their driving education. The good news is that these goals are absolutely complementary; while the driving school will give the learning driver a good grounding in the rules of the road, it is the parent who will put the leg work in as the new driver hones her skills.

### *Am I allowed to help?*

If you do want to help your teenager (or anyone else looking to acquire his or her driver's license) learn to drive, there are some rules in place you must follow. You have to be over the age of 21, and must have held your own driver's license for at least three years. In addition, you must display the Learning Driver "L" in both the rear and front windows of your vehicle to indicate a beginner is behind the wheel.

The Driving Standards Agency recommends that those wishing to help learning drivers become safe drivers undertake a course in safe driving themselves, before helping out new drivers. The Agency also states that on average, a learning driver needs 45 hours worth of instruction, along with 22 hours of practice, before she is ready to take the driving test. Again, this reinforces the need of the practice supervisor to adhere to the lessons when assisting a learning driver.

If you feel able to adequately assist the learning driver in your life with the practice they need in order to succeed, here are a few simple tips to follow regarding the practice sessions:

- Reinforce the latest driving lessons through the practice.
- Keep records of each practice session, so that the learning driver can show them to her instructor.
- Whenever possible, emulate the instructor's style in practice sessions.
- Be specific about when and where you and the new driver will practice.
- Be patient and calm when out with a learning driver!

Assisting a learning driver can be stressful for both parties. Following some simple rules and supporting the student's instructor can help lay a foundation that leads to lifelong safe driving skills.