



Having a teen driver has its advantages... right? Anyone?

Ned Hickson

simply a right to pass out — preferably before they can make it into the passenger seat. Not that my teen wouldn't drag my unconscious body into the car anyway, thereby meeting the "accompanied by a licensed adult" clause in his permit.

For teens, getting a driver's permit symbolizes a rite of passage toward independence. For parents, however, it is

After reading "The Oregon Parent Guide to Teen Driving," I can tell you nowhere in that pamphlet does it specify that "said adult" is to be "conscious" or "buckled and/or otherwise strapped in of his own accord" while the vehicle is in motion. Ideally using all four wheels.

This is what is known as a "technicality." And trust me, if there's a way to use it to their advantage, teenagers will find it. That's why I spent extra time going through this pamphlet, knowing it could be used against me in a court of law. Or over breakfast.

What I discovered is that the person who wrote this guide either a) never had teenagers of their own, b) grew up in the 1950s, or c) probably grows his own marijuana.

One clue this pamphlet was written by someone who has never had a teenager in their home is in the first suggestion, which regards practice driving: "Only practice when both of you are in good moods, and not for more than 30 minutes at a time."

The last portion of that sentence is the only thing that makes any sense. That's because any parent with

teenagers knows they are rarely in a good mood for more than 30 minutes at a time anyway. So a 30-minutes-or-less limit is definitely achievable.

The trick is finding them in a good mood, then maintaining it without things turning into the "Fast and Furious." And by that I mean him driving too fast and me getting furious.

With that in mind, I took it upon myself to offer a few, more realistic suggestions for parents teaching their teen to drive.

1) *Set a good example.* In addition to checking the mirrors, seat position and signal lights, I have started reciting the Rosary whenever we go for a practice drive. I find that it adds a sense of reverence to the occasion. Having your priest come bless the vehicle every time you leave the driveway isn't a bad idea either, unless he stops returning your calls like ours did.

2) *Make your expectations clear.* Before your teen even starts the engine, make it clear that you expect to return home alive. Even if it means wrestling the steering wheel away from him or her by knocking them unconscious.

Explain to them how, as a parent and licensed driver, you are responsible for their safety as well as the safety of everyone else on the road, in cross walks, waiting at bus stops, eating at restaurants with outdoor seating, and any businesses that don't currently have a drive-thru.

3) *Teach the rules of the road.* Just because your teen passed his or her written test doesn't mean they know the

rules of the road.

For example, I know for certain there is nothing on the test explaining the **Single Scratch Rule**: A single scratch on a family car can result in a teen driver having their driving privileges revoked for up to five years. Or the **Bring It Home On Empty Rule**, which states: Any teen who brings the family vehicle home with an empty tank shall be required to refill the tank by walking to and from the farthest gas station using a Dixie Cup.

And lastly, 4) *Stress the importance of proper parking.* With so much emphasis on driving, the importance of knowing how to park properly is often overlooked. I am reminded of this whenever I go grocery shopping and come out to find my car wedged between two SUVs, forcing me to look as though I'm performing a David Blaine illusion just getting back in.

Explain to your teen that this is poor driver courtesy. And how, as a courtesy to other drivers, we have a responsibility to fill the area between those SUVs with as many metal shopping carts as we can.

So consider this your warning that our son has officially passed his permit exam and will soon be joining you on the road! I say "you" because, as of today, I will be taking public transportation.

Ned is a syndicated columnist with News Media Corporation. His book, "Humor at the Speed of Life," is available online at Port Hole Publications, Amazon Books and Barnes & Noble. Write to him at nedhickson@icloud.com

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