

Parent's Guidelines and Help Resources

Parent Guidelines for Implementing a Parent-Teen Car-Use Agreement

1. Be an example

- Behavior is learned, not innate.
- It is unreasonable to expect your child to behave differently than you do when driving or caring for a vehicle.
- If there are preteens in the family, prepare them to take responsibility as a part of growing up.

2. Be clear

- Go over the contract with your son or daughter.
- Fill in the blanks where applicable.
- Explain the regulations.
- Listen to your child's point of view.
- Link driving privileges to school performance and overall behavior.
- Emphasize consequences of failure to meet contract provisions.
- Emphasize that you will not accept irresponsible behavior.

3. Be positive and emphasize:

- Your concern for your child's safety and welfare.
- Your hopes for your child's future.
- Your expectations concerning responsible behavior.
- Conservation of family resources as an important need.

4. Be vigilant

Let your child know that together you and he/she will be inspecting the following:

- Compliance with maintenance requirements.
- Tires for abusive use and adequate pressure.
- Fuel level and mileage before and after child uses car.
- Vehicle for damage.
- Vehicle for clues of drinking or other drug use.

5. Be prompt

- Act promptly if there is an infraction of the agreement.
- The longer you wait to impose consequences, the weaker the link to behavior.
- Delaying can be perceived as a sign of weakness.

6. Be firm, but gentle

- Let the contract do the talking.
- Express disappointment when rules are broken.
- Do not negotiate consequences for infractions.
- Be firm. Do not change your mind.
- Let your anger show, but do not allow it to take over.
- If your child is not accustomed to obeying regulations to the letter he or she may protest loudly when sanctions are imposed. Do not cave in to the uproar.
- Avoid name calling. Your power lies in enforcement of the agreement.
- Loud accusations cause resentment and alienation.

7. Be consistent

- Punish each infraction the same way each time it occurs.
- Both parents must provide a united front on issues. Do not allow yourselves to be divided and conquered.
- Your credibility and the power of the agreement will be weakened if you are not consistent in your enforcement and application of consequences.

8. Be fair

- Get all the facts before you take action.
- Inform your child that other families are also using the parent-teen agreement and that he/she is not being singled out as an exception.

9. Be flexible

- Zero flexibility could lead your child to drive at breakneck speeds to meet deadlines.
- Be careful not to allow exceptions too frequently, otherwise your exceptions become the rules, and your agreement loses its power.
- Beware of the tradeoff game. You deny the driving privilege on Friday night, but your child wants to trade for the following Friday night instead.
- Avoid the negotiation game in which your child wants to bargain for extra miles or extra driving time.

10. Be in control – be alert for games

- On strike: “I won’t study if you won’t let me have the car.”
- Nobody likes me: “This is the only way I can make it with the group.”
- The tickets are bought: “Now you’ll make all of us waste money.”
- Nobody else can drive: “You’re spoiling the fun for all of us.”
- The excuse game: “We ran out of gas.” “I had to take everybody home.”

11. Be forgiving

- Your love must be unconditional.
- The contract provides for withholding privileges, not withholding love.