



Choosing a Driving School

A Guide for Parents
of Beginning Drivers



Driver Education- A Foundation for Safe Driving



Getting a driver's license is an important step to adulthood for young, new drivers.

Classroom training provides a solid base for grooming safe drivers, but getting behind the wheel on the open road is the true test.

Learning to drive and successfully navigate America's roadways is like building a house. You need knowledge, skills, and plans. Without these solid foundations, you take a big risk each time you get behind the wheel.

Quality driving instruction provides the foundation needed for safe driving practices. Instructors ensure their students have the basic skills, knowledge, and habits needed for safety on the road. Structured classroom and behind-the-wheel instruction are the first steps in preparing students for the rigors of today's highway system.

Why Use a Professional Driving School?

Even parents who have the time and temperament to teach their teens to drive should consider the added benefits of training by an expert. Driver training is important. You may be an exceptional driver but not the best teacher — either because your competence is so ingrained it has become unconscious, or because you are more likely to overreact to your own children.

Professional instructors have been trained to provide comprehensive training that addresses the mistakes new drivers are most likely to make. Even parents who are exceptional drivers should



consider professional training by an expert.

Check with your local AAA club for references. Any school that displays the AAA logo has been thoroughly reviewed and must maintain:

- late-model, safe driver training cars;
- up-to-date training materials;
- professionally trained instructors;
- a record of good business practices;
- discounts to AAA members.

Quality- the Number One Priority

Too many parents seek driving schools that are low-cost, short in duration, or simply convenient to get to. While these factors are important, one other factor should outweigh them all – **quality**. Given that motor vehicle collisions are the leading cause of death for teenagers, it's absolutely worth the effort to identify a top-notch driving school where quality is the number one priority.

If you are looking for a quality driving school, this brochure will help you:

- Define the type of training that best suits your needs;
- Understand specific requirements for the facility, instructor, structure and lessons;
- Find and investigate quality local driving schools.

Make a Smarter, More Informed Choice

Your search for a quality school may be more successful if you know what to look for in facilities, instructors, structure, and lesson plans. The following tips may make it easier to select the best driver training school for you. Look for schools that:

Belong to a professional national or state association for Driver Education and Safety. Organizations that help driving schools and their instructors stay current on modern learning techniques and evolving driving skills include:



The American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA.org)



The Driving School Association of the Americas (TheDSAA.org)

Your state may also have its own professional association for driving schools. You can have more confidence that driving schools belonging to these organizations have a strong commitment to quality and truly preparing your teen for the challenges of modern driving.


Have professional-looking facilities and vehicles. Ask to see the classrooms and if you can observe part of a course. Classrooms should be clean, orderly, and set up to conduct classroom sessions. Also ask to see the training vehicles, which should be late-model cars in good condition.

Offer at least 30 hours of classroom instruction and six to ten hours of behind-the-wheel training. This should not necessarily be interpreted as sufficient time for instruction- your teen may need more time behind-the-wheel before he or she is ready to drive. Avoid "quickie" courses- optimally, the course should be taught for at least a 4 to 6 week duration.

Integrate the classroom and behind-the-wheel portions of instruction. The ideal course



integrates the classroom and behind-the-wheel training. The classroom time should consist of a professionally-developed, structured lesson plan that includes coverage of risk prevention and the fundamentals of defensive driving. Behind-the-wheel sessions should correspond with the classroom lesson plan to reinforce and demonstrate the practical usage of the classroom concepts. Driving environments should include residential streets, city traffic, rural roads, highways, and limited-access freeways.

- Have a good business reputation. Check with  the Better Business Bureau (**BBB.org**), which keeps files of complaints and compliments received about local businesses. Also check that the school's Driver Education School license is displayed in the school's business office.
- Will gladly give you references. Get the names of previous students and parents you may call as a reference. Ask them about their experience with the school.
- Are clear about details. Ask about refund policies, class make-up policies, and remedial training policies. Do you need to sign a contract?
- Can accommodate students with disabilities. Students with disabilities should choose a school with instructors and equipment prepared for their specific needs. For instance, vehicles should include hand controls, an adjustable steering column, and other aids for disabled drivers. The Association of Driver Rehabilitation Specialists (**ADED.net**) can provide information about facilities in your area.



□ Offer a “Parent Orientation Session.” Most parents are surprised to learn how valuable such a session is. Generally less than two hours in length, these sessions help parents understand how the school works, the parent’s role in the learning-to-drive process, and what tools are available to parents and families, such as

a Parent-Teen Driving Agreement*. Do not miss the opportunity to attend a parent orientation session- they’re invaluable!

□ Offers tools to help parents be effective driving coaches. Classroom and behind-the-wheel lessons should be supported by practice sessions, and many schools provide materials and regular input from instructors regarding a particular student’s needs. Parents should provide at least 50 hours of supervised practice driving experience for novice drivers.

*Download a *Parent-Teen Driving Agreement* at TeenDriving.AAA.com

Your Role: The Driving Coach



To support you as your teen’s driving coach, AAA developed “Teaching Your Teens to Drive.” This program was designed to help parents participate in the process of educating teenagers, including how to conduct practice

sessions with your young driver behind the wheel. “Teaching Your Teens to Drive” helps you prepare your teen driver for this new phase in their life, with 13 lessons focused on developing the following skills:

- Basic vehicle control;
- Visual search habits;



- Vehicle positioning and speed adjustment;
- Passing and off-road maneuvers;
- Freeway and night driving;
- Driving on slippery surfaces; and
- Reducing risks.

To order "**Teaching Your Teens to Drive,**" call AAA at 800-327-3444, contact your local AAA/CAA club, or visit TeenDriving.AAA.com

Making Your Decision

Before you select a driving school, ask around-check with friends and neighbors. Be sure to visit several schools, and investigate each thoroughly. New teen drivers are at high risk behind the wheel, and your diligence in locating a quality school that meets your needs will pay off – it's worth the effort.

Resources

AAA Driving Schools in Your Area– AAA.com
Association of Driver Rehabilitation Specialists–
ADED.net
The American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association– ADTSEA.org
The Driving School Association of the Americas–
TheDSAA.org
Better Business Bureau– BBB.org
TeenDriving.AAA.com



AAA's "Teaching Your Teens to Drive" is there to help with a colorfully illustrated handbook and live-action 60-minute DVD. For more information, contact your local AAA club or call 800-327-3444.

Provided as a public service by your AAA club.

For more information about AAA Driver Training Programs, contact your local AAA club's Driver Training Department or visit AAA.biz/DriverTraining



Driver Training Programs
1000 AAA Drive
Heathrow, Florida
32746-5063

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