

Attention parents of Summit! Do you want to make the streets safer for you and your children? Do you want to make sure that your child will be protected when he/she begins the daunting task of learning how to drive? Well, teaching proper driving techniques has never been easier!

Research by the National Safety Council shows that teen drivers strongly model their driving conduct after their parents. Basically, if teens view their parents as safe, responsible drivers, they are likely to model that behavior. Conversely, teens can also pick up bad driving habits from their parents, such as speeding, texting, and driving while distracted.

It is never too early to start modeling proper driving techniques. Additional research shows that children as young as five or six are aware of the driving habits of their parents and are likely to follow in their example. For instance, one recent study by the Air Bag Safety Campaign demonstrated that more than 80 percent of children used seat-belts when they witnessed their parents do so. However, when their parents did not buckle up, seat-belt use for children ranged only from a paltry 11 to 56 percent. With seatbelts known to reduce crash-related injuries and deaths by over 50 percent, the importance of setting this example is indisputable.

Moreover, seatbelt use isn't the only area where you can set examples for your kids. Simple things like keeping your eyes on the road, having two hands on the wheel, and putting phones away can go a long way in teaching them appropriate driving behavior (as well as making you a safer driver!). It is no less important to continue this practice when your children become of driving age. In fact, it is essential that you have a conversation with your teen about what your expectations and guidelines will be after he or she starts driving.

Every year, Summit High School partners with local insurance agents and the Summit Police to host a Share the Keys presentation where parents and teens learn how to work together during the driving process. Parents are even asked to sign contracts with their teens, agreeing to adhere to the rules of NJ's Graduated Driving License laws. All parents of high schoolers are strongly urged to attend. Finally, the Summit Safety Society (Summit High School's driving safety club) also invites you to attend the monthly PTO meetings, which the club not only participates in but also occasionally gives presentations of the same topic. Best of luck with teaching your children how to drive!

