

Improving teen driver safety

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Driving education programs for teenagers should be designed to stimulate interest in road safety and should clearly show them the possible consequences of unsafe driving. To help keep teens interested in the program, a range of activities should be designed that are fun and interactive while sending clear messages about the importance of road safety. Activities can include practical demonstrations that teens can take part in and interactive film clips in which they can make choices for the characters portrayed.

Educating teens on the practice of safe driving will include information on speeding, seat belts, drinking and driving, and how to handle distractions while driving. Teens should be made aware of the possible consequences of these issues, and perhaps the most effective way of doing this is using scare tactics that emphasize exactly why these are important points. Visual media and practical examples can be used in this way.

Taking the issue of speeding as an example, the important point to emphasize is that the faster you drive, the higher the impact of a crash, and the greater the damage that is done. However, the point must be made in a way that is interesting and engaging. A practical demonstration could be done using eggs and large toy cars - cars that collide at slow speeds will not cause harm to the eggs, whereas crashing the cars with sufficient force will break them. The demonstration provides an opportunity for humor while making the point, and allows students to interact rather than sitting and watching. Following a demonstration, interactive film clips can reinforce the point. These could be designed to allow teens to choose what happens to the characters: at important moments in the clips, a simple menu could be displayed which gives the audience a choice of action, such as wearing a

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seatbelt or not wearing a seatbelt. Choosing an option from the menu allows the film clip to continue and show the consequences of the action. If they choose not to wear the seatbelt, the characters in the clip are seriously injured or killed when the car crashes. The film could then show the consequences of the alternative choice and show that with seatbelts on, the characters in the film are not seriously hurt.

An entire safety program can be constructed in this way, with each point made using interactive practical demonstrations and interactive film clips that pinpoint common driver safety issues and their consequences. The important aspect of the program is that it is an interactive one that maintains interest and allows teens to make choices and see the consequences of them.