



## CY-FAIR TEENS TAKE THE WHEEL

### Tips for Parents of New Drivers

*WRITTEN BY LORRIE CROW*

It's something that all parents must face, and most do with much dread. It can't be avoided because your child will haunt you until you give in. So you finally hand over the car keys because your child now has his driver's license. But before he hits the road, there are legal requirements that must be met, and parents and family members should ensure their teen gets an education on safe driving.

### DRIVING SCHOOLS IN CY-FAIR

Cypress Driving School  
8660 Hwy. 6, Houston or  
2347 N. Fry Rd., Cypress  
832-593-9170  
cypressdrivingschool.com

Lone Star College - Cy-Fair  
9191 Barker Cypress Rd., Cypress  
281-290-3200  
cyfair.lonestar.edu

Safety First Driving School  
1171 Huffmeister Rd., Houston  
281-894-4645

**“We felt William needed to hear from another person the same things we’d been telling him.”** -Joanna Vickery

## LEAVE IT TO THE EXPERTS

Gone are the days of learning in school as Region IV no longer provides driver’s education classes. Instead, a popular alternative for parents is a teen driving school. Terri Hill, the Continuing Education Program Manager, Division II, at Lone Star College at Cy-Fair, says their classes are designed for students who are between the ages of 14 to 17 years old and wish to get a Texas Driver’s Permit. “We’re a bit different from most driving schools because we cut the cost in half to \$142,” Hill explains. “We provide the permit part and then let the parent or guardian teach the driving part. The student must be in the class for 32 hours, and we break that up into 16 two-hour classes.”

Hill says the school offers evening classes during the fall and spring semesters. “Teens attend class from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., normally, every week from Monday through Thursday. They are allowed to miss only three classes and then must make them up,” she says. Hill adds that there will be some daytime summer classes, but those spots tend to fill quickly.

A DE-964E form, required by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), will be issued to students who successfully complete this course, Hill says. She emphasizes students must have the permit six months before they can apply for a license.



Experts recommend a safe, used car to start with

## PARENT TAUGHT DRIVER EDUCATION

Another choice is the Parent Taught Driver Education Packet, sponsored by the DPS. Texas lawmakers implemented a Parent Taught Driver Education Program on April 1, 1997. However, before the instructor (parent, step-parent, grandparent, step-grandparent, foster parent or legal guardian) begins teaching this course, the instructor must have a valid Texas driver’s license for the preceding three years. The entire program consists of a minimum of 32 hours classroom instruction with seven hours behind-the-wheel instruction and seven hours in-car practice. There is a \$20 application fee and \$20 per student fee for the packet.

For \$229, one can order “Driver Ed in a Box” online that states “State Approved” by the Texas Department of Public Safety as Parent Taught: Driver Ed in a Box Course #103. This box contains the textbooks, videos, audio series, among other items, and a completion certificate.

Joanna and Keith Vickery decided to teach their now 16-year-old son, William, because driver’s education did not seem to fit into his school, band, and summer schedule. “However, just before he was able to get his license, we did arrange for seven hours of private driving instruction, just one-on-one,” she says. “We felt William needed to hear from another person the same things we’d been telling him.”

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Teens with provisional licenses in Texas are not allowed to talk on cell phones or text message while driving



## Minors Driving in Texas

The Texas Graduated Driver License (GDL) creates a specific provisional driver's license for drivers under age 18. Here are a few of the restrictions.

- ◆ Must have an instruction permit for a minimum of six months prior to receiving their provisional license.
- ◆ May not have more than one passenger in the vehicle under the age of 21 who is not a family member.
- ◆ May not drive between midnight and 5:00 a.m. (Except for some work or school related activities or medical reasons.)
- ◆ May not drive while talking on a cell phone or text messaging.

Terri Hill agrees that sometimes it's better to be trained by someone other than a family member. "I tried parent teaching, but my daughter wouldn't listen to me about what was likely to be on the test," she says. "It's better coming from an expert. Our educator is considered an expert in driver education and the students receive a lot of knowledge about driving and safety." Vickery admits that when William first drove alone, she was nervous. "We feel that he's a pretty good and also sensible driver," she says. "I'm more anxious about freeway driving than his father is. Experience is the only way that he'll become a better driver," she adds.

### KNOW THE LAW

Experience is important, which is why the Texas Graduated Driver License (DGL) created a specific provisional driver's license for drivers under 18. They include no talking on a cell phone or text messaging, no more than one passenger in the vehicle under the age of 21 who is not a family member, and the teen may not drive between midnight and 5 a.m. (except for some work or school-related activities or medical reasons).

William says he does not find following the rules too difficult. "However, not answering the phone when it rings or needing to ask my parents a question when I'm driving is probably the most difficult to follow," he admits.

### TEEN DRIVING TECHNOLOGY

For those parents who believe their child may not follow the rules, a popular way to track him is through the use of a GPS device. Some can run real-time feeds so parents can monitor their teen driver's decisions on the road, and some offer a record of the driver's speed. Vickery said she and her husband considered a tracking device, but, "William was horrified at the thought."

### SIGN A CONTRACT

If parents consider electronic tracking too extreme, there's always the old-fashioned contract between parent and student driver. Although the Vickerys did not have William sign one, she said they all discussed the components of one. "William knows that the consequences of dangerous, irresponsible driving and/or general behavior, or non-compliance with the law equates to the loss of driving privileges," she says. "This has happened once and he was not a happy camper getting on the school bus."

In general, William said his parents are good about permitting him to drive where he needs to go. And about where he wants to go? "They don't always let me go where I want to go," he says. **CFM**

*LORRIE CROW parent taught drivers education to both of her boys but wishes she would have handed them over to the experts.*

# DID YOU KNOW?

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, teenage drivers and passengers are among those least likely to wear their seat belts. This statistic is a contributing factor for the high amount of teenage driver injuries and even deaths each year. Be an example for your teen. Always wear your seatbelt, and encourage them to do the same.

## Driving Tips from a Cy-Fair Parent

- ◆ Buy your teen driver a sturdy, used car that can withstand the inevitable bumps and scratches before investing in a new car.
- ◆ When your teen is in the car with you, drive how you would want them to drive. Use turn signals, don't speed, and stay off your cell phone.



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