

Coaches Care: A Game Plan for Talking to Student Athletes About Highway Safety and New York's Driving Laws

As a coach, you're looked up to and respected by your players. They trust you to provide guidance and instruction that will help them succeed both on and off the field. Including every member of your team – players, coaches, managers, parents, and fans – in the discussion is critical for ensuring that it's not only a winning season, but a safe one.

Here are ways to get the word out:

- Include text about adhering to highway safety laws and Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) provisions, whether a driver or a passenger, in your team's code of conduct that spells out the penalties for non-compliance. Secure buy-in and support from your administration.
- Meet with your team captains and coaches to review the basics of highway safety and the GDL program and the text in your code of conduct. Reinforce their role not only as leaders on the field, but on the road. Make it clear that coaches and captains will be expected to serve as role models and report any violations.
- Attend a parent or booster club meeting prior to the start of the season to review the basics of highway safety and the GDL program, stressing that their sons' and daughters' safety, both on and off the field, is your top priority. Distribute copies of the code of conduct and have your team captains review.
- Regularly remind players and parents to make provisions for transportation if there are games or practices that could necessitate driving between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m.
- Partner with your police department to reinforce student athlete compliance with the GDL program and all motor vehicle laws.

New York State's Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) Program

The Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) program is designed to provide time for young people to gain critical experience in various traffic scenarios in a safe and controlled manner. In addition to the [learner permit restrictions that apply to everyone](#), the [Graduated License Law](#) places restrictions on drivers under 18 years of age who have a junior learner permit or junior driver license. The restrictions depend on whether you have a junior learner permit or a junior driver license, and where and when you will be driving in New York State. The New York State Department of Health created GTSC-funded pocket guides for law enforcement agencies and others regarding the GDL in [Upstate New York](#), [New York City](#), and [Long Island](#).

General rules for a driver with a Junior License (DJ):

(cont.)



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- No unsupervised driving between 9 p.m. to 5 a.m.
 - Non-credit bearing activities such as athletic events and dances do not qualify as an acceptable reason for driving outside of restrictions.
- No more than one passenger should accompany the driver in the vehicle.
- All passengers in the car must be restrained.
- The driver should not be texting or using portable electronic devices (also true for drivers of all ages).

For more information about the GDL or for additional regional restrictions which may apply to your students (NYC and Long Island) please refer to the [DMV website](#).

Remember the “5 to Drive”

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s “5 to Drive” campaign highlights the five necessary rules that teen drivers need to follow to stay safe behind the wheel. These rules address the greatest dangers for teen drivers: alcohol, texting, seat belts, speeding, and extra passengers.

1. **No Drinking and Driving.**
Set a good example by not driving after drinking. Remind teens that drinking before the age of 21 is illegal, and alcohol and driving should never mix no matter your age.
2. **Buckle Up. Every Trip. Every Time. Front Seat and Back.**
Lead by example. If you wear your seat belt every time you're in the car, teens are more likely to follow suit. Remind teens that it's important to buckle up on every trip, no matter how far or how fast.
3. **Put It Down. One Text or Call Could Wreck It All.**
Remind teens about the dangers of texting or dialing while driving, and that the phone is off-limits when they are on the road. It's equally important to model safe driving habits for your teen—you shouldn't text and drive either.
4. **Stop Speeding Before It Stops You.**
Drive the speed limit and require teens to do the same. Explain that every time your speed doubles, stopping distance quadruples.
5. **No More Than One Passenger at Any Time.**
With each passenger in the vehicle, a teen's risk of a fatal crash goes up.

More information about teen driver safety can be found at dmv.ny.gov and safeny.ny.gov.

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Department of Motor Vehicles