

Traffic safety for parents of teenagers



Talk to your teen about traffic safety



World champions and immortal with it?

The ability to handle traffic depends on many different factors. Young people have not yet developed the mental framework needed to handle all the situations that can arise in traffic – simply put, they are inexperienced road users. Teens must gradually learn to cope on their own in order to increase their ability to make intelligent decisions.

As a parent, you play a crucial role in your teen's development and how they will get on in traffic. Teens are not fully developed in terms of their ability to weigh up the consequences of their actions. At the same time, many lasting attitudes and behaviours are formed during the teenage years. The brain matures slowly. The frontal lobes, which is where the ability to weigh up consequences is located,

do not finish developing until around age 25. Which is why teens often overestimate their own capabilities.

Young people react impulsively more often, and react emotionally rather than rationally, which can lead to excessive risk-taking. Being a safe road user largely comes down to assessing risks and showing consideration to others. It is important to lay the foundation for the kind of thinking that promotes safety in traffic. Discuss the risks that are out there. Discuss what consequences various behaviours may result in.

In these pages, NTF has summarised information and advice for parents of teenage children who are active in traffic on their own.





Young people on bicycles

By the time they are teenagers, children will generally have cycled in traffic on their own for several years. Yet it is still a situation that may require plenty of conversations between parent and child.

Wearing a bicycle helmet up to age 15 is required by law, but it is an all-too-frequent occurrence that young people stop wearing helmets even earlier. Young people account for a large proportion of serious bicycle injuries, possibly because many parents forget to think about how and where their children should ride. That is why it is important not to completely let go of the issue of safe biking, and to continue setting a good example yourself – by being a safe bicyclist.

Things to keep in mind

- Riding a bike is good both for your own health and for the environment. Personal habits formed in adolescence often continue throughout a person's life.
- The bicycle helmet law is a help for many parents, but it is still important to protect the brains of adolescents over age 15.
- Studded bicycle tires make it easier for the rider to continue riding during the winter months as well.
- The bicycle is considered to be a road vehicle, meaning that cyclists must obey traffic rules, including the duty to give way and stop and not to bike the wrong way down one-way streets.
- The law requires cyclists to use bicycle lights when riding in the dark.

Young people on mopeds

The minimum age for riding a moped is 15. Statistics show that young people around age 15 are an accident-prone group, and this statistical trend often coincides with the time young people get a moped and venture out into traffic on a motorised vehicle for the first time. In 2009, a law was passed requiring mandatory training provided at a qualified training centre in order to be able to ride a moped. Make sure that your teen gets good driver's education, including both a theory component and driving lessons.

As of 1 January, it has been prohibited to drive a class I moped at speeds over 45 km/h. Today's EU mopeds can easily be souped up to achieve speeds of up to 60-80 km/h. But the moped's brakes, tires and frame are not designed for such high speeds. The higher the speed, the more serious the injury and accident will be – souped-up mopeds are involved in half of all fatal accidents involving mopeds.

If you buy a used moped and want to know whether the moped has been souped-up, there are a number of moped dealers that offer safety checks on used mopeds.

The law makes it mandatory to wear a helmet when driving a moped. The helmet is the most important, and in fact the only, piece of personal protective equipment that moped riders have. The helmet should sit snugly and be fastened. If it is loose, it will fall off and be useless in the event of an accident. Remember that the helmet law also applies to passengers being transported on the moped. If you use the helmet properly, you have a reasonable chance of surviving an accident at speeds of no higher than 45 km/h. Now imagine what would happen if you were to ride a moped at 70 km/h without a helmet!

Other rules to keep in mind are that the moped must have motor insurance, that it is forbidden to drive with alcohol or drugs in your bloodstream, that it is forbidden to drive mopeds on footpaths, and that all other traffic regulations must be complied with.

Mopeds are broken down into two classes, class I and class II.



Class I moped

- Must be registered and must have a license plate.
- Maximum speed 45 km/h.
- May not be driven on bike paths.
- AM-class driving license required at minimum.
- Only one passenger may be transported on the moped, provided that there is a designated, registered seat.

Class II moped

- Not subject to compulsory registration.
- Maximum speed 25 km/h.
- May be driven on bike paths, with the exception of bike paths marked “No mopeds”.
- ‘Förfarbevis,’ a type of permit, is required.
- It is permitted to transport a passenger on a class II moped if there is a designated passenger seat, otherwise the same rules as those applicable to giving passengers a lift on a bike apply.

Things to keep in mind

- It is illegal to soup up a moped. It is your responsibility to make sure this law is complied with as a parent. You may be sentenced to pay a fine for allowing unlawful driving if you allow your teen to drive a souped-up moped.
- Test drive the moped to make sure it is not souped-up.
- Dealers and workshops may void the warranty if the moped is souped-up.
- Insurance companies may refuse to honour claims for souped-up mopeds that have been damaged.
- Your teen may also have his or her license suspended if the moped is souped-up.
- The police may impound a souped-up moped.
- Driving a souped-up moped may lead to problems qualifying for a learner’s permit in the future.



A “slow-moving vehicle” sign must be affixed to the back of the A-tractor.

A-traktor.

An “A-traktor” is a car that has been converted to a tractor and whose maximum speed is limited to 30 km/h. An A-traktor may have seats for one or two passengers, but no people or objects may be transported in the compartment behind the front seats.

A driving license of any class or a special tractor license is required in order to drive an A-traktor. A tractor license entitles its holder to drive a tractor designed for a maximum speed of 40 km/h, or class II motorised equipment with a maximum speed of 30 km/h.

Souped-up engines are also a problem for A-traktors. A study carried out by NTF showed that over half of those driving A-traktors had vehicles capable of maximum speeds of over 80 km/h.

The following is required in order to obtain a tractor license:

1. *You have a valid driving learner’s permit.*
2. *You have turned 16.*
3. *You have passed a theory test.*

A tractor license also entitles its holder to drive class I and class II mopeds. You may also drive an A-traktor if you have an AM-class license. It is possible to qualify for an AM-class license from age 15. This license also lets its holder drive a tractor at an earlier age than if they were to simply apply for a tractor license.

Starting in 2017, A-traktors are also subject to inspection. If you own an A-traktor, you should find out when your vehicle is due for inspection.

Things to keep in mind

- Test drive the vehicle to make sure it is not souped-up.
- Never help anyone soup up the tractor.
- Driving a souped-up A-traktor may lead to problems qualifying for a learner’s permit in the future.
- If the vehicle is souped-up, it is you as the parent and owner of the vehicle who are responsible. Your teen may be convicted of unlawful driving, just as if he or she had driven a car without license.

The road to a driving license

In order to obtain a driving license, a driving learner's permit from the Swedish Transport Agency is required. This permit is valid for five years. A class B driving license entitles its holder to drive passenger cars and light trucks with a total weight of no more than 3500 kg.

In order to obtain a driving license, the applicant must be 18 years old, be a permanent resident of Sweden and have completed an introductory training course, as well as both parts of the risk awareness course. The driving test consists of a theory component and a practical driving test; these two components need to be completed around the same time.

In order to become a safe driver, in addition to just being able to manoeuvre the car well and follow traffic regulations, you need to be able to plan your journey, and be aware of potential risks and of your own limitations. Gaining experience is a matter of practice, and the best thing is to combine the lessons at the driving school with private practice lessons. Teens are allowed to start practice lessons with a supervisor from age 16. The supervisor must have completed and passed an introductory training course, must be 24 years old and have held a driving license for a total of five of the past 10 years.

Things to keep in mind

- Attending the introductory training course together lays a good foundation for practice driving lessons.
- Young drivers are inexperienced. The more hours behind the wheel, the better. So start practice lessons as early and as frequently as possible.
- Remember that the supervisor is responsible during private practice driving sessions, and that the supervisor is also responsible for any other passengers.





Teens and driving

Accident risks Young drivers are overrepresented in the single-vehicle accident category, and in accidents in which they lost control of the car. High speeds and inexperience are a dangerous combination, and the risk of mortality for younger drivers is many times higher than that for more experienced drivers. Many of those killed in such accidents were not wearing a seatbelt. The worst group of all is young men who have just received their driving license and drive far over the speed limit.

The risk of accidents is highest in the evening and at night, especially on the weekends. Alcohol and drug-related accidents are more common among young drivers than other road users; young people are also overrepresented in fatigue-related accidents.

These days there are technical support systems available, such as seatbelt reminders, driver fatigue alert systems and speed adaptation, to help improve safety when driver judgment lapses. The most common of these are seatbelt reminders, which make a noise and issue a signal reminding the driver to fasten their seatbelt. Try to choose a car with multiple support systems for increased traffic safety.



Under the influence in traffic Alcohol, drugs and traffic do not mix. And yet, many people are killed or seriously injured due to drink driving every year. One third of all drink drivers are between 18 and 24 years of age. A driver under the influence of drugs or alcohol and who is involved in an accident causing injuries to others or manslaughter can be sentenced to up to eight years in prison.

As a parent, you are a role model for your teens. Discuss the consequences with them and let them know what can happen if they drive under the influence. Give them the courage to refuse a lift from someone who is under the influence. Because drink drivers are dangerous drivers. It is more courageous to refuse to go along. Call the police to prevent someone from driving drunk. It is a matter of saving lives, both your own and others'. The best outcome when drunk in traffic is that the police will stop the car. In the worst case, the journey will be the young person's last.

Breathalyser locks are a way of preventing drink driving. In order for the car to start, you have to blow into a mouthpiece. If you have been drinking, it will not be possible to start the car. This safety system is not yet very common in private cars.

Things to keep in mind

- Think about your own behaviour. You can be a good role model for your teenage child by always wearing a seatbelt, obeying the speed limit and being well-rested and sober behind the wheel.
- Decide in advance how your teen will get home from the party.
- Always let your teen call home, even if it's in the middle of night.
- Encourage them to take public transport.
- Take turns with other parents giving your children lifts.
- Give your teen taxi money or make sure that they pack an overnight bag.



Contact our **associations**

Blekinge: **blekinge.ntf.se**

Dalarna: **dalarna.ntf.se**

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Safe traffic