ATLAS DRIVING SCHOOL

Help Your Teen Become a Safe, Confident Driver

The Georgia Parent's Practical Guide to Teaching a New Driver

A calm, step-by-step system for practice sessions, safer habits, and knowing when your teen is ready for the next level.

FREE PARENT RESOURCE

Learn with Calm. Drive with Confidence.

ATLAS
DRIVING SCHOOL

A Note to Parents

Teaching your teenager to drive can be one of the most important - and stressful - things you do together. You are sitting beside someone you love while they learn to manage speed, traffic, mirrors, signs, pedestrians, turns, and decision-making all at once.

This guide is designed to replace random, stressful practice with a simple system. Your teen does not need perfection. They need repetition, good habits, gradually harder situations, and calm feedback.

Use this guide to help you:

Know what to practice first, structure each session, spot common mistakes, measure progress, and recognize when professional instruction could help.

The biggest mistake parents make

One of the biggest mistakes is simply telling a new driver to “just drive.” Driving around provides experience, but experience alone does not guarantee improvement.

Think of driving like a sport: break the skill into pieces, practice those pieces, repeat them, and then combine them under harder conditions.

A better progression

Learn → Practice → Repeat → Add Difficulty → Evaluate

- Empty parking lot
- Quiet neighborhood
- Residential roads
- Main roads
- Multi-lane roads
- Heavier traffic
- Highway driving
- Night and challenging conditions

Confidence should follow competence - not replace it.

The 5-Level ATLAS Driving Progression

Use these levels to identify where your teen is today. Do not move up because a certain number of days have passed - move up when the previous skills are becoming consistent.

LEVEL 1 — VEHICLE CONTROL

Build comfort with the basic mechanics before adding complicated traffic.

- ☐ Adjust the seat and mirrors correctly
- ☐ Use a consistent seat belt routine
- ☐ Start and stop the vehicle smoothly
- ☐ Accelerate smoothly
- ☐ Brake smoothly
- ☐ Maintain steering control
- ☐ Stay centered in the lane
- ☐ Make right turns
- ☐ Make left turns
- ☐ Use turn signals
- ☐ Look in the correct direction while turning
- ☐ Practice basic parking

Parent Goal

Your teen can control the vehicle without constant physical or verbal intervention.

Don't rush ahead if...

You are constantly saying “Brake,” “Watch the curb,” “Stay in your lane,” “Slow down,” or “Turn the wheel.”

LEVEL 2 — AWARENESS

Once control improves, teach your teen to continuously collect information around the vehicle.

- ☐ Check mirrors regularly
- ☐ Scan intersections
- ☐ Look for pedestrians and cyclists
- ☐ Recognize traffic signs
- ☐ Notice traffic lights early
- ☐ Watch vehicles entering from side streets
- ☐ Recognize brake lights ahead
- ☐ Check blind spots
- ☐ Maintain safe following distance
- ☐ Look farther ahead instead of staring over the hood

Simple exercise

Occasionally ask, “What do you see?” Let your teen identify traffic lights, pedestrians, vehicles, intersections, brake lights, construction, road signs, and possible hazards.

LEVEL 3 — DECISION MAKING

Now your teen begins making more decisions without waiting for you to direct every move.

- ☐ Choose safe gaps in traffic
- ☐ Decide when to turn
- ☐ Recognize when to slow down
- ☐ Respond to changing traffic lights
- ☐ Yield correctly
- ☐ Navigate four-way stops
- ☐ Enter larger roads
- ☐ Change lanes safely
- ☐ Maintain appropriate speed
- ☐ Plan turns before reaching intersections

Parent shift

Instead of “Slow down - there is a red light,” ask “What do you see ahead?” Instead of “Change lanes now,” ask “What lane do you need?” Your goal is to become a passenger, not their navigation system.

LEVEL 4 — REAL-WORLD DRIVING

Add complexity gradually. Change one variable at a time so your teen can adapt without becoming overwhelmed.

- ☐ Moderate traffic
- ☐ Multi-lane roads
- ☐ Busy intersections
- ☐ Highway entrance ramps
- ☐ Highway exits
- ☐ Merging
- ☐ Higher speeds
- ☐ Night driving
- ☐ Light rain
- ☐ Unfamiliar roads
- ☐ Busy parking lots
- ☐ Navigating with GPS

One variable at a time

Try familiar road + nighttime, then familiar road + light rain, then unfamiliar road + normal conditions. Gradual exposure builds skill without flooding the learner.

LEVEL 5 — INDEPENDENT DRIVER

The real goal is not simply passing the road test. Ask: “Would I feel comfortable if my teen had to drive somewhere without me?”

- ☐ Drive without constant instructions
- ☐ Recognize hazards independently
- ☐ Maintain appropriate speed
- ☐ Keep safe following distance
- ☐ Change lanes safely
- ☐ Handle busy intersections
- ☐ Make safe left turns
- ☐ Merge appropriately
- ☐ Recover calmly after a mistake
- ☐ Navigate unfamiliar roads
- ☐ Drive safely at night
- ☐ Park independently
- ☐ Make responsible decisions without reminders

Passing the test is a milestone. Becoming a safe driver is the mission.

The 45-Minute Parent Practice Formula

5 MIN	**MAKE A PLAN** Pick only one or two skills. Example: “Today we are working on right turns and lane position.”
10 MIN	**WARM UP** Start on familiar roads. Give your teen time to settle before adding harder situations.
20 MIN	**FOCUSED PRACTICE** Repeat the chosen skill several times. Right turns? Make several. Lane changes? Find an appropriate road and repeat safely. Parking? Practice multiple attempts.
5 MIN	**INDEPENDENT DRIVING** Give fewer instructions. Let your teen make decisions while you observe.
5 MIN	**DEBRIEF** End with two things they did well and one skill to improve next time.

The 2 + 1 Method

End every session with 2 things your teen did well + 1 skill to improve next time. This keeps feedback clear and prevents the drive from ending as a list of everything that went wrong.

The Parent Passenger-Seat Rule

Your emotional state affects your teen. Panic, yelling, grabbing the dashboard, and constant criticism can make a nervous learner freeze, overthink, brake suddenly, or become afraid of mistakes.

Your job is not only to notice mistakes - it is to help your teen correct them safely.

Instead of…	Try…
“WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!”	“Slow down.”
“YOU ARE TOO CLOSE!”	“Create more space.”
“WATCH OUT!”	“Check your right side.”

The best instructions are short, calm, specific, and early.

The 10-Second Rule for Parents

Whenever possible, give instructions before your teen needs to act. New drivers process information more slowly than experienced drivers.

Instead of waiting until the last second...

Say: “At the next traffic light, we are turning right.” Now your teen has time to check mirrors → signal → position the vehicle → reduce speed → scan → turn.

10 Common Mistakes New Drivers Make

1. Looking too close to the vehicle

Teach your teen to scan farther ahead instead of staring immediately in front of the car.

2. Turning too fast

Slow down before the turn, then accelerate smoothly as the vehicle completes it.

3. Forgetting blind spots

Use the routine: Signal → Mirror → Blind Spot → Move When Safe.

4. Braking too late

Encourage earlier scanning so stopped traffic and red lights are noticed sooner.

5. Driving too slowly

The goal is not simply to “drive slow,” but to choose a safe and appropriate speed for conditions.

6. Poor lane position

Help your teen hold a natural position within the lane instead of constantly correcting the wheel.

7. Hesitating too much

Caution is useful, but practice is needed so your teen can recognize safe opportunities without freezing.

8. Forgetting to scan intersections

A green light does not mean “stop looking.” Continue checking for vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, and changing conditions.

9. Following too closely

Space creates time. Time creates options. Protect the space around the vehicle.

10. Depending on the parent for every decision

If you constantly say “go,” “stop,” “turn,” and “change lanes,” your teen may be operating the car while you are still driving mentally.

The Parent's 8-Week Practice Plan

Use this as a flexible progression, not a deadline. Repeat a week when your teen needs more consistency.

WEEK 1	**Vehicle Control** **Steering, braking, acceleration, lane position, basic turns**	Parking lots and quiet neighborhoods
WEEK 2	**Turns & Intersections** **Right turns, left turns, stop signs, traffic lights, scanning**	Quiet residential roads
WEEK 3	**Traffic Awareness** **Mirrors, following distance, speed management, hazard recognition**	Residential and moderate traffic
WEEK 4	**Lane Changes** **Signals, mirrors, blind spots, speed matching, safe gaps**	Appropriate multi-lane roads
WEEK 5	**Busier Roads** **Traffic flow, lane selection, larger intersections, independent decisions**	Moderate-to-busy roads
WEEK 6	**Highway Skills** **Entrance ramps, acceleration, merging, highway speed, exits**	Highway when appropriate
WEEK 7	**Different Conditions** **Night driving, light rain, different traffic levels, unfamiliar roads**	Vary one condition at a time
WEEK 8+	**Independent Driving** **Reduced parent coaching, self-correction, navigation, parking**	Realistic everyday trips

Parent Readiness Scorecard

Use this before adding more difficult roads or preparing for independent driving. Check only what your teen can do consistently - not what they have done once.

- ☐ Controls speed smoothly
- ☐ Brakes early and smoothly
- ☐ Maintains lane position
- ☐ Makes controlled right turns
- ☐ Makes controlled left turns
- ☐ Uses signals consistently
- ☐ Checks mirrors regularly
- ☐ Checks blind spots before lane changes
- ☐ Maintains safe following distance
- ☐ Scans intersections
- ☐ Recognizes hazards without prompting
- ☐ Handles stop signs and traffic lights correctly
- ☐ Changes lanes safely
- ☐ Makes decisions without constant coaching
- ☐ Recovers calmly after a mistake
- ☐ Can navigate a familiar route independently
- ☐ Can park with minimal guidance
- ☐ Can explain what they see developing ahead

Parent reflection

Which 3 skills create the most stress right now? Write them down and make those the focus of the next several practice sessions.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

When Professional Instruction Can Help

Parents are an important part of learning to drive. A professional instructor can be especially useful when your teen needs a neutral coach, more structure, or practice in situations that create tension at home.

- Your teen becomes very anxious while practicing with family
- The same mistakes keep repeating despite practice
- Parent and teen conversations become arguments during lessons
- Your teen needs structured work on lane changes, turns, parking, highways, or road-test skills
- You are unsure whether your teen is truly ready for more independent driving
- Your teen responds better to coaching from someone outside the family

Remember

Professional lessons do not replace parent practice. The strongest results usually come from combining structured instruction with consistent practice at home.

Parent Practice Log

Print this page more than once if you want to track multiple sessions.

Date	Minutes	Main skill	What improved	Next focus

Before You End a Practice Session

- ☐ I stayed calm and gave instructions early
- ☐ We focused on only one or two main skills
- ☐ I gave my teen time to make decisions
- ☐ I named two things they did well
- ☐ I chose one clear skill for next time

You do not have to teach every skill alone.

If your teen needs more confidence, structured coaching, road-test preparation, or another calm voice in the passenger seat, ATLAS Driving School is here to help.

ATLAS DRIVING SCHOOL

English & Spanish Behind-the-Wheel Instruction

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This guide is for educational purposes and does not replace current Georgia DDS requirements, laws, or official licensing guidance. Parents should verify current requirements with the Georgia Department of Driver Services.