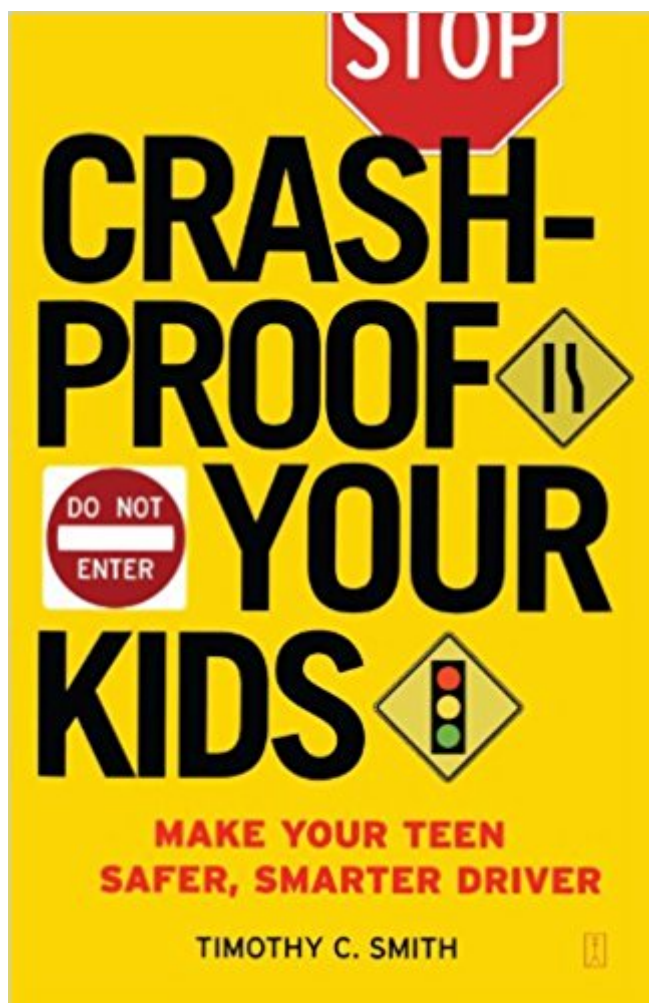


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# Crash-Proof Your Kids: Make Your Teen A Safer, Smarter Driver



## Synopsis

BEFORE YOU EVEN THINK ABOUT HANDING YOUR TEENS THE CAR KEYS, DO EVERYONE A BIG FAVOR: CRASHPROOF THEM! Every year, six million sons and daughters will become first-time drivers. Fifty-eight percent of them will be involved in a car accident within a year of getting their license, and a significant portion of these crashes will be fatal. But here's the good news: research has shown that car crashes can be reduced by up to 30 percent when you, the parent, are actively involved in your teen's instruction and set certain limits. In *Crashproof Your Kids*, certified driving instructor and dad Timothy Smith has combined the collective wisdom of numerous experts to develop the Crashproof Plan: a series of behind-the-wheel exercises designed to improve your teen's driving awareness, behavior, and skill in a way that fits your schedule. Written in a highly accessible, informal, and often humorous style, this comprehensive plan begins where drivers' education programs end, and includes:

- A step-by-step plan to develop your teen's braking, car control, and defensive driving skills
- How to handle road emergencies and basic car maintenance
- Tips on helping your teen deal with dangerous distractions, including peer pressure and the use of alcohol and drugs
- The Crashproof Contract, which outlines the expectations, responsibilities, and rules of the road for both the teen and the parent

You'll get plenty of help on how to communicate vital driving concepts to your teen, and you'll laugh, learn, and sympathize with stories from parents who have already been there. *Crashproof Your Kids* is an essential resource for any parents wanting to help their teenagers successfully navigate the single most dangerous activity they'll ever undertake.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Timothy C. Smith is a certified driving instructor, SCCA-licensed racer, and award-winning author. He lives with his wife and his three teenagers in suburban Chicago. Visit him at [www.crashproofyourkids.com](http://www.crashproofyourkids.com).

chapter 1 The Crashproof Plan Essentials Fortune favors the prepared mind. Louis Pasteur Here's what happens in less than a second when a car traveling 55 mph hits a stationary object: &#149; 0.1 second: The front bumper and grille of the car collapse. If the car has an air bag, it has already inflated. &#149; 0.2 second: The hood crumples, rises, and strikes the windshield as the rear wheels lift off the ground. The fender wraps around the struck object. &#149; 0.3 second: The driver's legs jam under the dashboard and break, while the steering wheel heads for the driver's chest. &#149; 0.4 second: The car's wrecked front end comes to a stop, but the car's rear is still rushing forward, and the driver's body is still traveling at 55 mph. &#149; 0.5 second: If the car is not equipped with an air bag, the driver is smashed against the steering wheel, crushing arteries and lungs. &#149; 0.6 second: The driver's feet are ripped out of their shoes. The brake pedal snaps off, and the car's frame buckles in the middle. Without an air bag, the driver's head smashes into the windshield. &#149; 0.7 second: The passenger door rips loose, and the rear doors fly open. The front seat rams forward, pinning the driver further against the steering wheel shaft and dashboard, as the backseat breaks free and strikes the driver, who may already be dead. Sometimes we need a jolting reminder of why effective driver training is so important and how shockingly fast lives can change forever. We have a collective blind spot in North America when it comes to the importance of training teen drivers. The training requirements for driver licensure are much less comprehensive than for other, far less hazardous activities. Consider that in the state of Illinois, an apprentice plumber is required to put in a minimum of 1,500 to 1,600 hours of supervised training in the first year. To become a licensed journeyman plumber, someone will typically spend 6,400 hours of in-field training and 800 to 1,000 hours of classroom work over a four-year period. Yet, with the possible exception of a cardiac arrest when a customer sees the bill, plumbers don't frequently kill or injure themselves or anyone else while fixing leaky pipes. It's clear that many of our training and licensure requirements are out of whack when compared to the risk factors associated with them. Teen driver training requirements in the United States are also far less rigorous than in many other countries. In Germany, obtaining a driver's license is possible only after turning 18, completing 24 hours of class work, logging 20 hours of driving with a certified driving instructor, passing a rigorous test (which is failed by more than half the takers), and paying more than \$2,000.

Then you get a two-year probationary license. More rigorous training has proven to pay off, too. In Australia, road safety organizations recommend at least 120 hours of parental-supervised driving, and Australian crash rates are substantially lower than in the United States. Swedish research indicates that teens with an average of 118 hours of supervised driving had 35 percent fewer crashes after licensure than those with an average of 44 hours of supervised experience. Sweden and Great Britain, which require comprehensive driver training, both have auto fatality rates less than half that of the United States. Despite these facts, many parents assume that traditional driver education programs are sufficient and provide enough training to make a major impact on their teens' driving ability and future safety. They're dead wrong. With limited hours of classroom and behind-the-wheel time, only traffic regulations and the fundamentals of car control can be covered. We give our teens a handful of hours to learn traffic laws and drive with an instructor, and then we wonder why the injury and death rates are so high? In addition, many high school driver education programs have been eliminated or have suffered substantial reductions in funding. The subsequent expansion of for-profit driver education schools has been distressingly haphazard, with little consistency in training, curriculum, and methods among the thousands of programs in this country. Most programs have little time to focus on risk factors, defensive-driving skills, and accident avoidance -- the very things that help keep our kids alive as they become better drivers. The other factors and pressures that have such an impact on driving behavior -- social, parental, peer -- are simply outside the scope and influence of driver education teachers. It should be noted that many driver education teachers are skilled, caring individuals who do a job every day that most of us would need heavy sedation to do full-time. Their instruction is an essential first step in the learning process for teens. But it's only a first step. Far more time and effort are needed to develop safe, skillful drivers than is possible with the current level of resources dedicated to driver education programs. While increased governmental and school spending on teen driver education would undoubtedly help, the primary responsibility lies with us, as parents. They're our kids and our precious heritage. And you have been granted clear authority: no child under 18 in this country can obtain a learner's permit or a driver's license without a parent or legal guardian's written consent. The Crashproof Plan is part of the solution to increasing the effectiveness of teen driver training. It won't be a cakewalk if you do it right. You have years of ingrained driving habits, which may or may not be the best ones to impart to your teen. And, like many parents, you may have difficulty communicating with your teenager. (If you disagree with the last point, you are either exceptionally fortunate or perhaps slightly delusional.) Your teen is not jumping up and down with joy at the thought of enduring a series of lectures from parents about driving, accompanied by that god-awful

'70s and '80s music you listen to on the radio. Your son is pretty sure that within a couple of weeks, he will drive better than you do, and your daughter mostly wants you to give her the keys, let her social life blossom, and get the heck out of the way. Finally, your calendar is jammed. You don't have big blocks of time to be allocated, no matter how worthy the cause. Relax. You can do this. These are not insurmountable obstacles, and the Crashproof Plan is your secret weapon. You don't have to be an experienced driving instructor to make the Crashproof Plan work. All it takes is time and proven methods. This book will provide the methods and break them down into manageable exercises that you can fit into a hectic schedule. If you think that there's just too much on your plate to do this, remind yourself of how valuable the investment will be for the well-being of your child and your family. Of all the things that compete for our attention, why wouldn't this be at the top of the list? Consider for a moment all the time you already spend in service of your son or daughter. More than any other generation in history, we've added chauffeur to our parenting duties. We shuttle our kids back and forth to see friends; to take lessons in dance, piano, and Spanish; to attend games and practices for soccer, baseball, basketball, football, volleyball, softball, and tennis; and to parties, dances, meetings, and club functions. If we were paid chauffeur rates for all the running around we do for our kids, we'd all be retired and living in Fiji by now. But teens don't die at soccer games and ballet practices. Take advantage of the time you might spend driving them back and forth by using it as part of your supervised driving time. Have your teen do the driving with you to his or her activities and to your regular circuit of the grocery store, pharmacy, and dry cleaner. If you can find consistent days and times to set aside, you'll be much more likely to stick with the Crashproof Plan and make good progress. Sit down with your calendar and your teen's schedule, and plot out the time slots that will be the most available. Mark it on your calendar to reinforce the commitment. As competing events arise, treat the time you've set aside with the priority it deserves. The prospect of reducing some of this burden by having our teens drive themselves to places as soon as they get their licenses can be compelling. Weigh those benefits very carefully, because crashes are actually most likely to occur in these local situations. Teens are more likely to be under time pressure, carry other passengers, and have their guard down a little on familiar streets. Shift the driving burden only as they prove ready, and be especially careful about additional distractions or weather hazards. The purpose of the Crashproof Plan is to better the odds of teens surviving their driving, which too often ends up as a form of high-stakes gambling. Every time your teen gets behind the wheel, his or her hand of cards includes training, mood, car condition, weather, road hazards, and the behavior of other drivers. The foundation of the Crashproof Plan rests on solid data, helping you determine the biggest payoffs for your time and effort, as well as suggesting how to work most effectively with your

teenager. Some of the statistics leading to the creation of specific exercises support the conventional wisdom about teen drivers. Others may challenge your preconceptions and rearrange your priorities. For example, the facts concerning what actually causes the most fatal crashes among young teen drivers are noteworthy. National publicity and awareness efforts have focused on teen drinking and driving, and rightfully so, but the percentage of fatal accidents involving teens and high blood alcohol is much lower than that of those caused by driver error. According to 1998 data released by the Insurance Institute for High... --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Better than comparable books, and I've purchased and/or looked through most of them. It's useful to read this as you teach your teenager to drive, but it's even more useful to get your teenager to read it. I had my teen read one chapter before each driving outing as a condition for the lesson. Despite her best efforts, she picked up a lot of useful information. Good luck to your teen driver.

High school Drivers' Education courses are woefully inadequate to the serious task of training young, easily distractable people what to do in actual real-life road conditions. More teens are killed in car accidents due to simple driver error than due to drugs and alcohol combined. It's time for parents to step in and supplement their kids' education with much-needed skills. "Crash-proof your teens" will help you do that. Presented in a simple step-by-step method, this book will lead you through the difficult maze of helping your kids to be safe and fearless drivers. You may also come out of it a safer driver yourself. (My 17-year-old daughter was killed in a car crash caused by simple driver error. The driver was also killed, as well as another teen in their car and a 9-year-old in the car they crashed into. I wish that this book would have been part of that young driver's training. Maybe all four girls would still be alive.)

This book was probably very helpful when it was current but at this point, over 10 years later, it is outdated. I was also hoping for more illustrations.:(

Excellent book. It reminds you to teach kids the things that have become automatic to us as parents after decades of driving. I definitely have become more comfortable with my daughter driving after working through this book together.

A very informative book on understanding the importance of young people driving a vehicle.

I love how Timothy gets the parents involved and give them specific instructions to train their teens to be safer drivers. He took his kids lives seriously and did the work to prove it! He's amazing. Diana Woodward

Good read and very practical!

This is a must for new drivers or those learning. It is packed with a wealth of information. Highly recommend.

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