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Teen-Driver Monitoring — Apps, Car Features & Keeping It Fair

Apps, car features and keeping it fair An Extended Guide · No. 1927

An Extended Guide · No. 1927

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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1. The 60-Second Version If you only read one page, read this one. A new driver is the most precious cargo there is, out on wheels for the first time, and there are genuinely good tools to help keep them safer through those nervous early months. Some of these tools are built right into the car for free, with no subscription at all. Some live on their phone. Some plug into the car and quietly report back to you. But all of them, every single one, work best when you do one thing first: agree on them together, openly, out in the daylight. Used to gently coach a young driver rather than to secretly spy on them, these tools build better habits and more trust, not less. The real goal here is not to catch them doing something wrong — it is simply to bring them home safe every night and help them grow into a careful, confident driver you can rely on. Many cars have free, built-in teen-driver features already waiting. Phone apps can share location and quietly grade the driving. Plug-in trackers report speed, harsh braking and location. Agree on it together — openness is the thing that keeps it fair. Use it to coach, never to spy, and taper it off as trust grows. The most effective tools are often the free ones built into the car. WATCH OUT Set all of this up while parked, and set it up with your teen right there in the room. Monitoring done in secret damages trust far more than it ever protects.

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THE RIGHT SPIRIT

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2. Start With the Right Spirit How you do this matters as much as what you do. Before we touch a single gadget or app, let me say the most important thing in this whole guide, because it shapes everything that follows. These tools can either quietly build trust between you and your young driver, or they can quietly wreck it, and the entire difference lies in how you choose to use them. A young driver who knows the tools are there, and who helped agree to them in the first place, comes to treat them as a shared safety net you built together. A young driver who one day discovers they were tracked in secret learns two painful lessons at once: that you did not really trust them, and that you were willing to go behind their back. The first path builds a safer driver and a stronger relationship that lasts. The second does the exact opposite and can take years to repair. So the spirit comes first, always: this is a team effort to keep them safe, not a trap you are laying. GOOD TO KNOW The research is quite clear that teens drive more safely through those first risky months when a parent is openly and warmly involved. The openness itself is the active ingredient. THE TALK 3. The Conversation to Have First Agree on the rules together, out loud. The single most valuable step in all of this costs nothing and involves no technology at all: a calm, honest conversation before anyone drives off alone. Sit down together at the table and agree out loud on what the tools will actually do, what the rules of the road are going to be in your family, and what happens if a rule gets broken. Crucially, let your teen have a real say in it — it is genuinely remarkable how much more willingly a young person accepts limits that they themselves helped to set, rather than ones simply handed down. Write down a simple, short agreement together if that helps make it feel real: buckle up every time, no phone in your hand while driving, be home by an agreed hour, and always call if the plans change. When the rules are shared and clear and mutual, the technology just quietly backs up a promise you have both already made to each other. That shared promise is what makes the whole thing feel fair instead of sneaky. Agree on the rules together before the very first solo drive. Let your teen help set the limits — they'll accept them far more readily.

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TIP

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Spell out plainly what happens if a rule gets broken.

Write down a short, shared agreement if it helps make it real. Frame it as 'this helps me worry less, so you get more freedom,' not 'this is how I'll catch you.' It's the same tool, but a completely different feeling for your teen. CAR FEATURES 4. Features Built Into the Car Often the best place to start — and free. Before you go out and buy anything at all, check carefully what your car can already do on its own, because the answer often surprises people. Many carmakers build teen-driver features right into the vehicle, at no extra cost whatsoever and with no monthly subscription to sign up for. These built-in features are often genuinely the best tools available precisely because they work through the car itself — they can do clever things a phone app simply cannot, like muting the stereo until the seatbelts are fastened, or placing a firm cap on the top speed. The exact features vary quite a bit depending on the make and the model year, but if your car is from roughly the last decade, there is a very good chance something useful is sitting there waiting quietly in the settings menu. Let me walk through the big three carmakers' versions so you know exactly what to look for in your own car. GOOD TO KNOW Built-in car features almost always cost nothing and need no monthly fee at all. Always check what your car already offers before you pay for any app or any tracker.

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GM TEEN DRIVER

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5. GM's Teen Driver Feature A report card from the car itself. A great many GM vehicles — that covers Chevrolet, GMC, Buick and Cadillac — include a thoughtful feature called Teen Driver, and it is well worth setting up if you have one. You set it up with a PIN that you tie to your teen's own key or key fob. Then, whenever they drive the car, it quietly mutes the audio entirely until the front seatbelts are buckled, it warns them with a chime if they push past a speed you have chosen, and it keeps certain important safety features switched permanently on so they cannot be turned off. But best of all, it generates a report card: a plain summary of how far they drove, their top speed on that trip, and any hard braking or warnings that came up along the way. You sit down and review it together afterward, calmly. It is a genuinely thoughtful, well-designed built-in system, and if you happen to drive a GM vehicle, it is well worth setting up before you spend a penny on anything else. Mutes the audio completely until the front seatbelts are buckled. Warns the driver with a chime if they exceed a speed you set. Keeps key safety features switched permanently on. Produces a report card to sit down and review together afterward. FORD MYKEY 6. Ford's MyKey Feature Caps speed and volume, no subscription. Ford and Lincoln vehicles come with a feature called MyKey, and it happens to be one of my personal favorites of the whole bunch, because it is simple, fully built-in, and completely free with no subscription hanging over it. Here is how it works: you program one of the car's keys as a MyKey, and then whenever the car is started using that particular key, you can cap the top speed the car will go, limit just how loud the stereo is allowed to get, mute the audio entirely until the seatbelts are buckled up, and keep gentle but persistent reminders switched on. The whole thing works entirely through the car itself, which means there is nothing on a phone that can be quietly disabled, and nothing at all to pay for month after month. For a great many families, MyKey all by itself covers the three biggest risks a new driver faces — going too fast, being distracted by a blasting radio, and driving unbuckled.

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TIP

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Capping the stereo volume with MyKey quietly removes one of the single biggest distractions for a new driver — a radio turned up loud drowns out sirens, horns and everything else. HYUNDAI KIA 7. Hyundai, Kia and Others Similar tools under different names. GM and Ford are certainly not the only ones doing this well. Hyundai and Kia both offer very similar young-driver tools through their connected-car phone apps, letting you set speed alerts, curfew alerts, and boundary alerts, and letting you see where the car has actually been. Plenty of other makers have their own versions too, filed under various brand names that change over the years. But the underlying pattern is reassuringly the same everywhere you look: speed warnings, seatbelt nagging, and some way to review the driving together afterward. Because the exact names and the finer details differ quite a bit from one brand and model year to the next, the honest answer is that you need to look up your own specific make and year — or simply let me do that bit of digging for you. The real point to take away here is that whatever you happen to drive, it is genuinely worth checking before you assume you have to go out and buy something. PHONE LOCATION 8. Phone Apps — Location Sharing Knowing they arrived safe. The most common and gentlest phone tool of all is simple location sharing — just being able to see on a map that your teen has made it safely to school, to practice, or back home again. On an iPhone, Apple's Find My feature lets family members share their location with one another, right there in the phone. On an Android phone, Google's own location sharing does exactly the same job. Both of these are completely free and already built into the phone, with nothing to buy. For a nervous parent lying awake, simply seeing that little dot arrive safely at its destination is an enormous, immediate comfort, and it is far gentler and less intrusive than full-blown driving surveillance. The key here, once again, is that your teen knows full well it is switched on, and ideally shares your location right back with you, so that the whole arrangement feels mutual and fair rather than one-sided watching from above.

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GOOD TO KNOW

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Apple's Find My shares location among family members on iPhones.

Google's location sharing does exactly the same on Android phones. Both are completely free and already built right into the phone. Share your own location back too, so it feels mutual, not one-sided. Location sharing shows you where the phone is, not how the car is actually being driven. For driving behavior itself, you need a driving-focused app or a built-in car feature. LIFE360 9. Life360 — Location Plus Driving A family map with driving reports. Life360 is a popular app made specifically for families, and it is worth knowing about. Everyone in the family installs it on their phone, and it then shows each member on a shared family map that everyone can see. The free version handles the location sharing just fine, and it can also produce driving reports — things like top speed, hard braking, and phone use while driving — with the more detailed reports and the longer history reserved for a paid plan. Because the whole family is on it together, parents very much included, it tends to feel more like a shared family tool than a one-way spy camera pointed at the kids, which is exactly the right spirit to aim for. A lot of families like it precisely because it rolls location and driving behavior together into one place. But as always, the advice holds: set it up together, out in the open, and be honest that it is running. WATCH OUT An app like Life360 can breed real resentment if a teen feels watched every single minute. Lean on arrival alerts and calm driving coaching, not constant minute-by-minute checking.

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APPLE DRIVING

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10. Apple's Tools for iPhone Families Find My, a Driving Focus and Screen Time. If your whole family happens to be on iPhones, Apple has several genuinely helpful pieces that all cost you nothing extra. Find My handles the location sharing, as we just covered. A Driving Focus can automatically silence incoming texts and calls while the car is moving and send a polite auto-reply letting friends know the person is driving — and this cuts out the single biggest danger of all, the phone buzzing and lighting up for attention right there behind the wheel. And Screen Time lets a parent sensibly manage what the phone can do and when. Used all together, and set up openly with your teen watching, these tools build the single best habit a young driver can ever have: simply leaving the phone alone while driving. You do not need to buy a single thing if you are already an iPhone family — it is all sitting right there, built in and waiting for you to switch it on. Find My, for the simple comfort of seeing they arrived safe. A Driving Focus that silences texts the moment the car starts moving. An auto-reply so their friends know they're driving and will reply later. Screen Time, to manage the phone sensibly and set healthy limits. TIP The Driving Focus may well be the single most valuable setting of them all — it quietly removes the buzzing, glowing phone that causes so many new-driver crashes.

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OBD TRACKERS

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11. Plug-In Trackers A small device that reports from the car. If you want detailed, reliable information coming straight from the car itself rather than depending on a phone, there are small trackers that plug right into the diagnostic port under the dash — the very same port we use for maintenance apps, usually tucked up near the driver's left knee. Devices like Bouncie or Zubie plug in there and, for a monthly subscription fee, report back the car's location, its speed, and specific driving events like hard braking, rapid acceleration, or sudden stops. Because they read the car directly and live inside it, they do not depend on your teen remembering to keep a phone app running, and they cannot simply be swiped closed. The honest trade-off is that ongoing monthly subscription cost, which adds up over a year. For a family that genuinely wants thorough, dependable reporting on the actual driving, a plug-in tracker is the most complete and hardest-to-dodge option on the table. Plugs into the diagnostic port tucked under the dash. Reports location, speed, and harsh driving events back to you. Works through the car, not a phone app your teen could simply close. Costs an ongoing monthly subscription fee that adds up over time. COMPARE 12. The Three Kinds, Side by Side A quick way to see your choices. It really helps to see all three families of tools laid out together so you can weigh them clearly. Built-in car features are free and surprisingly powerful, but they are limited strictly to whatever your particular car happens to offer. Phone apps are flexible and often free, but they depend on the phone being present and charged, and a determined teen can sometimes work around them. Plug-in trackers are thorough and genuinely hard to dodge, but they carry that monthly fee. In practice, a great many families end up happily combining a free built-in car feature with a phone's driving mode — and that simple pairing covers speed, seatbelts, and the dangerously buzzing phone all at once without costing a single dollar per month. My advice is always to start simple with the free tools, live with them a while, see honestly whether that is enough, and only add more if you genuinely find you need it. Kind of tool The honest trade-off

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GEOFENCING

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Built-in car feature Free and strong, but limited to your car Phone app Flexible, often free, can be worked around Plug-in tracker Thorough and hard to dodge, costs monthly 13. Geofencing and Curfew Alerts A gentle heads-up, not a leash. Several of these apps and trackers offer something called geofencing, which is a wonderfully simple idea wrapped up in a slightly fancy, technical-sounding name. You draw an invisible boundary on a map — say around your home, around the school, or around the edge of town — and the app sends you a quiet little alert whenever the car crosses that line. You can also set up a curfew alert that lets you know if the car is being driven after an agreed-upon hour, or a speed alert that pings you gently if they push too fast. Used lightly and wisely, these are genuinely reassuring: you do not have to sit staring at a map all evening, because the app only ever speaks up if something falls outside the plan you both agreed on. Used heavily and obsessively, though, they can quickly start to feel like a leash around the neck, so set only the few that truly match the rules you actually agreed on together. TIP Set just a geofence or two that match a real agreement, not a dozen that track every single move. A few meaningful alerts beat constant pings you'll soon start ignoring anyway.

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SPEED ALERTS

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14. Speed Alerts That Actually Help Speed is the number-one risk. If you are going to set up just one single kind of alert and nothing else, make it a speed alert, because excessive speed is far and away the single biggest danger for a new driver. Both the built-in car features and the plug-in trackers can warn you after the fact — and, more importantly, warn the driver in the very moment — when speeding happens. That in-the-moment warning is the truly valuable part: a chime, a flash, or a gentle message that reminds the young driver to ease off the gas right then and there, before anything goes wrong, teaches the habit far better than any lecture delivered hours later at the dinner table ever could. Pair that live warning with a calm, no-drama review of the week together, and speeding tends to quietly fade away as the young driver genuinely internalizes the limit and makes it their own. Coaching in the moment beats scolding after the fact every single time, without exception. COACH NOT SPY 15. Coaching, Not Catching The whole point, in one chapter. Here, truly, is the beating heart of this whole subject, so read it twice. When a report comes back showing a hard braking event or a moment of speeding, resist with all your might the natural urge to pounce and accuse. Instead, ask about it calmly and with genuine curiosity: 'I saw there was a hard stop over on Route 59 yesterday — what happened there?' Very often there turns out to be a perfectly good reason, like someone cutting them off in traffic, and now, just like that, the two of you are having a real conversation about defensive driving. And even on the days when they genuinely did make a mistake, a calm, warm conversation teaches far, far more than an angry, accusing one ever will. The data is only ever a starting point for coaching, never evidence to be used against them in a trial. Young drivers who feel coached steadily get better; young drivers who feel hunted just get sneaky and clever about avoiding you. Use every single report as a quiet chance to teach, and the whole arrangement works exactly the way it is meant to. WATCH OUT If every report turns into a fight, your teen will start leaving the phone at home or quietly finding ways around the car feature. Calm coaching is what keeps the tools working at all.

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PRAISE

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16. Remember to Notice the Good Catch them driving well, too. It is terribly easy, with all these reports and alerts coming in, to fall into only ever noticing the mistakes — the speeding, the hard stops, the late arrival. But a young driver who only ever hears from you when something went wrong will quietly come to dread the whole thing, and resentment grows in that soil. So make a real, deliberate point of noticing the good too. When a week's report comes back clean, say so and mean it. When they call ahead to say plans changed, thank them warmly for keeping their word. When they drive the whole family somewhere safely and smoothly, tell them you felt comfortable with them at the wheel. This kind of honest praise does more to build a careful, confident driver than any number of warnings, because it shows them that the tools are there to celebrate their growing competence, not merely to catch their slips. Balance the coaching with genuine recognition, and watch their confidence steadily grow. TAPER OFF 17. Tapering Off as Trust Grows The goal is to need the tools less. The very best teen-driver plan has an ending quietly built right into it from the start. As your young driver steadily proves themselves month after month — clean reports, honest conversations, rules respected without being nagged — the natural and well-earned reward is to ease back on the monitoring, step by step. Maybe you drop the detailed driving reports but keep the gentle arrival alerts going a while longer. Maybe you remove the speed cap once they have truly earned your confidence. Telling your teen right up front, at the very beginning, that the monitoring will relax and fall away as trust grows gives them something concrete and worthwhile to work toward, and it signals clearly that you see all of this as temporary scaffolding around a new skill, not a permanent cage to live in. The real destination here is a confident, safe, independent driver who no longer needs any watching at all — and a relationship that came through the learner years stronger than it went in. Ease back steadily as clean reports and honest talks add up. Keep the gentle arrival alerts, but drop the detailed tracking. Tell them right up front that the tools will relax as trust grows. Aim always for a confident, independent driver who needs no watching.

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PRIVACY

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18. A Word on Older Teens and Privacy Balance safety with growing independence. A sixteen-year-old with a brand-new license and an eighteen-year-old packing up for college are two very different situations, and the tools you use ought to reflect that honestly. Heavier monitoring makes real sense in those first genuinely risky months, when the crash rates for new drivers are at their very highest and the stakes could not be clearer. But as a teen steadily grows into a young adult, constant tracking starts to quietly work against the very independence and judgment they desperately need to be building for themselves. There is no single right line that works for every family, but the wise thing is to keep honestly asking yourself whether a particular tool is still earning its place and doing real good, or whether it has simply hardened into a habit of control. The same openness applies here too: a young adult deserves to know plainly what is still on and to have a real say in winding it down. Safety and respect are not opposites at all — the whole trick is thoughtfully adjusting the balance between them as they grow up. SETUP 19. Setting It Up the Right Way A simple, fair order of steps. When you are finally ready to set things up, do it in an order that keeps everything fair and working smoothly from the start. Have the honest conversation first and agree together on the rules before anything is switched on. Then check carefully what your car already offers, since that is so often free and genuinely strong. Add one phone tool if you want location sharing or a driving mode. And only reach for a paid plug-in tracker if you honestly need that level of thorough reporting. Crucially, set it all up together, with your teen sitting right there watching the whole thing, so that there are simply no secrets and nothing hidden. Then settle comfortably into a steady rhythm of calm, brief weekly reviews together. Done this way, in this order, the setup process itself quietly becomes part of the trust-building, rather than something done behind a closed door that could blow up later.

1. Have the agreement conversation first, before anything is switched on.
2. Turn on your car's built-in teen features — they're usually free.
3. Add a phone driving mode or location sharing if you want it.
4. Only add a paid tracker if you truly need the detailed reports.

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COST

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1 Set it all up together, then review it calmly each week. 20. What It All Costs You can do a lot for nothing. The good news for your wallet is that the most effective tools of all are very often completely free. Your car's own built-in teen features cost nothing beyond the car you already own. Apple's and Google's location and driving tools cost nothing. A free app like the basic version of Life360, or a free reminder-style app, costs nothing. You really only start paying actual money when you want the detailed, dodge-proof reporting of a plug-in tracker, which runs a modest monthly fee, or when you step up to the premium paid tier of a family app for the longer history and extra features. My honest advice, the same one I would give my own family, is to build your plan from the free tools first — a good built-in car feature paired with a phone driving mode genuinely covers the biggest risks — and pay for a tracker only if your particular situation truly calls for that extra layer. Do not pay for peace of mind you can get for free. Tool What it costs Built-in car features Free, with no subscription at all Phone location and driving modes Free A family app's premium tier A monthly fee A plug-in OBD tracker An ongoing monthly subscription

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MISTAKES

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21. Common Mistakes to Avoid A few pitfalls that undo the good. A few common missteps can quietly turn a genuinely good idea sour, so they are well worth naming plainly so you can sidestep them. Setting up the monitoring in secret is the big one by far — it teaches distrust the very day it is inevitably discovered, and it will be. Using the data only ever to punish and never once to praise is another real trap; be sure to notice and mention the good driving too. Setting up so many alerts that you quietly stop reading any of them is a subtle pitfall that defeats the whole purpose. And never letting go, never easing off even as the teen clearly earns your trust, misses the entire point of the exercise. Steer clear of these four, hold firmly to the spirit of coaching rather than catching, and the tools will do exactly what you hoped all along: help a young driver come home safe each night and grow steadily into a good and careful one. Don't ever set it up in secret — the openness is the whole point. Praise the good driving, not only the mistakes and the slips. Don't drown in so many alerts that you end up ignoring them all. Don't forget to let go and ease off as trust is honestly earned. OHIO NOTE 22. A Note for Ohio Families Our roads and weather add to the lesson. Here in Ohio, a brand-new driver faces challenges that these tools can genuinely help with but can never fully replace, and it is worth being honest about that. Winter brings snow, ice, slush and sudden whiteout conditions that demand slow, gentle, patient driving that has to be learned the hard way. And our rural township roads come with their own hazards: deer bounding out at dusk, blind hills, sharp unmarked curves, and long stretches with no streetlights at all. No app on earth can teach a young driver how a car actually feels when it starts to slide on black ice — only careful, patient practice with you sitting calmly in the passenger seat can do that. So let the technology back up and reinforce your coaching, but please do put in the real hours riding along beside them, especially through that first full winter. The combination of your patient, steady guidance and a few sensible tools is exactly what turns a nervous beginner into a driver you can genuinely trust out on a dark county road in the middle of January.

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GRADUATED LICENSE

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23. Working With the Learner Stages The law already builds in good habits. Ohio, like most states, brings new drivers along in stages rather than handing over full freedom all at once, and these stages are a gift worth leaning on. A young driver starts with a learner's permit, driving only with a licensed adult beside them, then moves to a probationary license with real limits on things like late-night driving and how many young passengers they can carry. These rules exist because the data is clear about when and how new drivers get into trouble — at night, with a carful of friends, in the first months. Your monitoring tools work best when they simply back up these sensible legal stages rather than fighting them. Set your curfew alerts and passenger expectations to match the law, and you are reinforcing good habits the state already decided on. Check your own state's current rules, since the details and ages can vary, and let the technology quietly support them. GOOD TO KNOW The staged licensing rules exist because new drivers get into the most trouble at night and with a carful of friends. Set your alerts to match the law and you reinforce habits that genuinely save lives. NIGHT & PASSENGERS 24. Night Driving and a Carful of Friends The two biggest early dangers. If you focus your coaching energy on just two things in the early months, make them night driving and passengers, because together they account for a huge share of new-driver crashes. Driving in the dark is simply harder — less is visible, judging speed and distance is trickier, and tiredness creeps in. And a car full of chattering friends is a storm of distraction for someone whose driving is not yet automatic. This is exactly why the licensing stages limit both. Your tools can help: a curfew alert lets you know about late driving, and an honest conversation about not stuffing the car with friends matters more than any gadget. Practice night driving together, deliberately, with you in the passenger seat, on quiet roads before busy ones. These two habits, learned early and well, do more for your young driver's safety than almost anything else you can do. Night driving is genuinely harder — practice it together, deliberately.

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PHONE HABIT

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A carful of friends is a storm of distraction for a new driver.

A curfew alert quietly flags late-night driving. These two risks account for a huge share of early crashes. 25. The Phone-Free Driving Habit The hardest habit, and the most important. Of every single habit you can help a young driver build, leaving the phone alone while driving is the most important and, honestly, the hardest, because the pull of a buzzing phone is strong for all of us. A text that pulls the eyes down for even a couple of seconds at highway speed means traveling the length of a football field essentially blind. The tools genuinely help here: a Driving Focus on an iPhone silences texts and calls automatically the moment the car moves, and Life360 and the trackers can flag phone use while driving. But the deepest lesson is one you teach by example and by rule — phone goes in the glovebox or the bag, out of reach, before the car starts. Make it a firm, non-negotiable family rule, model it yourself without exception, and back it with the automatic silencing tools. This one habit, more than any other, is the one that saves lives. WATCH OUT A glance at a text for two seconds at highway speed means traveling the length of a football field essentially blind. The phone belongs out of reach before the car starts moving. LEAD BY EXAMPLE 26. Your Own Driving Is the Real Lesson They learned to drive by watching you. Here is a truth that no app can replace, and it is worth sitting with for a moment. Your young driver spent sixteen or so years in the back seat watching exactly how you drive — whether you glanced at your phone at red lights, whether you rolled through stop signs, whether you sped when you were running late, whether you buckled up every single time without thinking. They absorbed all of it, and it shaped the driver they are becoming far more deeply than any rule you set now. So the most powerful coaching tool you own is not a tracker or an app; it is the example you set every time you are behind the wheel with them watching. If you ask them to put the phone away, put yours away too. If you want them calm and unhurried, drive that way yourself. Children, even grown ones, do as we do far more than as we say — and in driving, that goes double.

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THE WEEKLY REVIEW

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27. The Weekly Review, Done Well A short, calm ritual beats a pop quiz. The monitoring tools produce information, but information only helps if you turn it into a short, calm, regular conversation — and the shape of that conversation matters a great deal. Pick a quiet, low-stakes time, maybe Sunday evening, and keep it brief and matter-of-fact, not a tense interrogation sprung on them after a long day. Glance at the week together, note what went well first, then ask curiously about anything that stood out, giving them room to explain. Keep it short; a ten-minute check-in they do not dread beats a tense hour they learn to avoid. Over the weeks, this gentle ritual becomes a normal part of the routine rather than a confrontation, and it keeps the lines of conversation about driving open and easy. The goal is that your young driver comes to see the review as coaching from someone in their corner, not a weekly trial where they stand accused. Pick a quiet, low-stakes time, not the end of a long day. Start by noting what went well, before anything else. Ask curiously about what stood out; give them room to explain. Keep it short — ten calm minutes beats a tense hour. AFTER A FENDER-BENDER 28. What to Do After a Little Crash Prepare them for the moment it happens. Sooner or later, many young drivers have a small scrape or fender-bender, and how you have prepared them for that moment matters enormously. Talk through it ahead of time, calmly, so they are not panicking and alone when it happens. The basics: stop safely, turn on the hazard lights, check that everyone is alright, and call you and then the police if needed. Exchange names, numbers and insurance information with the other driver, and take photos of everything with the phone — the damage, the plates, the scene. Teach them, above all, never to flee and never to admit fault on the spot, just to gather information and call for help. And make sure they know that your first concern will always be that they are safe, not the car. A young driver who knows you will be calm and supportive, not furious, is far more likely to call you right away — which is exactly what you want.

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TIP

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Tell your young driver plainly that if they ever crash, your first worry is them, not the car.

That promise is what makes them call you right away instead of trying to hide it. INSURANCE 29. A Word on Insurance and Teens Safe habits can lower the bill. Adding a teenager to your car insurance is, there is no gentle way to put it, expensive — young drivers are statistically the riskiest on the road, and the premiums reflect that hard truth. But there is good news tucked inside the tools we have been discussing. Many insurers offer real discounts for good grades, for completing a driver-education course, and for enrolling in a safe-driving program that uses an app or a plug-in device to track careful driving. In other words, the very same kind of monitoring that keeps your teen safer can, with the right insurer, also trim the bill. It is worth asking your agent directly what discounts they offer and whether their safe-driver program fits your family. Just be sure your teen knows if an insurer's tracking app is running too, keeping with the same spirit of openness. Safe driving and a lighter insurance bill tend to go hand in hand, which is a nice alignment of interests. WINTER PRACTICE 30. Practicing for Ohio Winters Snow and ice must be learned, not read about. No app, no tracker, and no report card can teach a young driver what a car actually feels like when the back end starts to slide on black ice — that can only be learned, carefully and patiently, with you beside them. So make deliberate winter practice part of the plan. On the first good snow, find an empty, safe parking lot and let them feel, at low speed, how the car brakes and turns on a slick surface, how much farther it takes to stop, how gently everything must be done. Teach them to slow down early, leave extra room, and avoid sudden moves. Our Ohio winters are not optional, and a young driver who has practiced in the snow with a calm parent is far safer than one meeting their first whiteout alone on a county road. The monitoring tools keep an eye on the numbers, but this hands-on winter coaching is where real, deep safety is built.

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TIP

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On the first good snow, take your young driver to an empty parking lot and let them feel, at low speed, how the car slides and stops. That safe practice is worth more than any report. THE LONG VIEW 31. Raising a Driver, Not Just Watching One The goal is the person, not the data. It is worth stepping back, every so often, to remember what all of this is really for. The reports, the alerts, the speed caps and the arrival pings are not the point in themselves — they are simply tools in service of a much bigger goal: helping a young person become a thoughtful, careful, confident driver who will be safe on the road long after you have stopped watching the data. The best thing you can build in these learner years is not a perfect record of every trip, but a young driver who has genuinely internalized good judgment, who slows down because they understand why, who leaves the phone alone because it has become second nature, not because an app made them. The technology is scaffolding around a skill that is still being built. The day it comes down and your driver carries those habits entirely on their own is the day it all worked. Keep that long view in mind, and every weekly review and every gentle correction finds its proper place. GOOD TO KNOW The goal was never a perfect record of every trip. It was a young driver who carries good judgment on their own, long after the tools come down. Keep that long view in mind.

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GET HELP

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32. When to Call Bill I'll set up the tools so you can focus on the coaching. Setting up a car's built-in teen-driver feature, a phone's driving mode, location sharing between family members, or a plug-in tracker — and then getting it all working together sensibly and fairly — is exactly the kind of thing I am genuinely glad to help with. You truly do not have to wrestle alone with all the confusing menus and buried settings. I can come right to your home, sit down together with you and your young driver at the table, and set up a sensible, open, fair plan that fits your particular family and your particular car. With more than thirty years of patiently doing this kind of work, I will keep it plain, calm, and entirely free of judgment, and I will help you set it all up firmly in the spirit of coaching rather than spying. Give me a call at (330) 200-8042 and Sophie will find a time that suits you. I serve families all over Portage County, and every bit of my work comes with a friendly guarantee — if it is not right, we simply make it right, no fuss at all. CHEAT SHEET Everyday Cheat Sheet Keep this page handy. It points you straight to what to do for each task. I want to... Do this My car is a GM Try the built-in Teen Driver report card My car is a Ford Set up MyKey — no subscription I want location and driving reports Life360 or Find My I want harsh-braking and speed alerts An OBD tracker like Bouncie I want an alert if they leave an area Set up a geofence I want it to feel fair Agree on it together, out loud My teen is gaining trust Taper the monitoring back I'm not sure where to start Start with the free car feature Get help Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

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HOW I CAN HELP

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Your Visit — and My Promise In-home visit — $99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included. Remote Support — $49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the $49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that $49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members ($39/mo). GOOD TO KNOW My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full $99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated. Call or text (330) 200-8042 · Book a visit: billshometech.com/book · bill@billshometech.com This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

Setting it up fairly

The order that keeps trust.

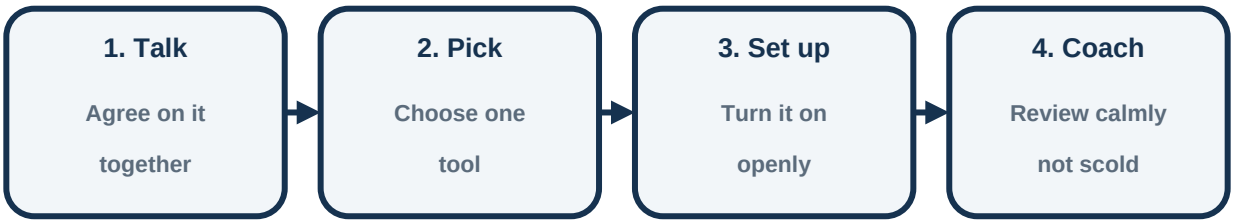

Illustration — a schematic. The order is a suggestion; do one box at a time.

A schematic of the plan — company steps vary; the order does not have to.

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AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

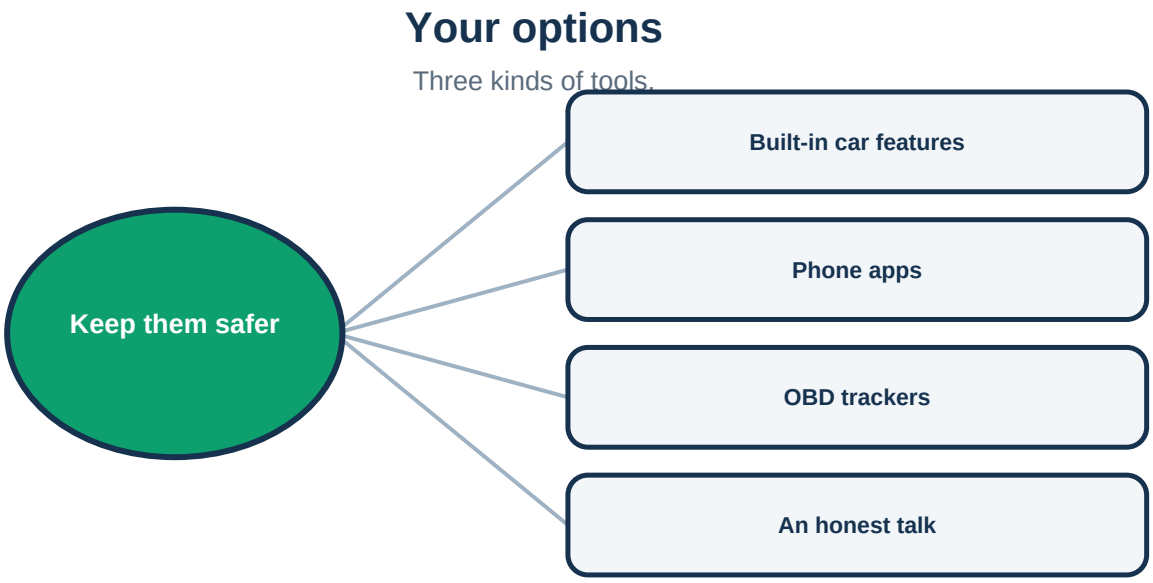

Illustration — a schematic. Set-up screens differ; each takes only a few minutes.

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.

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Remote Support — $49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the $49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that $49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members ($39/mo).

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full $99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

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