

Information for parents

Street Smart High

Help your child to be Street Smart

The facts:

On average 123 drivers or riders under the age of 25 were killed or seriously injured on South Australian roads each year between 2019 and 2023. Learner drivers have few crashes because they are always under supervision. But, once they have passed their test and can drive unsupervised, their chances of crashing increase dramatically.

- The young driver crash rate increases nearly 14-fold from the three months prior to obtaining P plates to the three months after obtaining P plates
- 84% of driver and rider fatalities under the age of 25 were male, and 75% of young drivers or riders were responsible for the fatal crash they were involved in ¹
- Between 2019 and 2023, 18 was the most common age to be seriously injured or killed in a crash in South Australia
- Between 2019 and 2023, 653 18-year-olds were injured or killed in a crash compared to 375 48-year-olds.

Why?

Lack of experience

As new drivers gain more driving experience their crash rate begins to fall.

Attitude

Young drivers, especially men, tend to be overconfident and are more likely to drive in risky ways: too fast, too close to the vehicle in front and dangerous overtaking. Young drivers consistently rate their own performance as above average and are more likely to regard good driving as the ability to master the controls of the car at higher speeds.

Hazard perception

Young drivers often have excellent vehicle control skills and fast reactions. But they are poor at identifying potential hazards and assessing risk and tend to overestimate their ability to avoid hazards and crashes. It takes new drivers up to two seconds longer to react to hazardous situations than more experienced drivers.

Peer pressure

Young drivers, especially men, who carry friends are more likely to have a crash.

So, what can I do?

The role of parents cannot be underestimated in our efforts to reduce the number of lives lost on our roads. Parents are key influencers in the development of safe driver beliefs, attitudes, and actions. So, what can you do to help your child be a safer, smarter driver?

- If your child is driving unsafely, talk to them about your concerns and why it's important to take road safety seriously.
- When your child begins to drive unsupervised, set boundaries so that they are clear as to what your expectations are.
- Encourage them to drive safely and to speak up if they feel their friends are driving unsafely.
- Help learners to find their own way instead of teaching through 'do as I say'; it will help them learn how to think for themselves instead of just respond to instructions.
- Drive in P-plate situations while still on L-plates to help prepare young drivers for the responsibilities and decisions they will face as a solo driver.
- Have lots of variety during practice – different roads, times of day, weather conditions, and vehicles.
- Let the learner drive the safest car in the household and encourage them to buy the safest car they can afford.

¹ CASR's 2008 study "The crash experience of newly licensed young drivers in South Australia" – https://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/2440/49075/1/hdl_49075.pdf#%20