

**The following articles have appeared in the AHS PTSA Newsletters. They have been contributed by two professionals; John Dusch is from the Motor Vehicle Administration and Edwin Ferris is a nationally recognized driving instructor.**

**Dec. 2007/Jan. 2008 PTSA Newsletter**

**Driver Education for Parents  
J. Dusch and E. Ferris**

High school — when kids and their parents often go in different directions! Different interests, different attitudes, different tastes. Parents and kids tend to feel much the same about one thing, though. They both lie awake at night, anxiously waiting for the day when the first driver's license is put into that young hand. The new driver wants the freedom and mobility, and the parent, to paraphrase an aviation phrase, wants the new driver's number of arrivals to equal their number of departures.

Having spent several years immersed in the licensing process for new drivers and mentally wrestling with the difficulties of creating safe drivers, we have offered to the PTSA a series of articles that is intended to share with the parents of the new and want to be new drivers some thoughts on the process, and how to gain an edge in the struggle to keep the kids from making some terrible mistakes. These messages will address the graduated licensing process, what the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration calls the Rookie Driver Program; the ins and outs of driver education, and ideas meant to improve the post-licensing safety of the new drivers. All statements and facts will be based on official publications, but all opinions will be strictly our own and not meant to represent those of any other person or organization.

The Rookie Driver Program requires that the new driver - anyone who has never been licensed before - complete three licensing stages: learner's permit, provisional license and full license. These steps are clearly described on the [Rookiedriver.com](http://Rookiedriver.com) web page and in the Maryland Driver's Handbook (licensing volume) and in the MVA brochure "Everything You Need to Know About Maryland's Graduated Licensing System". A learner's permit may be obtained when the applicant is at least 15 years and nine months old. Anyone may take driver education when at least 15 years and no months old (more on that later).

My first bit of advice to you is to start your child's education as a driver as soon as possible, no later than early teens and earlier if they show an interest. Do not put the child behind the wheel, but every time you drive, turn off the iPods, put away the DVDs, hang up the cell phones and have the kid watch the real world as it passes by. Talk to him/her about driving. Explain the route that you selected, how to start the car and what all of those symbols mean (it's all in your owner's manual), why you are taking a particular route, why you checked the oil and need to have it changed in the next hundred miles or so, why you are driving in a particular lane, why actions

by one or more other drivers are dangerous, etc., etc., etc. Involve your teen in the driving process... doing so might also make you a better driver.

Next time: An education about driver education.

## **Feb. 2008 AHS PTSA Newsletter**

### **An Education about Driver Education - 101**

**J. Dusch and E. Ferris**

There are several things that a new driver must complete before getting that coveted provisional license. Get a learner's permit, successfully complete a driver education course, complete a minimum of 60 hours of supervised driving, fill out the Maryland Skills Log and Practice Guide, and one thing that they must not do: commit a moving violation. Last month, I stated that anyone may take driver education when they are 15 years old, but must be 15 years and 9 months old to get a learner's permit. It is now time for you to do another thing that will decrease your new driver's risk: delay. We recommend that you do not let the student take driver education before he has his learner's permit and do not get the learner's permit until he or her is ready to drive. That means mentally mature as well as chronologically eligible. Driving requires mental skill much more than physical skill. Delay equals more maturity; not much, but more than none.

We recommend that the new driver obtain the learner's permit before taking driver education. If you look inside the front cover of the Maryland Skills Log and Practice Guide you will see the MVA recommended sequence and a statement that "Driver education is intended to provide the basic skill and knowledge required by a new driver to safely continue his or her training with a supervising driver".

It is the driver education instructor's job to teach the new driver how to correctly and safely maneuver the car. It is up to the supervising drivers to teach the new driver how to do it well. The skills that are introduced in driver education should be practiced as much as possible, as soon as possible, and that can only be done when the teen has a learner's permit.

So your child has a shiny new learner's permit and is ready to take driver education. How do you select a driving school? Driver education is not inexpensive and it is quite time consuming. There are a lot of reasons for selecting a driving school: convenience, cost, schedule, quality. Our advice is to talk to people who have been there: friends, neighbors, relatives, or whoever has recently had an experience with a driving school. We also suggest that you visit the driving school office, attend a class, take a good look at their cars, get a sense of the quality and professionalism.

Regardless of the driving school chosen, at the end of the course the students almost all get a coveted Driver Education Completion Certificate, that magic piece of paper that they take to the MVA when they go for their driving skills test. Will your teen have learned anything or just received the piece of paper?

Next: An Education about Driver Education - 102