
THE ALLSTATE FOUNDATION TEEN DRIVING PROGRAM

Tips for Working with Teens

- Clearly lay out rules and expectations. Don't be overly restrictive, but do let teens know what is expected and what won't be allowed.
- Keep it short and simple. Teens are easily distracted. Messages should be concise and to the point.
- Clear, frequent and open communication is key. And always follow up. What seems obvious to you might not be clear to them, as teens think differently than adults and have differing priorities.
- Don't lecture – have a conversation. Teens need to feel that adults are receptive to their ideas and opinions.
- Don't use power-assertive statements to force a point. Teens can reason and have essentially the same logical skills as adults.
- Don't try to talk like a teen if you're an adult. Be conscious of verbiage that might be over their heads, but don't try to talk in "teen speak" – they will see right through it.
- Never ask or expect teens do anything they are not comfortable doing.
- Make requests, not demands. Remember, teens are busy and involved in a lot of extracurricular activities – be mindful of their time.
- Don't criticize or ridicule their viewpoints. Teens are forging their identities and want to be respected as adults.
- Express confidence that the teen will make the right decision or handle the situation appropriately.
- Teens need to feel and know they have your support but should not be overprotected.
- Keep in mind that teens still need large doses of encouragement, praise and reassurance.
- Teens won't always respond to you immediately. They are busy with school, work and extracurricular activities. Allow them time to respond, but do follow-up with a friendly reminder if they miss a deadline.