



DRIVING CONTRACT

This is not about driving.

That might surprise you, but it is the truth. This experience with your teenager signifies way more than just driving. There is a shift in your relationship, where your teenager will spend much more time away from you than with you. When your son or daughter drives a car, he or she will experience the first significant amount of freedom. That freedom also represents the first opportunity for you to gauge your student's moral compass. How will he handle making his own decisions apart from you? Will she be smart? Will he be safe? This Milestone Experience is not about driving; it is about establishing a system for your teenager to both build trust and restore broken trust with you. What your teenager wants more than anything is freedom. What you want more than anything is for your student to be trustworthy. Therefore, if your son or daughter earns your trust, you are unleashed to reward him or her with freedom. This Milestone Experience will give you the opportunity to **ENGAGE** in conversation with your teenager and teach your son or daughter how to safely operate a car. You will also communicate clearly to your teenager, through a driving contract, so as to avoid confusion, about your expectations for your student while driving. You will also have an opportunity to **AFFIRM** your teenager by presenting him or her with a driving contract that you will both sign, a special keychain, and notes from members of your student's family reflecting on their early driving memories.

These conversations will set you up for greater conversations in the future. (i.e. What is our plan for slowly giving to you the freedom of a young adult? What is our plan for restoring trust when it is broken?).

You are giving your student more than a set of keys; you are giving your child your trust. Don't miss this parenting opportunity that this Milestone Experience offers.

STEP 1: PREPARE

We want to help you maximize the potential of this Milestone Experience with your student so here are some tips for getting the conversation started.

- Communicate to your teenager that this Driving Contract (attached below) is mainly about **establishing an opportunity to build trust and restore broken trust** during the driving adventure.
- Blank spots are provided in the contract for you to add any expectations that you would like. Other potential expectations you might choose to add are: a statement that says parents, not the teenager, are owners of the car; a statement about whether or not you will allow your teenager to drive with passengers; a statement about "racing" or reckless driving; a statement about how loud to play the radio; a statement about eating while driving; or a statement about driving when your student is emotional or upset.
- The portion of the contract that deals with consequences is left blank on purpose. If this is truly going to be a two-sided conversation, you should **let your teenager be a part of the process** of deciding consequences. You ultimately decide what they will be, but your 9th grader will be more likely to honor them if he or she helped to come up with the consequences.
- If at all possible, **make sure both parents are a part of this contract**. If you are separated or divorced, it would be a huge "win" if both parties were able to work together to complete this contract with your student. It would communicate a lot of security and consistency to your 9th grader as well.
- You might want to review, revise, and re-sign this Driving Contract each year around your student's birthday to make sure that it remains relevant and builds clear communication, which is the purpose.
- Encourage your 9th grader to **recognize and evaluate driving issues** he or she sees with other cars on the road. It can help in troubleshooting your student's own mistakes.

Now that you are prepared, set aside a time to **ENGAGE** with your child in conversation. We have included several topics about driving and freedom below. It would be ideal to have these conversations outside of the home so you and your student feel like this is a special time between you. What matters most isn't the location but the quality time you will have engaging your student as you talk to him or her about driving and the freedom it offers. After your time together, you will have the opportunity to **AFFIRM** your child by presenting him or her with the driving contact as well as a special keychain you choose. As you celebrate this time, let older friends and family jot a note to them, finishing the sentence, "The most important thing I learned when I first started driving was..." or "The stupidest thing I did my first year of driving was..." There will be some funny and some poignant stories—all of which will reinforce to your student that his or her family identifies with this new freedom he or she has gained.

STEP 2: ENGAGE

This Milestone Experience is your opportunity to pour your confidence into your student and give him or her the wisdom to succeed as a driver. There are three sections that you will want to cover in this conversation on the topics of being trustworthy, full of integrity and also wise when it comes to driving alone.

Supplies needed:

1. A Bible (or use the scriptures provided)
2. The Driving Contract which will be completed at the end of your conversation
3. A keychain of your choosing and any notes you have gathered from family or friends to give to your student when you affirm him or her after you have completed the Driving Contract

TOPIC ONE: TRUSTWORTHY

Although driving does not necessarily seem like a spiritual activity, it is crucial to teach our students that driving is one place where either the fruit of our faith shows up...or it doesn't. Driving is one of the first big tests of our trustworthiness and integrity. It's wise to set gradual driving privileges involving where they may drive and how many passengers are allowed in their car. Don't be afraid to set incremental goals that should be met before more privileges or responsibilities are given.

New freedoms still call for trust in lessons that were learned throughout childhood. **Read together Proverbs 6:20 from your Bible or use the scripture below:**

My son, obey your father's commands, and don't neglect your mother's instruction.

The incredibly fun part of being a first-time driver is the immediate freedom it offers. As you witness your student's excitement, try to enjoy it with him or her. Also remind your student that as parents, you have clear expectations about speed, car maintenance, and how many passengers are allowed in the vehicle. How your student drives and incorporates your instructions will, in some way, demonstrate your teen's level of trustworthiness. Remind him or her that this is a tremendous opportunity for your student to show respect for your teaching and obedience to your wishes when he or she is out of your sight.

TOPIC TWO: INTEGRITY

Driving reveals a picture of our true selves.

Read together Luke 16:10 from your Bible or use the scripture below:

Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.

Driving is a strong test of integrity. Not only is it a time for your teen to show he or she can do what they have been instructed to do, but it is also a strong indicator of whether or not your 9th grader will do what he or she says they are going to do. Try to include spiritual connections to the idea that in driving, your student should be going where he or she says they will go. Be sure that your student is really driving phone-free and text-free and be sure that he or she sees the importance of following even the 25 MPH speed limits in neighborhoods. Guide your student in understanding how integrity (or lack of it) in this endeavor will shape your ability to trust him or her in bigger things in the future.

Read together Proverbs 14:16 from your Bible or use the scripture below:

A wise man fears, and shuns evil, but the fool is hot headed and reckless.

Teens are at a place in life where their knowledge is growing by leaps and bounds, and their level of impulsivity is probably at an all-time high. It's the reason adults look back on something they did in high school and say with disdain for themselves, "That was REALLY dumb!" But students don't like the word foolish being attributed to them. However, much of the information they are taking in at school is compartmentalized away from their short-sighted ability to see consequences ahead of time. The message that something they are about to do is really dumb or foolish does not typically get to the processing area of their brain until something bad happens as a result of an impulsive action. So go into your student's driving season with a wisdom/foolishness index in mind. Evaluate how well your 9th grader is able to connect quick decisions with natural consequences. Help your student to see any patterns of recklessness in other areas of his or her life and challenge correction in those areas before you turn your student loose with the keys to the car.

FILLING OUT THE DRIVING CONTRACT: Now that you have discussed the topics of trustworthiness, integrity and wisdom you can capitalize on the significance of this moment by presenting your son or daughter with the Driving Contract for you to fill out together.

STEP 3: AFFIRM

Once you have had an opportunity to **ENGAGE** with your student in a discussion about driving and freedom, you can present the keychain you have chosen as well as the notes from family members and friends reflecting on their early driving memories. We have included a sample script below.

SAMPLE SCRIPT:

"I am so glad you are my son/daughter and I have enjoyed the time we have spent talking through this new milestone in your life. I would like to give you this keychain as a reminder of your new found freedom. I also thought it would be fun and helpful to have our family and friends share with you some advice and memories they have as they began driving for the first time. I am proud of you and confident that you prove yourself trustworthy, full of integrity and also wise as you begin to drive on your own and experience more freedom."

[Present the keychain and notes]



DRIVING CONTRACT

THE GOAL OF THIS CONTRACT IS TO:

- Clearly Communicate the expectations and desires of both the parent and the teenager about driving a vehicle. Allow both parent and teenager to understand that this is a huge opportunity to build trust in their relationship and grow closer.
- Make a plan for when trust is broken, so that it can be restored allowing the relationship between parent and teenager to grow.
- Agree together ahead of time how to handle the unexpected events like speeding tickets, car accidents, and a broken down car.

IN ORDER TO BUILD TRUST IN OUR FAMILY AND TO HONOR GOD IN OUR HOME WE AGREE THAT OUR TEENAGER WILL BE EXPECTED TO...

- Inform my Parents of where I am when I am away from them by calling or texting.
- Observe and Obey speed limits and other traffic laws while driving.
- Ask permission to drive until my Parents choose to no longer require this of me.
- Wear my seat belt and require those that ride with me to do the same.
- Refuse to use the cell phone to text while driving so I can stay focused. I will pull over if I need to use any electronic device that might distract me.
- I will not use and definitely will not drive under the influence of alcohol/drugs.
- If I am in an accident of any kind (even if it seems minor) I will contact my parents and will not leave the scene of the accident unless my parents or the police give permission.
- I will inform my parents any time that I am pulled over for warnings, tickets, or any interaction with the police.
- I understand that hiding this from them is a break of trust in our relationship.
- I will not allow any other person to drive my car without the permission of my parents.

ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Both parents and teenager agree that, if and when trust is broken, it will be restored. There are two parts to restoring trust. The teenager will experience a consequence first, and then they will display a trustworthy behavior for a set period of time. Once those two trust builders are complete, then the trust will be restored in the relationship.

TRUST BUILDER #1: What is the agreed consequence of breaking the above agreement?

TRUST BUILDER #2: What is the agreed period of time that the teenager must display responsible behavior before trust is restored? *(Make sure it is a reasonable amount of time that sets the teenager up for success.)*

PARENT'S SIGNATURE: _____

PARENT'S SIGNATURE: _____

TEENAGERS'S SIGNATURE: _____