

# commentary drive

This activity is based on a comprehensive commentary drive provided by NETS member company Shell and customized by NETS for use with family members.

A good way to evaluate and work on sharpening the skills of your teen driver is to conduct a commentary drive. In a commentary drive, you sit in the front passenger seat and record observations on the driver's skills.

## PROVIDING FEEDBACK

Don't give feedback during the drive unless the situation is imminently dangerous. When the drive is completed, begin by pointing out those things about the driver's skills that impressed you the most. Then you can move on to areas where you think there is room for some improvement. Whether providing praise or constructive feedback, site specific examples of things that occurred during the drive.

yes      no      not observed

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### PRE-DRIVE ROUTINE

It is important to get a safe start!

**Is everyone in the vehicle properly restrained in a seat belt?**

**Does your teen check his/her mirrors and adjust them as needed?**

yes      no      not observed

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### VEHICLE POSITIONING AND CONTROL

The commentator is in an ideal position to observe how the driver spaces the vehicle in relation to other vehicles on the road.

**Does your teen maintain a proper following distance from the vehicle in front?**

NETS members recommend a following distance of 3-4 seconds to provide a little extra space cushion to react to the driver in front. To check following distance, identify a marking up ahead such as an overpass or sign. When the car ahead passes that marker, silently count one-one thousand, two-one thousand, three-one thousand. If you get to the marker before you count to three or four, following distance should be increased.

**Does your teen adjust following distance as necessary to keep up with driving conditions (for example, if another vehicle cuts in front, if being tailgated or if there is a change in the weather)?**

**Is the vehicle's position properly maintained in the center of the lane?**

**Does your teen keep his/her hands properly positioned on the steering wheel at 9:00 and 3:00?**

**When merging into traffic, does your teen ensure that there is adequate space from other vehicles?**

Note: When merging, the driver should look for a 4-second gap. However, merging into a 4-second gap leaves just a 2-second following distance between his/her vehicle and the vehicle ahead. Once merged with traffic, the driver should fall back to the recommended 3-4 second following distance.

Does your teen keep his/her focus on the task of driving, avoiding unnecessary distractions?

Note any potential distractions in which the driver engages:

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In general, does the commentator feel safe while the vehicle is in operation?

Comments

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yes      no      not  
observed

## SCANNING AND BRAKING

Keeping your eyes moving to scan the road ahead and the surrounding environment is an essential part of driving defensively. The best way to detect scanning skills is to ask the driver to describe what they see ahead, behind and to the right and left.

  

Does your teen regularly scan 360°, sweeping the mirrors with his/her eyes every 5-6 seconds to keep track of other vehicles?

  

Does he/she continue to scan even when the vehicle is stopped?

  

Does your teen anticipate potential hazards up ahead and react by moving into another lane or covering the brake?

  

Does he/she scan intersections upon approach?

  

Does your teen pause when a traffic light goes from red to green, and look both ways before proceeding?

  

Is he/she able to use smooth braking in response to moves by other drivers?

  

In general, does the commentator feel the driver has a good sense of other vehicles and the driving environment?

yes      no      not  
observed

## RULES OF THE ROAD

  

Does your teen follow posted speed limits (or go slower if conditions dictate)?

  

Does he/she come to a full and complete stop at stop signs and red lights?

  

Is your teen courteous to other drivers?

  

Does he/she exercise extra caution when encountering construction zones, pedestrians, emergency vehicles, etc.?

  

Is your teen activating the turn signal at least 3-4 seconds prior to lane changes and directional changes?

  

Does he/she respect right of way (yield) signs?