

# Get Your Kid to Buckle Up, Every Time

Some tweens and teens slack off when it comes to seat belt use. Here's why—and how you can help them break this dangerous habit.

**IMAGINE YOUR FAMILY** is going for a short drive. You're usually sticklers for seat belts, but someone in the car skips putting it on this time. It's only a few blocks, so it's no big deal, right? Wrong.

As a parent, you already know that putting on a seat belt is a lifesaving move. Most drivers and passengers know this, which is why the national rate of seat belt use was nearly 90 percent last year. But there are people who blow off buckling up—and one group in particular is more likely to do that: tweens and teens. Some of the reasons:

- 👉 **THEIR PARENTS DON'T WEAR SEAT BELTS**, so kids think, "Why do I have to?" (Note to parents: You need to model safe behavior for your family!)
- 👉 **THEY GET DISTRACTED** by their devices (because devices are distracting!) and forget. If they're in the back seat, their parents or whoever is driving may not notice.
- 👉 **THE SHOULDER BELT BOTHERS THEM**, so they move the upper portion behind their back or underneath both arms—where it won't protect them in a crash.
- 👉 **IF THEY'RE IN THE FRONT SEAT**, they assume the air bag will protect them. But air bags are definitely *not* the best first line of protection (a seat belt is!). And in any case, kids are safer in the back seat until they're 13 years old or at the legal height and weight.
- 👉 **IT'S A SHORT TRIP**, so they figure it's OK to skip buckling up for quick rides. But it's definitely not: The fact is that most crashes happen within 25 miles of home, and at speeds under 40 miles an hour.
- 👉 **IT'S NIGHTTIME AND NO ONE CAN SEE THEM**, so they unbuckle to lie down easily on the back seat.

Use these facts to start an honest conversation with your child. Make clear that **it's never OK to skip seat belts** when everyone can be safer in a snap.



**14,955**  
LIVES WERE  
**SAVED**  
BY SEAT BELT  
USE IN 2017

## Pop Quiz for Parents!

1. Where in the vehicle is the safest place for a kid under 13 to ride?
2. True or false: Most car crashes happen at speeds under 40 miles an hour.
3. Are seat belts more effective when worn across your torso, or behind your back?

**37,133**

people died in car crashes in 2017.

**47%**

of them weren't wearing seat belts.

SOURCE: NHTSA

For more resources from the National Road Safety Foundation and Scholastic, visit [scholastic.com/drive2life](http://scholastic.com/drive2life).





# I Promise Pledge

**Driving is serious business.** Before you get in a vehicle, pledge to practice responsible and safe driving habits, whether you're the driver or the passenger. Discuss other promises your family should add, and then fill them in on the blank lines below. Safe driving!

## I Promise...

- I will always wear a seat belt.
- I will always follow the speed limit.
- I will obey all streetlights and traffic signs.
- I will not tailgate.
- I will keep a safe distance from the car in front of me.
- I will not rush when driving.
- I will focus on driving and not drive distracted.
- I will not text or talk on the phone while driving.
- I will not drive when I'm drowsy.
- If I am driving, I agree to have the legal number of passengers in the car, with everyone buckled up.
- As a passenger, I will respect the driver and refrain from creating distractions so that he or she can concentrate on driving.
- As a passenger, I will speak up if I feel unsafe and I will find an alternate ride.
- I will learn my state's Graduated Drivers Licensing (GDL) laws.
- I agree to drive sober and will not drink alcohol or use substances that impair my judgment.
- I will call my parents or another trusted person for a ride if I feel tired or am not able to drive.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**I recognize that speeding, distracted driving, impaired driving, and not wearing a seat belt injure and kill thousands of people each year. I promise to keep my pledge.**

Teen's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's/Guardian's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_