

# iPhone app supports parents, helps teens become safer drivers

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Book after book has been written to help parents know what to expect when they are expecting, how to handle the terrible twos, and how to talk about the birds and the bees. Now the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center (HSRC) and the Center for the Study of Young Drivers have developed a smartphone app that provides guidance to parents when their teen reaches another important milestone: learning to drive.

Time to Drive is the first research-based [iPhone](#) app designed to help [parents](#) ensure their teen gets enough driving practice – and the right kind of practice – during the lengthy initial period of supervised driving.

"It is critical that teens get lots of experience in all kinds of driving situations while a parent is still supervising and guiding the process," said Arthur Goodwin, a senior research associate with HSRC's Center for the Study of [Young Drivers](#). "Time to Drive will help parents better prepare their teen for the high-risk period when they begin driving on their own."

The idea for the app grew from research conducted by the Center showing that many teens do not get enough driving practice, especially in potentially challenging situations such as darkness, [bad weather](#), or [heavy traffic](#). This lack of experience, explains Goodwin, is one of the primary reason why [motor vehicle crash](#) rates are so high during the first few years of driving.

Time to Drive aims to remedy that by encouraging parents and teens to

achieve certain goals for overall driving time and driving in various situations. In addition, many U.S. states require a record of supervised experience when a teen driver in the learner stage applies for a provisional license. Time to Drive provides parents with an easy way to keep an accurate, printable log of driving time and conditions.

"Using the Time to Drive app driving log and mapping feature, I realized that my daughter and I always drove the same roads to her after school activities," said Melissa Jackowski, a parent who used the app during its testing phase. "We intentionally changed our routes so that she could practice [driving](#) in different situations, including on interstates and higher speed roadways."

Time to Drive, developed in collaboration with Sky Highways, Inc., also provides tips for parents of teen drivers, such as how to handle a teen who may be scared to drive, or how to choose an appropriate vehicle for a newly licensed teen driver. Another unique feature of Time to Drive is a hard stop meter that will help parents and teens identify when the teen brakes too hard. The goal is to help teens learn to brake sooner and more gradually. Braking too late is one of the most common contributors to teenage driver crashes.

The Time to Drive app was the winning entry for the first Carolina Apps Competition, co-sponsored by the office of the UNC Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovate@Carolina. The goal of this competition was to embrace new ways of translating findings from UNC research into practice. Sky Highways, Inc. was selected to develop the [App](#) for the iOS platform.

**More information:** [www.timetodriveapp.com/](http://www.timetodriveapp.com/)

Time to Drive can be purchased in the Apple iTunes store. All proceeds from the app go toward maintaining the app and supporting research by

the Center for the Study of Young Drivers.

Provided by University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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