

This is not a study guide for your teen. It is a plan for the role you are about to take on: supervising driver, calm voice from the passenger seat, and eventually the person who hands over the keys. The legal numbers below are South Carolina's; the coaching approach works anywhere.

1 • The South Carolina legal frame

EARLIEST PERMIT AGE	15
PERMIT HOLDING PERIOD (MONTHS)	6
SUPERVISED DRIVING HOURS REQUIRED	40
OF WHICH, NIGHT HOURS	10
EARLIEST INTERMEDIATE LICENSE AGE	15½
INTERMEDIATE CURFEW — START TIME	6 p.m. (8 p.m. during daylight saving time)
INTERMEDIATE CURFEW — END TIME	6 a.m.
EARLIEST FULL LICENSE AGE	17

Intermediate passenger restriction

Conditional and special restricted license holders may not have more than two passengers under age 21 in the vehicle unless accompanied by a licensed adult who is at least 21. The only exception is transporting family members or students to and from school.

The rules you'll be enforcing

SEATBELT LAW ENFORCEMENT	primary
BAC LIMIT — MINOR (UNDER 21)	0.02

Stage-one passenger limits, hour requirements, and night-driving restrictions are not red tape; each one maps to a leading cause of first-year crashes. Enforce them even when it is inconvenient.

2 • The supervised-hours ladder

The legal minimum above is a floor, not a ceiling. Safety research consistently points to roughly 100 hours of supervised driving as what it takes for solo driving to become reliably safe. Plan to coach past the minimum, and add conditions in this order:

1. **Empty parking lots.** Controls, smooth stops, backing, parking. Stay here until none of it takes thought.
2. **Quiet residential streets.** Signs, right-of-way at uncontrolled intersections, speed discipline.

3. **Arterials and busy local roads.** Lane changes, left turns across traffic, timing gaps.
4. **Highways.** Merging, following distance at speed, exiting.
5. **Night, rain, and weather.** The conditions you avoid in supervised driving are the ones your teen will hit unsupervised first. Do not skip them.

The first ten hours are the most important and the most uncomfortable. Your teen will stall, oversteer, and miss exits. What predicts the outcome is whether the practice continues past the discomfort.

3 • When your teen makes a mistake

Mistakes are guaranteed. What your teen remembers is the next thirty seconds. A framework that works:

During the mistake, say nothing about it. "Pull over when it's safe" is fine. Lectures at 40 mph produce the next mistake.

After they pull over, ask what happened. Not "do you know what you did wrong" but "tell me what you saw and what you decided." The answer tells you whether the issue was perception, judgment, or execution.

Name the rule, not the failing. "The rule is three seconds of following distance" lands. "You're following too close again" doesn't.

Decide whether to keep driving. If the mistake was honest and they're calm, keep going; recovery is part of the lesson. If they're shaken or the mistake was reckless, swap seats and talk about it after dinner.

Your tone sets your teen's tone. A calm correction lands; a sharp one creates the anxiety that produces the next mistake.

4 • Test week, day by day

- **Three days out.** One full-length practice test, untimed. Then timed. The score is a study list, not a verdict.
- **Two days out.** Read the cheat sheet together. Have your teen explain each rule back in their own words; explaining is harder than recognizing.
- **The night before.** Pack the appointment confirmation, IDs, and fee. Verify the office address. Set the alarm earlier than feels necessary.
- **The morning of.** Breakfast. No new material; re-read the cheat sheet, not new chapters. Don't quiz them in the car.
- **At the office.** Wait in the lobby or the car. The knowledge test takes most teens 20 to 40 minutes.
- **After.** Pass or not, take them to lunch. If they didn't pass, retake rules are usually forgiving; the South Carolina test-day page covers what to do next.

