

David B. asks,

*"My daughter is turning 14 next week and I'm beginning to think about driver education for her... do you recommend any driving simulation games she could start using on our computer or X-Box?"*

As of right now I have not seen any simulation games for the various game consoles that are geared toward street driver training. Without an expensive force feedback wheel and the proper pedal setup this type of simulation would have very few if any benefits at all. If anything the lack of consequences for making a mistake may increase risk taking behavior behind the wheel.

So much of driving goes beyond what one sees out the windshield. The G-forces, vibrations sounds and subtleties that are necessary for good driving skills and decisions aren't really reproduce-able in a video game. Even with an investment in the best wheel and pedal setup you'd still be woefully under representative of the necessary tools to effectively train.

The best thing to do at this point is to have her sit in the front seat while you drive. Start vocalizing what you're looking at, why you reacted to a particular situation, and point out what you predict other drivers are going to do. Explain why you think that and explain what you think could happen as you drive down the road based on what you're seeing at that moment.

Narrate every move you make behind the wheel. "OK, I need to change to the left lane to pass. I'm turning on my signal, check my rear view mirror, check my driver's side mirror, turn my head to check my blind spot. Now I'm moving to the left lane, pass the slower car. I'm checking my rear view mirror to make sure I've completed my pass, signal, check mirrors, turn my head to check blind spot and change back to the right lane."

Set the example during this time. Make sure you don't talk on the phone (even hands free) and never, never text. Make sure you're using safe following distances as you follow other cars. Most drivers were taught the "2-second rule"; however, the current methodology for determining a safe following distance is as follows:

- Speed below 35 MPH - 2-second following distance
- Speeds 36 - 45 MPH - 3-second following distance
- Speeds 46+ MPH - 4-second following distance
- Double these distances in the rain
- Quadruple in the snow

After a few weeks of this have her begin to predict what is going to happen based on what she sees. Have her navigate using traditional maps and tell you where to go. Let your daughter tell you what hazards she sees as you drive and have her tell you where to drive. Have her tell you when you are following at an unsafe distance and to let you know when you've achieved that safe distance. This will help condition her to visually identifying a safe distance so that by the time she starts driving she will be able to do it without thinking.

I would also recommend picking up a copy of [Safe Young Drivers by Phil Berardelli](#) . It is an excellent book that will help you learn how to teach driving. It provides exercises, a log book and excellent information for both student and teacher.

The single most important teaching methodology though is to lead by example. Drive like you would want your daughter to drive. She has been watching you for years, so now is the time to really keep to the straight and narrow.