

Schools' guide: How to select providers of road safety education programs for senior school students

Here for Life



Road safety education is not just about safe driving. Best practice road safety education seeks to improve knowledge and change attitudes relating to being safe, and making sure others are safe on the road.

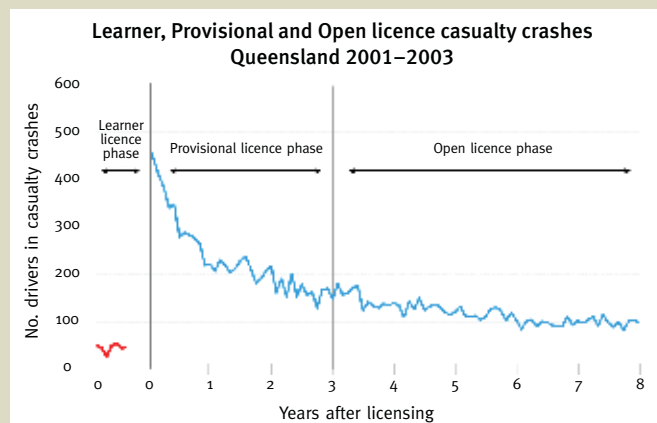
Typical topics might include:

- strengthening attitudes toward safe road use behaviours and avoiding risks
- supporting behaviours to ensure others are safe
- promoting knowledge of traffic rules.

Why road safety education?

Learner licence holders have the lowest crash rates compared to all other licence holders. However, as shown in the following graph, in the first year after receiving their provisional licence, when they are no longer supervised, young drivers have the highest crash rates.

- About 100 fatalities a year occur in Queensland as a result of crashes involving young drivers. These fatalities include drivers, pedestrians and passengers.
- About 80% of young drivers involved in fatal crashes in Queensland are male.
- More than 2,000 young adult drivers are typically involved in crashes that result in hospitalisation in Queensland each year.
- Around three-quarters of the time, the young adult driver or rider is considered 'at fault' in crashes resulting in death or injury.





A checklist for selecting best practice road safety education programs


An effective road safety education program will include the following content:

A focus on attitudinal change, not on the acquisition of driving skills.

Attitudes targeted should include:

- acceptance of dangerous risk-taking behaviour (for example, impairment due to drugs, alcohol, fatigue, speed or distraction)
- impulsive and aggressive driving
- reducing the influence of risk-taking friends on driver behaviour
- engaging parents in modelling safe driving behaviours
- changing the perception of risky behaviour, such as speeding or drinking, as 'safe' and having benefits such as, impressing people or getting there faster.

A focus on cognitive or perceptual skill development, including the following:

- hazard perception – young people have a less developed ability to scan their environment and predict the behaviour of other road users
 - attention control – young drivers find it difficult to prioritise competing tasks (for example, music, distracting passengers)
 - impact of over-confidence – young drivers believe their driving skills are better than they really are.
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Material that helps students understand and maximise the benefits of Queensland's graduated licensing system for learner and provisional drivers, including:

- learners under 25 years of age must gain 100 hours of certified, supervised driving experience before being eligible to apply for a provisional licence
- peer passenger restrictions – P1 provisional licence holders under 25 years of age can only carry one passenger aged under 21 years between 11pm and 5am
- high-powered vehicles are restricted for provisional drivers under 25 years of age.

More detailed information can be found at www.transport.qld.gov.au/youngdrivers.

An effective road safety education program will include the following methods and processes of delivery:

- presentation of messages on multiple occasions over time – research shows that information delivered on only one occasion is less effective than if it is repeated over a period of weeks or months
- program components that are interactive and encourage student discussion (for example, small group work, individual tasks and large group work), as lecture-style communication is less likely to result in behaviour change
- presenters who have skills in facilitating groups, especially with young people
- tools for classroom teachers to reinforce road safety messages between sessions with appropriate follow-up activities





- practical information for parents and carers to help them reinforce and practice road safety skills with young drivers in the road environment.


An effective road safety education program will include the following evaluation components:

- self-evaluation forms for students that are designed to increase their self-awareness between program sessions
- an evaluation of the impact of the program on participants' road use behaviour and road safety attitudes.

An effective road safety education program should *not* include:

- components that encourage students to obtain their provisional driver licence earlier than they might otherwise, as research suggests this can lead to an increase in crash rates
- components that set out to shock, traumatise or evoke fear (for example, presenting graphic images of crashes), as some students can develop anxiety disorders
- an emphasis on vehicle control skills, as research suggests this can lead to over-confidence and risk-taking by students, as they believe their driving skills are stronger than they really are. The following issues need to be addressed if it is felt necessary to include vehicle control skills in a program in order to make it attractive to students:
 - » these activities should form only a minor part of the overall program
 - » any driving demonstrations or activities should focus on increasing risk awareness, rather than increasing vehicle control skills




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- » repetition of behind-the-wheel activities should be avoided – this tends to lead students to focus on improving skills, rather than changing attitudes
 - » defensive driving exercises (such as the use of skid pans) should be avoided – this can lead to over-confidence and risk-taking by young drivers.

Key factors related to young driver crashes and an overview of the risk data

The cause of crashes involving young drivers is often complex, and may involve a variety of both direct and indirect factors. Direct factors include speeding, drink/drug driving and fatigue. Indirect factors (for example, an aggressive personality, over-confidence, peers who are risk-takers) can impact on the likelihood that a young driver may exhibit unsafe road use behaviours, such as choosing to drink and drive, and can result in a higher crash risk.

Personality and attitudinal factors

Young people who seek novel sensations and engage in risks for the sake of the experience or the thrill are more likely to be killed or injured in a road crash. Such young people are also more likely to have difficulties with self-control of temper, be 'hot-headed' or be quick to start an argument (often for no reason). Young novice drivers might also differ in the way in which they define safe driving, compared with experienced drivers. Young people report identifying greater benefits to risky behaviour (for example, impressing people) and are less likely to identify the costs of risk-taking behaviours.





Cognitive and perceptual factors

Young and inexperienced drivers have poorer skills relating to scanning their environment, evaluating the relative location of other road users and predicting the behaviour of other road users. They have greater difficulty in managing their attention and prioritising competing tasks. Young drivers also over-rate their skills and are less likely to moderate their driving according to their capabilities and the demands of the driving situation.

Social relationships

Young people are influenced by both their peers and parents. Some young people are surrounded by people who are risk-takers, which increases the likelihood that they will be injured on the road by engaging in risky behaviour themselves. In contrast, some young people have parents who monitor and supervise their activities, restrict their car use and model safe driving behaviours, and they are less likely to be killed or injured on the road.





Top five road safety websites for young drivers

1. **Department of Transport and Main Roads**
Crash statistics and information on young drivers
www.transport.qld.gov.au
2. **Austroads**
*The Austroads School Road Safety Education
Check List - Final Report - AP-R262/04*
www.onlinepublications.austroads.com.au
3. **Western Australia's Department of Education and Training**
*Principles for School Road Safety Education: A Research
Summary*
www.sdera.wa.edu.au
4. **Land Transport New Zealand**
*Safer Young Drivers. A Guide to Best Practice
Education Report*
www.landtransport.govt.nz/education/young-driver-education
5. **Australian College of Road Safety**
Information on trends in road safety, road safety
education and evaluation
www.acrs.org.au

Further information

More detailed information can be found on
www.transport.qld.gov.au/sde.

You can also contact the Department of Transport and
Main Roads via email at sde@transport.qld.gov.au
or on 3253 4565.

