

Car Kits for Teenagers

The most important thing to have with you in case of an emergency is knowledge. Younger drivers are less likely to have experience with problems and so first of all, prepare a list of possible problems and an action list for what they should do. After you determine what you want your teenager to do in various situations, you then need to make sure they have the proper equipment to follow through safely.

Situations (some ideas to get you started)

- Car won't start
- Non-injury accident
 - Single Vehicle
 - Multiple Vehicle
- Injury accident
- Lost
- Stuck or out of gas

For each situation, decide what steps you want your teenager to take and then talk it over with them. Do some dry runs and make sure they understand what and how to do what is needed.

Equipment List (roughly in order of importance) for either glove box (G) or trunk (T) or both.

- AAA membership – reliable help for a wide range of problems (G)
- List of phone numbers (G)
 - Include all office and cell numbers, as well as trusted friends and relatives. Remember that they may be in a situation they are embarrassed to tell you about. Make sure they have reliable alternate numbers they can contact.
- Reliable AA cell LED Flashlight – use Energizer lithium primary batteries and have spares (G,T)
 - Get 2 of these, one for the glove compartment and another to keep with the emergency kit in the trunk.
- Car charger for cell phone (G)
- Bottled water (T)
 - The 12oz bottles can handle multiple freeze/thaw cycles. Get screw on caps rather than sport caps. Single serving lemonade or other flavor additive can be included for variety.
- First Aid Kit & Emergency First Aid manual (G)
 - Include plenty of 4x4 gauze pads and rolls of Kerlix gauze. A few Band-Aids and other small items are good, but in a real emergency, you'll want a bit more 'trauma' stuff than is usually found in off-the-shelf kits.
- Map and Compass (G)
 - Include both state and county/city maps. A GPS isn't a substitute, although they are certainly a nice addition.
- \$5 in quarters and \$20 in bills (G)

- Blanket (T)
 - At bare minimum, a fleece sport blanket. Much better would be a wool military surplus style blanket.
- Winter Clothing (T)
 - Prepare for the trip, not the destination. Keep a spare watch cap, wool socks, spare coat, and gloves. Overshoes or a pair of boots is a good idea. You don't have to stand in freezing slush too long in tennis shoes before you have real frostbite problems.
- Gloves or mittens (G)
 - Keep a spare pair inside the car for scraping off the windshield and pumping gas.
- Ice scraper (G)
- Waterproof matches and a lighter (G,T)
- 44 hour candle (G)
 - These are available at hiking and camping stores. If you are stuck in your car in a blizzard, one candle can produce enough heat to keep you comfortable if you have decent clothing. Nuwick is a common brand name.
- Whistle (G)
 - Emergency signaling – can be heard much farther than shouting and you can do it for much longer. Fox 40 is a specific brand, but any plastic pea less whistle will do.
- EMT Shears (G)
 - Will cut almost anything and has no sharp points that could be considered a 'weapon' by overzealous school administrators.
- Nalgene bottle with metal cup
 - Something to store and melt water in.
- 6'x6' blue waterproof tarp (T)
- Hazard Triangle (T)
 - Put these up to warn approaching cars that you are there. They are collapsible and increase visibility considerably.
- Life Hammer, Res-Q tool, or Glass Breaker (G)
 - Allow you to break non-laminated glass (side/back windows). Windshields are laminated and basically need to be cut open. Some include seatbelt cutters. They should be assessable from the driver's seat without removing the seatbelt.
- Tow rope/Jumper Cables (T)
 - Even if you do not want them using these themselves, there may be someone else there that knows how to use them but just doesn't have them.
- Fire Extinguisher (T)
 - Probably will never need, but if you do, you'll be glad you had it. Read the directions before you need to use it.
- Basic Toolkit (T)
 - Pliers, adjustable wrench, screwdrivers, hammer, rags, hand cleaner, nitrile gloves (keeps hands clean when changing tires).
- Duct tape (T)

- 25' Lightweight rope or paracord (T)
- Large, heavy duty trash bags (T)
 - Emergency poncho, emergency tarp, etc.
- Coveralls
 - If you are dressed up and you have to work on your car, having something to wear to keep your clothes clean can be real handy. Also works as extra warm clothing in emergency.

Conclusion

This should all fit in a small container in your glove box and a duffel bag or Rubbermaid plastic container in the trunk. The warm clothing will be bulky, and could be stored in a separate container. I specifically didn't include any food items because there is basically no danger from going a few hours (or days) without food. Any other consumables should be replaced if they are used.

It is very important to test both the driver and the equipment to make sure the former is able to use the latter to do whatever is expected of them. If you want them to change their tire in case of a flat, make sure they know how the jack works, they are physically able to remove lug nuts with the wrench, and able to position and raise the jack. At all times, especially in the winter, keep the gas tank at least half full. You are almost always better off staying with the car if you are stranded unless your destination is in clear view and short distance. Go through the situations list with your teenager and make sure they understand the reasoning behind each one.