

# FrontLine

Wellness, Productivity & You!

# Employee

University of Texas Employee Assistance Programs 713.500.3327

## Road Map to Teen Driver Safety



**C**ar accidents are the number one cause of death for teenagers. Reckless driving, poor risk assessment, failure to wear seatbelts, and unnecessary distractions all are major contributors. Start talking about road safety before your teen starts riding with friends. Always know who and how many friends will be in the car, as the likelihood of an accident rises with the number of young passengers. Limit trips to daylight hours, and be ready to intervene when the weather creates dangerous road conditions. Agree to pick up your teen anytime, anywhere, if he or she is riding with a driver who's impaired or behaving recklessly. Some conditions, like icy roads, take time to master, so treat your teen's first few years of driving like an apprenticeship. Review defensive driving techniques, how to recognize and avoid hazards, and basic car maintenance every few months.

## Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month

**I**t's 3-D Prevention Month. Help ensure a safe holiday season out on the roads. Plan a safe ride home before attending events where alcohol is served; eat before attending parties; slow your alcoholic intake by alternating between alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks; and bring extra cash in case you need to call a cab. If you're hosting an event, provide a place for overzealous revelers to sleep it off. Collect car keys at the door so that all drivers have to check in with you before leaving.



## Teens and Online Photo Safety

**K**ids begin socializing on the Internet long before they're old enough to be aware of its dangers. Make sure they're interacting only on age-appropriate sites, and review all photos before allowing your youngster to share them online with friends. Examine each photo closely for school names, monogrammed clothing, house numbers, and unique personal effects. These elements are used by online predators to gain access and trust. Learn more internet safety tips at [www.netsmartkidz.org](http://www.netsmartkidz.org). For older children, try [www.nsteens.org](http://www.nsteens.org).

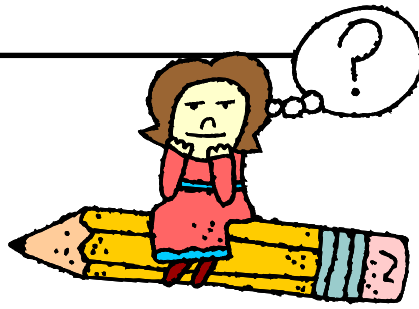


## Holiday Stress Tip Let Go and Get Going

**I**t's not the chores, shopping, and Uncle Fred's visit that's stressing you out – it's your anticipation of them! The solution? Get moving! Act now by creating a to-do list. Organizing, planning, and prioritizing tasks will help you to thwart your trajectory of negativity. Stress is a mental state, so tackle the stuff you dread first. If your plans seem doomed to failure, review your expectations to make sure that they are realistic. Forget about possible outcomes that are outside of your control. When lapsing into catastrophic thinking, ask yourself, "So what?" Is serving a dry turkey the end of the world? Probably not.



## Don't "Write Off" This Skill!

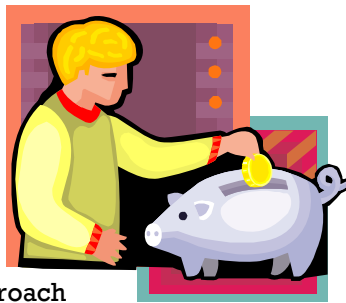


If your workplace correspondence generates more head scratching than head nodding, your writing probably needs some improvement. This is no small problem. Business leaders cite poor writing skills as one of their top complaints about employees. Poorly crafted correspondence creates confusion, dilutes your message, and harms your professional image. Managers report that they're more likely to hire and promote those who write competently. Here's how to polish your writing. First, get right to the point. Clarity is more important than style. Do a first draft, and then go back and simplify. Ditch multiple-word phrases like "at this moment in time" in favor of shorter ones like "now." Use positive language like "We're making conservation a company goal" rather than "We need to stop being so wasteful." Use active voice when possible. Active voice means the subject is the doer—"I'm implementing a new policy" rather than "A new policy has been implemented." If you're fumbling for the right words, imagine yourself speaking instead of writing, and then put it to paper. To catch more grammatical mistakes, let correspondence sit awhile, and then do your final proofread. This includes emails. Here's a secret: Read your work out loud away from distractions to catch the smallest errors. A coworker's ear can help ensure that you're using the right tone and that everything makes sense. Remember, mistakes will sneak through, which is why writing is art, not science.

## Teaching Kids Saving Skills

If you're determined to teach your child to save money, start early. Consider the following approach

if it fits your parenting style: Start with a short-term, easily achieved goal like saving for a special toy. Establish the relationship between work and money by tying an allowance to small household chores. During each payment, separate spending money and savings in front of your child, and place the savings into a clear container. Seeing the coins pile up will provide visual affirmation of progress. Once a savings goal is reached, make a big event of the purchase. Be sure to let your child carry the money and hand it over to the cashier. As your child grows older, you can create longer target dates for purchases and encourage greater responsibility by replacing mandatory savings requirements with matching funds for each saved dollar.



## Freebies for Frozen Budgets

Looking to trim your budget? Here are six great online services with little or no cost:

1) Save money and maintain a clean environment by trading your old books with other readers at [paperbackswap.com](http://paperbackswap.com). You only pay shipping; 2) Toss that video recorder and instead log on to [hulu.com](http://hulu.com), where you can watch current and classic television shows. There's also a good movie section; 3) If music's more your thing, try [slacker.com](http://slacker.com) for access to dozens of free internet radio stations. You can even customize playlists based on your preferences; 4) Ugh. Sloppy joes again? Check out [allrecipes.com](http://allrecipes.com) and add a new dish to your rotation; 5) Better yet, find a restaurant where your kids can eat free by using [kidsmeal-deals.com](http://kidsmeal-deals.com); 6) No internet connection? No problem. [wifreespot.com](http://wifreespot.com) will show you where to find all the local free wireless hotspots.



## Shared Space Squabble Busters

Working harmoniously in close quarters requires self-awareness and sensitivity toward others because shared space environments naturally magnify minor irritants and disagreements. Getting along with coworkers is a lot like dealing with family, so take the occasional squabble in stride. Squabble busters: Keep a neat work space and wipe down surfaces once per day to prevent spreading germs. Pitch in on maintaining community areas – those microwave splatters won't disappear by themselves. Dispose of your lunch remains in an outside garbage can rather than towering the trash in a tiny wastebasket and fouling the air. Keep noise levels to a minimum and take personal calls someplace private. Tune in to the mood and stress levels of those around you. A slack period for you may be crunch time for others.

