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## Behind the Wheel

By Caie Kelley



Caie Kelley is a junior in high school and the Pop Culture reporter on the teen show, Express Yourself! (tm) In her free time, she enjoys swimming, teaching piano, and volunteering.

Although I have a hunch that my mother would disagree, I was an immensely talented driver the moment I sat down behind the wheel. During my first try, I repeatedly mixed up the turn signals, shifted gears to neutral when trying to drive in rear, and stepped on the accelerator when I meant to hit the break. Needless to say, it was a relief when I passed my driver's license test (the first time, shockingly!) after many bumper scratches and stressed-out squeals from the passenger seat. To my excitement, this summer my own little sister repeated the experience and began learning to drive. In light of my own joyous memories of the test, and her nervous anticipation, I thought I would find out: How did other teens do when they took hold of the wheel for the first time?

"It was horrible," explained a friend who wished to remain anonymous. "I grew up watching my mom and dad drive, so I was pretty confident. But it's a very different view from the back seat!"

Sammi K., who took her driver's test over the summer, echoed that sentiment when she said, "Learning to drive has been a big challenge. I assumed that it would be a breeze, and I used to laugh at my Korean immigrant grandma's stories with the dreaded DMV some 30 years ago when she passed on her fourth try. After my first lesson, the story was not funny anymore - my driving instructor even told me that I fit both stereotypes of the Asian driver and reckless teenager."

Even after passing the test, many Lamorinda teens have stories about the rookie mistakes they made after getting their licenses. Gabi D. shared, "I have dented my car more than five times from hitting the front curb when I park. I have hit my friends' cars multiple times, too. I swear though, I am a responsible driver!"

Fortunately, there seem to be at least a few safe new drivers on the road. Stephany H. said, "I learned to drive in a parking lot, and it was pretty easy. I always pay attention to the road, because I want to defy the teenage-driver label."

So while new drivers can certainly be something to fear when cruising around windy Lamorinda roads, hopefully most 16-year-olds will seize Stephany's approach when taking the wheel for the first

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