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## We Need to Talk: The Difficult Driving Conversation

### **When — and how — to talk about turning over the car keys**

There are many things to consider before broaching the sensitive topic of when it's best to stop driving.

Whether it's the driving of a spouse, a parent or another loved one, there may come a time in your life when you begin to question whether a loved one is still safe to drive. But how do you know when it's time for your loved one to limit or [stop driving](#)?

#### **► [Take the AARP Smart Driver online course](#)**

Although there are natural changes that may occur in our brains and to our bodies as we age, the question of when it is time to limit or stop driving is not about age. It's about the ability of the driver. To this end, observing the driving of the loved one about whom you are concerned and looking for warning signs of unsafe driving is a great first step in determining whether it's time to talk to them about hanging up the keys.

### **Warning Signs of Unsafe Driving**

As we all know, driving ability goes beyond the simple ability to physically operate a vehicle. [Safely driving](#) a vehicle requires physical and cognitive capabilities, driving skills and good driving behavior.

Here are only a few warning signs of unsafe driving:

- Delayed response to unexpected situations
- Becoming easily [distracted while driving](#)
- Decrease in confidence while driving
- Having difficulty moving into or maintaining the correct lane of traffic
- Hitting curbs when making right turns or backing up

- Getting scrapes or dents on car, garage or mailbox
- Having frequent close calls
- Driving too fast or too slow for road conditions

If you've noticed that your loved one shows some of these warning signs, it means it is time to talk with them. But how are you supposed to sensitively broach the topic of stopping or limiting driving and have a productive conversation?

First, it's important to remember that limiting or stopping driving is a complex and emotionally charged discussion. Older drivers have a lifetime of driving experience behind them and deeply value the independence and mobility that driving provides.

Preparing for the conversation with [We Need to Talk](#), a free online seminar developed jointly with the Hartford and MIT AgeLab, can help guide you through what steps to take. Beyond providing you with tools to begin a casual conversation about driving and tips on engaging an older driver in self-evaluation, We Need to Talk can also help you with possible solutions for your loved one's transportation needs — helping your loved one maintain their independence and relieving some of the pressure on you as the caregiver.

----- Written by Kyle Rakow, AARP, 2016

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**AARP** was founded in 1958 and has over 38 million members. It is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization for people over the age of 50. AARP is well-known for its advocacy efforts, providing its members with important information, products and services that enhance quality of life as they age. They also promote community service and keep members and the public informed on issues relating to the over 50 age group.

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