



Joyce Younger is the owner of Joyce's Driving School.

Slow Down, You Move Too Fast

WHEN BARRINGTON AREA TEENS REACH THE AGE TO QUALIFY FOR DRIVER'S EDUCATION—THE LEARNING CURVE IS OFTEN AS MEANINGFUL, CHALLENGING, AND AS GREAT A TEST OF NERVES FOR THEIR PARENTS AS IT IS FOR THEM. THERE ARE IMPORTANT RULES OF THE ROAD FOR BOTH.

IF YOU LIVE IN BARRINGTON, you've seen the bright blue cars driving around town with driver's ed teachers and their students. Those cars with the extra brake on the front passenger side belong to Joyce's Driving School, located at 120 Lageschulte Street near the high school.

Owned by Joyce Younger, the school and its philosophy was inspired after Younger observed her daughter's driver's ed experience in another town. She felt something was missing. Her goal of offering an improved learning experience is good news for her students, as she guides them (and their parents) in learning how to drive without being in a rush. Younger says this is one time in life to slow down, and get it right.

QB: Tell us about the start of your driver's education business.

JY: I started the school in 2009 up at the (then) Lake Barrington Fieldhouse. There was another driving school in town. That other driving school closed

three months after I opened mine. We've been doing well ever since.

QB: What is your approach or philosophy about teaching students how to drive?

JY: I was watching how my daughter's instruction for driving was by a teacher who was just going through the motions. So, my husband and I basically taught our daughter how to drive. After that, I got a job as an instructor and decided to approach the training from a more personal approach. I care about our kids becoming responsible and ingraining what's important about driving a car safely.

QB: How does your model approach the state's requirements versus other private programs?

JY: Most private driver's ed schools follow a common industry model of four weeks in the classroom to achieve the 30 hours required, followed by 12 hours of Behind-The-Wheel training. Then, students must log 50 hours of drive time with their parents before they can go for a road test to get their license. What

I believe works better is our FLEX-Ed or weekend model, where the 30 hours of classroom training is spread out over 15 weeks with the 12 hours of Behind-The-Wheel training interspersed between the classroom hours. Students can get their learner's permits as early as the 1st or 2nd week of class! This way, students can take their recent classroom knowledge of say, driving through an intersection, and put the concepts into practice right after learning them. We are the only school that offers FLEX-Ed classes allowing teens to choose one night per week for classes, and encouraging them to schedule a Behind-The-Wheel lesson sooner rather than later.

QB: How else does your approach help students?

JY: We find they are more interested in what they are learning when they can put classroom concepts into practice with driving time. Our classroom discussions are better and I see the "light bulbs" go off frequently. Students take a greater ownership over their learning. Attending classes once a week keeps them interested in what they are learning versus just coming to class as a requirement.

QB: What process do you find works best for driver's ed students?

JY: Driving is not a right. Obtaining a driver's license and driving is a privilege. There is no way to compress the learning process into a shorter time. The state minimum time is nine months and there is no getting around that. We go over in class several times the steps each teen needs to take to be allowed to go for their road test. We ask that they be responsible for completing these steps—yet somehow they give this job to their parents who do not know these rules. When kids take ownership of their own driver's education process, they understand the significance of the driving task a bit better.

QB: So many people are in a rush these days. What about the parents who want to shortcut the driver's ed process and its timeframe for their children?

JY: Parents are accustomed to providing for their children at every age. But by age 15, if a student wants to get their license, they need to start being responsible for themselves—knowing where their learner's permit is, helping their parents book their own Behind-The-Wheel lessons, and tracking/logging the 50 hours of required family driving is their responsibility. But some parents say, "But he/she is only 15!"

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My thought is, if the child is not responsible to help with these simple things by this age, why are we giving them the keys to a car?


QB: *You have a friend who spent a few years in the U.K. and had to take a driver's ed course to get a license in that country. How is Europe different than the U.S. in driving instruction?*

JY: Even though licensed here, eventually you must get a new license of the country you're living in. He had to take a Behind-The-Wheel lesson for several hours to learn their rules. The driving test for his license then took 45 minutes, with failure lurking at the first mistake. Here, an on-the-road driving test is seven to eight minutes. In Europe, everyone must also be 18 to begin any driver's ed training.

QB: *You mentioned that the state recently changed the format of the learner's permit.*

JY: Yes, rather than a piece of paper that teens were making multiple copies of, it's wallet-sized when folded and comes in an envelope the size and shape of a driver's license. It has a watermark that says VOID if it is copied onto paper. I love this new permit format because students taking driver's ed need to keep track of this document themselves. Wherever they would carry a license—a wallet, purse, backpack—by keeping this legal document on their person, they are in the first stages of becoming an adult.

QB: *What is your best advice for the parents of a student in driver's ed?*

JY: First of all, slow down and follow the program [we offer]. You should not rush it. Even if your student presses on you to cheat the requirement of 50 hours logged driving with a family member, don't do it. You are setting them up for accidents. Most insurance companies lower their rates only after a driver reaches age 25! That's how long the statistics suggest new-driver accidents happen. Also, it's so important to take a deep breath and let your son or daughter do the driving in those 50 hours. Don't yell or scream at them when they make an error—it's going to happen. Provide constructive criticism at the end of the drive, or pull over to discuss the incident. Don't give your young driver a play-by-play on every move to make by pointing out all obstacles—let them think it through. And be a good example. Drive the way you would want them to drive—that means no drinking and driving, no speeding, and please keep your phone calls on a hands-free device and NEVER text and drive. 

For more information, visit www.joycesdrivingschool.net.