

Driving lessons.

In the United States, young men and women are allowed to start driving lessons when they are fifteen. They apply for an 'Initial Permit', take lessons, and have the opportunity to drive the family car. They have to be accompanied by a parent or guardian(1) who is over 21 and who has a proper(2) driver's license. After a year of good driving, on their sixteenth birthday, they can get their driver's license. None of this meant anything to me until my oldest son, Hudson, asked me if he could apply for his initial permit. "What!" I said to myself. "This is crazy! He's only fifteen! His brain isn't fully developed yet!" When I had calmed down, I realised that everybody starts young over here. And, the best way to keep my son safe, is to allow him to get proper training, and lots of experience. So, even though(3) I would like to say "No", I haven't. I am actually the one who sits next to him when he is driving around. Thankfully, he is very careful. It's nerve wracking(4), however, as a parent, to sit there in the passenger seat, and have no control at all. I'm definitely more nervous than he is in that situation. I have to control my breathing, bite my tongue(5), and try not to slam my foot onto my imaginary brake. As he is encouraged by his driving instructors to drive everywhere, in the morning, he drives his three siblings to school, and then goes on(6) to the High School. So, first thing in the morning, I find myself sitting in the passenger seat in my pyjamas, heart racing, wild eyed like a trapped cat, just hoping for it all to be over soon. I smile, of course, and say things like, "That was a really good corner, Hudson. You used the brakes really well." By the time I get home, though, I look like I've seen a ghost. So I destress with some Yoga, and a long shower.

1. 'Guardian' is a person who looks after someone, even though he is not a parent.

a. Tell your parents or guardians about the school meeting tonight.

b. Their aunt became their guardian.

2. 'Proper' is often used in English to mean, the 'actual', 'real', 'authentic'. It is also, occasionally, used as 'neat', or 'fully prepared.'

a. The little boy has a toy computer, but his older brother has a proper one.

b. He has become a proper baker, with his own business and delivery van.

3. 'Even though' is worth practicing:

a. Even though it's raining, we should go for a walk.

b. Even though it's late, you should do your homework.

c. Even though they didn't want to, they stayed behind after school.

d. She decided to quit her job, even though she had been offered a raise.

e. We went by train, even though by car would have been quicker.

4. 'Nerve wracking' is a common expression that expresses extreme stress.

a. I can't go on roller coasters anymore; it's too nerve wracking.

b. All the noise and demands of running a preschool can be nerve wracking.

5. 'To bit your tongue' means to deliberately keep quiet in order to not say the wrong thing and cause a problem.

a. He was going to say that she looked fat in her new dress, but he bit his tongue.

b. Please bite your tongue instead of arguing.

6. '...goes on' here is used instead of 'continues driving to'. Using the verb 'to go' + on is a quicker and more informal way than repeating the original verb.

a. We'll drive to the park first, and then go on to the shopping mall.

b. They skied to the valley, and went on to the hotel.

Please send me your emails with any questions and comments that you may have: acupofenglish@hotmail.com Remember, you're all welcome to join my FACEBOOK page called Anna Fromacupofenglish.