

The Three-Stage Graduated Driver License

Anyone under age 18 applying for an instruction permit must progress through a three-stage system to obtain a driver license.

Stage 1: Provisional (or Learner's) Permit

To obtain a permit, you must:

- Be at least 15½ years old, but under age 18.
- Have completed driver education and driver training courses, have completed driver education and be enrolled in driver training (not required if 17½ or older), or be enrolled in an integrated driver education and training program.
- Complete a DMV application form DL44, signed by parents or guardians.
- Pay the \$27 application fee.
- Pass the DMV traffic law, road sign and vision tests.

Once a permit is obtained, you must:

- Hold the instruction permit for at least six months.
- Complete both classroom driver education and formal behind-the-wheel training.
- Complete at least 50 hours of supervised driving practice, including 10 hours at night. The supervisor may be a parent, guardian, spouse, adult 25 or older, or a licensed professional instructor. These drivers must have a valid California Driver License.

A parent or guardian must certify in writing to the DMV that these hours of supervised driving have been completed.

- Not drink and drive. Even a .01 percent concentration of alcohol in your blood – less than one drink – will result in a one-year license suspension for drivers under age 21.

Stage 2: Provisional License

To obtain a provisional driver license, you must:

- Complete Stage 1.
- Be at least 16 years old, but less than 18.
- Pass a behind-the-wheel driving test. You must show proof of insurance to take the test.

Once your provisional license is issued, the following conditions apply:

- *For the first year (or until you turn 18), no passengers under age 20 allowed unless a licensed driver age 25 or older is present. Exceptions made for family need.*
- *For the first 12 months (or until you turn 18), no driving permitted between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m., unless accompanied by licensed driver age 25 or older. Exceptions permitted for school, employment, family and medical need (licensees must carry a statement from the appropriate school official, employer, doctor or parent/guardian).*
- *Violation of passenger or nighttime driving restrictions results in either court-ordered community service or a fine. Citations are given only if an officer stops a teen driver for another violation.*
- Maintain a clean driving record. One citation or at-fault crash within 12 months results in a DMV warning. Two or more result in license restrictions and suspensions.

Stage 3: Full License

A provisional license becomes a full license when you:

- Become 18 years old, and
- Have no outstanding DMV or court-ordered restrictions, suspensions or probation.

You do not need to return to the DMV to obtain your full license.

All drivers under 18: are prohibited from using any electronic communication device while driving – including cell phones, PDAs, pagers and laptop computers.

All drivers under 21: are still subject to a one-year license suspension if their blood alcohol concentration exceeds .01 percent when driving.

Helping Teens Take

Why do we need graduated driver licensing?

Driving is a complex and often demanding task, even for the best drivers. More supervised practice helps young drivers become more skilled behind the wheel and gives parents greater peace of mind.

Some resources to help teens practice their driving skills include:

The DMV's *Parent-Teen Training Aide* is available at your local DMV field office.

AAA's *Teaching Your Teens to Drive* is available for purchase by calling:
Southern California (800) 972-2472

This 13-lesson program includes a 50-minute video and handbook that help teens learn driving tasks such as:

- Basic vehicle control
- Positioning and speed adjustment
- Passing and changing lanes
- Visual search habits
- Freeway and night driving
- Driving on slippery surfaces
- Reducing risks

Driver-Zed is an interactive DVD developed by AAA to help teens identify and respond to driving risks. Driver-Zed is available for purchase at your local Auto Club office.

Crash patterns for teen drivers are alarming. Studies regularly show that:

■ **Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death among teens in the United States.**

In California alone, nearly 20,000 teen drivers are injured or killed every year.

■ **Teen drivers are in a far higher proportion of crashes than expected,** given their relatively small percentage of the entire driving population.

■ **Teen fatal crashes take place far more commonly during late night hours** than expected, given their relatively limited nighttime driving.

■ **Teen passengers are at a far greater risk in vehicles driven by other teen drivers** than in vehicles driven by older, more experienced drivers.

Licensing System

Because night-time driving poses a greater risk for teens, the instruction permit period requires 10 of the 50 hours of practice to occur during darkness. The law also restricts late-night driving during the first year of a provisional license.

Because the risk for teen passengers is greater with teen drivers, the law restricts under-age-20 passengers for the first year of a provisional license, until the teen gains more driving experience. ■

Graduated driver licensing has been very successful in California. During its first two years:

■ At-fault fatal and injury collisions involving 16-year-old drivers declined 24%.

■ Teen passenger deaths and injuries from crashes of 16-year-old drivers dropped a stunning 40%.