

What You Need To Know About Pennsylvania's Young Driver Law

Pennsylvania licenses young drivers through a three-stage program, reflecting the driver's gradual progression in skill, experience, and decision-making ability.

LEARNER'S PERMIT

After successfully completing a physical examination, vision screening and knowledge test, young drivers may begin behind-the-wheel practice. Basic driving skills and safe habits are developed under adult-supervised conditions. Requirements under the law include:

- Six months of learning: A six-month skill-building period to practice and gain experience is required before a young driver may take the road test for a junior license.
- You must be accompanied by a licensed driver who is at least 21 years of age or a parent, guardian, person in loco parentis or spouse who is at least 18 years of age and licensed with the same or higher class vehicle that appears on your learner's permit.
- 65 hours of adult-supervised skill building, including no less than ten hours of nighttime driving and five (5) hours of bad weather driving: A parent or guardian must certify (Parent or Guardian Certification Form (DL-180C)) that the young driver's six months of skill building included at least 65 hours of practical, adult-supervised driving experience.
- Nighttime driving restriction begins at 11 p.m.: The young driver may not be behind the wheel between the hours of 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. Young drivers may travel for employment and for volunteer or charitable service during these hours, but they must carry proper documentation.
- Passenger limitation: The number of passengers must not exceed the number of seat belts in the vehicle. This applies to all drivers under age 18.
- Learner's permit valid for one year: The learner's permit will be valid for one year with extensions for those requiring more practice time.
- Required sanctions for high-risk drivers under age 18: A young driver's permit will be suspended for 90 days if he or she accumulates six or more points or is convicted of a single high-speed violation (driving 26 miles per hour or more over the posted speed limit).

JUNIOR LICENSE

Young drivers who graduate to a junior license have satisfactorily completed all learner's permit requirements, including the road test, but the following restrictions still apply:

- Required sanctions for high-risk drivers under age 18: A young driver's junior license will be suspended for 90 days if he or she accumulates six or more points or is convicted of a single high-speed violation (driving 26 miles per hour or more over the posted speed limit).
- Nighttime driving restriction begins at 11 p.m.: Even with a junior license, a young driver may not be behind the wheel between the hours of 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. Exceptions for employment and volunteer or charitable service will apply, but young drivers must carry proper documentation regarding their need to travel.
- Passenger limitation: The number of passengers must not exceed the number of seat belts in the vehicle. This applies to all drivers under age 18.
- You may not carry more than one (1) passenger under the age of 18 who is not an immediate family member unless one (1) of your parents or guardians is in the vehicle with you. After the first six (6) months of driving on a junior license, the limit is increased to no more than three (3) passengers under the age of 18 who are not immediate family members unless one (1) of your parents or guardians is in the vehicle with you. The increased limit does not apply to any junior driver who has ever been involved in a crash in which you were partially or fully responsible or who is convicted of any driving violation.

UNRESTRICTED LICENSE

A full, unrestricted license - typically issued at age 18 - provides unlimited driving privileges to teenagers who have progressed through the graduated system and have an established history of safe driving. If certain conditions are met, some young drivers may qualify for an early license before age 18.

- Unrestricted license before age 18: A young driver cannot obtain an unrestricted license before age 18 unless he or she has maintained a crash-and conviction-free record for 12 months and has completed an approved driver's education course. To apply for an unrestricted license before age 18, young drivers must complete a special form, DL-59, and submit it to PennDOT along with a certificate of completion from an approved driver's education course, An affidavit of consent from a parent, guardian, person in loco parentis or spouse who is at least 18 years of age must also be provided.
- Passenger limitation: The number of passengers must not exceed the number of seat belts in the vehicle. This applies to all drivers under age 18.
- Required sanctions for high-risk drivers under age 18: A young driver's unrestricted license will be suspended for 90 days if he or she accumulates six or more points or is convicted of a single high-speed violation (driving 26 miles per hour or more over the posted speed limit).

SEAT BELT REQUIREMENTS

Drivers and occupants in a vehicle who are under the age of 18 must wear a properly adjusted and fastened seat belt, and children under the age of eight must be securely fastened in a child restraint system. Failure to comply with the new law's seat belt provisions is a primary offense, meaning that a driver can be pulled over and cited solely for that violation.

YOUNG DRIVER TUTOR'S GUIDE (How to Steer Them to Safe Driving)

PennDOT has developed a tutor's guide for those teaching teenagers to drive. As a helpful supplement to the Pennsylvania Driver's Manual, it guides tutors through lesson plans that help organize the time spent behind the wheel and assists in better preparing young drivers for the open road. The young Driver Tutor's guide (PUB 385), is available at www.dmv.state.pa.us by clicking on Forms and Publications.

SOME BASICS OF SAFE DRIVING

Always remember to buckle up before taking the wheel and ensure that your passengers do, too.

- Know and follow the rules of the road.
- Stay within speed limits and drive at a speed that is safe for road conditions.
- Look out for the actions of other drivers on the roadway and communicate your intentions to other drivers
- Follow other vehicles at a safe distance.
- Never drive while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

For more information or if you have more questions, please go to www.dmv.state.pa.us.

Consider the Gift of Life

When you get your driver's license, you can choose to give the gift of life and become an organ donor. Join the more than three million Pennsylvanians who have said they care by choosing this life-saving option. If you are under age 18, you must have the consent of your parent or guardian to become an organ donor.