

FACTSHEET

Provisional Licenses in California

Nearly 24 million Californians are licensed to drive. Sixteen and 17 year old drivers who have provisional licenses account for less than one percent of these licensed drivers. In 1997, before provisional licensing laws took effect, 24 percent of the state's 16 year old population was licensed to drive. By 2012 the rate of 16 year olds with a license was only 12.9 percent. According to an August 2013 study by the American Automobile Association Foundation for Traffic Safety, the most common reasons cited by teenagers surveyed for delaying licensure are lack of a vehicle, being able to get around without a car, and costs associated with driving.

Every state has enacted a law or laws making it more difficult for teenagers to obtain driver's licenses, commonly referred to as graduated driver's licensing. Graduated driver's licensing aims to enable teens to gain valuable driving experience in low-risk driving situations.

As described below, existing law includes a number of additional steps for those under age 18 to obtain a driver's license and places a number of restrictions on their driving privileges.

Steps to Obtaining a License for 16 and 17 Year Olds: Before obtaining a provisional license, a teen driver over the age of 15 ½ may apply to the DMV for an instruction permit. The teenager must provide proof of completion of the classroom portion of a driver's education course to the DMV when he or she applies for the instruction permit. During the permit period, which must be at least 6 months but can be as long as 12 months from the date of the application, the permittee may operate a motor vehicle only when accompanied by a licensed California driver over the age of 25.

In addition, during the permit period the teen must take the following steps in order to be granted a provisional license:

- Log 50 hours of driving practice with a parent, guardian, or instructor;
- Complete a 30-hour driver's education course and at least six hours of behind-the-wheel training with a certified instructor; and
- Pass written, driving, and vision tests administered by the DMV.

Upon completion of these steps, state law allows teen drivers to apply for a provisional driver's license.

Provisional Driver's License Restrictions: Existing law includes a number of special restrictions for holders of provisional licenses. With some exceptions, for the first 12 months of licensure the teen cannot do the following without being accompanied by a licensed driver who is the licensee's parent or guardian, a licensed driver who is 25 years of age or older, or a certified driving instructor.

- Drive between 11 PM and 5 AM.
- Drive with anyone under the age of 20 in the vehicle.

These restrictions end either 12 months after receiving a provisional license or when the teen turns 18 years old, whichever comes first. Applicants age 17 ½ or older may apply for an instruction permit without providing proof of completion of a driver's education course, but cannot be licensed until turning 18.

State law requires applicants for a driver's license who are 18 or older simply to pass written, driving, and vision tests administered by the DMV in order to obtain a license. It places no restrictions on the driving privilege once a person 18 or older receives a license.

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