

## Safety Belt Law

Under Virginia law, the drivers and all front seat passengers must wear safety belts. A driver transporting anyone younger than age 18 must ensure that the passenger is properly secured in a safety belt, booster seat or child safety seat no matter where the child is seated in the vehicle.

## Texting Law

Text-messaging or reading text messages while driving are prohibited.

## Sanctions

- ▶ **Texting while driving convictions** are assessed three demerit points.
- ▶ **If your teen is under the age of 18 and has ten or more unapproved absences from school** on consecutive school days, a court may suspend his or her driving privilege for any period of time, or until he or she reaches the age of 18.
- ▶ **A second or subsequent conviction for a violation** of the passenger, curfew or cell phone/wireless communication device restrictions may result in a court suspension of your teen's driver's license for up to six months.
- ▶ **If your teen receives a conviction for a demerit point**, safety belt and/or child restraint violation committed while under the age of 20, DMV will require him or her to attend a driver-improvement clinic.
  - ▶ If your teen receives a second conviction for an offense committed while under age 18, DMV will suspend his or her driving privilege for 90 days. If your teen has no other means of transportation, he or she may petition the juvenile and domestic relations court in his or her jurisdiction for restricted driving privileges to drive between home, work, and/or an institution of higher learning.
  - ▶ After the third demerit point conviction for an offense committed while under age 18, DMV will revoke your teen's driving privilege for one year or until he or she reaches age 18, whichever is longer. No restricted driving privileges will be granted during this time.

- ▶ **Drivers renewing licenses at age 20** will be required to take the knowledge exam if their driving record reflects at least one conviction for a traffic violation.

## Zero Tolerance

If your teen is under age 21, he or she cannot purchase, possess or consume alcohol. It is illegal for any person under the age of 21 to operate any motor vehicle after illegally consuming alcohol. If your teen is convicted of driving after illegally consuming alcohol and was found to have a BAC of 0.02 and less than 0.08, the court penalty will include a suspension of his or her driving privilege for one year from the date of conviction, and a minimum mandatory fine of \$500, or the requirement that he or she complete at least 50 hours of community service.

## Learner's Permit

If your teen wants to go driving with his or her learner's permit, there must be a licensed driver at least 21 years of age seated next to him or her at all times. The driver accompanying your teen must be legally permitted to drive and be alert to assist your teen.

There are exceptions. The driver supervising your teen's driving may be as young as 18 years of age if he or she is your teen's brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister, stepbrother, or stepsister.

Of course, the person accompanying your teen must not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

The in-car driver education teacher will administer your teen's final road test. If your teen successfully passes the test, the school will issue him or her a completion certificate. The certificate, combined with your teen's learner's permit, acts as a valid driver's license for 180 days.

Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles

## Court Licensing Ceremony

If your teen is **under age 18** when he or she meets the requirement for DMV to issue a driver's license, DMV will mail his or her driver's license to the juvenile and domestic relations court in his or her jurisdiction. Within the 180 day period, you and your teen will receive a notice from the juvenile and domestic relations court that will tell you when to appear in court for a licensing ceremony. During this ceremony your teen will receive his or her driver's license.

If your teen is **age 18 or older** on the date of the ceremony, you are not required to attend the ceremony with him or her.

If your teen is **age 18 or older** when he or she meets the requirements for DMV to issue his or her driver's license, DMV will mail the license directly to your teen. Your teen will not be required to attend a juvenile licensing ceremony.

If your teen held a valid driver's license issued by another state and exchanged it for a Virginia driver's license, he or she will not be required to attend a juvenile licensing ceremony.

## Stay Involved

Take an active role in the first years of your teen's driving. After your teen is licensed, don't opt out – continue to monitor his or her driving behavior. Your involvement may save a life.



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# Parents *in the Driver's Seat*

Now that your teen has a learner's permit, you have rights and responsibilities that can minimize the risks he or she will face on the road.



**Driving  
is not a right  
for teens.  
It's a privilege  
parents grant  
to teens.**

Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles

## The Leading Cause of Death

Driving is a complex task, even for most seasoned drivers. For young drivers, driving is especially difficult and can be lethal. In fact, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for persons between the ages of 15 and 20. That's why it's important for you to be involved in the first years of your teen's driving. This can be a rewarding experience for you and your teen that will help minimize the risks he or she will face on the road.

As your teen's parent or guardian, you know when he or she has the skills and maturity to drive. That's why your permission is required at many steps in the juvenile licensing process. That's why you have the right to withhold or cancel your teen's driving privileges.

## Rights and Responsibilities

With your permission, your teen now has a learner's permit. This means that you now have rights and responsibilities that will involve you in your teen's driving experience.

### Your Rights

- ▶ You have already exercised your first right – you gave DMV permission to issue your teen a learner's permit and, eventually, a driver's license.
- ▶ You also have the right to grant or not grant your teen's school permission to enroll him or her in the in-car phase of driver education.
- ▶ Until your teen turns age 18, you have the right to cancel his or her driver's license for any reason you deem appropriate. If you choose to cancel your teen's driver's license, complete the "Cancellation of a Minor's Driver's License" form (DL 18). The form is available on the DMV website at [www.dmvNOW.com](http://www.dmvNOW.com) or contact DMV at (804) 497-7100. But remember, you and your teen will not be able to reapply for a driver's license for at least six months.



### Your Responsibilities

Before your teen can get a driver's license, you must certify that he or she has 45 hours of behind-the-wheel driving experience, 15 hours of which must be after sunset. This requirement applies only if your teen is under age 18. The driver's education/training completion certificate must include your signature and driver's license or identification card number.

To help you meet this requirement, your teen will bring home a publication from his or her driver education class or from DMV when the learner's permit is issued. Created by the Department of Education, the 45-Hour Parent/Teen Driving Guide provides:

- ▶ suggested in-car guided practice sessions
- ▶ helpful tips on how to coach your teen during the guided practice sessions
- ▶ a detailed explanation of the fundamentals of driving
- ▶ a 45-hour driving log that you complete and give to your teen's driver education instructor
- ▶ a sound groundwork to foster responsible attitudes and driving behaviors in your teen

The guide is also available online at [www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/driver\\_education/parent\\_teen\\_driving\\_guide.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/driver_education/parent_teen_driving_guide.pdf).

## Licensing Requirements and Restrictions

### Learner's Permit

**Age of applicant** – Your teen must be at least 15 years, six months of age before he or she can apply for a learner's permit.

**Testing** – Successful completion of the two-part knowledge test is required to obtain a learner's permit. If your teen fails the knowledge test three times, completion of the classroom component of driver's education or training will be required before he or she is allowed to take the knowledge test a fourth time.

**Passenger limits** – While driving with a learner's permit, your teen may not carry more than one passenger under age 18. (This does not apply to family members.)

**Curfew** – While driving with a learner's permit, your teen may not operate a motor vehicle between the hours of midnight and 4 a.m.

### Driver's License

**Age of applicant** – Your teen must be at least 16 years, 3 months of age and have held his or her learner's permit for at least nine months before he or she can apply for a driver's license.

#### Passenger limits

If your teen is under age 18, he or she may carry only one passenger under age 21, unless accompanied by a licensed parent, or other adult acting in place of a parent, in the front passenger seat; however, after he or she has held a license for one year, your teen may carry up to three passengers under age 21 in the following situations:

- ▶ travel to and from a school-sponsored activity
- ▶ there is a licensed driver 21 or older in the front passenger seat or
- ▶ there is an emergency.

(Passenger restrictions do not apply to family members.)

**Curfew** – If your teen is under age 18, he or she may not operate a motor vehicle between the hours of midnight and 4 a.m. except:

- ▶ in cases of an emergency, including when

responding to an emergency call as a volunteer firefighter or rescue squad member

- ▶ when traveling to and from a place of business where he/she is employed
- ▶ when traveling to or from an activity that is supervised by an adult and is sponsored by a school or civic, religious, or public organization
- ▶ when accompanied by a parent or other adult acting in place of a parent or by a spouse who is at least 18 years old, in the front passenger seat.

**Cell phones** – If your teen is under age 18, he or she may not operate a motor vehicle while using any cellular telephone or any other wireless telecommunication devices, regardless if it is a hands-free device, unless in a driver emergency or when the vehicle is lawfully parked or stopped.

The passenger limits, curfew and cell phone restrictions under this section are lifted on the driver's license holder's eighteenth birthday.

## Driver Education Requirements

If your teen is under age 19, he or she must complete a state-approved driver education program. The program must present 36 classroom periods. It must also include 14 in-car instruction periods, seven periods of driving and seven periods of observation. The course must be taken at a **Virginia** public or private driver training school unless your teen is home-schooled.\*

**Transferring from another state** – Your teen's out-of-state driver's education may be accepted if it was successfully completed while residing in that state and the program meets a minimum of 30 classroom hours and six in-car hours.

If your teen holds a current out-of-state driver's license but does not have proof of driver's education, he or she may be issued a Virginia six-month temporary license. This will give your teen time to obtain proof or to complete a state-approved driver education program.

\* Information about home-schooled requirements are online at <http://www.dmv.virginia.gov/drivers/#homeschoolers.asp>.