FLASHFEED STUDY GUIDE

U.S. Permit Test by State (Driving)

Study guide by FlashFeed

November 2026 edition · pack version 1.0.20

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U.S. Permit Test by State (Driving): study guide

California and Texas permit tests: road signs, signals and markings, right of way, speed limits, turns and parking, phones and seat belts, alcohol limits, insurance, crashes and teen licensing. Pick your state in the latest version of the app. Not affiliated with any state DMV or DPS.

Edition	November 2026 (2026-11-21)
Pack version	1.0.20
Contents	18 lessons · 423 cards in the app · 106 self-test questions · 61 pictures
In the app	flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/drivers-permit

How to use this guide

Take one lesson at a time: read the study guide, then go over any key facts. Where a lesson has a self-test, try it from memory before you check the answer key at the back. Follow the Go deeper links when you want more.

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LESSON 1 OF 18

Road Signs: Shapes, Colors and Key Meanings

Sign shapes · Sign colors · Signs to know on sight

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- Identify a road sign from its shape, its color or its message, and say what it tells a driver.

A road sign carries its message through its shape, its color and what it says. A national standard assigns shapes and colors to particular uses. As a result, the look of a sign often shows whether it states a rule, warns of a situation or points the way. Knowing those shapes and colors, plus a short list of key signs, lets a driver tell at a glance what a sign is for.

Sign shapes

The **Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)** is the national standard for traffic control devices on any street, highway or bicycle trail open to public travel. Road signs are one kind of traffic control device. As of 30 October 2026, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) names the 11th Edition with Revision 1 (December 2025) as the current edition of the MUTCD. FHWA also wrote that by 18 January 2026, each State needed to have either the national MUTCD or a State MUTCD or supplement that substantially conforms to it.

Shape carries part of a sign's message. The MUTCD reserves certain shapes for specific signs or series of signs. Shapes used this way are **exclusive sign shapes**. They include:

- The octagon is the shape reserved for the STOP sign.
- Only the YIELD sign uses the downward-pointing equilateral triangle, a triangle with all sides equal.
- The circle is exclusive to the Grade Crossing Advance Warning sign, the sign that comes before a grade crossing, where a road and a railroad cross at the same level.
- The **pennant**, an isosceles triangle with its longer axis horizontal and pointing to the right, is the shape of the NO PASSING ZONE sign. That sign is installed on the left-hand side of the roadway where a no-passing zone begins.
- The upward-pointing pentagon is the shape of two signs, School and County Route. The School sign has four applications: school area, school zone, school advance crossing and school crossing. The county route marker shows a yellow county name, route number and border on a blue background.
- The **crossbuck**, two rectangles crossed in an X, belongs only to the Grade Crossing sign, the sign at the railroad crossing itself.

Not every sign shape is reserved. The **diamond**, a square with one diagonal vertical, is the standard shape of warning signs unless a sign is designated otherwise, and it is not an exclusive shape. A diamond

sign may not have its left and right points cut off. The circle, the pennant and the school pentagon are warning shapes too, so a warning sign is not always a diamond. The rectangle, square included, is not an exclusive shape either: it appears in the regulatory, guide and warning series. Regulatory signs, which notify road users of traffic laws or regulations, are rectangular unless specifically designated otherwise.

Sources

- 23 CFR 655.603
- MUTCD Table 2A-1 and section 2A.05
- FHWA, Current MUTCD Edition
- FHWA, MUTCDs by State

Sign colors

The MUTCD's color code gives colors general meanings. A color from the code may be used only for the devices or applications it prescribes. Some of the meanings are:

- Red is the color the MUTCD assigns to stopping and to prohibitions. The ALL-WAY plaque, which is used with STOP signs, has a white **legend** (the words and symbols on a sign) and border on a red background.
- The MUTCD gives yellow the general meaning of warning.
- Green carries the general meaning of permitted movements and direction guidance.
- Blue marks guidance on road-user services, tourist information and evacuation routes. General Service signs are white on blue, and so is the Emergency Notification System sign at a railroad crossing.
- Orange is the MUTCD's general color for temporary traffic control. Added work-zone guide signs are black on orange.
- Brown marks guidance to recreational and cultural interest areas. Symbol signs for these areas are white on brown.
- **Fluorescent yellow-green** carries the general meaning of pedestrian, bicycle, playground, school bus and school warning. School and school bus warning signs must carry a black legend and border on this background, while pedestrian, bicycle and playground warning signs may use it or yellow.

Colors also combine in set patterns on whole signs:

- On an **ordinary warning sign**, the legend and border are black and the background is yellow.
- Unless the MUTCD provides otherwise, a **guide sign**, which gives route and destination information, has a white message and white border on a green background.
- In a **work zone**, warning signs are normally diamonds with a black legend and border on orange, except the Grade Crossing Advance Warning sign, which stays yellow.

The two kinds of warning sign differ in background color: permanent warning signs normally use a yellow background, while work-zone warning signs normally use orange. There are exceptions to the usual

pattern: school and school bus warning signs must use fluorescent yellow-green, and the MUTCD allows a few other options in work zones.

Sources

- MUTCD sections 1D.05, 2C.02, 2D.02 and 6H.01

Signs to know on sight

Regulatory signs notify road users of traffic laws or regulations, while **warning signs** alert road users to a situation that might not be readily apparent. **Guide signs** tell road users about routes and destinations, directions and distances, services, points of interest, and other geographical, recreational or cultural information.

Regulatory and warning signs also differ in look: regulatory signs are normally rectangular, while warning signs are normally diamond-shaped with a black legend and border on yellow. Black and white are the colors for regulation. Some signs break the usual look: STOP and YIELD are regulatory signs that are not rectangles.

Key regulatory signs include:

- A STOP sign is the MUTCD's sign for an intersection approach where a full stop is always required.
- A YIELD sign tells road users to give the right-of-way to other traffic, slowing to a reasonable speed or stopping when necessary so they do not interfere with conflicting traffic. Giving the right-of-way means letting other traffic go first.
- A STOP sign means a full stop is always required, while a YIELD sign means giving the right-of-way and stopping only when necessary.
- The MUTCD requires a DO NOT ENTER sign at listed locations, including where a two-way roadway becomes one-way.
- A WRONG WAY sign may be added to supplement a DO NOT ENTER sign where a crossroad meets a one-way roadway in a way that does not physically discourage or prevent wrong-way entry.
- A NO TURN ON RED sign is required where a right turn on a circular red signal is to be prohibited.
- Where every approach to an intersection has a STOP sign, an **ALL-WAY plaque** goes below each of them.

Other key signs include:

- The MUTCD requires a Stop Ahead, Yield Ahead or Signal Ahead sign when a primary traffic control device cannot be seen from far enough away for road users to respond.
- A ROAD WORK sign gives a general warning that the road ahead has obstructions or restrictions.
- A Grade Crossing Advance Warning sign is required on each highway in advance of every grade crossing, with listed exceptions.
- The Emergency Notification System sign at a highway-rail crossing shows the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) inventory number and an emergency phone number.

Sources

- MUTCD Parts 2, 6 and 8

Key concepts

Octagon

- Reserved for the sign used where a full stop is always required on an approach to an intersection
- The sign it is reserved for is the STOP sign

Downward triangle

- Reserved for the sign that tells road users to give the right-of-way to other traffic
- Its sign calls for slowing to a reasonable speed, or stopping only when necessary, to avoid interfering with conflicting traffic

Circle

- Reserved for the sign required on each highway in advance of every grade crossing, with listed exceptions
- Its sign keeps a yellow background in a work zone, where other warning signs normally use orange

Pennant

- Reserved for the sign that marks where a no-passing zone begins
- Its sign is installed on the left-hand side of the roadway
- An isosceles triangle with its longer axis horizontal, pointing to the right

Pentagon

- Used for a sign with four applications: school area, school zone, school advance crossing and school crossing
- It is also the shape of the county route marker, which shows a yellow county name, route number and border on a blue background

Crossbuck

- Belongs only to the sign at the railroad crossing itself
- Two rectangles crossed in an X

Red

- The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices assigns it to stopping and to prohibitions
- The ALL-WAY plaque, which is used with STOP signs, has a white legend and border on this background

Yellow

- The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices gives it the general meaning of warning
- On an ordinary warning sign, the legend and border are black and the background is this color
- The Grade Crossing Advance Warning sign keeps this background in a work zone

Green

- Its general meaning is permitted movements and direction guidance
- Unless the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices provides otherwise, a guide sign has a white message and white border on this background

Blue

- Its general meaning is guidance on road-user services, tourist information and evacuation routes
- General Service signs are white on this background
- The Emergency Notification System sign at a railroad crossing is also white on this background

Orange

- Its general meaning is temporary traffic control
- In a work zone, warning signs are normally diamonds with a black legend and border on this background
- Added work-zone guide signs are black on this background

Brown

- Its general meaning is guidance to recreational and cultural interest areas
- Symbol signs for these areas are white on this background

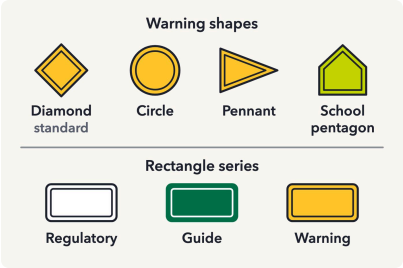
Key facts



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Shapes Reserved for Specific Signs

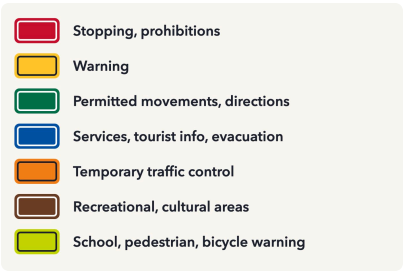
The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) reserves particular shapes for specific signs or series of signs, making them **exclusive sign shapes**. The octagon is reserved for the STOP sign, and only the YIELD sign uses the downward-pointing equilateral triangle. The circle is exclusive to the Grade Crossing Advance Warning sign, the crossbuck only to the Grade Crossing sign. The pennant is the shape of the NO PASSING ZONE sign, and the upward-pointing pentagon is the shape of the School and County Route signs.



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Diamonds and Rectangles Are Not Exclusive

The **diamond**, a square with one diagonal vertical, is the standard shape of warning signs unless a sign is designated otherwise, and it is not an exclusive shape. The circle, the pennant and the school pentagon are warning shapes too, so a warning sign is not always a diamond. The rectangle, square included, is not an exclusive shape either: it appears in the regulatory, guide and warning series, and regulatory signs are rectangular unless specifically designated otherwise.



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What Each Sign Color Marks

In the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices' **color code**, red is assigned to stopping and to prohibitions, and yellow carries the general meaning of warning. Green carries the general meaning of permitted movements and direction guidance, while blue marks guidance on road-user services, tourist information and evacuation routes. Orange is the general color for temporary traffic control, and brown marks guidance to recreational and cultural interest areas. Fluorescent yellow-green carries the general meaning of pedestrian, bicycle, playground, school bus and school warning.

Color Schemes on Whole Signs

On an ordinary warning sign, the legend (the words and symbols) and border are black and the background is yellow. In a work zone, warning signs are normally diamonds with a black legend and border on orange, except the Grade Crossing Advance Warning sign, which stays yellow. The two kinds differ in background color: permanent warning signs normally use yellow, while **work-zone warning signs** normally use orange. Unless the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices provides otherwise, a guide sign has a white message and white border on a green background.

Regulatory, Warning and Guide Signs

Regulatory signs notify road users of traffic laws or regulations, while warning signs alert road users to a situation that might not be readily apparent. Guide signs tell road users about routes and destinations, directions and distances, services, points of interest, and other geographical, recreational or cultural information. Regulatory signs are normally rectangular, while warning signs are normally diamond-shaped with a black legend and border on yellow. Black and white are the colors for regulation.

STOP, YIELD and the ALL-WAY Plaque

A **STOP sign** is the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices' sign for an intersection approach where a full stop is always required. A YIELD sign tells road users to give the right-of-way to other traffic, slowing to a reasonable speed or stopping only when necessary so they do not interfere with conflicting traffic. Giving the right-of-way means letting other traffic go first. Where every approach to an intersection has a STOP sign, an ALL-WAY plaque goes below each of them.



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Required Signs and Advance Warnings

The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices requires a **DO NOT ENTER** sign at listed locations, including where a two-way roadway becomes one-way. It also requires a Stop Ahead, Yield Ahead or Signal Ahead sign when a primary traffic control device cannot be seen from far enough away for road users to respond. A Grade Crossing Advance Warning sign is required on each highway in advance of every grade crossing, with listed exceptions. A ROAD WORK sign gives a general warning that the road ahead has obstructions or restrictions.

Matched pairs

Each item on the left goes with the one on the right.

ALL-WAY plaque → Goes below each STOP sign where every approach has one

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. Which sign tells road users to give the right-of-way, stopping only when necessary?

A Stop Ahead sign
B YIELD sign
C STOP sign
D WRONG WAY sign

2. Which sign does the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) require where a two-way roadway becomes one-way?

A DO NOT ENTER sign
B Yield Ahead sign
C NO TURN ON RED sign
D WRONG WAY sign

3. Which sign gives a general warning that the road ahead has obstructions or restrictions?

A Signal Ahead sign
B STOP sign
C ROAD WORK sign
D NO TURN ON RED sign

4. Which sign has the crossbuck shape, two rectangles crossed in an X?

A NO PASSING ZONE sign
B Grade Crossing Advance Warning sign
C STOP sign
D Grade Crossing sign

5. In a work zone, what background color do warning signs normally have?

A Red
B Orange
C Yellow
D Green

Go deeper

WATCH One Shape, One Sign 0:31 · YouTube
Some road sign shapes are reserved for one sign. Spot the shape, know the sign.

WATCH The Sign Color Code 0:29 · YouTube
A yellow warning sign and an orange one don't mean the same thing.

WATCH Yield Is Not Stop 0:31 · YouTube
Does a YIELD sign mean stop? Not always.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/drivers-permit/road-signs-shapes-colors-and-key-meanings

STUDY U.S. Permit Test by State (Driving) in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/drivers-permit

LESSON 2 OF 18

Traffic Signals and Pavement Markings

Traffic signals · Pavement markings · Pedestrian signals and crossings

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- Read a traffic signal or a pavement marking, including flashing signals, arrows and line patterns, and say what it tells a driver.

Signals and road markings tell drivers and pedestrians when to stop, when to go with care, and where passing or crossing is allowed. The topics are the lights at an intersection, the lines marked on the road, and the signals and crosswalks that pedestrians use. The federal Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) sets what these devices mean. A driver who misreads one can enter an intersection when the signal says to stop, or cross a line that prohibits crossing.

Traffic signals

A signal indication is the light or arrow that a traffic signal shows, and the MUTCD sets what each one means. The three steady circular lights mean the following:

- Traffic facing a **steady circular green** may go straight, turn right or left, or make a U-turn, unless signs, markings or other devices modify the movement.
- A **steady circular yellow** warns traffic that the green movement is ending and that red will follow.
- A **steady circular red** requires traffic to stop, unless the driver is entering the intersection to make another movement permitted by another signal indication.

In the usual order, a circular green is followed by a steady yellow and then by a circular red.

Flashing circular lights do not work like steady ones:

- A **flashing circular red** means stop at the marked point, after which the right to proceed follows the rules for a stop at a STOP sign.
- A **flashing circular yellow** lets traffic enter the intersection cautiously, yielding as it would at a steady green.

In the MUTCD, yielding at a steady green means giving way to pedestrians lawfully in the crosswalk, the pedestrian crossing. It also means giving way to vehicles lawfully within the intersection. A driver turning left or making a U-turn to the left must also give way to oncoming vehicles close enough to be an immediate hazard.

The first move tells the two flashing lights apart. At a flashing circular red, traffic stops and then proceeds as at a STOP sign, while at a flashing circular yellow it may enter the intersection cautiously. A steady yellow and a flashing yellow differ: the first warns that red will follow, and the second permits cautious entry.

An arrow shows one direction only. A green arrow permits traffic to enter cautiously only to make the movement the arrow indicates, yielding to pedestrians lawfully in the crosswalk and to vehicles lawfully within the intersection. A flashing yellow arrow permits the same cautious entry, only for the movement the arrow shows, with the same duty to yield; a driver turning left or making a U-turn to the left must also yield to oncoming vehicles close enough to be an immediate hazard.

The MUTCD gives a flashing green indication no meaning and does not allow it to be used.

Sources

- MUTCD sections 4A.03, 4A.04, 4E.01 and 4F.01

Pavement markings

Pavement markings include the lines on the road, and each pattern carries meaning. A **broken line** indicates a permissive condition, meaning crossing with care is allowed. A solid line either discourages or prohibits crossing, depending on the specific application. A **double line** indicates maximum or special restrictions.

Yellow center-line patterns tell a driver whether passing is allowed:

- One normal broken yellow line down the center of a two-lane, two-way road permits passing with care in either direction.
- A double yellow center line made of one broken and one solid line permits passing with care only for traffic next to the broken line.
- Two solid yellow center lines prohibit crossing to pass in either direction.

Compared directly, two solid yellow center lines prohibit crossing to pass in either direction, while one broken yellow center line permits passing with care in either direction.

A two-way left-turn lane is a lane set aside for left turns by traffic going either way. The MUTCD describes a **two-way left-turn lane** as a lane that can be used by traffic in either direction as part of a left-turn maneuver (Section 3B.05). The MUTCD describes a **reversible lane** as a lane in which the direction of travel is reversed from time to time (Section 3B.04). A two-way left-turn lane that is never operated as a reversible lane has a broken and a solid yellow line on each side. The broken line is on the side nearest the turn lane. A reversible lane is a lane whose direction of travel can change.

White lane lines use the same idea. A normal-width broken white lane line is used where crossing with care is neither discouraged nor prohibited. The exception is that a dotted white line separates a through lane from an adjacent acceleration or deceleration lane. A Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) research report on interchange ramps says speed-change lanes let entering and exiting vehicles speed up or slow down without conflicting with through traffic: the speed-change lane for an on-ramp is an **acceleration lane**, and the one for an off-ramp is a **deceleration lane** (Chapter 1). A through lane carries traffic that keeps going along the road, an acceleration lane is for speeding up, and a deceleration lane is for slowing down. A dotted lane line warns that the function of the lane changes farther along the road.

A normal-width solid white lane line is used where crossing is discouraged.

A **stop line** is a solid white line across the approach lanes that marks the point where a stop is intended or required. Approach lanes are the lanes vehicles use to reach the line. A **yield line** is a row of solid white triangles pointing toward approaching vehicles. A yield line may not be installed without a YIELD sign or another device that requires a yield.

Sources

- MUTCD Parts 1 and 3
- FHWA, Interchange Ramps and Speed-Change Lanes

Pedestrian signals and crossings

Pedestrian signals show a **WALKING PERSON** or an **UPRAISED HAND**, and the meaning changes with whether the symbol is steady or flashing. The four combinations of symbol and display mean the following:

- At a steady WALKING PERSON signal, which shows the figure in white, pedestrians may start across.
- A flashing WALKING PERSON pedestrian signal has no meaning and may not be used.
- A steady UPRAISED HAND pedestrian signal, shown in Portland orange, means do not enter.
- Under the MUTCD, at a flashing UPRAISED HAND pedestrians must not start to cross, but anyone already crossing continues.

A flashing WALKING PERSON gives pedestrians no instruction, just as a flashing green gives drivers none.

Under the MUTCD, a steady UPRAISED HAND means do not enter, while a flashing one means do not start to cross but let anyone already crossing finish. For example, a pedestrian already partway across while the hand is flashing continues, and one who has not yet stepped into the crossing must not start. Because anyone already crossing continues, a crossing may still hold pedestrians while the UPRAISED HAND flashes. A state's own law can differ on when a pedestrian may start to cross.

A **pedestrian countdown** shows the seconds left in the pedestrian change interval. Where a pedestrian countdown is used, it is always displayed at the same time as the flashing UPRAISED HAND and only then, not during the steady WALKING PERSON or the steady UPRAISED HAND. Not every flashing hand has a countdown: it is optional where the pedestrian change interval is 7 seconds or less.

After being dark between uses, a **pedestrian hybrid beacon** shows four lit stages in this order:

1. Flashing yellow.
2. Steady yellow.
3. Steady red.
4. Alternating flashing red.

The dark state is the resting state between uses, so it is not one of the four steps.

A **crosswalk** includes any part of a roadway, at an intersection or elsewhere, that pavement marking lines clearly indicate as a pedestrian crossing. So a crosswalk can be at an intersection or at another

place along the road. That wording gives one part of what a crosswalk is, and it does not say that every crosswalk is marked. Crosswalk markings show where pedestrians cross, while a stop line shows where traffic is to stop.

Sources

- MUTCD Parts 1, 3 and 4

Key concepts

Steady green light

- In the usual order, it is followed by a yellow and then by a red
- Permits going straight or turning right or left, unless signs, markings or other devices modify the movement

Steady yellow light

- In the usual order, it comes after a circular green and before a circular red
- Warns traffic that the green movement is ending and that red will follow

Steady red light

- In the usual order, it comes after a yellow
- Requires traffic to stop, unless the driver is entering the intersection to make another movement permitted by another signal indication

Flashing red light

- Traffic stops, and then proceeds as it would at a STOP sign
- The stop is made at the marked point, after which the right to proceed follows the rules for a stop at a STOP sign

Flashing yellow light

- A circular indication that lets traffic enter the intersection cautiously
- Entry is cautious, with traffic yielding as it would at a steady green

Flashing yellow arrow

- A signal that blinks in a caution color and shows one direction only
- Permits only the one movement it shows; a left turn also yields to close oncoming traffic

One broken yellow line

- Only one stripe runs down the center of a two-lane, two-way road
- Passing with care is permitted in either direction

Mixed double yellow

- Made of one broken line and one solid line
- Passing with care is permitted only for traffic next to the broken line

Double solid yellow

- Made of two lines, neither of them broken
- Crossing to pass is prohibited in either direction

Two-way left-turn lane

- Set aside for traffic going either way
- Has a broken and a solid yellow line on each side, when it is never operated as a reversible one

Stop line

- A solid white stripe that extends across the approach lanes
- Marks the point where vehicles are intended or required to halt

Yield line

- Made up of a row of triangles
- The triangles are solid white and point toward approaching vehicles

Key facts

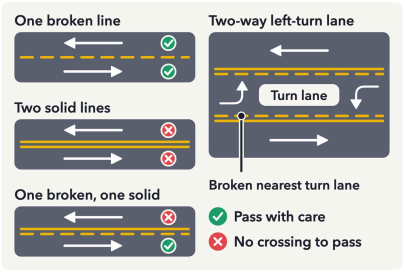
> **Steady green, yellow and red**
>
> Traffic facing a **steady circular green** may go straight, turn right or left, or make a U-turn unless signs, markings or other devices modify the movement. A steady circular yellow warns traffic that the green movement is ending and that red will follow. A steady circular red requires traffic to stop, unless the driver is entering the intersection to make another movement permitted by another signal indication. In the usual order, a circular green is followed by a steady yellow and then by a circular red.



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Flashing lights and arrows

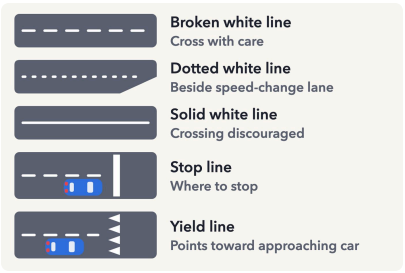
At a **flashing circular red**, traffic stops at the marked point and then proceeds as at a STOP sign, while at a flashing circular yellow it may enter the intersection cautiously, yielding as it would at a steady green. A green arrow permits cautious entry only for the movement it shows, yielding to pedestrians in the crosswalk and vehicles lawfully in the intersection. A flashing yellow arrow permits the same, and a left turn or left U-turn under it must also yield to oncoming traffic close enough to be an immediate hazard. A flashing green indication has no meaning and may not be used.



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Yellow center-line patterns

One normal broken yellow line down the center of a two-lane, two-way road permits passing with care in either direction, while two solid yellow center lines prohibit crossing to pass in either direction. A **double yellow center line** made of one broken and one solid line permits passing with care only for traffic next to the broken line. A two-way left-turn lane that is never operated as a reversible lane has a broken and a solid yellow line on each side, with the broken line on the side nearest the turn lane.



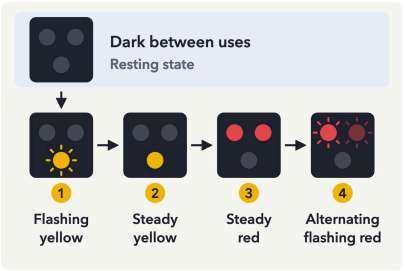
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Lane lines, stop lines, yield lines

A normal-width broken white lane line is used where crossing with care is neither discouraged nor prohibited, except that a dotted white line separates a through lane from an adjacent acceleration or deceleration lane. A normal-width solid white lane line is used where crossing is discouraged. A **stop line** is a solid white line across the approach lanes that marks the point where a stop is intended or required. A yield line is a row of solid white triangles pointing toward approaching vehicles.

Walking person and upraised hand

At a steady **WALKING PERSON** signal, which shows the figure in white, pedestrians may start across, while a flashing WALKING PERSON pedestrian signal has no meaning and may not be used. A steady UPRAISED HAND pedestrian signal, shown in Portland orange, means do not enter. Under the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, at a flashing UPRAISED HAND pedestrians must not start to cross, but anyone already crossing continues. A state's own law can differ on when a pedestrian may start to cross.



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Pedestrian countdown and hybrid beacon

A **pedestrian countdown** shows the seconds left in the pedestrian change interval. It is displayed only during the flashing UPRAISED HAND, and not every flashing hand has one. After being dark between uses, a pedestrian hybrid beacon shows flashing yellow, then steady yellow, then steady red, then alternating flashing red. The dark state is the resting state between uses, so it is not one of these lit stages.



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Crosswalks and stop lines

A **crosswalk** includes any part of a roadway, at an intersection or elsewhere, that pavement marking lines clearly indicate as a pedestrian crossing. Crosswalk markings show where pedestrians cross, while a stop line, a solid white line across the approach lanes, shows where traffic is to stop.

Step by step

The lit stages a pedestrian hybrid beacon shows, in order, after it has been dark between uses

1. Flashing yellow
2. Steady yellow
3. Steady red
4. Alternating flashing red

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. A pedestrian is already partway across a street when the signal begins to flash an UPRAISED HAND. What does that pedestrian do?

- A Stops where standing
- B Goes back to the curb
- C Waits for a WALKING PERSON
- D Continues crossing

2. Which pedestrian signal indication is displayed at the same time as a pedestrian countdown?

- A A flashing UPRAISED HAND
- B A flashing WALKING PERSON
- C A steady UPRAISED HAND
- D A steady WALKING PERSON

3. Which signal indication has no meaning and is not allowed to be used?

- A Flashing red
- B Flashing yellow
- C Flashing green
- D Steady yellow

4. What does a green arrow tell a driver?

- A That the green movement is ending and red will follow
- B That the movement the arrow indicates is permitted
- C That a stop is required before proceeding
- D That any movement through the intersection is permitted

5. A normal-width solid white lane line is used under which condition?

- (A) Where a stop is intended or required
- (B) Where passing with care is permitted
- (C) Where pedestrians are to cross
- (D) Where crossing is discouraged

Go deeper

WATCH The Flashing Yellow Arrow 0:30 · YouTube
A yellow arrow is flashing. Can you turn? Yes, with care.

WATCH The Flashing Hand 0:27
A hand is flashing at a crosswalk. That hand says two things at once.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/drivers-permit/traffic-signals-and-pavement-markings

STUDY U.S. Permit Test by State (Driving) in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/drivers-permit

LESSON 3 OF 18

Seeing, Space and Stopping

Scanning, mirrors, blind spots and the space cushion · Reaction, braking and stopping distance

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- Describe how to scan ahead, use mirrors, cover blind spots, keep a space cushion around the vehicle and count a following distance.
- Explain how perception, reaction and braking distance make up stopping distance, why speed lengthens it, and what else makes stopping take longer.

A driver can stay out of trouble before any law applies by looking far ahead, knowing what mirrors do not show, and keeping space around the vehicle. Space gives a driver time to act when things go wrong. Stopping also takes distance, and a faster vehicle needs more of it.

Scanning, mirrors, blind spots and the space cushion

All drivers look ahead, but many do not look far enough ahead. Looking far enough ahead means looking well down the road, not only at the vehicle directly ahead. It matters because stopping or changing lanes can take a lot of distance. Safety researchers define **hazard perception** as a driver's ability to foresee situations that could lead to a crash.

A **blind spot** is an area alongside a vehicle that the driver cannot see. Mirrors help a driver see around the vehicle, but they do not allow a driver to see everything. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) makes both points in a May 2025 handout. The handout also gives a head position for each outside mirror: against the driver's window for the driver's-side mirror, and in the middle of the vehicle for the passenger's-side mirror. Each mirror is set so the driver can just see the side of the driver's own vehicle.

Enhanced mirror settings shrink the blind spots, but the handout still says to look over the shoulder before changing lanes. Checking the blind spots means looking over the right and left shoulders out of the side windows, turning only the head. A driver does this before moments such as changing lanes, merging with traffic or backing up.

A safe driver needs **space around the vehicle** on all sides, a space cushion. When things go wrong, that space gives time to think and to take action. Staying alongside another vehicle is risky for two reasons: the other driver may change lanes suddenly and turn into the driver's vehicle, and the driver may be trapped when a lane change is needed.

Tailgating means driving too close behind another vehicle. A driver needs space ahead in case of a sudden stop, so the **counting method** checks the following distance behind the vehicle ahead in three steps:

1. The driver waits for the vehicle ahead to pass a fixed landmark, such as a shadow on the road or a pavement marking.
2. The driver counts seconds, one thousand-and-one, one thousand-and-two and so on, until the driver's vehicle reaches the same spot.
3. The driver compares the count with the target number of seconds.

The order matters, because each step needs the one before it. The target differs by source and vehicle, so the method gives no number.

Sources

- NHTSA, Minimize Blind Spots
- NHTSA, Hazard Perception Training
- Model Commercial Driver License Manual, Section 2
- Driver handbook, safe driving
- Driver handbook, glossary

Reaction, braking and stopping distance

Stopping takes more than braking, because the vehicle keeps traveling before the driver applies the brakes. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) defines **stopping distance** as the sum of three distances:

- **Perception distance** is the distance a vehicle travels during perception time, which runs from the moment a driver sees a hazard until the brain recognizes it.
- **Reaction distance** is the distance the vehicle continues to travel, in ideal conditions, before the driver applies the brakes in response to the hazard.
- **Braking distance** is the distance the vehicle travels, in ideal conditions, while the driver is braking, from the time the brakes are applied until it stops.

These definitions count perception distance separately from reaction distance. The difference between reaction distance and braking distance is timing: reaction distance is covered before the brakes are applied, and braking distance is covered while the driver is braking.

NHTSA's speed-enforcement training says human reaction time stays the same at higher speeds. During the time it takes the driver to perceive and react, the vehicle keeps moving at the same speed toward the hazard. A faster vehicle therefore covers more ground while the driver perceives and reacts.

Braking distance does not double when speed doubles. In FHWA's example, going from 20 to 40 miles per hour (mph) makes it four times longer. That figure is for braking distance only, not for the whole stopping distance, which also includes the reaction distance.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) says that as speed goes up, crash energy goes up faster than speed does. It also says higher speed raises the risk of losing control in an evasive steer, which means steering around a hazard.

FHWA also says substantially more distance is needed to stop in four cases:

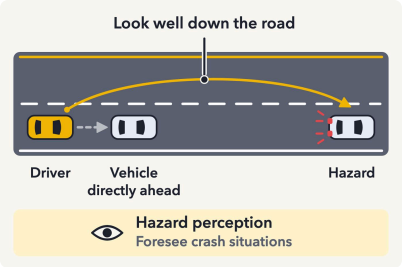
- a fatigued (tired) driver
- a distracted driver
- a driver on a down slope
- stopping on a wet roadway

The speed limit is set by state law, yet NHTSA says a driver can be **going too fast for road conditions** even at the speed limit. Its examples include bad weather, a road under repair, or an area at night that is not well lit.

Sources

- FHWA, Pilot/Escort Training Manual, Module 7
- NHTSA, Speed-Measuring Device Operator Training
- NHTSA, Speeding and Aggressive Driving
- IIHS, Speed

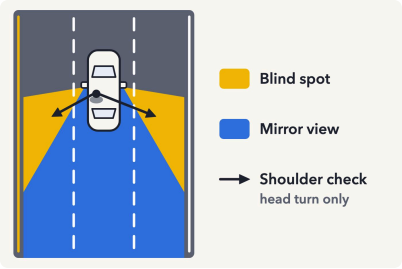
Key facts



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Looking Far Enough Ahead

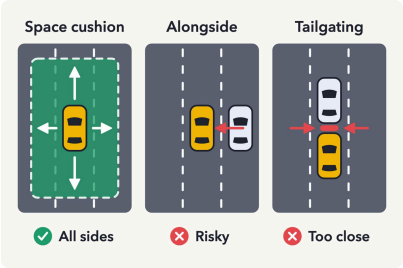
All drivers look ahead, but many do not look far enough ahead. Looking far enough ahead means looking well down the road, not only at the vehicle directly ahead, because stopping or changing lanes can take a lot of distance. Safety researchers define **hazard perception** as a driver's ability to foresee situations that could lead to a crash.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Mirrors Do Not Show Everything

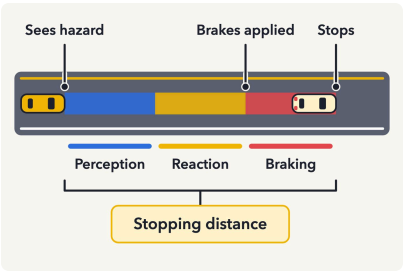
A **blind spot** is an area alongside a vehicle that the driver cannot see. Mirrors help a driver see around the vehicle, but they do not allow a driver to see everything. Checking the blind spots means looking over the right and left shoulders out of the side windows, turning only the head, before moments such as changing lanes, merging with traffic or backing up. Enhanced mirror settings shrink the blind spots, but the federal handout still says to look over the shoulder before changing lanes.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Space Around the Vehicle

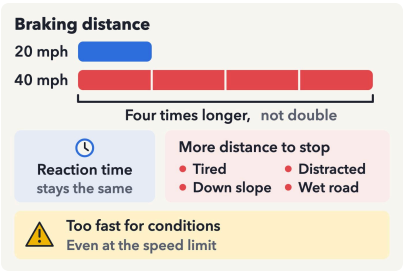
A safe driver needs **space around the vehicle** on all sides, a space cushion, because when things go wrong that space gives time to think and to take action. Staying alongside another vehicle is risky: the other driver may change lanes suddenly and turn into the driver's vehicle, and the driver may be trapped when a lane change is needed. Tailgating means driving too close behind another vehicle. To check the following distance, a driver counts the seconds from when the vehicle ahead passes a landmark until reaching the same spot, then compares the count with the target number of seconds.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

What Stopping Distance Includes

The Federal Highway Administration defines **stopping distance** as the sum of perception distance, reaction distance and braking distance. Reaction distance is the distance the vehicle continues to travel, in ideal conditions, before the driver applies the brakes in response to the hazard. Braking distance is the distance the vehicle travels, in ideal conditions, while the driver is braking, from the time the brakes are applied until it stops.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Speed, Conditions and Stopping

Human reaction time stays the same at higher speeds, so a faster vehicle covers more ground while the driver perceives and reacts. Braking distance does not double when speed doubles: in the Federal Highway Administration's example, going from 20 to 40 mph makes it four times longer. Substantially more distance is needed to stop for a fatigued driver, a distracted driver, a driver on a down slope, and when stopping on a wet roadway. A driver can also be going **too fast for road conditions** even at the speed limit.

Step by step

Counting a following distance to keep space ahead for a sudden stop; the target differs by source and vehicle, so the method gives no number

1. The driver waits for the vehicle ahead to pass a landmark
2. The driver counts seconds until reaching the same spot
3. The driver compares the count with the target

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. A driver watches only the vehicle directly ahead. Which describes looking far enough ahead?

- A Watching the vehicle directly ahead more closely
- B Looking at the road just in front of the vehicle
- C Looking at the traffic alongside the vehicle
- D Looking well down the road and at the vehicle ahead

2. A driver checks both outside mirrors and sees no vehicle alongside. Which statement is true?

- A A vehicle can still be alongside in a blind spot
- B A vehicle can be alongside only if mirrors are not set
- C No vehicle can be alongside since mirrors show everything
- D A vehicle can be missed only when it is far down the road

3. Which gives a driver time to think and to take action when things go wrong?

- A Watching only the vehicle directly ahead
- B Staying alongside another vehicle
- C Keeping space all around the vehicle
- D Relying on the mirrors to show everything

4. A driver's vehicle has enhanced mirror settings, which shrink the blind spots. What does the federal handout still say to do before changing lanes?

- A Waiting for blind spots to clear
- B Looking over the shoulder
- C Using only the center mirror
- D Using the mirrors alone

5. A driver checks a following distance by the counting method. The vehicle ahead has just passed a shadow on the road. What does the driver do next?

- A Counts seconds until the vehicle reaches the same spot
- B Slows down until the vehicle ahead is out of sight
- C Waits for a second landmark before counting
- D Compares the count with the target number of seconds

6. Human reaction time stays the same at higher speeds. What does a faster vehicle do while its driver perceives and reacts?

- A Covers less ground toward the hazard
- B Covers the same ground as a slower vehicle
- C Stops sooner than a slower vehicle would
- D Covers more ground toward the hazard

7. In the Federal Highway Administration's example, a vehicle's speed doubles from 20 to 40 mph. What happens to its braking distance?

- A It becomes three times longer
- B It becomes four times longer
- C It stays the same length
- D It becomes twice as long

8. Which case needs substantially more distance to stop?

A. A driver stopping on a level road
B. A driver stopping on a dry roadway
C. A driver stopping on a wet roadway
D. A driver stopping while rested and alert

9. Which condition can make a driver too fast for the road even at the speed limit?

A. A road that is in good repair
B. An area at night that is well lit
C. Dry and clear daytime weather
D. A road that is under repair

10. Which describes braking distance?

A. The distance kept behind the vehicle ahead
B. The distance covered from seeing a hazard to a stop
C. The distance covered while the driver is braking
D. The distance covered before the brakes are applied

Go deeper

WATCH Three Parts of Stopping 0:30 · YouTube
Go from 20 to 40 miles per hour. In one federal example, braking distance gets 4× longer.

WATCH Where to Put Your Head 0:31
Mirrors do not show everything. A blind spot is an area alongside the vehicle you cannot see.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/drivers-permit/seeing-space-and-stopping

STUDY U.S. Permit Test by State (Driving) in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/drivers-permit

LESSON 4 OF 18

Sharing the Road

Pedestrians, bicyclists and motorcyclists · Trucks, buses, work zones and animals

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- Describe how to share the road with pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcyclists, large trucks and buses, road crews and work zones, and animals.

Drivers share the road with pedestrians, bicyclists and motorcyclists, with large trucks and buses, with road crews and with animals. Each of them needs room, and several are easy for a driver to miss. Knowing what each of them may do, and where a driver cannot see them, makes it easier to leave the room they need.

Pedestrians, bicyclists and motorcyclists

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) advises drivers to look out for pedestrians everywhere and to minimize blind spots. It also tells drivers to use extra caution at night or in bad weather, because pedestrians can be harder to see at those times and may show up suddenly.

NHTSA also advises drivers never to pass vehicles stopped at a crosswalk, because there may be people crossing where the driver cannot see. A driver stopping at a crosswalk should stay well back from it, NHTSA says, so that other vehicles can see the pedestrians and stop too. Some pedestrians give a visible clue: one guided by an assistance animal or carrying a white cane may be fully or partly blind, or may have a disability.

A **multiple threat** is a pedestrian-car crash type in which one car stops for a pedestrian in the crosswalk and a second car approaches with its driver's view of the pedestrian blocked by another vehicle.

Bicyclists and motorcyclists face challenges that include being **smaller and harder to see** than other road users. NHTSA advises drivers not to underestimate the speed of bicyclists.

NHTSA says the majority of multi-vehicle motorcycle crashes are generally caused when other drivers simply did not see the motorcyclist. A 7 May 2015 advisory from the Department of Transportation (DOT) and NHTSA tells drivers to allow a motorcycle the **full width of a lane** at all times. The 2015 advisory also tells drivers to look for motorcycles in every mirror and blind spot before they change lanes or merge, especially at intersections.

A flashing motorcycle turn signal does not prove the rider is about to turn, because motorcycle signals often do not cancel on their own. A rider may have forgotten to turn the signal off.

The legal duty to stop or yield at a crosswalk, and any passing distance the law requires, are set by state law.

Sources

- NHTSA, Pedestrian Safety
- NHTSA, Share the Road
- NHTSA, Bicycle Safety
- NHTSA, Motorcycle Safety
- DOT and NHTSA, Motorcyclist Advisory
- DL 600, Pedestrians
- DL-7, p. 61

Trucks, buses, work zones and animals

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) says a large truck or bus has a **blind spot on the right** that is significantly larger than the one on the left. For that reason, it advises drivers never to pass a large truck or bus on the right. This is advice about large trucks and buses only, not a rule about passing on the right in general.

FMCSA also says that if a driver cannot see a truck or bus driver's **face in that driver's mirror**, the truck or bus driver cannot see the car. It adds that when turning right, large trucks and buses may first move to the left to get enough room to turn. Trucks and buses are slow to speed up and often slow down when going up a hill, FMCSA says.

FMCSA advises staying a safe distance back when stopped behind a truck or bus, particularly going up an incline, where large vehicles might roll backward. It warns that in a crash behind a truck, a passenger vehicle could slide or be pushed under it, because trucks sit much higher off the ground than passenger vehicles.

FMCSA advises making sure a truck or bus is visible in the rearview mirror before merging in front of it, and leaving extra space when doing so.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) says speed was a factor in over one-third of fatal work-zone crashes in 2024. FHWA's 2026 work-zone fact sheet gives drivers **six calls**:

- to pay attention
- to keep their distance
- to slow down
- to watch for pedestrians
- to allow extra space
- to avoid distractions

A deer biologist, quoted in the National Safety Council's November 2021 Traffic Safety newsletter, says deer are most active at **dawn and dusk**. In that November 2021 newsletter, the Council itself says that when a deer is seen near the road, more are likely to follow.

Sources

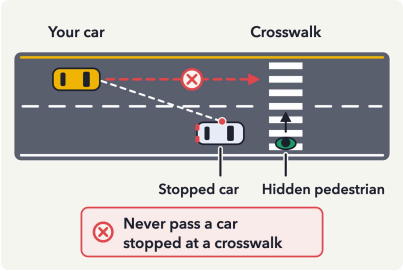
- FMCSA, Tips for Passenger Vehicle Drivers
- FMCSA, Teen Zone
- FHWA, 2026 Work Zone Fact Sheet
- National Safety Council, Deer-Vehicle Collisions
- DL-7, p. 51

Key terms

Multiple threat

A crash type in which one car stops for a pedestrian in the crosswalk and a second car's driver cannot see the pedestrian past another vehicle.

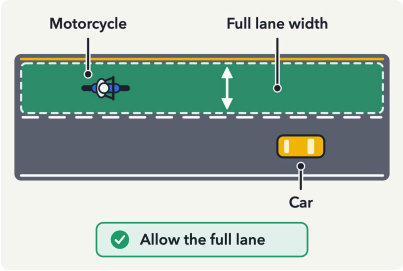
Key facts



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Watching for pedestrians everywhere

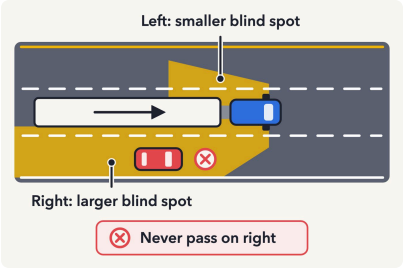
Drivers are advised to look out for pedestrians everywhere and to minimize blind spots. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) also advises drivers never to **pass a vehicle stopped at a crosswalk**, because there may be people crossing where the driver cannot see.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Smaller road users are easy to miss

Bicyclists and motorcyclists are **smaller and harder to see** than other road users, and drivers are advised not to underestimate a bicyclist's speed. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) says most multi-vehicle motorcycle crashes are generally caused when other drivers did not see the motorcyclist. A 7 May 2015 U.S. Department of Transportation and NHTSA advisory tells drivers to allow a motorcycle the full width of a lane at all times. A flashing turn signal does not prove the rider is about to turn, because motorcycle signals often do not cancel on their own.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Seeing and being seen by trucks

A large truck or bus has a **blind spot on the right** that is significantly larger than the one on the left, so the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) advises never passing it on the right. If a driver cannot see the truck or bus driver's face in that driver's mirror, the truck or bus driver cannot see the car. When turning right, large trucks and buses may first move to the left to get enough room to turn. In a crash behind a truck, a passenger vehicle could slide or be pushed under it, because trucks sit much higher off the ground.

Staying alert in work zones and deer country

The 2026 work-zone fact sheet from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) gives drivers **six calls**: to pay attention, to keep their distance, to slow down, to watch for pedestrians, to allow extra space and to avoid distractions. A deer biologist quoted in the National Safety Council's November 2021 newsletter says deer are most active at dawn and dusk.

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. A car ahead has stopped at a crosswalk. Why are drivers advised never to pass it?

- A People may be crossing out of the driver's view
- B The stopped car may suddenly back up
- C The traffic signal ahead may be about to change
- D The stopped car may be about to change lanes

2. A driver is judging how fast a bicyclist ahead is traveling. What are drivers advised to do about a bicyclist's speed?

- A To assume it is slower than cars
- B Not to bother judging it at all
- C To treat it as a runner's speed
- D Not to underestimate its speed

3. A driver sees a large truck about to turn right. What does the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration say the truck may do first?

- A Speed up first to clear the corner
- B Move left first to get turning room
- C Stop short of the corner to wait
- D Move right first to hug the curb

4. A driver is passing through a work zone. Which action is one of the six calls to drivers in the Federal Highway Administration's 2026 work-zone fact sheet?

- A To clear the zone quickly
- B To follow closely behind
- C To allow extra space
- D To change lanes often

5. A driver shares the road with a motorcycle. How much of a lane is the driver advised to allow it?

(A) Whatever width the driver's vehicle leaves
(B) The full width of the lane, at all times
(C) Half the lane, as motorcycles are narrow
(D) Only the width the motorcycle takes up

Go deeper

WATCH The Truck's Right Side 0:29 · YouTube
A large truck has a blind spot on each side. The right one is significantly larger.

WATCH The Car That Stopped for a Reason 0:28
A car stops at a crosswalk. The driver behind cannot see why.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/drivers-permit/sharing-the-road

STUDY U.S. Permit Test by State (Driving) in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/drivers-permit

LESSON 5 OF 18

Alcohol, Drugs, Fatigue and Distraction: How They Impair Driving

Alcohol and other drugs · Distraction and fatigue

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- Explain how alcohol, other drugs (drugged driving and mixing drugs), fatigue and distraction impair driving, and why a legal limit is not a safe amount.

Alcohol, other drugs, distraction and tiredness all impair driving, which means each one leaves a driver less able to drive safely. Each does it in its own way, and some ideas about them do not hold up. A driver can also be impaired without realizing it, which is why the facts about each cause matter.

Alcohol and other drugs

Blood alcohol concentration (BAC) is the weight of alcohol in a given volume of a person's blood. The type of drink does not matter: one standard drink, meaning a set amount of alcohol, is the same as another.

A legal blood alcohol limit is a **legal line**, not a safe amount. The legal limit itself is set by state law. Staying under the legal limit does not make it safe to drive. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that impairment starts at lower BAC levels than the legal limit. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) says that no amount of drinking before driving is safe.

Drivers find it very difficult to judge their own BAC or impairment. Failing to recognize alcohol impairment is often itself a symptom, or sign, of impairment. One myth says a person can drive as long as he or she is not slurring words or acting erratically. In fact, the coordination needed for driving is compromised long before signs of intoxication show, and reaction time is slowed.

Coffee does not sober a driver up: caffeine may help with drowsiness (sleepiness) but not with alcohol's effects on decision-making or coordination. There is no quick cure for alcohol impairment; only time helps.

Drugged driving is driving a vehicle while impaired by the intoxicating effects of recent drug use. Alcohol, marijuana and other drugs can impair driving because they slow a driver's coordination, judgment and reaction times. The CDC also states that using any alcohol or any other drug impairs a person's ability to drive safely. Using two or more drugs at the same time, alcohol included, can amplify, or strengthen, each drug's impairing effects.

One rumor says that marijuana cannot impair driving or even makes a safer driver. That rumor is a misconception: several scientific studies indicate it is false.

Over-the-counter (OTC) cold and allergy medicines, sleep aids and other OTC medications can cause side effects, including drowsiness, nausea and blurred vision. A medicine's warning against operating heavy machinery covers driving a vehicle.

Sources

- NHTSA, Drunk Driving
- CDC, Impaired Driving
- FMCSA, Tips for Drivers
- NIAAA, Holiday Spirits
- NHTSA, Drug-Impaired Driving
- NHTSA, Medicines and Driving
- NIDA, Drugged Driving

Distraction and fatigue

Distracted driving is any activity that pulls a driver's attention away from driving. The definition is not limited to phones. The CDC names three types of distraction, and each one takes something different off the task of driving:

- **Visual distraction** is taking the eyes off the road.
- **Manual distraction** is taking the hands off the wheel.
- **Cognitive distraction** is taking the mind off driving.

Texting and similar tasks involve all three types of distraction at the same time: the eyes leave the road, the hands leave the wheel and the mind leaves driving. Sending or reading a text keeps a driver's eyes off the road for about 5 seconds, which at 55 miles per hour (mph) is like driving the length of a football field with the eyes closed. Teen and young adult drivers face a higher risk of distracted driving than other age groups do.

Fatigue, or tiredness, is a different problem from distraction. Signs of drowsy driving include driving across the lines on the road, hitting a rumble strip (a strip that rumbles under the tires), yawning often and having trouble keeping the eyes open. These are only some of the signs, not a complete list. Drowsy-driving crashes occur most frequently between midnight and 6 a.m., or in the late afternoon. These crashes often involve a single driver, with no passengers, who runs off the road at high speed with no sign of braking. They also often happen on rural roads and highways.

A **micro sleep** is a brief loss of consciousness that can last four or five seconds, though the length is not fixed. In plain words, the driver is briefly asleep at the wheel. If a micro sleep lasts four or five seconds, a driver at 55 miles per hour travels more than 100 yards down the road while asleep.

Coffee or an energy drink alone is not always enough against drowsy driving. It might help a driver feel more alert, but the effects last only a short time, and the driver might not be as alert as he or she thinks.

Sources

- NHTSA, Distracted Driving
- CDC, Distracted Driving
- FHWA, Driver Safety Issues
- NHTSA, Drowsy Driving
- NSC, Fatigued Driving

Key terms

BAC

The weight of alcohol in a given volume of a person's blood

Micro sleep

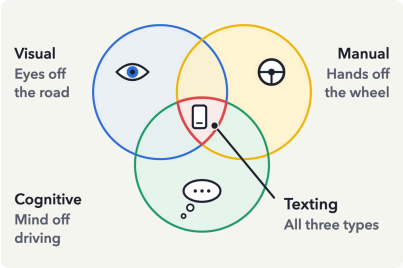
A brief loss of consciousness that can last four or five seconds

Key facts

> **A Legal Line, Not a Safe Amount**
>
> A legal blood alcohol limit is a **legal line**, not a safe amount. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that impairment starts at lower blood alcohol levels than the legal limit, so staying under the limit does not make it safe to drive. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration says that no amount of drinking before driving is safe.

> **Why Feeling Fine Is Not Enough**
>
> Drivers find it very difficult to judge their own impairment, and failing to recognize alcohol impairment is often itself a symptom of impairment. One myth says a person can drive as long as he or she is not slurring words or acting erratically, but the coordination needed for driving is compromised long before signs of intoxication show, and reaction time is slowed. Coffee does not sober a driver up: caffeine may help with drowsiness, but not with alcohol's effects on decision-making or coordination. There is no quick cure for alcohol impairment; **only time helps**.

> **How Other Drugs Impair Driving**
>
> **Drugged driving** is driving a vehicle while impaired by the intoxicating effects of recent drug use. Alcohol, marijuana and other drugs can impair driving because they slow a driver's coordination, judgment and reaction times. Using two or more drugs at the same time, alcohol included, can amplify each drug's impairing effects. The rumor that marijuana cannot impair driving, or even makes a safer driver, is a misconception: several scientific studies indicate it is false.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Three Types of Distraction

Distracted driving is any activity that pulls a driver's attention away from driving. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention names three types: visual distraction is taking the eyes off the road, manual distraction is taking the hands off the wheel and cognitive distraction is taking the mind off driving. The Federal Highway Administration notes that texting and similar tasks involve all three types of distraction at the same time.

> ### Coffee, Energy Drinks and Drowsy Driving
>
> Coffee or an energy drink alone is not always enough against **drowsy driving**. It might help a driver feel more alert, but the effects last only a short time, and the driver might not be as alert as he or she thinks. Drowsy-driving crashes occur most frequently between midnight and 6 a.m., or in the late afternoon.

Matched pairs

Each item on the left goes with the one on the right.

Cognitive distraction → Taking the mind off driving

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. A driver who has been drinking alcohol has a cup of coffee. What might the caffeine help with?

- A Decision-making and coordination, but not drowsiness
- B Sobering the driver up enough to be fit to drive
- C Coordination, but not decision-making
- D Drowsiness, but not decision-making or coordination

2. A driver has used marijuana and has also been drinking alcohol. Which statement about using both at the same time is correct?

- A Each can amplify the impairing effects of the other
- B Only the alcohol impairs driving; marijuana does not
- C The effects stay separate, so neither is stronger
- D Marijuana can offset the alcohol, making the driver safer

3. A driver reads and answers a text message while driving. Which types of distraction are involved at the same time?

- A Visual and manual, not cognitive
- B Visual, manual and cognitive
- C Manual and cognitive, not visual
- D Visual only

4. A driver relies on an energy drink alone to stay awake on a late-night drive. Which statement about relying on it is correct?

- A Its effects do not fade during a night of driving
- B It fixes drowsy driving every time it is used
- C It is not always enough against drowsy driving
- D It is enough as long as the driver feels alert

5. A driver's blood alcohol concentration is under the legal limit. Which statement about impairment is correct?

- A Impairment starts sooner with certain types of drink
- B Impairment starts only once the legal limit is reached
- C Impairment starts at lower levels than the legal limit
- D Impairment starts only once signs of intoxication show

Go deeper

WATCH Five Seconds Blind 0:29 · YouTube
5 seconds. That's about how long a text keeps your eyes off the road.

WATCH Only Time Helps 0:31
Coffee does not sober a driver up. Caffeine may help with drowsiness, not with alcohol's effects on decisions or coordination.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/drivers-permit/alcohol-drugs-fatigue-and-distraction-how-they-impair-driving

STUDY U.S. Permit Test by State (Driving) in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/drivers-permit

LESSON 6 OF 18

Night, Bad Weather and Vehicle Emergencies

Night, fog, rain and ice · Skids and vehicle emergencies

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- Describe the correct response to night glare, fog, rain, a skid, a blowout, brake failure and a stall on railroad tracks.

Darkness, fog, rain and ice each change how a driver should drive. Night gives a driver less time to respond, and some slick roads do not look slick. A skid, a tire blowout, brake failure or a stall on railroad tracks can put a driver in danger. For each of these, the safe response has a reason behind it.

Night, fog, rain and ice

Night driving carries greater risk mainly because drivers cannot see hazards as quickly as in daylight, so they have less time to respond. **Glare** is harsh light, such as the bright headlights of an oncoming vehicle. Driver factors in night-driving problems include vision, glare and fatigue. It can take drivers several seconds to see normally again after glare.

To handle glare, a driver should not look directly into the bright headlights of an oncoming vehicle. Instead, the driver should look toward the right side of the lane: at its right edge, or down toward its lower right side.

At night a driver must be able to stop within the distance the headlights light up. More generally, drivers have to make certain they can come to a stop within the distance they can see ahead. Choosing a speed that lets the vehicle stop inside that distance is one way a driver matches speed to conditions.

Low-beam headlights, the dimmer setting, should be turned on when approaching fog. **High beams**, the brighter setting, can actually limit a driver's visibility in poor weather such as rain, fog and snow. State law sets when headlights must be on and the distance for lowering high beams.

In fog, a driver should not change lanes or pass other vehicles unless absolutely necessary. The National Weather Service (NWS) lists three **small decisions** for driving in fog: to slow down, not use cruise control, and delay travel. Cruise control is a setting that holds a steady speed. Slowing down also fits the idea of stopping within the distance a driver can see ahead.

After a long dry stretch, oil and debris have built up on the road, so the road becomes slick when it first starts to rain. If the rain continues, it washes the oil away. Roads can be slippery even when they only appear wet. Four-wheel drive does not prevent a vehicle from losing traction, or grip, in snow. Trucks and sport utility vehicles (SUVs) can still lose grip in snow even when they have four-wheel drive. **Black ice** can form on a road without the driver even seeing it.

Sources

- Federal Highway Administration, Pilot/Escort Manual, Module 7
- NWS, Fog Safety
- NWS, Winter Driving
- National Safety Council, High Beams
- Model Commercial Driver License Manual, Section 2
- California Driver's Handbook, Safe Driving
- DL-7, p. 47

Skids and vehicle emergencies

Hydroplaning happens on water or slush, when the tires lose contact with the road and have little or no traction. The driver may not be able to steer or brake. A driver who is hydroplaning should release the accelerator (the gas pedal) and avoid applying the brakes. A driver handbook says to slow down gradually, without using the brakes.

A **skid** is different: it is any time the tires lose their grip on the road. A skid has four named causes: over-braking, over-steering, over-acceleration and driving too fast.

Recovering from a skid takes three steps, and the aim is to regain control of the vehicle. The driver:

1. stays calm and eases the foot off the gas;
2. turns the wheels in the direction the driver wants the front of the car to go;
3. straightens the wheels gently as control comes back.

NWS gives the first two steps and a driver handbook the third.

The goal in any tire **blowout** is to keep the vehicle balanced and controllable. Overreacting, such as slamming on the brakes, can cause a loss of control. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) lists five steps for a blowout, including these three. The driver:

1. holds the steering wheel with both hands;
2. corrects the steering as necessary to stabilize the vehicle and regain control;
3. once the vehicle is stable, continues to slow down and pulls off the road where and when it is safe.

After brake failure, the longer a driver waits, the faster the vehicle will go and the harder it will be to stop. The shared core of the response has three steps, and the **parking brake** is used because it is a different system from the hydraulic brakes. The driver:

1. shifts to a lower gear;
2. applies the parking brake with care, ready to let go of it if the vehicle starts to skid;
3. looks for an escape route.

A freight train can take a very long distance to stop. The aim is to get people away from a vehicle stalled on railroad tracks before a train arrives. In NHTSA's order, a driver whose car has stalled at a

crossing should:

1. get everyone out of the vehicle;
2. move away from the tracks and the vehicle;
3. call the number on the blue **emergency notification system sign**, or 911 if the sign is not visible.

Sources

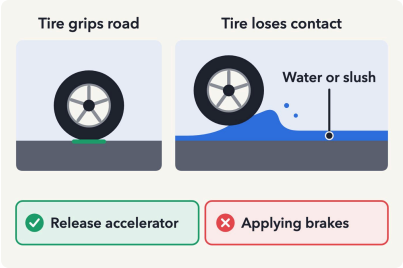
- Federal Highway Administration, Pilot/Escort Manual, Module 7
- NWS, Caught in a Winter Storm
- NHTSA, Tire Blowouts
- NHTSA, Railroad Crossing Safety
- Model Commercial Driver License Manual, Section 2
- California Driver's Handbook, Safe Driving
- DL-7, p. 48

Key facts

> **Night driving and glare**
> Night driving carries greater risk mainly because drivers cannot see hazards as quickly as in daylight, so they have less time to respond. After **glare**, such as from the bright headlights of an oncoming vehicle, it can take several seconds to see normally again. A driver should not look directly into those headlights and should look toward the right side of the lane instead. At night, a driver must also be able to stop within the distance the headlights light up.

> **Headlights and fog**
> **Low-beam headlights** should be turned on when approaching fog, and the National Safety Council notes that high beams can actually limit a driver's visibility in poor weather such as rain, fog and snow. In fog, a driver should not change lanes or pass other vehicles unless absolutely necessary. The National Weather Service lists small decisions for driving in fog: to slow down, not to use cruise control, and to delay travel.

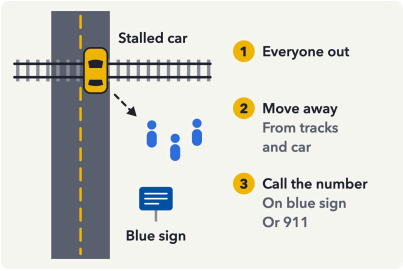
> **Roads slicker than they look**
> After a long dry stretch, oil and debris have built up on the road, so the road becomes slick when it first starts to rain; continuing rain washes the oil away. Roads can be slippery even when they only appear wet. Trucks and sport utility vehicles can still lose grip in snow even when they have four-wheel drive. **Black ice** can form on a road without the driver even seeing it.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Hydroplaning and skids

Hydroplaning happens on water or slush, when the tires lose contact with the road and have little or no traction, so the driver may not be able to steer or brake. A hydroplaning driver should release the accelerator and avoid applying the brakes. A skid is different: it is any time the tires lose their grip on the road. Recovery from a skid takes three steps: staying calm and easing the foot off the gas, turning the wheels in the direction the driver wants the front of the car to go, and gently straightening them as control comes back.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Brake failure and stalls on tracks

After brake failure, the longer a driver waits, the faster it will go and the harder to stop. Driver manuals share three steps: shifting to a lower gear, applying the **parking brake** with care and being ready to let go of it if the car starts to skid, and looking for an escape route. A freight train can take a long distance to stop, so the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's order for a car stalled at a crossing is to get everyone out, move away from the tracks and the vehicle, and call the number on the blue emergency notification system sign, or 911 if it is not visible.

Step by step

In a tire blowout, a driver takes three of the five steps to keep the vehicle balanced and controllable; slamming on the brakes can cause a loss of control

1. Holds the steering wheel with both hands
2. Corrects the steering as necessary to regain control
3. Once stable, slows down and pulls off where and when safe

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration lists five steps for a blowout; these three keep its numbered order, and the last step comes once the vehicle is stable.

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. At night, a driver meets the bright headlights of an oncoming vehicle. Where should the driver look to handle the glare?

A. Straight at the oncoming lights
B. The right side of the lane
C. The center of the road ahead
D. The left side of the lane

2. In fog, what should a driver do about speed and cruise control?

A Slowing down, no cruise control
B Holding speed, cruise control on
C Holding speed, no cruise control
D Slowing down, cruise control on

3. What should a driver whose car is hydroplaning do?

A Press the accelerator harder to regain control
B Release the accelerator and then brake hard
C Brake hard to slow down as fast as possible
D Release the accelerator and avoid the brakes

4. A car begins to skid. What does the driver do first?

A Straightens the wheels at once
B Presses harder on the gas
C Eases the foot off the gas
D Pulls the parking brake

5. After brake failure, how should a driver apply the parking brake?

A Hard and fast, to stop as soon as possible
B All the way, and kept on if the vehicle starts to skid
C With care, ready to let go if it starts to skid
D Only after the vehicle has stopped

6. In the order from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) for a vehicle stalled on railroad tracks, what should the driver do first?

A Get everyone out of the vehicle
B Move away from the tracks and the vehicle
C Try to restart the engine
D Check the tracks for an oncoming train

Go deeper

WATCH Steer Out of a Skid 0:31 · YouTube
Your tires lose their grip on the road. That's a skid.

WATCH Slicker Than It Looks 0:27
After a long dry stretch, the first rain makes the road slick. Oil and debris have built up on it.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/drivers-permit/night-bad-weather-and-vehicle-emergencies

STUDY U.S. Permit Test by State (Driving) in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/drivers-permit

LESSON 7 OF 18

California: Right of Way

Intersections and who goes first · Traffic signals and pedestrian signals · Pedestrians and crosswalks · Emergency vehicles and railroad crossings

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- In California, decide who must yield or stop at intersections, signals, crosswalks and railroad crossings, when turning or entering, and for emergency vehicles

Right-of-way is about who goes first, and who must stop or yield, when vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists meet. California's rules cover intersections, signals, crosswalks, emergency vehicles and railroad crossings. Laws change, and the rules here are California law as of 30 October 2026. The California Driver's Handbook (DL 600, Rev. 6/2025) from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) describes itself as a summary of the Vehicle Code. It says the DMV, law enforcement and the courts follow the code's full, exact language, so the code governs where the two differ.

Intersections and who goes first

California's Vehicle Code defines a **highway** as a way or place of whatever nature, publicly maintained and open to the public for vehicular travel, and says that a highway includes a street (Vehicle Code section 360). California's Vehicle Code defines **right-of-way** as the privilege of immediate use of the highway. The handbook glossary adds that it helps determine who may go first when vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists meet. The code defines an **intersection** as the area within the prolongation of the lateral curb lines (or boundary lines, if there are no curbs) of two highways that join at about right angles. It also covers the area where vehicles on highways joining at any other angle may come into conflict. The handbook calls it any place where one road meets another.

Where no sign or signal controls an intersection, the vehicle that arrives first has the right-of-way. Under the Vehicle Code, a driver approaching an intersection must yield to any vehicle that has already entered it from a different highway.

An uncontrolled intersection has no signs or signals, and an all-way stop has stop signs on every approach. At either kind of intersection, when two vehicles enter from different highways at the same time, California's Vehicle Code has the driver on the left yield to the vehicle on the driver's immediate right. At an uncontrolled intersection, a driver on a **terminating highway** instead yields to any vehicle on the continuing highway (Vehicle Code section 21800(b)); the code gives no such exception at an intersection with stop signs on every approach (section 21800(c)). At a T-intersection with no signs or signals, the highway that ends is the terminating one, and its driver yields to traffic on the highway that continues.

At an all-way stop, California's handbook order is that the driver stops and lets the vehicle that arrived first go. The driver yields to the vehicle on the right if arriving at the same moment, and proceeds after

checking all directions.

After a full stop at a stop sign, a California driver must yield to vehicles that have approached from another highway or that are approaching so closely as to be an immediate hazard. That duty does not apply where stop signs are on all approaches. A yield sign, by contrast, means slowing down and being ready to stop to let any vehicle, bicyclist or pedestrian pass before proceeding. California's handbook tells a driver approaching a roundabout to yield to traffic already in it.

A California driver turning left, including by U-turn, must yield to oncoming vehicles that are near enough to be a hazard. A driver entering a highway from private property or an alley must yield to traffic that is an immediate hazard. California's Vehicle Code defines an **alley** as a highway with a roadway no wider than 25 feet that is used mainly to reach the rear or side entrances of abutting property (Vehicle Code section 110). The handbook has any driver entering traffic yield to vehicles already in the lanes. On a steep, narrow road where two vehicles cannot pass each other, the uphill vehicle has the right-of-way. The downhill vehicle yields and, if necessary, backs up to a place where the vehicles can pass.

Sources

- Vehicle Code §110
- Vehicle Code §360
- Vehicle Code §365
- Vehicle Code §525
- Vehicle Code §21661
- Vehicle Code §21800
- Vehicle Code §21801
- Vehicle Code §21802
- Vehicle Code §21804
- DL 600, p. ii
- DL 600, p. 35
- DL 600, p. 39
- DL 600, p. 40
- DL 600, p. 42
- DL 600, p. 84

Traffic signals and pedestrian signals

California's signal rules depend on the indication:

- Steady circular red: the driver stops at a marked **limit line** if there is one, otherwise before the near crosswalk, otherwise before the intersection. The driver stays stopped until an indication to proceed is shown. The exception: after stopping, the driver may turn right (or turn left from a one-way street onto a one-way street) unless a sign prohibits the turn, yielding to pedestrians in the adjacent crosswalk and to vehicles that are an immediate hazard. California's handbook defines a limit line, its

term for a stop line, as a wide white line marking where drivers stop before an intersection or crosswalk.

- Steady yellow: warns either that the green movement it follows is ending or that red will appear immediately afterward. The code gives a yellow arrow the same warning.
- Flashing red: requires a stop at the limit line, the near crosswalk or the point with a view of crossing traffic. After stopping, the driver may go on under the rules for a stop sign, so a flashing red works like a stop sign.
- Flashing yellow: lets a driver go through only with caution. The handbook adds that the driver should slow down, be alert and need not stop.
- Green arrow: lets a driver enter the intersection only to make the movement the arrow shows, or another movement the other indications permit. The driver still yields to other traffic and to pedestrians lawfully in the intersection or adjacent crosswalk. The handbook calls a green arrow a **protected turn**.

When traffic signals at an intersection are not working, a California driver must stop there and may go on with caution only when it is safe.

On a green signal a California driver, even one turning, must yield to vehicles and pedestrians lawfully within the intersection or an adjacent crosswalk. The handbook words this as proceeding with caution on a green, with pedestrians keeping the right-of-way.

Under Vehicle Code section 21456, operative 1 January 2024, a pedestrian facing a WALK signal or the walking-person symbol may cross in the direction of the signal. The pedestrian must yield to vehicles already lawfully within the intersection when the signal is first shown. Under that section, a steady DON'T WALK, or a flashing DON'T WALK with no countdown, means a California pedestrian must not start to cross. A pedestrian who started on WALK and is partway across continues to a sidewalk or safety zone or otherwise leaves the roadway. California's Vehicle Code defines a **safety zone** as space within a roadway lawfully set apart for the exclusive use of pedestrians that is protected, or marked by vertical signs, raised markers or raised buttons, so that it is plainly visible at all times (Vehicle Code section 540).

A flashing signal with a **countdown** means a pedestrian may start to cross. The pedestrian must finish before the steady DON'T WALK appears when the countdown ends. California's handbook says drivers must yield even while DON'T WALK is flashing, and tells a pedestrian not to start then. The code's countdown rule, operative 1 January 2024, governs the pedestrian.

Sources

- Vehicle Code §540
- Vehicle Code §21451
- Vehicle Code §21452
- Vehicle Code §21453
- Vehicle Code §21456
- Vehicle Code §21457

- Vehicle Code §21800
- DL 600, p. 18
- DL 600, p. 33
- DL 600, p. 34
- DL 600, p. 35
- DL 600, p. 39

Pedestrians and crosswalks

A California driver must yield to a pedestrian crossing in a marked crosswalk, or in an unmarked crosswalk at an intersection. The Vehicle Code defines a **crosswalk** as either the extension of the sidewalk lines where roads meet at about right angles (except the extension of lines from an alley across a street) or any part of a roadway marked for pedestrian crossing. There is no crosswalk where local authorities have posted signs indicating no crossing. The handbook adds that not every crosswalk is marked. California's own 2026 edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) requires yellow crosswalk markings beside school grounds, citing Vehicle Code section 21368. The handbook words this differently, saying crossings at schools can be marked with yellow lines.

A driver approaching a pedestrian in a crosswalk must exercise all due care and reduce speed or take any other action as necessary to safeguard the pedestrian. A California driver may not pass a vehicle that has stopped at a crosswalk to let a pedestrian cross. A vehicle may pass a bus or trolley coach stopped at a safety zone in California only at 10 miles per hour (mph) or slower. The handbook likewise gives 10 mph for passing a bus, streetcar or trolley stopped at a safety zone or traffic light.

A totally or partially blind pedestrian carrying a white cane or using a guide dog has the right-of-way under the Vehicle Code. California's handbook says such pedestrians hold it at all times.

A pedestrian outside a crosswalk in California must yield to vehicles so near on the roadway as to be an immediate hazard. That does not relieve a driver of the duty to use due care for the safety of any pedestrian on the roadway. The handbook words this more broadly, as pedestrians always having the right-of-way.

In California, unless the Vehicle Code expressly permits otherwise, a motor vehicle may be driven on or across a sidewalk only as necessary to enter or leave adjacent property. The handbook says a driver may cross a sidewalk to enter or exit a driveway or alley.

California's **Anti-Gridlock Act** bars a driver from entering an intersection or marked crosswalk without room to clear it on the far side, even on a green signal.

Sources

- Vehicle Code §275
- Vehicle Code §21663
- Vehicle Code §21756
- Vehicle Code §21950

- Vehicle Code §21951
- Vehicle Code §21954
- Vehicle Code §21963
- Vehicle Code §22526
- Caltrans, California MUTCD 2026
- DL 600, p. 39
- DL 600, p. 41
- DL 600, p. 42
- DL 600, p. 43
- DL 600, p. 51

Emergency vehicles and railroad crossings

California's Vehicle Code defines an authorized emergency vehicle by a list that includes publicly owned and operated ambulances, certain publicly owned peace-officer and fire-department vehicles, and other vehicles the code lists (Vehicle Code section 165). When an **authorized emergency vehicle** approaches sounding a siren, with a lighted red lamp visible from 1,000 feet in front of the vehicle under normal atmospheric conditions, California drivers must yield unless a traffic officer directs otherwise. To give it a clear path, a driver yields by driving immediately to the right-hand edge or curb, clear of any intersection, and then stops and stays stopped until it passes. A driver in an exclusive or **preferential lane** must instead exit that lane as soon as that can be done with reasonable safety.

In the same situation, all pedestrians on a California highway must go to the nearest curb or place of safety and stay there until the vehicle has passed, unless a traffic officer directs otherwise. California's handbook says a driver already in an intersection when an emergency vehicle approaches continues through it, then pulls to the right and stops.

California bars other motor vehicles from following within 300 feet of an emergency vehicle that is responding under the Vehicle Code's exemption, and the handbook gives the same distance. Going to the scene of an emergency for the purpose of viewing it, and so impeding police, firefighters or other emergency personnel, is a misdemeanor under Penal Code section 402. The handbook words this more broadly, warning that a driver can be arrested for driving to the scene of a fire, collision or other disaster.

At a railroad or rail transit crossing, an ordinary driver must stop at least 15 feet from the nearest rail when a signal device or flagman warns, or when a train is visible or audible and an immediate hazard. California bars a driver from going through, around or under a closed railroad crossing gate. The handbook says to wait at a crossing until the flashing red lights stop, even when the gate goes up. No person may park a vehicle upon a railroad track or within seven and a half feet of the nearest rail.

A stricter rule applies to a bus carrying passengers, a school bus carrying pupils, and a commercial motor vehicle placarded for listed hazardous materials. Such a vehicle must stop at every California railroad crossing, 15 to 50 feet from the nearest rail, and listen and look both ways, unless the Vehicle Code excuses the stop, for example where an officer or traffic signal directs traffic to proceed. It must not shift gears manually while crossing the tracks.

Sources

- Vehicle Code §165
- Vehicle Code §21706
- Vehicle Code §21806
- Vehicle Code §22451
- Vehicle Code §22452
- Vehicle Code §22521
- Penal Code §402
- DL 600, p. 45
- DL 600, p. 51

Key terms

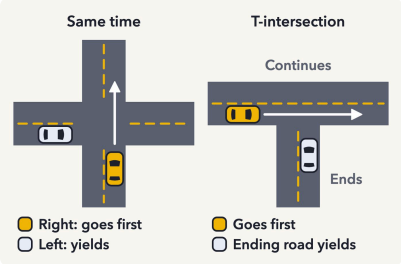
Intersection

In California, the area within the curb lines of two highways joining at about right angles, or where vehicles on highways joining at another angle may conflict

Crosswalk

In California, the extension of sidewalk lines where roads meet (except lines from an alley) or a marked pedestrian crossing; none where signs say no crossing

Key facts



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Who Goes First at an Intersection

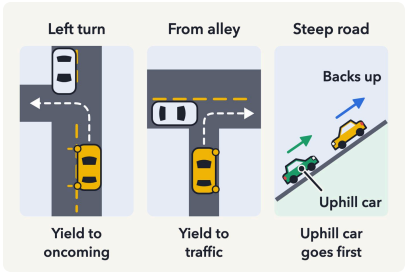
Where no sign or signal controls an intersection, the vehicle that arrives first has the right-of-way, the privilege of immediate use of the highway. When two vehicles from different highways enter an intersection with no signs or signals at the same time, California's Vehicle Code has the driver on the left yield to the vehicle on the right, unless that vehicle is on a **terminating highway**, the highway that ends at a T-intersection, whose driver yields to traffic on the continuing highway. An all-way stop has no such exception: the driver on the left yields to the vehicle on the right.



Wikimedia Commons · Federal Highway Administration · Public domain

All-Way Stops, Stop Signs and Yield Signs

At an all-way stop in California, the driver stops, lets the vehicle that arrived first go, yields to the vehicle on the right if arriving at the same moment, and proceeds after checking all directions. After a full stop at a stop sign, a California driver must yield to vehicles that have approached from another highway or that are approaching so closely as to be an immediate hazard, except where stop signs are on all approaches. A **yield sign** means slowing down and being ready to stop to let any vehicle, bicyclist or pedestrian pass before proceeding.



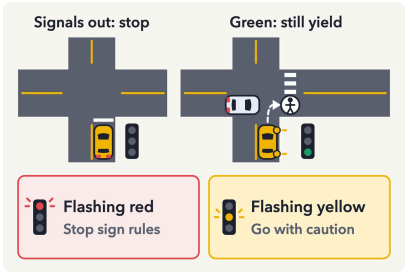
FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Yielding When Turning or Entering

A California driver turning left, including by U-turn, must yield to oncoming vehicles that are near enough to be a hazard. A driver entering a highway from private property or an alley must yield to traffic that is an immediate hazard. On a steep, narrow road where two vehicles cannot pass each other, the **uphill vehicle** has the right-of-way, and the downhill vehicle yields and, if necessary, backs up to a place where the vehicles can pass.

Steady Red and Steady Yellow Signals

At a **steady circular red**, a California driver stops at a marked limit line if there is one, otherwise before the near crosswalk, otherwise before the intersection, and stays stopped until an indication to proceed is shown. The exception: after stopping, the driver may turn right (or turn left from a one-way street onto a one-way street) unless a sign prohibits the turn, yielding to pedestrians in the adjacent crosswalk and to vehicles that are an immediate hazard. A steady yellow warns that the green movement is ending or that red will appear immediately afterward.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Flashing, Non-Working and Green Signals

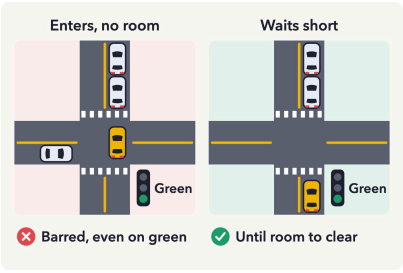
A **flashing red** signal requires a stop at the limit line, the near crosswalk or the point with a view of crossing traffic, after which a California driver may go on under the rules for a stop sign; a flashing yellow lets a driver go through only with caution. When traffic signals at an intersection are not working, a California driver must stop there and may go on with caution only when it is safe. On a green signal, even a turning driver must yield to vehicles and pedestrians lawfully within the intersection or an adjacent crosswalk.

Pedestrian Signals and the Countdown

A California pedestrian facing a WALK signal may cross in the direction of the signal but must yield to vehicles already lawfully within the intersection when the signal is first shown. A steady DON'T WALK, or a flashing DON'T WALK with no countdown, means the pedestrian must not start to cross; one who started on WALK and is partway across continues to a sidewalk or safety zone or otherwise leaves the roadway. A flashing signal with a **countdown** lets the pedestrian start, but the crossing must be finished before the steady DON'T WALK appears when the countdown ends.

Yielding to Pedestrians in Crosswalks

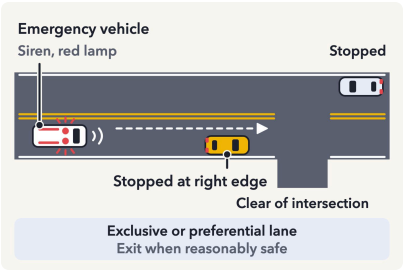
A California driver must yield to a pedestrian crossing in a marked crosswalk, or in an **unmarked crosswalk** at an intersection. A driver approaching a pedestrian in a crosswalk must exercise all due care and reduce speed or take any other action as necessary to safeguard the pedestrian. A driver may not pass a vehicle that has stopped at a crosswalk to let a pedestrian cross. A totally or partially blind pedestrian carrying a white cane or using a guide dog has the right-of-way under the Vehicle Code.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Outside Crosswalks, Sidewalks and Gridlock

A pedestrian outside a crosswalk in California must yield to vehicles so near on the roadway as to be an immediate hazard, but that does not relieve a driver of the duty to use due care for the safety of any pedestrian on the roadway. Unless the Vehicle Code expressly permits otherwise, a motor vehicle may be driven on or across a sidewalk only as necessary to enter or leave adjacent property. California's **Anti-Gridlock Act** bars a driver from entering an intersection or marked crosswalk without room to clear it on the far side, even on a green signal.



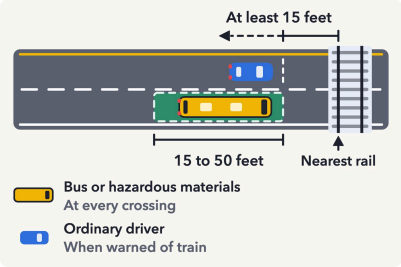
FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

When an Emergency Vehicle Approaches

When an authorized **emergency vehicle** approaches sounding a siren, with a lighted red lamp visible from 1,000 feet under normal atmospheric conditions, a California driver must, unless a traffic officer directs otherwise, drive immediately to the right-hand edge or curb, clear of any intersection, and stay stopped until it passes. A driver in an exclusive or preferential lane must instead exit that lane as soon as that can be done with reasonable safety. Going to an emergency scene to view it, and so impeding emergency personnel, is a misdemeanor under California law.

Distances Near Emergency Vehicles and Rails

California bars other motor vehicles from following within 300 feet of an emergency vehicle responding under the Vehicle Code's exemption. At a railroad or rail transit crossing, an ordinary driver must stop at least 15 feet from the nearest rail when a signal device or flagman warns, or when a train is visible or audible and an immediate hazard. No person may park a vehicle upon a railroad track or within seven and a half feet of the nearest rail. A driver may not go through, around or under a **closed railroad crossing gate**.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Buses and Hazardous-Material Vehicles at Crossings

A bus carrying passengers, a school bus carrying pupils and a commercial motor vehicle placarded for listed hazardous materials must stop at every California railroad crossing, **15 to 50 feet** from the nearest rail, and listen and look both ways, unless the Vehicle Code excuses the stop, for example where an officer or traffic signal directs traffic to proceed. Such a vehicle must not shift gears manually while crossing the tracks. An ordinary driver, by contrast, stops at least 15 feet from the nearest rail when warned of a train.

Matched pairs

Each item on the left goes with the one on the right.

Steep, narrow road with no room to pass → California: the uphill vehicle has the right-of-way

Step by step

California drivers give an approaching emergency vehicle a clear path, unless a traffic officer directs otherwise (a driver in a preferential lane exits it)

1. Moving immediately to the right-hand edge or curb
2. Stopping at that edge or curb, clear of any intersection
3. Staying stopped until the emergency vehicle has passed

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. Two vehicles from different highways reach an all-way stop in California at the same moment. Which driver yields?

- (A) The driver in the smaller vehicle yields to the larger one
- (B) The driver on the left yields to the vehicle on the right
- (C) The driver on the narrower highway yields to the wider one
- (D) The driver on the right yields to the vehicle on the left

2. The traffic signals at a California intersection are not working. What does the Vehicle Code require of an approaching driver?

A. Stopping and going on with caution only when it is safe
B. Slowing down and going through only if no vehicle is close
C. Waiting there until the signals are working again
D. Going through at normal speed since no signal applies

3. A pedestrian starts to cross at a California intersection where no crosswalk lines are painted. How must an approaching driver respond under the Vehicle Code?

A. Yielding only when the pedestrian has a WALK signal
B. Continuing because the pedestrian must yield to the vehicle
C. Continuing because only painted crosswalks count
D. Yielding because an intersection has an unmarked crosswalk

4. A California driver comes up behind an emergency vehicle that is responding under the Vehicle Code's exemption. California bars following it within how many feet?

A. 1,000 feet
B. 50 feet
C. 300 feet
D. 100 feet

5. Which action does the California Vehicle Code bar at a railroad crossing?

A. Stopping when a flagman warns of a train
B. Stopping a bus 40 feet from the nearest rail
C. Parking ten feet from the nearest rail
D. Going around a closed crossing gate

Go deeper

WATCH Who Goes First 0:31 · YouTube
Two cars reach a four-way stop at the same moment. Who goes first?

WATCH Gate Up, Lights Flashing 0:28
A railroad gate goes up, but its red lights still flash. California's handbook says wait until they stop.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/drivers-permit/california-right-of-way

STUDY U.S. Permit Test by State (Driving) in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/drivers-permit

LESSON 8 OF 18

California: Speed Limits and Following Distance

Maximum limits and the basic speed law · Lower limits in zones and special places · Following distance and driving to conditions

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- In California, state the basic speed law, the prima facie and maximum limits, the limits by road type and zone, and the rules on following distance.

California's Vehicle Code (VC) sets speed limits in miles per hour (mph) by road type and zone. Its general rule on following distance asks what is reasonable and prudent rather than for a number. The California Driver's Handbook (DL 600, Rev. 6/2025) adds figures of its own, such as a three-second count for following distance. Knowing which rules come from the code and which figures are only the handbook's advice shows a driver what is required and what is only suggested.

Maximum limits and the basic speed law

California's **basic speed law** (VC 22350) bars driving faster than is reasonable or prudent given weather, visibility, traffic, and the surface and width of the road. The handbook puts it as never driving faster than is safe for current conditions, whatever the posted limit.

A **prima facie speed limit**, such as California's 15 and 25 mph limits, makes a speed within it lawful unless clearly proved to violate the basic speed law. A speed above it is prima facie unlawful unless the driver shows otherwise. **Maximum speed limits**, such as the 65 mph maximum, are not prima facie limits (VC 22348): no one may exceed them, while a prima facie limit lets a driver show that a higher speed was not unlawful.

California's general maximum speed limit is 65 mph (VC 22349), except that VC 22356 lets the Department of Transportation declare and post 70 mph on some state highways. On a two-lane undivided highway the maximum speed in California is 55 mph unless a higher limit is posted after a survey. The 55 mph limit under VC 22406 includes trucks with three or more axles, trucks and passenger vehicles drawing another vehicle, and school buses carrying pupils.

A posted 70 mph limit is for vehicles not subject to VC 22406, on a state highway otherwise limited to 65 mph, where the Department of Transportation declares it. Under VC 22356, the declaration is made after an engineering and traffic survey and with California Highway Patrol approval. Like the 65 mph limit, a posted 70 mph limit is a maximum limit that no one may exceed.

California's **minimum speed** rule (VC 22400) bars driving so slowly as to impede traffic unless necessary. The handbook adds that driving faster or slower than the limit may be cited and that slow drivers use the right lane.

Sources

- Vehicle Code §22348
- Vehicle Code §22349
- Vehicle Code §22350
- Vehicle Code §22351
- Vehicle Code §22352
- Vehicle Code §22356
- Vehicle Code §22400
- Vehicle Code §22406
- DL 600, p. 50
- DL 600, p. 67

Lower limits in zones and special places

VC 22352 sets California's 15 and 25 mph prima facie limits for particular places.

The speed limit on any alley in California is 15 mph. The limit is also 15 mph at a railway crossing where, in the last 100 feet of the approach, the driver cannot see 400 feet in both directions. That limit does not apply where a flagperson is on duty or a signal device is not warning of a train.

California also sets 15 mph at an intersection where, in the last 100 feet of the approach, the driver cannot see 100 feet along every entering highway, unless stop signs, yield signs or signals control it.

California sets 25 mph on any highway in a business or residence district unless another speed is set. The Vehicle Code defines a **business district** as a stretch of highway where buildings in use for business occupy 50 percent or more of the fronting property, for 600 feet on one side or 300 feet on both sides together. It defines a **residence district** as a stretch of highway, other than a business district, where the fronting property within a quarter mile holds 13 or more separate dwelling houses or business structures on one side, or 16 or more on both sides together. A residence district may be longer than a quarter mile if that ratio holds.

California sets 25 mph when a driver is approaching or passing a school marked with a SCHOOL warning sign while children are going to or leaving school during school hours or the noon recess. It also sets a 25 mph prima facie limit when a driver passes a senior center or similar facility used mainly by senior citizens, next to a street other than a state highway and posted with a standard SENIOR warning sign. Both rules are in the version of VC 22352 in effect only until 1 Jan 2031.

California's handbook words the school zone as a distance: within 500 feet of a school, 25 mph applies while children are outside or crossing the street, and some zones go as low as 15 mph.

Under VC 22358.4, as amended on 1 Jan 2026, a local authority may declare 15 mph for a school zone in two cases:

- when an engineering and traffic survey shows the 25 mph school limit is more than reasonable or safe
- in a residence district, on a highway that has at most two traffic lanes and a posted limit of 30 mph or slower immediately before and after the school zone

Sources

- Vehicle Code §235
- Vehicle Code §515
- Vehicle Code §22352
- Vehicle Code §22358.4
- DL 600, p. 50

Following distance and driving to conditions

California's **general following rule**, VC 21703, sets no time or distance: a driver must not follow more closely than is reasonable and prudent given speed, traffic and the road. Doing so is **following too closely**.

California's driver handbook teaches a safe following distance of three seconds behind the vehicle ahead. Its glossary defines the **three-second rule** as counting three seconds after the vehicle ahead passes a fixed point, such as a sign; a driver who passes the same point before finishing the count is following too closely.

The code's general following rule, VC 21703, judges what is reasonable and prudent with no number, while the handbook's three-second rule counts a number of seconds. Other code sections give a distance in their own cases, so the no-number point holds for the general rule only. California's driver handbook gives three seconds of space when merging onto a highway and behind a motorcyclist ahead, and says to scan at least 10 seconds ahead. These are the handbook's own figures, not rules of law.

California's driver handbook says to reduce speed by 5 to 10 mph on wet roads, by half on packed snow, and to no more than 5 mph on ice. It says to slow down at the first rain after a dry, hot spell, because oil and dust are not yet washed off the road. In a heavy storm where the driver can see 100 feet or less, it says 30 mph is the most that is safe.

In a **traffic break**, a California law enforcement officer turns on emergency lights and weaves across lanes to slow or stop traffic for hazards, heavy fog or unusual conditions. When this happens, the handbook tells drivers to:

- turn on their emergency flashers
- slow gradually to the officer's speed without braking suddenly unless needed to avoid a collision, keeping a safe distance from the patrol vehicle
- not drive past the patrol vehicle
- not speed up until the officer turns off the emergency lights and traffic conditions allow a return to normal speed

In heavy fog or smoke, California's handbook says to use low beams, because high beams reflect back and cause glare. It says never to drive in fog using only the parking lights or fog lights.

Sources

- Vehicle Code §21703
- DL 600, p. 23
- DL 600, p. 44
- DL 600, p. 57
- DL 600, p. 61
- DL 600, p. 62
- DL 600, p. 64
- DL 600, p. 84

Key facts

Basic speed law and limit types

California's **basic speed law** bars driving faster than is reasonable or prudent given weather, visibility, traffic, and the surface and width of the road. A prima facie speed limit, such as California's 15 and 25 mph limits, makes a speed within it lawful unless clearly proved to violate that law, and a speed above it prima facie unlawful unless the driver shows otherwise. A maximum limit, such as 65 mph, is not prima facie: no one may exceed it.

Maximum limits and slow driving

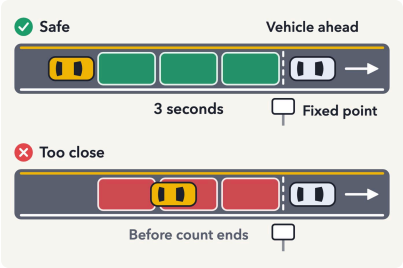
California's **general maximum speed limit** is 65 mph, except that the Vehicle Code lets the Department of Transportation declare and post 70 mph on some state highways. On a two-lane undivided highway the maximum is 55 mph unless a higher limit is posted after a survey. California's separate 55 mph vehicle limit includes trucks with three or more axles, trucks and passenger vehicles drawing another vehicle, and school buses carrying pupils. California's minimum speed rule bars driving so slowly as to impede traffic unless necessary.

Where California sets 15 mph

Under the Vehicle Code, the speed limit on any alley in California is **15 mph**. The limit is also 15 mph at a railway crossing where, in the last 100 feet of the approach, the driver cannot see 400 feet in both directions, except where a flagperson is on duty or a signal device is not warning of a train.

Where California sets 25 mph

California sets **25 mph** on any highway in a business or residence district unless another speed is set. It also sets 25 mph when a driver is approaching or passing a school marked with a SCHOOL warning sign while children are going to or leaving school during school hours or the noon recess. The school rule is in the current version of the law setting these limits, which is in effect only until 1 Jan 2031.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

The handbook's three-second rule

California's driver handbook teaches a safe following distance of three seconds behind the vehicle ahead, while the general following rule in the Vehicle Code sets no time or distance. Its glossary defines the **three-second rule** as counting three seconds after the vehicle ahead passes a fixed point, such as a sign; passing the same point before finishing the count means following too closely.

Matched pairs

Each item on the left goes with the one on the right.

California's basic speed law → No driving faster than is reasonable or prudent for conditions

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. What is the general maximum speed limit on California highways under the Vehicle Code?

- A) 50 mph
- B) 55 mph
- C) 65 mph
- D) 70 mph

2. Until 1 Jan 2031, what limit does California set when a driver is approaching or passing a school marked with a SCHOOL warning sign while children are going to or leaving school?

- A) 10 mph
- B) 35 mph
- C) 30 mph
- D) 25 mph

3. In California, what limit applies at a railway crossing where, in the last 100 feet of the approach, the driver cannot see 400 feet in both directions?

- A) 35 mph
- B) 15 mph
- C) 10 mph
- D) 25 mph

4. Under California's general following rule, when is your gap behind the vehicle ahead too close?

- A) Only when it is closer than is reasonable and prudent
- B) Only when it is shorter than a single car length
- C) Only when you are traveling at freeway speeds
- D) Only when the vehicle ahead has to brake hard

5. How many seconds behind the vehicle ahead does California's driver handbook teach as a safe following distance?

- A) Four seconds
- B) Three seconds
- C) Five seconds
- D) Two seconds

Go deeper

WATCH Can the Limit Be Too Fast? 0:30 · YouTube
The sign says 65. Can 65 still be too fast?

WATCH Count to Three 0:29
The car ahead passes a sign. Count 3 seconds. Reach it before 3? Following too closely.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/drivers-permit/california-speed-limits-and-following-distance

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LESSON 9 OF 18

California: Turns, Lanes, Passing and Parking

Signals, turns and turns on red · Lanes, lane lines and U-turns · Passing, keeping right and high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes · Parking, curbs, lights and distances in feet

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- In California, choose the legal signal, turn, lane, passing, parking or lighting action in a described situation, and state the lighting distances.

California's rules for signaling, turning, lane use, passing and parking come from the California Vehicle Code (VC), and the California Driver's Handbook (DL 600, Rev. 6/2025) adds guidance in places. A driver needs to know how to signal a move, where to position a turn, which lines may be crossed, and where a vehicle may stop or park. Small details decide many of these rules, such as a red arrow instead of a steady red, a broken line instead of a solid one, or a distance in feet.

Signals, turns and turns on red

A California driver gives turn and stop signals with signal lamps. A vehicle not required to have signal lamps, such as a bicycle, uses **hand and arm signals**, and so does any driver whose lamps stop working while driving. In California the three hand signals are:

- A left turn is signaled by holding the left arm out horizontally.
- A right turn is signaled by holding the left arm up.
- A stop or slowdown is signaled by holding the left arm down.

A bicyclist in California may signal a right turn by pointing the right arm out.

A California driver may not come to a stop or abruptly slow on a highway without first giving an appropriate signal to the driver immediately behind, when there is an opportunity to give one (VC 22109).

A driver may not turn from a direct course or move right or left on a roadway until the move can be made with reasonable safety. The driver must give an appropriate signal first whenever another vehicle may be affected (VC 22107). California's handbook advises signaling for lane changes and, unlike the code, even when no other vehicles are in view.

In California a driver must give an audible warning with the horn when reasonably necessary for safe operation, and may not otherwise use the horn except as a theft alarm (VC 27001). California's handbook advises using the horn to avoid collisions. A California motor vehicle must have a horn that can be heard under normal conditions from at least 200 feet away (VC 27000), and the handbook repeats that distance.

A California driver makes a right turn, in both the approach and the turn, as close as practicable (reasonably possible) to the right curb or edge, with exceptions such as for one-way roads and marked turn lanes. California's handbook shows the turn ending in the lane nearest the right edge.

A California left turn is approached as close as practicable to the left-hand edge of the extreme left (leftmost) lane lawfully available to traffic going that way, and is not begun before the vehicle enters the intersection.

On a steady red signal a California driver may turn right after stopping, unless a sign bars the turn. On a **steady circular red**, a driver may also turn left from a one-way street onto a one-way street after stopping, unless a sign bars the turn. A driver making either turn must yield to pedestrians in the adjacent crosswalk and to vehicles that are an immediate hazard. A **red arrow** is different: it bars the turn the arrow points to, and it permits neither the right turn on red nor the left turn from a one-way street onto a one-way street that a steady red allows after a stop.

Sources

- Vehicle Code §22110
- Vehicle Code §22111
- Vehicle Code §22109
- Vehicle Code §22107
- Vehicle Code §27001
- Vehicle Code §27000
- Vehicle Code §22100
- Vehicle Code §21453
- DL 600, p. 6
- DL 600, p. 10
- DL 600, p. 11
- DL 600, p. 20
- DL 600, p. 21

Lanes, lane lines and U-turns

A California driver may not drive to the left of double solid yellow lines except as the Vehicle Code permits. A pair with one broken line is different: a driver on the broken-line side may cross to pass. California's handbook calls two sets of double yellow lines two or more feet apart a **barrier**, and Vehicle Code section 21651 describes a dividing section not less than two feet wide, marked by curbs, double parallel lines or other markings.

On a roadway with two or more marked lanes in one direction, a California driver must stay as nearly as practical entirely within a single lane and not leave it until the move can be made with reasonable safety (VC 21658). The handbook adds not to weave in and out of traffic. On a two-lane road in California, a slow vehicle with five or more vehicles following must use a **turnout**, a place to pull off the road so others can pass, where passing is unsafe.

In California a **center left-turn lane** is bounded by double yellow lines, the inner line dashed and the outer line solid. It may be used only to prepare for or make a left turn, or a U-turn where otherwise permitted by law. Where a two-way left-turn lane has been designated, no left turn or U-turn may be made from any other lane (VC 21460.5).

A **dedicated right-turn lane** in California does not merge into another lane. It lets a driver turn right without stopping, even on a red light for through traffic, but the driver must obey a light or sign at the right curb of that lane and always yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk. The Vehicle Code lets a driver turn right from any lane designated and marked for that movement.

For a right turn from a one-way street onto a one-way street, California's handbook has the driver start in the far-right lane and, if it is safe, end in any lane. The code lets a right turn from a one-way highway finish in any lane lawfully available to traffic going that way.

In a business district, California allows a U-turn only at an intersection or at an opening in a divided highway. At a signal-controlled intersection, a U-turn may be made only from the far left lane lawfully available in the direction of travel (VC 22100.5), and the handbook advises signaling and using the left turn lane or far-left lane.

Sources

- Vehicle Code §21460
- Vehicle Code §21651
- Vehicle Code §21658
- Vehicle Code §21656
- Vehicle Code §21460.5
- Vehicle Code §22100
- Vehicle Code §22102
- Vehicle Code §22100.5
- DL 600, p. 13
- DL 600, p. 15
- DL 600, p. 16
- DL 600, p. 19
- DL 600, p. 20
- DL 600, p. 22

Passing, keeping right and high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes

A California vehicle moving slower than the normal speed of traffic keeps to the right-hand lane or as close as practicable to the right-hand edge or curb, except when overtaking and passing or preparing for a left turn (VC 21654).

A California driver passes on the left at a safe distance. On a two-lane highway no vehicle may be driven to the left of center to pass unless the view of the left side is clear and no oncoming traffic is there for

far enough ahead to finish the pass safely (VC 21751). California bars passing on the left on a crest or curve where the view is obstructed, and within 100 feet of a bridge, viaduct or tunnel when the view is obstructed. It also bars passing on the left within 100 feet of, or while traversing, a railroad grade crossing or an intersection, with no obstructed-view condition. None of these bars applies on a one-way roadway (VC 21752). The handbook lists bridges and tunnels among its 100-foot places without the obstructed-view condition.

California allows passing on the right when the vehicle ahead is turning left and on multi-lane and one-way roads. It bars passing on the right by driving off the paved portion of the road. Except where passing on the right is permitted, a driver who is being overtaken must not increase speed until the overtaking vehicle has completely passed (VC 21753).

California's **high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes** follow the posted occupancy and hours, and motorcycles may use them unless prohibited. Where double parallel solid lines lie to the right of an HOV lane, no driver may cross them to enter or exit the lane, except when leaving the lane for an approaching emergency vehicle displaying a red light or siren. Entry and exit are otherwise allowed only in designated areas or where a single broken line is in place (VC 21655.8). California's Clean Air Vehicle (CAV) decal program has ended: from 1 October 2025, CAV decals are no longer valid for HOV lane access, and vehicles must meet the posted occupancy requirement.

In California a driver required to enter a **bus-only (transit-only) lane** to turn right, to turn left where there is no left-turn lane for motorists, or to enter or exit a highway may do so, unless signs prohibit turns across the lane or a physical separation delineates it. Otherwise no one may drive in it except as a peace officer or official traffic control device directs (VC 21655.1). No one may stop, park or leave a vehicle standing in it, except when necessary to avoid conflict with other traffic or as a peace officer or official traffic control device directs (VC 22500(m)).

Sources

- Vehicle Code §21654
- Vehicle Code §21750
- Vehicle Code §21751
- Vehicle Code §21752
- Vehicle Code §21753
- Vehicle Code §21655.8
- Vehicle Code §21655.1
- Vehicle Code §22500
- DMV, Clean Air Vehicle Decals
- DL 600, p. 16
- DL 600, p. 24
- DL 600, p. 25

Parking, curbs, lights and distances in feet

California's Vehicle Code sets these distances in feet:

- California bars parking within 3 feet of a signed or red-painted sidewalk access ramp.
- California bars parking within 15 feet of a fire hydrant, with exceptions.
- From 1 January 2024, California bars stopping or parking within 20 feet of the approach side of a marked or unmarked crosswalk (15 feet where a curb extension exists), except to avoid conflict with other traffic or as directed by a peace officer or official traffic control device; a local authority may mark a different distance.
- A driver must signal an intended turn continuously during the last 100 feet traveled before turning, by lamp or by hand.
- A driver may drive in a center left-turn lane for no more than 200 feet while preparing for and making a turn.
- In darkness, California requires low beams within 300 feet behind another vehicle.
- In darkness, California requires low beams within 500 feet of an oncoming vehicle.

California's handbook lists the distances but its crosswalk line leaves out the approach side.

California also bars stopping or parking in an intersection, on a crosswalk, in front of a driveway, on a sidewalk, in a tunnel, on a bridge, or double-parked, except when necessary to avoid conflict with other traffic or as directed by a peace officer or official traffic control device, and each place has its own narrow exceptions (VC 22500).

California's Vehicle Code lets local authorities mark curbs in five colors, called **curb colors**:

- A red curb means no stopping, standing or parking, though a bus may stop in a bus-marked zone.
- A yellow curb is for loading or unloading passengers or freight.
- A white curb is for loading or unloading passengers or depositing mail.
- A green curb means time-limited parking.
- A blue curb is for parking for disabled persons and disabled veterans.

California's handbook words the white curb more briefly, mentioning passengers only. In California a parked vehicle sits parallel to and within 18 inches of the right-hand curb, or, on a one-way road that is not part of a divided highway, the left-hand curb (VC 22502).

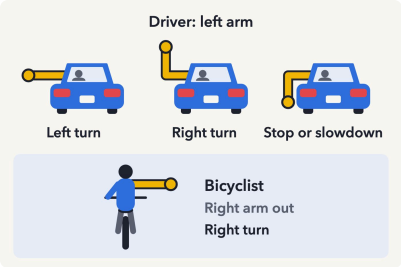
For lights, California's Vehicle Code counts **darkness** as the period between half an hour after sunset and half an hour before sunrise, and any time sight is under 1,000 feet. California's handbook has headlights on from 30 minutes after sunset to 30 minutes before sunrise. California requires headlamps in **inclement weather**: under Vehicle Code section 24400, a motor vehicle other than a motorcycle must have at least two lighted headlamps when a weather condition prevents seeing a person or vehicle from 1,000 feet or requires continuous use of the windshield wipers. California's handbook separately lists conditions such as clouds, dust, smoke or fog that prevent a driver from seeing other vehicles among the times to use headlights, and the code's definition does not name dust or smoke.

On a hill, California's handbook advises setting the parking brake and leaving the vehicle in park, or in gear if it has a manual transmission. The code goes less far: VC 22515 requires only setting the brake and stopping the motor of an unattended vehicle. California's handbook teaches parallel parking in five numbered steps: find a space at least three feet longer than the vehicle and signal, pull up beside the vehicle ahead of the space about two feet away, check blind spots, back in at about a 45-degree angle, then straighten out and finish parallel to and within 18 inches of the curb.

Sources

- Vehicle Code §22522
- Vehicle Code §22514
- Vehicle Code §22500
- Vehicle Code §22108
- Vehicle Code §21460.5
- Vehicle Code §24409
- Vehicle Code §21458
- Vehicle Code §280
- Vehicle Code §24400
- Vehicle Code §22502
- Vehicle Code §22515
- DL 600, p. 26
- DL 600, p. 27
- DL 600, p. 28

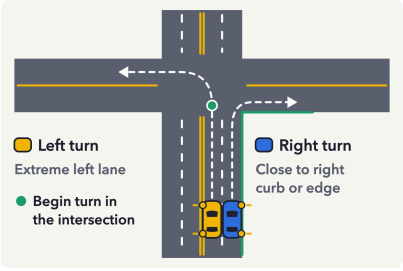
Key facts



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California Hand and Arm Signals

A California driver gives turn and stop signals with signal lamps. A vehicle not required to have signal lamps, such as a bicycle, uses **hand and arm signals**, and so does any driver whose lamps stop working while driving. In California, the left arm held out horizontally signals a left turn, held up signals a right turn, and held down signals a stop or slowdown. A bicyclist in California may signal a right turn by pointing the right arm out.



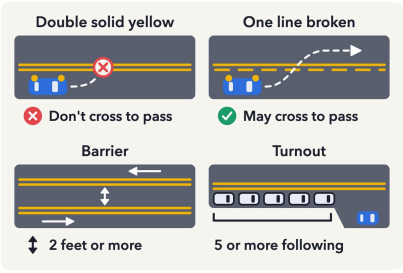
FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

California Signaling and Turn Position

A California driver may not come to a stop or abruptly slow on a highway without first giving an appropriate signal to the driver immediately behind, when there is an opportunity to give one. A right turn is made, in both the approach and the turn, **as close as practicable** to the right curb or edge, with exceptions such as for one-way roads and marked turn lanes. A left turn is approached as close as practicable to the left-hand edge of the extreme left lane lawfully available to traffic going that way, and is not begun before the vehicle enters the intersection.

California Red Arrows

A **red arrow** in California bars the turn the arrow points to. Unlike a steady circular red, which allows a right turn, or a left turn from a one-way street onto a one-way street, after a stop unless a sign bars it, a red arrow does not allow its turn, even after stopping.



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California Yellow Lines and Turnouts

A California driver may not drive to the left of **double solid yellow lines** except as the Vehicle Code permits. Where one line of a double yellow pair is broken, a driver on the broken-line side may cross to pass. Two sets of double yellow lines two or more feet apart are a barrier, a dividing section not less than two feet wide marked by curbs, double parallel lines or other markings. On a two-lane road, a slow vehicle with five or more vehicles following must use a turnout, a place to pull off the road, where passing is unsafe.

California Lane Use and the Center Lane

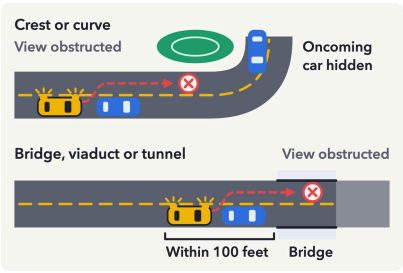
On a roadway with two or more marked lanes in one direction, a California driver must stay as nearly as practical entirely within a single lane and not leave it until the move can be made with reasonable safety. A California **center left-turn lane** is bounded by double yellow lines, the inner line dashed and the outer line solid, and may be used only to prepare for or make a left turn, or a U-turn where otherwise permitted by law. Where a two-way left-turn lane has been designated, no left turn or U-turn may be made from any other lane.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

California Turn Lanes and U-Turns

A **dedicated right-turn lane** in California does not merge into another lane and lets a driver turn right without stopping, even on a red light for through traffic, but the driver must obey a light or sign at the right curb of that lane and always yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk. A right turn from a one-way highway may finish in any lane lawfully available. In a business district, California allows a U-turn only at an intersection or at an opening in a divided highway. At a signal-controlled intersection, a U-turn may be made only from the far left lane lawfully available.



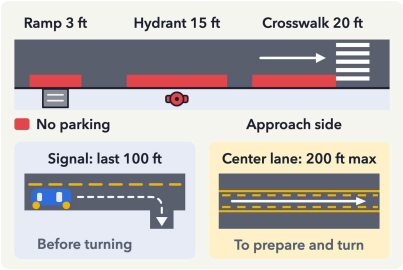
FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

California Passing on the Left

A California driver passes on the left at a safe distance. On a two-lane highway, no vehicle may be driven to the left of center to pass unless the view of the left side is clear and no oncoming traffic is there for far enough ahead to finish the pass safely. California bars passing on the left on a **crest or curve** where the view is obstructed, and within 100 feet of a bridge, viaduct or tunnel when the view is obstructed. It also bars passing on the left within 100 feet of, or while traversing, an intersection or a railroad grade crossing. These bars do not apply on a one-way roadway.

California Passing Right and HOV Lines

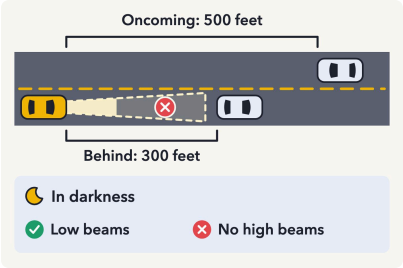
California allows passing on the right when the vehicle ahead is turning left and on multi-lane and one-way roads, but not by driving off the paved portion. A vehicle moving slower than the normal speed of traffic keeps to the right-hand lane or as close as practicable to the right-hand edge or curb, except when overtaking and passing or preparing for a left turn. Where double parallel solid lines lie to the right of a **high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane**, no driver may cross them to enter or exit it, except to leave for an approaching emergency vehicle displaying a red light or siren.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

California Parking and Signal Distances

California bars parking within 15 feet of a fire hydrant, with exceptions, and within 3 feet of a signed or red-painted sidewalk access ramp. From 1 January 2024, it also bars stopping or parking within 20 feet of the **approach side** of a marked or unmarked crosswalk (15 feet with a curb extension), except to avoid traffic conflict or as an officer or traffic control device directs; a local authority may mark another distance. A driver must signal continuously for the last 100 feet before turning, and may use a center left-turn lane for no more than 200 feet to prepare for and make a turn.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

California Low Beams and Headlamps

In darkness, California requires low beams within 300 feet behind another vehicle and within 500 feet of an oncoming vehicle. **Darkness** is the period from half an hour after sunset to half an hour before sunrise, and any time sight is under 1,000 feet. A motor vehicle other than a motorcycle must have at least two lighted headlamps in inclement weather, a weather condition that prevents seeing a person or vehicle from 1,000 feet or requires continuous use of the windshield wipers. The handbook names clouds, dust, smoke or fog that prevent seeing other vehicles as times to use headlights.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

California Curb Colors

Under California's Vehicle Code, local authorities may mark curbs in **curb colors**. A red curb means no stopping, standing or parking, though a bus may stop in a bus-marked zone. A yellow curb is for loading or unloading passengers or freight, and a white curb is for loading or unloading passengers or depositing mail. A green curb means time-limited parking, and a blue curb is for parking for disabled persons and disabled veterans.

By the numbers

California bars parking within how many feet of a signed or red-painted sidewalk ramp?

3 feet

California bars parking within how many feet of a fire hydrant, with exceptions?

15 feet

With exceptions, California bars stopping within how many feet of a crosswalk approach?

20 feet

California requires a turn signal during the last how many feet traveled before turning?

100 feet

In darkness, California requires low beams within how many feet behind another vehicle?

300 feet

In darkness, California requires low beams within how many feet of an oncoming vehicle?

500 feet

Matched pairs

Each item on the left goes with the one on the right.

Left arm held up → Signals a right turn in California

California white curb → Loading or unloading passengers, or depositing mail

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. A California driver approaches an intersection to turn left. Which approach does the Vehicle Code require?

- A In the leftmost lane for that direction, near its left edge
- B In the rightmost lane, to stay clear of through traffic
- C In whichever lane has the fewest vehicles waiting
- D In any lane, as long as the driver signals first

2. A California driver enters a center lane bounded by double yellow lines, the inner line dashed and the outer line solid. Which purpose does the Vehicle Code allow?

- A To reach the next intersection
- B To pass slower traffic
- C To wait for a parking space
- D To prepare for a left turn

3. In a California business district, where may a driver make a U-turn?

- A At a driveway or a parking lot entrance on the block
- B Anywhere the road ahead is clear of oncoming traffic
- C At an intersection or an opening in a divided highway
- D Anywhere the center line is a broken line

4. A California driver on a two-lane highway nears a curve where the view ahead is obstructed. What does the Vehicle Code do about passing on the left there?

- A It bars the pass only when oncoming traffic is in sight
- B It bars the pass while the view is obstructed
- C It allows the pass if the driver signals first
- D It allows the pass if the vehicle ahead is slower

5. Double parallel solid lines lie to the right of a California high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane. When may a driver cross them to leave the lane?

- A Only for an approaching emergency vehicle
- B Whenever the driver is leaving at an exit
- C Whenever traffic in the lane ahead is slow
- D Only after the driver has signaled first

Go deeper

WATCH Read the Curb 0:29 · YouTube
Pull up to a painted curb in California. Can you park there? The color tells you.

WATCH The Red Arrow 0:31
Two drivers stop. One faces a steady circular red, the other a red arrow. Only one may turn.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/drivers-permit/california-turns-lanes-passing-and-parking

STUDY U.S. Permit Test by State (Driving) in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/drivers-permit

LESSON 10 OF 18

California: Phones, Restraints and Road-User Laws

Phones, devices and windshield view · Seat belts, child restraints and school buses · Bicycles, motorcycles and move-over · Loads, slow vehicles and work zones

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- In California, state rules on phones, restraints, school buses, move-over zones, bicycles, motorcycles, loads and slow vehicles.

California sets specific rules for phone use, seat belts and child restraints, school buses, bicycles and motorcycles, loads, windshield view, slow vehicles and work zones. Many of them protect a person at risk, such as a child in a car, a student getting on or off a school bus, a bicyclist at night or a worker in a work zone. The rules come from the California Vehicle Code, other California codes and the California Driver's Handbook (DL 600, Rev. 6/2025).

Phones, devices and windshield view

California's **handheld device ban** says a driver may not hold and operate a handheld phone or electronic wireless communications device unless it is designed for voice-operated, hands-free use and is used that way. A driver may touch a wireless device only if it is mounted on the windshield in the manner permitted for a portable Global Positioning System (GPS), or on the dashboard or center console without hindering the driver's view. Even then, a **mounted device** may be touched only with a single swipe or tap.

California's **phone ban for drivers under 18** goes further. The handheld ban allows hands-free use, but a hands-free phone is not allowed for a driver under 18, because the under-18 ban covers hands-free devices. A driver under 18 may not use a wireless phone or device at all, including a hands-free one, except for emergency purposes, such as an emergency call. The handbook words the under-18 rule more narrowly, as answering calls and sending or responding to texts.

California's handbook says to let a ringing cell phone go to voicemail rather than answer it. If a driver must return or make a call, the handbook says to pull safely off the road. It also says adults should use hands-free mode only when necessary, and not to read or send texts or emails while driving. California also bars drivers and bicyclists from wearing a headset or earplugs in both ears.

A California driver may not drive with a television or video screen that is operating forward of the back of the driver's seat or is visible to the driver. Vehicle Code section 27602 makes exceptions for vehicle information, navigation and mapping displays; a display that helps the driver see forward, behind or to the sides to maneuver, such as a backup-camera screen; and screens that an interlock disables or that keep the driver from viewing them while driving.

California also bars objects on the windshield and windows. Among the exceptions for signs, stickers and other materials are:

- a seven-inch square at the lower corner of the windshield farthest from the driver;
- a seven-inch square at the lower corner of the rear window farthest from the driver;
- a five-inch square at the lower corner of the windshield nearest the driver.

The handbook places the five-inch square on the driver's side window. Vehicle Code section 26708 also allows a five-inch square at the top center for a toll or California Highway Patrol (CHP) device, and bars driving when snow or ice blocks the driver's clear vision through the windshield or the side or rear windows.

A California driver may not drive a vehicle so loaded, or with so many people in the front seat, that the view to the front or sides is obstructed or control of the vehicle is interfered with.

Sources

- Vehicle Code §21700
- Vehicle Code §23123.5
- Vehicle Code §23124
- Vehicle Code §26708
- Vehicle Code §27400
- Vehicle Code §27602
- DL 600, p. 53
- DL 600, p. 70
- DL 600, p. 71

Seat belts, child restraints and school buses

In California, a driver and all passengers 16 or older must be properly restrained by a safety belt. A child under 8 must be properly secured in a rear seat in an appropriate **child passenger restraint system**, except as Vehicle Code section 27363 provides. For example, a child 4 feet 9 inches or taller may be restrained by a safety belt, an exception that section 27363 keeps from 1 January 2027 as re-enacted by Assembly Bill 435. The driver is exempt if the child's parent or legal guardian is a passenger.

A child under 2 rides rear-facing in California unless the child weighs 40 or more pounds or is 40 or more inches tall, subject to the exceptions in Vehicle Code section 27363.

The handbook says a child 8 or older, or 4 feet 9 inches or taller, may use a safety belt; that rule applies until 31 December 2026. California's current Vehicle Code sections 27360.5 (children 8 to under 16) and 27363 (child restraint exceptions) both say that they remain in effect only until 1 January 2027, when they are repealed. From 1 January 2027, Assembly Bill 435 (AB 435) re-enacts both sections. Under it:

- a child 8 to under 16 must be in a child passenger restraint or properly restrained by a safety belt;
- a child under 8 who is 4 feet 9 inches or taller may be properly restrained by a safety belt;

- **properly restrained by a safety belt** means passing a five-step test.

California's handbook asks drivers to sit with the breastbone at least 10 inches from the center of the steering wheel's airbag cover when they can still keep full control of the vehicle. It asks passengers to keep 10 inches from the passenger-side air bag as well.

Leaving children or animals in a hot vehicle is dangerous and illegal in California, the handbook says. Penal Code section 597.7 also bars leaving or confining an animal in an unattended vehicle under conditions that endanger it through heat, cold, poor ventilation or lack of food or water. It is unlawful in California to smoke a tobacco product in a motor vehicle, whether moving or parked, when a minor is in it. The handbook tells drivers not to smoke when a minor is in the vehicle.

Flashing yellow lights on a California school bus mean slow down and prepare to stop. Flashing red lights mean stop from either direction, so children can cross safely, unless the bus is on the other roadway of a divided or **multiple-lane highway** (two or more lanes in each direction). Under the Vehicle Code, a driver meeting or overtaking, from either direction, a school bus stopped to load or unload schoolchildren and displaying a flashing red light signal and stop signal arm must stop immediately before passing it, except on the other roadway of a divided or multiple-lane highway. A driver who must stop may not proceed until the flashing red light and the stop signal arm, if equipped, cease operation.

A California school bus shows flashing red lights and a stop signal arm while it is stopped to load or unload pupils, and at no other time, except that they are not operated where an officer controls traffic or at the school loading zones and other locations listed in Vehicle Code section 22112(e). A school bus equipped with amber lights turns them on 200 feet before a stop where pupils are loading or unloading, with listed exceptions, such as where an officer controls traffic.

Sources

- Vehicle Code §27315
- Vehicle Code §27360
- Vehicle Code §27363
- Vehicle Code §27360.5 (2027)
- Penal Code §597.7
- Health and Safety Code §118948
- Vehicle Code §22454
- Vehicle Code §22112
- DL 600, p. 51
- DL 600, p. 52
- DL 600, p. 66
- DL 600, p. 67

Bicycles, motorcycles and move-over

California's **move-over duty** covers a stationary:

- emergency vehicle with emergency lights;
- tow truck or highway maintenance vehicle with flashing amber lights;
- other vehicle that shows flashing hazard lights or another warning device.

A California driver approaching one of them must approach with due caution and, before passing in a lane immediately adjacent to it and absent other direction by a peace officer, change to a non-adjacent lane, with due regard for safety and traffic conditions, if practicable and not prohibited by law. If that would be unsafe or impracticable, the driver must slow to a reasonable and prudent speed. The duty does not apply if the stationary vehicle is not adjacent to the highway or is separated from it by a protective physical barrier.

A California driver passing a bicycle in the same direction must keep at least three feet between any part of the vehicle and any part of the bicycle or its operator. When the bicycle is in the same lane and another lane going the same way is available, the driver must change lanes before passing, if practicable and lawful. If traffic or roadway conditions make that impossible, the driver must slow to a reasonable and prudent speed and pass only when it would not endanger the bicyclist. A motor vehicle may use a **bicycle lane** only to park where permitted, to enter or leave the road, or to prepare for a turn within 200 feet of the intersection.

A bicyclist in California has all the rights and is subject to all the provisions applicable to the driver of a vehicle, except those that by their very nature can have no application. Bicyclists must go the same way as traffic on a roadway or shoulder. A bicyclist riding slower than the normal speed of traffic must ride as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway, except when:

- passing another bicycle or vehicle in the same direction;
- preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private road or driveway;
- reasonably avoiding conditions that make it unsafe to stay there, including a lane too narrow for a bicycle and a vehicle to share safely;
- approaching a place where a right turn is authorized.

In California, on a one-way road with two or more marked lanes, a bicyclist may ride as near the left curb or edge as practicable.

At night a California bicycle needs a front lamp with a white light visible from 300 feet in front and from the sides, and a red reflector, or a solid or flashing red light with a built-in reflector, on the rear, visible from 500 feet to the rear when directly in front of the lawful upper beams of a motor vehicle's headlamps. It also needs a white or yellow reflector on each pedal, shoe or ankle visible from 200 feet, plus side or wheel reflectors or reflectorized tires.

California requires a person under 18 to wear a properly fitted and fastened helmet meeting a standard of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) or the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) when operating a bicycle, a nonmotorized scooter or a skateboard, wearing in-line or roller skates, or riding as a passenger on a bicycle, scooter or skateboard on a street, bikeway or public path.

California's handbook says that sharing lanes with motorcycles, which it calls **lane splitting**, is legal. It also says to give a motorcycle the full lane when possible and never to pass one within the same lane.

Sources

- Vehicle Code §21809
- Vehicle Code §21760
- Vehicle Code §21209
- Vehicle Code §21200
- Vehicle Code §21650.1
- Vehicle Code §21202
- Vehicle Code §21201
- Vehicle Code §21212
- DL 600, p. 44
- DL 600, p. 47

Loads, slow vehicles and work zones

It is unlawful in California to throw any lighted or unlighted cigarette, cigar, match or other flaming or glowing substance from a vehicle. A driver may not carry a load that can drop, blow or spill out of the vehicle.

A California passenger vehicle's load may not extend beyond the fender line on the left or more than six inches beyond the fenders on the right. A load extending four feet or more beyond the rear, as measured from the taillamps, needs two red lights at its extreme end, plainly visible from at least 500 feet to the sides and rear, during darkness. Otherwise, such a load needs a solid red or fluorescent orange flag or cloth at least 18 inches square, where the handbook says 12 inches; a load wider than two feet needs two.

On a California highway, no person may ride in the back of a pickup or flatbed truck unless secured by a restraint system that meets the federal standards, with narrow exceptions for farm and ranch trucks on the owner's lands, emergency response by a public agency, and supervised parades at 8 miles per hour (mph) or less. An animal riding in the back of a pickup, flatbed or other motor vehicle on a highway must be in an enclosed space or behind side and tail racks at least 46 inches high (measured vertically from the floor), or the vehicle must have installed means of preventing it from being discharged, or the animal must be cross tethered or in a secured container or cage, in a way that keeps it from being thrown, falling or jumping out. Livestock and certain ranch and farm dogs are exempt.

A **low-speed vehicle** (the handbook calls it a neighborhood electric vehicle) has four wheels, can reach more than 20 and not more than 25 mph in one mile, and has a gross vehicle weight rating under 3,000 pounds. **Gross vehicle weight rating** means the loaded weight the manufacturer specifies for a single vehicle. The handbook gives 25 mph as its maximum speed. A low-speed vehicle is restricted from roads where the speed limit is greater than 35 mph, except in an area with an adopted neighborhood electric vehicle transportation plan. The Vehicle Code lets it cross a faster road at an intersection of about 90

degrees if the crossing begins and ends on a road with a limit of 35 mph or less, but not an uncontrolled intersection with a state highway unless the enforcing agency has approved and authorized it.

The handbook describes the **slow-moving vehicle emblem** as an orange and red triangle on the back, and the Vehicle Code requires one on a vehicle designed to be and operated at 25 mph or less, except certain utility vehicles and highway-authority vehicles while working at a jobsite. A driver approaching a horse-drawn vehicle, a ridden animal or livestock must keep proper control and reduce speed or stop as appears necessary or as the person in charge signals or requests, and the handbook adds that intentionally scaring horses or livestock is illegal.

In California, a designated **Safety Enhancement-Double Fine Zone** doubles the fine, or raises an infraction one category, for violations of the passing and speed chapters and for reckless driving, speed contest, drunk-driving and open-container offenses, but only when signs have been placed. The handbook adds highway construction or maintenance zones when workers are present. For work zones, it says to slow down, allow extra space, expect sudden slowing, watch for lane changes, avoid distractions and merge early, as soon as it is safe, without crossing the cones or drums.

Sources

- Vehicle Code §23111
- Vehicle Code §23114
- Vehicle Code §35111
- Vehicle Code §24604
- Vehicle Code §23116
- Vehicle Code §23117
- Vehicle Code §385.5
- Vehicle Code §350
- Vehicle Code §21260
- Vehicle Code §24615
- Vehicle Code §21759
- Vehicle Code §42010
- DL 600, p. 45
- DL 600, p. 46
- DL 600, p. 49
- DL 600, p. 52

Key terms

Low-speed vehicle

In California, a four-wheeled vehicle that can reach more than 20 and not more than 25 mph in one mile, with a gross vehicle weight rating under 3,000 pounds

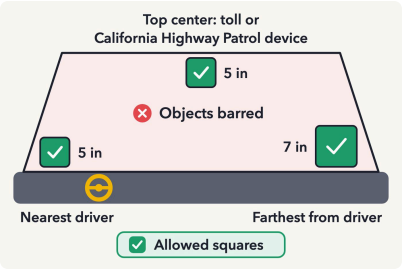
Key facts

Handheld ban and mounted devices

California's **handheld device ban** bars a driver from holding and operating a handheld phone or electronic wireless communications device unless it is designed for voice-operated, hands-free use and is used that way. A driver may touch a wireless device only if it is mounted on the windshield in the manner permitted for a portable GPS, or on the dashboard or center console without hindering the driver's view, and then only with a single swipe or tap. Drivers and bicyclists in California may not wear a headset or earplugs in both ears.

Phone ban for drivers under 18

California's **phone ban for drivers under 18** goes further than the handheld ban, which allows hands-free use. A driver under 18 may not use a wireless phone or device at all, including a hands-free one, except for emergency purposes, such as an emergency call. The handbook words the under-18 rule more narrowly, as answering calls and sending or responding to texts. For a ringing phone, California's handbook says not to answer, to let the call go to voicemail and, if a driver must return or make a call, to pull safely off the road.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Windshield objects and the driver's view

California bars **objects on the windshield and windows**, with exceptions such as a seven-inch square at the lower windshield corner farthest from the driver and a five-inch square at the lower corner nearest the driver. The Vehicle Code allows a five-inch square at the top center for a toll or California Highway Patrol device, and bars driving when snow or ice blocks vision through the windshield or the side or rear windows. A driver may not drive so loaded, or with so many people in the front seat, that the view to the front or sides is obstructed or control is interfered with.

Safety belts and child restraints

In California, a driver and all passengers 16 or older must properly wear a safety belt. A child under 8 must be properly secured in a rear seat in an appropriate **child passenger restraint system**, except as the Vehicle Code provides; for example, one who is 4 feet 9 inches or taller may use a safety belt (an exception the law keeps from 1 January 2027). The driver is exempt if the child's parent or legal guardian is a passenger. A child under 2 rides rear-facing unless the child weighs 40 or more pounds or is 40 or more inches tall, subject to the exceptions in the Vehicle Code.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Airbag distance, heat and smoking

California's handbook asks drivers, when they can still keep full control of the vehicle, to sit with the breastbone at least 10 inches from the center of the steering wheel's airbag cover. Leaving children or animals in a hot vehicle is dangerous and illegal in California, the handbook says, and California law bars leaving or confining an animal in an unattended vehicle where heat, cold, poor ventilation or lack of food or water endangers it. It is also unlawful in California to **smoke a tobacco product** in a motor vehicle, whether moving or parked, when a minor is in it.

School bus lights and stops

Flashing yellow lights on a California school bus mean slow down and prepare to stop. Flashing red lights mean stop from either direction, so children can cross safely, unless the bus is on the other roadway of a divided or **multiple-lane highway** (two or more lanes in each direction). A driver meeting or overtaking a stopped school bus with a flashing red light signal and stop signal arm must stop immediately before passing it, and may not proceed until the flashing red light and the stop signal arm, if equipped, cease operation.

Moving over and passing a bicycle

California's **move-over duty**: a driver approaching a stationary emergency vehicle with emergency lights must use due caution and, before passing in the lane next to it and absent other direction by a peace officer, change to a non-adjacent lane if practicable and lawful, unless the vehicle is not adjacent to the highway or is separated from it by a protective physical barrier. If that is unsafe or impracticable, slow to a reasonable and prudent speed. Passing a bicycle going the same way takes at least three feet; if impossible, slow likewise and pass only when safe for the rider.

Bicyclist rights, direction and helmets

A bicyclist in California has all the rights and is subject to all the provisions applicable to the driver of a vehicle, except those that by their very nature can have no application. Bicyclists must go the same way as traffic on a roadway or shoulder. A motor vehicle may use a **bicycle lane** only to park where permitted, to enter or leave the road, or to prepare for a turn within 200 feet of the intersection. California requires a person under 18 to wear a properly fitted and fastened helmet when operating a bicycle, a nonmotorized scooter or a skateboard.

Bicycle night lights and lane splitting

At night a California bicycle needs a front lamp with a white light visible from 300 feet in front and from the sides. It also needs a red reflector, or a solid or flashing red light with a built-in reflector, on the rear, visible from 500 feet to the rear when directly in front of the lawful upper beams of a motor vehicle's headlamps. California's handbook says that sharing lanes with motorcycles, which it calls **lane splitting**, is legal.

Loads that spill, reach or trail

California bars throwing a lit or unlit cigarette, cigar, match or other flaming or glowing substance from a vehicle, or carrying a load that can drop, blow or spill out. A passenger vehicle's load may not extend past the fender line on the left or more than six inches beyond the fenders on the right. A **rear load** extending four feet or more beyond the taillamps needs two red lights at its extreme end, visible from at least 500 feet in darkness, and by day a solid red or fluorescent orange flag or cloth at least 18 inches square, one if the load is two feet wide or less and two if wider.

Riders and animals in a pickup bed

On a California highway, no person may ride in the back of a pickup or flatbed unless secured by a restraint system that meets the federal standards, with narrow exceptions for farm and ranch trucks on the owner's lands, emergency response by a public agency and supervised parades at 8 mph or less. On a highway, an **animal in the back of a pickup** must be in an enclosed space, behind side and tail racks at least 46 inches high, cross tethered or in a secured container or cage, or protected by installed means of preventing its discharge; livestock and certain ranch and farm dogs are exempt.

Low-speed roads and double fine zones

A low-speed vehicle in California reaches a maximum of 25 mph and is restricted from roads where the speed limit is greater than 35 mph, except in an area with an adopted neighborhood electric vehicle transportation plan or at the limited crossings the Vehicle Code allows. A designated **Safety Enhancement-Double Fine Zone** doubles the fine, or raises an infraction one category, for violations of the passing and speed chapters and for reckless driving, speed contest, drunk-driving and open-container offenses, but only when signs have been placed.

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. Which response to a ringing cell phone does California's driver handbook give for a driver?

A. To pick up if the call is urgent
B. To let the call go to voicemail
C. To reply by text message
D. To hold it to the ear for a short call

2. In California, how must a child under 2 ride unless the child weighs 40 or more pounds or is 40 or more inches tall?

A. Seated in a booster seat
B. Seated in a regular safety belt
C. Facing the rear of the vehicle
D. Facing the front of the vehicle

3. A California driver has stopped for a school bus loading children with a flashing red light and stop signal arm. When may the driver proceed?

A. When the bus driver waves the driver on
B. When the driver has waited for a few seconds
C. When traffic in the other direction starts moving
D. When the red light and stop arm cease operation

4. Before passing in the lane next to a stationary emergency vehicle with emergency lights, what must a California driver do if a lane change is practicable and lawful, absent an officer's direction?

A Change to a lane not next to it
B Keep the same lane and speed
C Pull onto the shoulder behind it
D Stop until the lights are turned off

5. At night, a California bicycle needs a front lamp with a white light visible from how far in front and from the sides?

A 500 feet
B 300 feet
C 200 feet
D 100 feet

Go deeper

WATCH Not Even Hands-Free 0:30
In California, adult drivers may use a phone hands-free. Drivers under 18 may not.

WATCH Stop From Either Direction 0:30
A California school bus flashes yellow lights. That means slow down and prepare to stop.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/drivers-permit/california-phones-restraints-and-road-user-laws

STUDY U.S. Permit Test by State (Driving) in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/drivers-permit

LESSON 11 OF 18

California: Alcohol, Insurance and Crashes

Alcohol limits and drivers under 21 · Chemical tests, open containers and DUI arrests · Insurance and crash duties · Crash reports, police stops and driving offenses

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- In California, state alcohol limits, where open containers go, who suspends a license after a DUI arrest, insurance minimums, and crash and police-stop steps.

California sets exact rules for drivers who drink or use drugs, for minimum liability insurance, for a driver's duties after a crash, and for a police stop. The California Driver's Handbook (DL 600, Rev. 6/2025) teaches them. Breaking them can mean a license suspension, an impounded vehicle or time in jail.

Alcohol limits and drivers under 21

In California, **driving under the influence (DUI)** of any alcoholic beverage, any drug, or both together is unlawful. Alcohol, marijuana and other drugs can impair the ability to drive because they slow coordination, judgment and reaction times. California's handbook says the law draws no line between illegal drugs and medicines from a doctor or pharmacy. It adds that at any age it is illegal to drive after:

- drinking excessive alcohol in any form, including medications such as cough syrup;
- taking any drug that affects driving, prescription or over-the-counter;
- any combination of alcohol or drugs that reduces the ability to drive safely.

California's **blood alcohol concentration (BAC)** limit is 0.08 percent for an adult driver but 0.01 percent for a driver under 21. The Vehicle Code applies the 0.08 percent limit to any driver, although the handbook words it as applying to drivers over 21 years old. A driver of any age who is on DUI probation has a limit of 0.01 percent. For a driver under 21, the Vehicle Code makes a blood alcohol level of 0.05 percent or more a separate offense. These limits are legal lines, never safe amounts of alcohol. California's handbook adds that, depending on how badly a driver is impaired, the driver may be arrested and convicted of DUI even without a BAC measurement.

A California driver under 21 may not knowingly drive a vehicle carrying alcohol unless accompanied by a parent, legal guardian, responsible adult relative or adult designated by a parent or guardian. The ban also does not apply when the driver is working for a licensee under the Alcoholic Beverage Control Act during regular hours and in the course of the employment. A passenger under 21 may not knowingly possess or control alcohol, with the same exceptions. California's handbook words these exceptions as accompaniment by a person aged 21 or older with a full, sealed container, or working for someone with an off-site liquor sales license and carrying closed containers. A vehicle registered to a driver under 21

who is caught carrying alcohol may be impounded at the owner's expense for one to 30 days for each violation. A conviction is a misdemeanor. The handbook says the impound is for up to 30 days.

A California peace officer who lawfully detains a driver under 21 and has reasonable cause to believe the 0.01 percent limit is violated shall request a **preliminary alcohol screening (PAS)** test if a device is immediately available. The handbook says officers can require a hand-held breath test, PAS or another chemical test. It adds that if the PAS of a driver under 21 shows 0.05 percent or higher, the officer may require a breath or blood test.

Sources

- Vehicle Code §13388
- Vehicle Code §23136
- Vehicle Code §23140
- Vehicle Code §23152
- Vehicle Code §23154
- Vehicle Code §23224
- NHTSA, Drug-Impaired Driving
- DL 600, p. 72
- DL 600, p. 73
- DL 600, p. 75

Chemical tests, open containers and DUI arrests

California's Vehicle Code deems a driver to have given **consent to chemical testing** of blood or breath on a lawful DUI arrest. For drugs, the consent covers blood, or urine if blood is unavailable. California's handbook words this as consent to a breath, blood or urine test when an officer suspects DUI.

A driver in California may not drink alcohol, or smoke or ingest cannabis, while driving on a highway. A passenger may not do so while the vehicle is being driven on a highway. On a highway, an **opened alcohol container** must be kept in the trunk. If the vehicle has no trunk, it must be kept in an area the driver and passengers do not normally occupy. This rule does not apply to the living quarters of a housecar or camper, and an off-highway vehicle subject to identification with no trunk needs a locked container. A glove compartment or utility compartment counts as part of the area the driver and passengers occupy, so an opened alcohol container may not be kept in it.

In California, a driver who has an **opened or unsealed cannabis container**, or loose cannabis flower not in a container, commits an infraction unless it is in the trunk. A qualified medical patient with an identification card or physician's recommendation may carry it if it is sealed, resealed or closed. California's handbook words this for alcohol and cannabis alike: a container must be sealed and unopened, and an open one goes in the trunk or a place where passengers do not sit.

Under the **Administrative Per Se** law that California's handbook describes, the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) must suspend the driving privilege after a DUI arrest on the grounds set in the Vehicle Code. The code says the department shall immediately suspend it for:

- a person who drove with a blood alcohol level of 0.08 percent or more;
- a person under 21 with 0.01 percent or more on a PAS or other chemical test;
- a commercial-vehicle driver with 0.04 percent or more;
- a driver on DUI probation with 0.01 percent or more.

California's handbook says the officer may take the driver's license after a DUI arrest and give a **temporary license** for 30 days. For a driver under 21 who refuses to take or fails to complete the PAS test, or whose test shows 0.01 percent or more, the Vehicle Code has the officer take the license and issue a temporary license. The temporary license is valid for 30 days from issuance or until the DMV's order of suspension is received, whichever comes first.

A first DUI conviction in California can bring up to six months in jail, with a code minimum of 96 hours. California's handbook lists other consequences of a DUI conviction: the driver must complete a DUI program and must file a California Insurance Proof Certificate (SR 22/SR 1P). It adds that the driver can be ordered to install an ignition interlock device (IID).

It is unlawful to ride a bicycle on a California highway while under the influence of alcohol or a drug. A person aged 13 to 20 who is convicted has the driving privilege suspended for one year or, if not yet licensed, delayed for one year after becoming eligible.

Sources

- Vehicle Code §13202.5
- Vehicle Code §13353.2
- Vehicle Code §13388
- Vehicle Code §21200.5
- Vehicle Code §23221
- Vehicle Code §23222
- Vehicle Code §23225
- Vehicle Code §23536
- Vehicle Code §23612
- DL 600, p. 72
- DL 600, p. 74

Insurance and crash duties

For policies issued or renewed on or after 1 January 2025, California's **minimum liability insurance limits** are:

- $30,000 for one person's injury or death;
- $60,000 for injury to or death of more than one person;
- $15,000 for property damage.

These limits replace earlier limits of 15,000, 30,000 and $5,000. California drivers and owners must carry **evidence of financial responsibility** in the vehicle. They must show it on an officer's demand, electronically if they choose. A parent or guardian who signs a minor's application accepts financial responsibility for the minor's driving. A driver in a collision who has no proper insurance coverage faces suspension of the driving privilege no matter who was at fault. Under the Vehicle Code, the privilege is suspended 30 days after the DMV mails notice, unless coverage at the time of the accident is shown.

After a crash that injures anyone other than the driver, or kills anyone, a California driver must stop immediately at the scene. After a crash with injury or death, the driver gives name, current address and vehicle registration number to those involved and to any officer at the scene. The driver also renders reasonable help and, on request, shows a driver's license if available. After a crash with property damage only, the driver stops at the nearest spot that will not impede traffic. The driver then either finds the owner or leaves a written note and notifies police or the California Highway Patrol (CHP).

Every driver involved in a California accident must, unless incapable, exchange these with the other driver or property owner at the scene:

- name and current address;
- license number;
- vehicle identification number;
- the registered owner's current address;
- evidence of financial responsibility, giving the insurer's name, address and policy number if the responsibility is insurance.

To cover a driver's duties after a crash, California's handbook lists these steps, in an unnumbered order that is not a required sequence:

- stopping at the scene;
- calling 911 at once if anyone is hurt;
- moving the vehicle out of traffic and then calling 911 if no one is hurt;
- exchanging information with the others involved;
- making the required reports.

California's handbook lists the most common causes of collisions as:

- driver distractions;
- unsafe speed;
- improper turns;
- not following right-of-way rules;
- not following stop signals and signs;
- driving on the wrong side of the road;
- traveling faster or slower than the flow of traffic.

Sources

- Vehicle Code §16020
- Vehicle Code §16025
- Vehicle Code §16028
- Vehicle Code §16056
- Vehicle Code §16070
- Vehicle Code §17707
- Vehicle Code §20001
- Vehicle Code §20002
- Vehicle Code §20003
- DL 600, p. 3
- DL 600, p. 76
- DL 600, p. 77

Crash reports, police stops and driving offenses

A crash with injury or death in California requires a written report to the CHP or city police within 24 hours. Every driver involved in a crash must also report it to the DMV within 10 days, on **form SR 1**, if it caused damage over 1,000 to one person's property or any injury or death. The DMV report is required no matter who caused the crash. The report can be made personally or through an insurance agent, broker or legal representative. The reporting rule also covers a reportable off-highway accident. That is one off the street or highway involving a vehicle subject to registration, with damage over 1,000 to one person's property or any injury or death. The accident does not count if the damage is only to the driver's or owner's own property. The handbook says the rule applies even on private property.

California's handbook lists six actions, in no required order, so that a police stop is calm and safe for everyone:

- turning on the right turn signal;
- moving completely onto the right shoulder;
- turning off the radio;
- staying inside unless told to get out;
- rolling down the window before the officer makes contact;
- keeping the driver's and all passengers' hands in clear view.

A California driver must obey a lawful order or signal of a uniformed officer. A driver stopped by an officer must produce a license, proof of insurance and registration. Since 1 January 2024, a peace officer must state the reason for a stop before questioning related to a criminal investigation or traffic violation, and must document it on any citation or report, unless the officer reasonably believes that withholding it is necessary to protect life or property from imminent threat.

In California, **evading a peace officer** is a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in county jail. It applies when a driver flees a pursuing peace officer's marked vehicle, which has a lighted red lamp and siren, with the intent to evade. When evading causes serious bodily injury, the penalty is state prison for three, five or seven years, county jail for up to one year, or a fine. The handbook says up to seven years in state prison or a county jail term of one year or less. When evading causes death, the penalty is state prison for 4, 6 or 10 years.

In California, a vehicle driven by a person who was never issued a driver's license may be impounded for 30 days. The Vehicle Code defines **reckless driving** as driving with willful or wanton disregard for the safety of people or property. A **speed contest** includes a race against another vehicle, a clock or another timing device.

As of 31 October 2026, the California Highway Patrol's **Freeway Service Patrol** is a free program of privately owned tow trucks patrolling designated routes on congested urban freeways. It may offer a gallon of gas, a jump-start for a dead battery, a radiator refill with taped hoses, or a flat-tire change.

Sources

- Vehicle Code §2800
- Vehicle Code §2800.1
- Vehicle Code §2800.3
- Vehicle Code §2806.5
- Vehicle Code §12951
- Vehicle Code §14602.6
- Vehicle Code §16000
- Vehicle Code §16000.1
- Vehicle Code §20008
- Vehicle Code §23103
- Vehicle Code §23109
- CHP, Freeway Service Patrol
- DL 600, p. 29
- DL 600, p. 30
- DL 600, p. 53
- DL 600, p. 78

Key facts

DUI and California's adult limit

In California, **driving under the influence (DUI)** of any alcoholic beverage, any drug, or both together is unlawful. Alcohol, marijuana and other drugs can impair the ability to drive because they slow coordination, judgment and reaction times. California's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limit for adult drivers is 0.08 percent, and the Vehicle Code applies it to any driver. The limit is a legal line, never a safe amount of alcohol.

Limits for under 21 and on probation for driving under the influence (DUI)

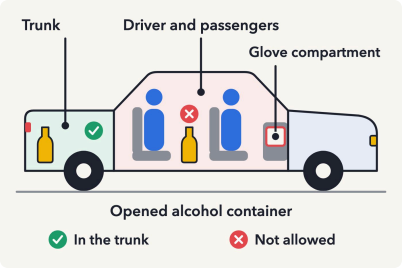
California's blood alcohol limit is 0.08 percent for an adult driver but 0.01 percent for a driver under 21, and a driver of any age on probation for DUI also has a limit of 0.01 percent. For a driver under 21, the Vehicle Code makes a blood alcohol level of 0.05 percent or more a separate offense. A peace officer who lawfully detains a driver under 21 and has reasonable cause to believe the 0.01 percent limit is violated shall request a **preliminary alcohol screening (PAS)** test if a device is immediately available.

Under 21 carrying alcohol

A California driver under 21 may not knowingly drive a vehicle **carrying alcohol** unless accompanied by a parent, legal guardian, responsible adult relative or adult designated by a parent or guardian, or working for a licensee under the Alcoholic Beverage Control Act during regular hours and in the course of the employment. A passenger under 21 may not knowingly possess or control alcohol, with the same exceptions. A vehicle registered to a driver under 21 caught carrying alcohol may be impounded at the owner's expense for one to 30 days for each violation; a conviction is a misdemeanor.

Implied consent and the license suspension

A driver is deemed to consent to chemical testing of blood or breath on a lawful arrest for driving under the influence (DUI), and of blood, or urine if blood is unavailable, for drugs. Under the **Administrative Per Se** law, the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) must immediately suspend the driving privilege after a DUI arrest on these Vehicle Code grounds: blood alcohol of 0.08 percent or more, 0.01 percent or more under 21 on a preliminary alcohol screening or other chemical test, 0.04 percent or more for a commercial-vehicle driver, and 0.01 percent or more on DUI probation.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Opened containers in a California vehicle

On a highway, an **opened alcohol container** must be kept in the trunk or, if there is none, in an area the driver and passengers do not normally occupy; a glove or utility compartment counts as part of the area they occupy. That rule does not cover a housecar's or camper's living quarters, and an off-highway vehicle subject to identification with no trunk needs a locked container. A driver with an opened or unsealed cannabis container, or loose cannabis flower, commits an infraction unless it is in the trunk; a qualified medical patient may carry it if it is sealed, resealed or closed.

Temporary license, jail and cycling under the influence

California's handbook says that after an arrest for driving under the influence (DUI) the officer may take the driver's license and give a **temporary license** for 30 days. A first DUI conviction in California can bring up to six months in jail, with a code minimum of 96 hours. Riding a bicycle on a California highway while under the influence of alcohol or a drug is unlawful, and a person aged 13 to 20 who is convicted has the driving privilege suspended for one year or, if not yet licensed, delayed for one year after becoming eligible.

California's minimum liability limits

For policies issued or renewed on or after 1 January 2025, California's **minimum liability insurance limits** are 30,000 for one person's injury or death, 60,000 for injury to or death of more than one person, and $15,000 for property damage. California drivers and owners must carry evidence of financial responsibility in the vehicle and show it on an officer's demand. In California, a driver in a collision who has no proper insurance coverage faces suspension of the driving privilege no matter who was at fault, unless coverage at the time of the accident is shown.

Duties at the scene of a crash

After a crash that injures anyone other than the driver, or kills anyone, a California driver must **stop immediately** at the scene. After a crash with injury or death, the driver gives name, current address and vehicle registration number to those involved and to any officer at the scene, renders reasonable help, and on request shows a driver's license if available. After a crash with property damage only, the driver stops at the nearest spot that will not impede traffic and then either finds the owner or leaves a written note and notifies police or the California Highway Patrol (CHP).

Exchanging information after a crash

Every driver involved in a California accident must, unless incapable, exchange name and current address, license number, vehicle identification number, the registered owner's current address, and **evidence of financial responsibility** with the other driver or property owner at the scene. California's handbook lists these steps after a crash, in no required order: stopping at the scene; calling 911 at once if anyone is hurt; moving the vehicle out of traffic and then calling 911 if no one is hurt; exchanging information; and making the required reports.

Crash reports to police and the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

A crash with injury or death in California requires a written report to the California Highway Patrol or city police within 24 hours. Every driver involved in a crash must also report it to the DMV within 10 days, on **form SR 1**, if it caused damage over $1,000 to one person's property or any injury or death, whoever caused the crash. The DMV report can be made personally or through an insurance agent, broker or legal representative, and the rule also covers a reportable off-highway accident, but not damage only to the driver's or owner's own property.



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At a police stop in California

The handbook lists six actions for a calm, safe **police stop**, in no required order: signaling right, moving completely onto the right shoulder, turning off the radio, staying inside unless told to get out, rolling down the window before the officer makes contact, and keeping the driver's and all passengers' hands in clear view. Since 1 January 2024, a peace officer must state the reason for a stop before questioning related to a criminal investigation or traffic violation, unless the officer reasonably believes withholding it is necessary to protect life or property from imminent threat.

Orders, documents and evading an officer

A California driver must obey a lawful order or signal of a uniformed officer and, when stopped, produce a license, proof of insurance and registration. A driver who flees a pursuing peace officer's marked vehicle, which has a lighted red lamp and siren, with the intent to evade commits a **misdemeanor** punishable by up to one year in county jail. When evading causes serious bodily injury, the penalty is state prison for three, five or seven years, county jail for up to one year, or a fine. A vehicle driven by a person never issued a driver's license may be impounded for 30 days.

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. A California driver of any age is on driving under the influence (DUI) probation. What is that driver's blood alcohol limit?

- A 0.04 percent
- B 0.05 percent
- C 0.01 percent
- D 0.08 percent

2. Under the Vehicle Code, a California driver with an opened cannabis container commits an infraction unless the container is kept where?

- A In the trunk of the vehicle
- B In the front center console
- C In the glove compartment
- D Under the front passenger seat

3. A California driver renews a liability policy on or after 1 January 2025. What is the minimum limit for one person's injury or death?

A $60,000
B $5,000
C $15,000
D $30,000

4. A California driver's crash injures another person. Which action does the Vehicle Code require of the driver?

A Stop at the nearest safe spot
B Stop immediately at the scene
C Go to the nearest police station
D Stop at the next safe exit

5. A California driver is signaled to stop by an officer. Which action does the handbook list for the stop?

A Stay in unless told to get out
B Move onto the left shoulder
C Keep the window up until asked
D Get out unless told to stay in

Go deeper

WATCH Two Limits, One Line 0:32
In California, the alcohol limit depends on who's driving.

WATCH Not the Glove Compartment 0:28
Not the glove compartment. In California, an opened alcohol container on a highway belongs in the trunk.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/drivers-permit/california-alcohol-insurance-and-crashes

STUDY U.S. Permit Test by State (Driving) in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/drivers-permit

LESSON 12 OF 18

California: Teen Licensing and the DMV Written Test

From permit to license · Supervised practice and the provisional license · Limit exceptions, points and citations · The tests and what a driver owes the DMV

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- Lay out California's steps to a provisional license and its practice hours, who supervises and signs for a minor, first-year limits and point consequences.
- Describe what California's license exam must test, the drive test's attempts and allowed technology, traffic violator school, and what a driver owes the DMV.

A California teen reaches a driver's license in stages: an instruction permit, supervised practice, then a provisional license with limits on night driving and passengers. The California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) gives a knowledge test and a drive test along the way, and it requires notice when a driver moves. These rules appear in the Vehicle Code and in the California Driver's Handbook (DL 600, Rev. 6/2025). They decide who may supervise practice, when a new driver may drive, and what a driver owes the DMV.

From permit to license

In California, a learner's permit is also called an **instruction permit**. A permit held by a person under 18 is called a **provisional instruction permit**. The DMV's Teen Driver Roadmap sets the path from permit to license in twelve numbered steps, from requirements and restrictions to DMV online services. Along that path, a teen passes through five main stages:

1. Driver's education.
2. Applying and passing the permit tests at the office.
3. Practice driving and a six-month wait.
4. The drive test.
5. The license, with 12 months of restrictions.

A California applicant for an instruction permit under 18 must be at least 15 years and 6 months old. The DMV's page words this as 15 and a half. An applicant who is 15 and a half to 17 and a half years old must have a certificate of completion of driver education, or of enrollment in an approved integrated driver education/driver training program. A parent or guardian must sign the application. Both must sign if the parents or guardians share joint custody.

A parent or guardian must attend the teen's DMV appointment in California. An applicant has three attempts at each **knowledge test**, a multiple-choice exam, before reapplying.

A California minor's license application must be signed and verified (Vehicle Code section 17701):

- by both the father and the mother, if both are living and have custody;
- otherwise by the one parent, guardian or custodian;
- for a dependent or ward of the court, it may also be signed by a grandparent, a sibling over 18, an aunt, an uncle or a foster parent with whom the minor lives.

A parent or guardian who signs is **jointly and severally liable** with the minor for damages from the minor's negligent or wrongful driving (Vehicle Code section 17707). The handbook adds that signers become financially responsible for drivers under 18 and pay for damages if the driver is in a collision. A signer can end responsibility for the minor's later driving by applying to the DMV to cancel the minor's license (section 17711). The handbook describes this as completing a Request for Cancellation or Surrender of a Driver License or ID Card form.

An applicant for a California instruction permit must qualify for and be issued the permit within 12 months from the date of the application (Vehicle Code section 12509). The code lets a permit be valid for up to 24 months from the date of the application. As of 31 October 2026, the DMV's Teen Driver Roadmap says permits are good for up to one year from the application date. The Vehicle Code governs where the two differ.

Sources

- Vehicle Code §12509
- Vehicle Code §17701
- Vehicle Code §17707
- Vehicle Code §17711
- DMV, Teen Driver Roadmap
- DMV, Learner's Permits
- DL 600, p. 3
- DL 600, p. 4
- DL 600, p. 5
- DL 600, p. 76

Supervised practice and the provisional license

In California, an adult permit holder's **supervising driver** must be a licensed driver at least 18. A minor's supervising driver must be at least 25, unless the supervisor is the permit holder's parent, spouse, guardian or a licensed or certified driving instructor, who may be any age. The handbook words the same split as 18 for adults and 25 for minors. For a minor, the supervisor must also be a California-licensed driver whose driving privilege is not on probation. The handbook adds that the supervisor must sit near enough to take over driving if needed.

For an adult permit holder (one not in the minor program), Vehicle Code section 12509 allows driving accompanied by a California-licensed driver who:

- is 18 or older;
- holds a valid license of the appropriate class;
- has a driving privilege not subject to probation; and
- is seated in the driver's compartment so as to help control the vehicle.

California's handbook says a driver under 18 holds a license marked as **provisional**. To get a provisional license, a minor must be at least 16, older than the permit's minimum age of 15 years and 6 months. The minor must also have held the instruction permit for six months. A California minor getting a provisional license must have practiced driving for 50 hours. Of those 50 hours, 10 are at night. The minor needs proof of driver education and training. The DMV states six hours of professional driver training for a teen license.

In the first 12 months, a California provisional licensee may not drive between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. The licensee also may not carry passengers under 20. Each limit applies unless the licensee is accompanied and supervised by a parent or guardian, a licensed driver 25 or older, or, under the Vehicle Code, a licensed or certified driving instructor. For night driving, limited exceptions apply for medical, school, work or family necessity, with a signed note, and for an emancipated minor. For passengers, the code lets a licensee transport an immediate family member without a supervising driver for medical, school, work or family necessity, with a signed note, or as an emancipated minor.

In short, a California minor's instruction permit means supervised driving. The supervisor is a licensed driver at least 25, or a parent, spouse, guardian or driving instructor of any age, seated near enough to take over. A provisional license instead carries night-driving and passenger limits for the first 12 months, with limited exceptions.

Sources

- Vehicle Code §12509
- Vehicle Code §12814.6
- DMV, Teen Driver Roadmap
- DL 600, p. 3
- DL 600, p. 4

Limit exceptions, points and citations

Four exceptions to California's provisional night-driving and passenger limits each need a **signed note** from a different person:

- Medical need: a note signed by a physician, stating the condition and the expected recovery date.
- School: a note signed by the school principal, dean or designee.
- Work: a note signed by the employer, confirming the employment.
- An immediate family member: a note signed by a parent or legal guardian, stating the reason, the family member and the date the need will end.

The Vehicle Code lists an emancipated minor as a fifth exception that needs no note (section 12814.6).

California's handbook says a minor with a provisional license cannot drive for pay or operate vehicles that need a commercial Class A, B or C license. The Vehicle Code bars hiring someone under 18 to drive a motor vehicle on the highways for pay (section 12515).

California's Vehicle Code counts violation points on a driving record (section 12810): two points for convictions such as reckless driving or failing to stop after an accident, and one point for most other traffic convictions involving safe driving and for a traffic accident in which the operator is deemed by the department (the DMV) to be responsible. Two or more **violation points** in 12 months bring a California provisional licensee a 30-day restriction. Three or more violation points in 12 months bring the licensee a six-month suspension and one year of probation. The suspension and the probation both run their full length even after the 18th birthday. A provisional licensee on probation must violate no law whose conviction is reportable to the DMV. The licensee must also stay free of responsibility for any accident (Vehicle Code section 12814.6).

For adults, California's handbook says a driver's license may be suspended when the record shows any of these totals:

- 4 points within a 12-month window;
- 6 points within a 24-month window;
- 8 points within a 36-month window.

The Vehicle Code presumes a driver with such a record to be a negligent operator (section 12810.5). These adult totals differ from the two and three points in 12 months that apply to a provisional licensee.

California's handbook glossary defines a **traffic citation** as a formal summons that law enforcement issues for breaking a traffic law, also called a ticket. For a one-point violation, a judge may offer **traffic violator school** only once in any 18 months. The handbook says the school keeps the citation off the insurance record but on the driver record. Vehicle Code section 41501 has the court notify the person of the one-conviction limit within 18 months.

Sources

- Vehicle Code §12515
- Vehicle Code §12810
- Vehicle Code §12810.5
- Vehicle Code §12814.6
- Vehicle Code §41501
- DL 600, p. 4
- DL 600, p. 54
- DL 600, p. 55
- DL 600, p. 84

The tests and what a driver owes the DMV

The DMV says California's knowledge tests are multiple choice. The DMV also says every question comes from the handbook. The Vehicle Code requires the driver license examination to cover the code itself, the ability to read the simple English used on traffic signs, and knowing what traffic signs and signals mean.

As of 30 October 2026, the DMV's learner's permit page gives 80 percent as the passing score on the knowledge tests. The DMV's 28 December 2023 release says California's online exam is offered in 35 languages. As of 30 October 2026, the Vehicle Code requires a minor who fails a knowledge test to wait at least one week before retaking it. The handbook says the wait is seven days, not counting the day of failure.

In California's handbook glossary, the **behind-the-wheel test**, or drive test, is a test in which the applicant controls the vehicle with a DMV examiner riding along. A minor has three attempts at the drive test. The glossary defines the **Driving Performance Evaluation (DPE)** as the part of the drive test where the applicant drives their own car and a DMV examiner evaluates their driving skills.

For the drive test, California's handbook tells an applicant to bring, among other things:

- another California-licensed driver at least 18 years old (25 for minors), unless the applicant is already licensed to drive;
- a vehicle that is safe to drive for the test;
- valid proof of insurance and vehicle registration.

California's handbook also says advanced driver assistance systems, such as automated parallel parking, lane departure features and adaptive cruise control, may not be used on the drive test. It adds that a backup camera or blind spot monitor may be used, but neither takes the place of actually checking the mirrors and blind spots by eye.

A California driver who moves must notify the DMV of both the old and new address within 10 days (Vehicle Code section 14600). The handbook gives the same 10 days. Driving with an expired driver's license is against the law. The code bars driving on a highway unless the person holds a valid driver's license, except those persons expressly exempted under the code (section 12500).

Sources

- Vehicle Code §12500
- Vehicle Code §12804.9
- Vehicle Code §12814.6
- Vehicle Code §14600
- DMV, Learner's Permits
- DMV, Teen Driver Roadmap
- DMV, 28 Dec 2023 release
- DL 600, p. 5

- DL 600, p. 6
- DL 600, p. 7
- DL 600, p. 8
- DL 600, p. 84

Key terms

Instruction permit

The California Department of Motor Vehicles' term for what is also called a learner's permit

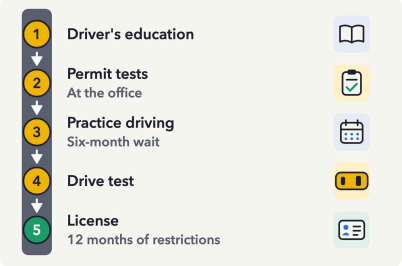
DPE

In California's handbook glossary, the part of the drive test where the applicant drives their own car and a California Department of Motor Vehicles examiner evaluates their driving skills

Key facts

> **A California minor's permit rules**
>
> In California, a permit held by a person under 18 is called a **provisional instruction permit**. To apply for an instruction permit, a California applicant under 18 must be at least 15 years and 6 months old, which the California Department of Motor Vehicles' page words as 15 and a half. An applicant who is 15 and a half to 17 and a half must have a certificate of completion of driver education, or of enrollment in an approved integrated driver education/driver training program. A parent or guardian must sign the application, and both must sign if the parents or guardians share joint custody.

> **Who signs for a California minor**
>
> A California minor's license application must be signed and verified by both parents if both are living and have custody, and otherwise by the one parent, guardian or custodian; for a dependent or ward of the court, a grandparent, sibling over 18, aunt, uncle or foster parent with whom the minor lives may also sign. A signer is **jointly and severally liable** with the minor for damages from the minor's negligent or wrongful driving and can end responsibility for the minor's later driving by applying to cancel the license.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

The path from permit to license

The **Teen Driver Roadmap** sets California's path from permit to license in twelve numbered steps. Along that path, a teen passes through driver's education, the permit tests at the office, practice and a six-month wait, the drive test, and the license with 12 months of restrictions. Under California law, an applicant must qualify for and be issued the instruction permit within 12 months from the date of the application. A parent or guardian must attend the teen's appointment, and an applicant has three attempts at each knowledge test before reapplying.

Who supervises a California permit holder

In California, the **supervising driver** of an adult permit holder, one not in the minor program, must be a California-licensed driver 18 or older, with a valid license of the appropriate class and a driving privilege not subject to probation. A permit holder under 18 practices with a California-licensed driver whose driving privilege is not on probation and who is at least 25, unless the supervisor is the permit holder's parent, spouse, guardian or a licensed or certified driving instructor, who may be any age.

First-year limits on a provisional license

In the first 12 months, a California **provisional licensee** may not drive between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. or carry passengers under 20, unless accompanied and supervised by a parent or guardian, a licensed driver 25 or older, or, under the Vehicle Code, a licensed or certified driving instructor. Limited exceptions apply to night driving for medical, school, work or family necessity, with a signed note, and for an emancipated minor. A minor's instruction permit instead means supervised driving, with the supervisor seated close enough to take control.

Four exceptions and their signers

Four of the exceptions to California's provisional night-driving limit each need a **signed note** from a different person. A medical need calls for a note signed by a physician, stating the condition and the expected recovery date, and school for one signed by the principal, dean or designee. Work calls for one signed by the employer, confirming the employment, and an immediate family member for one signed by a parent or legal guardian, stating the reason, the family member and the date the need will end.

Points and paid driving for minors

A California minor with a provisional license cannot drive for pay or operate vehicles that need a commercial Class A, B or C license, and the Vehicle Code bars hiring someone under 18 to drive a motor vehicle on the highways for pay. Two or more **violation points** in 12 months bring a provisional licensee a 30-day restriction. Three or more bring a six-month suspension and one year of probation, which both run their full length even after the 18th birthday.

Adult point totals and citations

An adult California driver's license may be suspended when the record shows 4 points within 12 months, 6 points within 24 months or 8 points within 36 months, and the Vehicle Code presumes such a driver to be a negligent operator. California's handbook glossary defines a **traffic citation** as a formal summons that law enforcement issues for breaking a traffic law, also called a ticket. For a one-point violation, a judge may offer traffic violator school, which keeps the citation off the insurance record but on the driver record, only once in any 18 months.

California's knowledge test

The California Department of Motor Vehicles says California's **knowledge tests** are multiple choice and that every question comes from the handbook. The Vehicle Code requires the driver license examination to cover the code itself, the ability to read the simple English used on traffic signs, and knowing what traffic signs and signals mean.

California's drive test

A California minor has three attempts at the behind-the-wheel test, or **drive test**, which the handbook defines as one where the applicant controls the vehicle with an examiner riding along. The handbook says to bring, among other things, a safe vehicle, valid proof of insurance and registration, and another California-licensed driver at least 18 (25 for minors), unless already licensed to drive. It also bars driver assistance systems such as adaptive cruise control; a backup camera or blind spot monitor may be used but does not replace a visual check of mirrors and blind spots.

What a driver owes the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

A California driver who moves must notify the DMV of both the old and new address within 10 days. Driving with an expired driver's license is against the law in California, and the Vehicle Code bars driving on a highway unless the person holds a **valid driver's license**, except those persons expressly exempted under the code.

Matched pairs

Each item on the left goes with the one on the right.

California's school exception note → Signed by the principal, dean or designee

Step by step

The five main stages a California teen passes through from permit to license, a path the Teen Driver Roadmap sets in twelve numbered steps

1. Driver's education
2. Applying and passing the permit tests at the office
3. Practice driving and a six-month wait
4. The drive test
5. The license, with 12 months of restrictions

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. A California parent signed a minor's license application, and the minor later caused damage through negligent driving. Under the Vehicle Code, who is liable for the damages?

- A Only the signer as the adult
- B Only the minor as the driver
- C Neither once the minor is licensed
- D Both the minor and the signer

2. What is the minimum age for a California applicant under 18 to apply for an instruction permit?

- A 15 years and 6 months
- B 15 years and 9 months
- C 16 years and 6 months
- D 14 years and 6 months

3. To qualify for a California provisional license, a minor must have practiced driving for how many hours, and how many of them at night?

A) 25 hours, 5 of them at night
B) 50 hours, 15 of them at night
C) 50 hours, 10 of them at night
D) 30 hours, 10 of them at night

4. In its first 12 months, a California provisional licensee may not drive between which hours, unless a parent, guardian, licensed driver 25 or older or licensed or certified instructor supervises?

A) 11 p.m. to 6 a.m.
B) 11 p.m. to 5 a.m.
C) 12 a.m. to 5 a.m.
D) 10 p.m. to 5 a.m.

5. A California provisional licensee gets three or more violation points in 12 months. How long is the resulting suspension?

A) Three months
B) One year
C) Thirty days
D) Six months

6. In California, the Vehicle Code requires the driver license examination to test the ability to read what?

A) Vehicle registration forms
B) Simple English on traffic signs
C) Billboards and advertising signs
D) Maps and driving directions

7. A California minor is about to take the drive test. How many attempts at it does a minor have?

A) 5 attempts
B) 2 attempts
C) 3 attempts
D) 4 attempts

8. Which of these does California's handbook allow an applicant to use on the drive test?

A) Blind spot monitor
B) Adaptive cruise control
C) Lane departure features
D) Automated parking

9. A California driver moves to a new home. Within how many days must the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) be notified of both the old and new address?

A) 10 days
B) 7 days
C) 30 days
D) 20 days

10. For a one-point violation, a California judge may offer traffic violator school. How often may a driver have that option?

A) Once in any 36 months
B) Once in any 18 months
C) Once in any 12 months
D) Once in any 24 months

Go deeper

WATCH After 11 at Night 0:30
It's 11:30 at night. A California 16-year-old got a license. Can they drive?

WATCH By Eye 0:30
A car can park itself. On the California drive test, that is not allowed.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/drivers-permit/california-teen-licensing-and-the-dmv-written-test

STUDY U.S. Permit Test by State (Driving) in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/drivers-permit

LESSON 13 OF 18

Texas: Right of Way

Intersections: stops, yields and who goes first · Pedestrians and emergency vehicles · Railroad crossings

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- In Texas, decide who must yield or stop at an intersection, a crosswalk, a railroad crossing or when an emergency vehicle approaches.

Right of way in Texas decides who goes first when two road users could collide, and the Transportation Code sets most of the answers for intersections, crosswalks, emergency vehicles and railroad crossings. The Texas Driver Handbook (DL-7, revised January 2026) adds some guidance of its own. Laws change, so the Texas rules here are described as of 30 October 2026.

Intersections: stops, yields and who goes first

In Texas, **right-of-way** is the entitlement of one vehicle or pedestrian to go ahead of another vehicle or pedestrian that is approaching close enough to risk a collision, unless one of them gives way.

At a Texas stop sign, the driver stops at a clearly marked stop line. Without a line, the driver stops before entering the crosswalk on the near side. Without a line or crosswalk, the driver stops at the place nearest the intersecting roadway with a view of approaching traffic. DL-7 adds that slowing down is not enough.

The Texas Transportation Code defines a **highway or street** as the width between the boundary lines of a publicly maintained way, any part of which is open to the public for vehicular travel (section 541.302(5)). After stopping at a Texas stop sign, the driver yields to a vehicle that entered the intersection from another highway or is close enough to be an immediate hazard. A stop sign requires a full stop before yielding, while a yield sign requires slowing and yielding, and a stop only if safety requires it.

A **dark signal** is a traffic signal that shows no indication in any of its signal heads. Texas law treats it as a stop sign, except when it is a freeway entrance ramp control signal or a pedestrian hybrid beacon.

At an **uncontrolled intersection**, which no sign or signal controls, Texas law sets these yield rules:

- A driver on a road with one or two lanes yields to traffic on a divided road or on a road with three or more marked lanes.
- A driver on an unpaved road yields to traffic on a paved road.
- A driver on a street that ends yields to the other road.
- At other uncontrolled intersections, a driver yields to a vehicle that has entered, or is approaching in hazardous proximity, from the driver's right.

A Texas driver turning left yields to oncoming traffic that is close enough to be an immediate hazard.

At an **all-way stop**, every approach has a stop sign. To decide who goes first, DL-7 teaches this three-step order as handbook guidance:

1. Every driver stops at the stop sign.
2. Traffic then goes in the order of arrival.
3. When two vehicles arrive at once, the driver yields to the vehicle on the right.

A Texas driver leaving an alley or driveway stops before the sidewalk and yields to highway traffic and to pedestrians on the sidewalk. The Texas Transportation Code defines an **alley** as a street that is not used primarily for through traffic and that provides access to rear entrances of buildings or lots along a street (section 541.302(1)).

Texas's DL-7 handbook teaches a **roundabout** as a one-way circle where traffic flows counterclockwise and entering vehicles are controlled by yield signs.

Sources

- Transportation Code chapter 541
- Transportation Code chapter 544
- Transportation Code chapter 545
- Transportation Code chapter 552
- DL-7, pp. 30-31, 49-50

Pedestrians and emergency vehicles

Where no traffic signal is operating, a Texas driver must stop and yield to a pedestrian in a crosswalk. The duty covers a pedestrian on the driver's half of the roadway, or one approaching from the other half closely enough to be in danger.

A Texas driver coming up behind a vehicle that has stopped at a crosswalk to let a pedestrian cross the roadway may not pass it.

On a green signal, a Texas driver yields to pedestrians who are lawfully in the intersection or in an adjacent crosswalk.

Approaching an intersection or crosswalk where a pedestrian with a white cane or guided by an assistance animal is crossing or attempting to cross, a Texas driver must take necessary precautions to avoid injuring or endangering the pedestrian. The driver must stop completely if injury or danger can be avoided only by that action.

Texas's own 2025 Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (TMUTCD) took effect on 18 January 2026. In that manual, the **Stop Here for Pedestrians** sign replaces the Yield Here to Pedestrians sign, as the Texas Department of Transportation summarizes the changes. The manual also puts stop lines in place of yield lines before crosswalks.

The Texas Transportation Code lists the authorized emergency vehicles, including a fire department or police vehicle and a public or private ambulance operated by a person licensed by the Department of

State Health Services (section 541.201(1)(A) and (B)). The Texas duty to yield to an **authorized emergency vehicle** applies when the vehicle is using **audible and visual signals**; for police vehicles, either kind of signal is enough. DL-7 words the warning as a siren, bell or flashing red light.

To yield to an approaching authorized emergency vehicle, a Texas driver follows three steps in the order the Transportation Code states them, unless a police officer directs otherwise:

1. The driver yields the right-of-way to the emergency vehicle.
2. The driver immediately drives to a position parallel to the right-hand edge or curb of the roadway, as close as possible and clear of any intersection.
3. The driver stops and stays stopped until the emergency vehicle has passed.

Unless on official business, a Texas driver may not follow closer than 500 feet behind a fire apparatus responding to a fire alarm or an ambulance with flashing red lights.

Sources

- Transportation Code chapter 541
- Transportation Code chapter 544
- Transportation Code chapter 545
- Transportation Code chapter 552
- Texas TMUTCD page
- 2025 TMUTCD list of changes
- 2025 TMUTCD, Part 3
- DL-7, p. 22

Railroad crossings

When a warning applies at a Texas railroad crossing, a driver stops no closer than 15 feet and no farther than 50 feet from the nearest rail. This is a stopping position at a crossing warning, not a parking distance. The Transportation Code section behind it was amended effective 1 September 2025.

A **stop condition** is a situation that triggers this stop. The Transportation Code lists several, and a Texas driver must stop 15 to 50 feet from the nearest rail in each of these four:

- A visible signal warns of a train or other on-track equipment.
- A crossing gate is lowered or a flagger gives a warning.
- A train is plainly visible and in hazardous proximity.
- An engine within about 1,500 feet sounds a signal and is an immediate hazard.

The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Highway-Rail Crossing Handbook says that in the railroad context a **flagger** is a person authorized by the railroad to warn of an approaching train or of roadway workers along the right-of-way. Texas law treats two kinds of crossing differently. At a crossing where a signal warns of a train, a gate is lowered or a flagger gives a warning, the driver must stop 15 to 50 feet from the nearest rail and remain stopped until permitted and safe. At a **crossbuck-only crossing**, one

marked only by a crossbuck, the driver yields to a train in hazardous proximity and stops only if safety requires it.

Driving around, under or through a closed railroad crossing gate is an offense in Texas.

DL-7 warns that at a crossing with two or more tracks, one train can hide another. So a Texas driver crossing railroad tracks follows four steps, aiming to cross only when permitted and safe, with every track checked:

1. The driver reduces speed as the crossing approaches.
2. When a warning applies, the driver stops 15 to 50 feet from the nearest rail.
3. The driver stays stopped until permitted to proceed and it is safe to proceed.
4. At a crossing with two or more tracks, the driver checks every track before crossing.

This sequence combines the Transportation Code with DL-7. No single source lists the four steps in this order, and the code itself orders only the stop and the wait.

Sources

- Transportation Code chapter 545
- FHWA, Highway-Rail Crossing Handbook
- DL-7, pp. 21-22

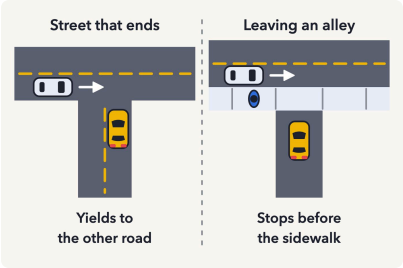
Key facts



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Right of Way, Stop Signs and Dark Signals

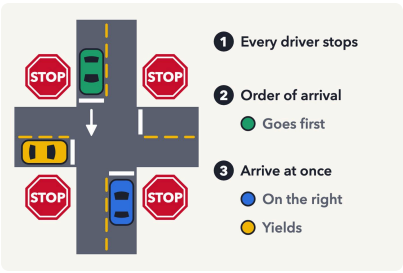
In Texas, **right-of-way** is the entitlement of one vehicle or pedestrian to go ahead of another that is approaching close enough to risk a collision, unless one of them gives way. At a stop sign the driver stops, then yields to a vehicle that entered from another highway or is close enough to be an immediate hazard; a yield sign requires slowing and yielding, and a stop only if safety requires it. A signal that shows no indication in any signal head counts as a stop sign, except a freeway entrance ramp control signal or a pedestrian hybrid beacon.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Uncontrolled Intersections and Alleys

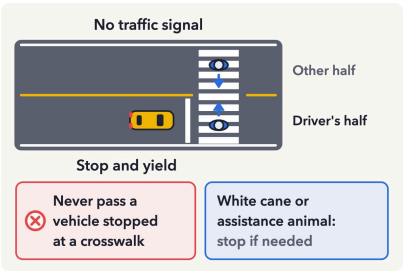
At a Texas **uncontrolled intersection**, which no sign or signal controls, a driver on a road with one or two lanes yields to traffic on a divided road or a road with three or more marked lanes, and a driver on an unpaved road yields to traffic on a paved road. A driver on a street that ends yields to the other road; at other uncontrolled intersections, a driver yields to a vehicle that has entered, or is approaching in hazardous proximity, from the driver's right. A driver leaving an alley or driveway stops before the sidewalk and yields to highway traffic and to sidewalk pedestrians.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Who Goes First at an All-Way Stop

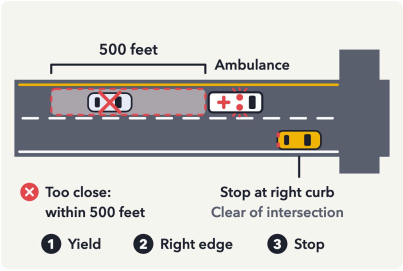
At an **all-way stop**, every approach has a stop sign. To decide who goes first, the Texas Driver Handbook teaches this order as guidance: every driver stops, traffic then goes in the order of arrival, and when two vehicles arrive at once, the driver yields to the vehicle on the right.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Pedestrians and Crosswalks

Where no traffic signal is operating, a Texas driver must stop and yield to a pedestrian in a **crosswalk** on the driver's half of the roadway or approaching from the other half closely enough to be in danger. A driver may not pass a vehicle stopped at a crosswalk to let a pedestrian cross. At an intersection or crosswalk where a pedestrian with a white cane or guided by an assistance animal is crossing or attempting to cross, a driver must take necessary precautions to avoid injuring or endangering the pedestrian, and must stop completely if that is the only way to avoid injury or danger.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Emergency Vehicles and Following Distance

The Texas duty to yield to an **authorized emergency vehicle** applies when it is using audible and visual signals; for police vehicles, either kind is enough. When one approaches, the driver yields, drives immediately to the right edge or curb clear of any intersection, and stops until the vehicle passes, unless a police officer directs otherwise. Unless on official business, a driver may not follow closer than 500 feet behind a fire apparatus responding to a fire alarm or an ambulance with flashing red lights.

Where to Stop at a Railroad Crossing

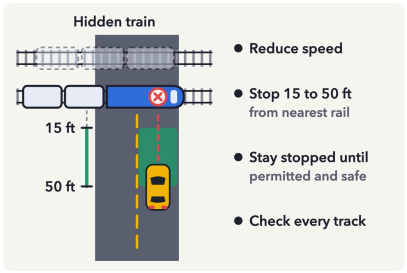
When a warning applies at a Texas railroad crossing, a driver stops no closer than 15 feet and no farther than 50 feet from the nearest rail; this is a stopping position, not a parking distance. A **stop condition** is a situation that triggers this stop. Among them are a visible signal that warns of a train or other on-track equipment, a lowered gate or a flagger's warning, a train that is plainly visible and in hazardous proximity, and an engine within about 1,500 feet that sounds a signal and is an immediate hazard.



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Gated and Crossbuck-Only Crossings

At a Texas crossing where a signal warns of a train, a crossing gate is lowered or a flagger gives a warning, the driver must stop 15 to 50 feet from the nearest rail and remain stopped until it is permitted and safe to proceed. At a **crossbuck-only crossing**, one marked only by a crossbuck, the driver yields to a train in hazardous proximity and stops only if safety requires it. Driving around, under or through a closed crossing gate is an offense in Texas.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

The Steps for Crossing Railroad Tracks

In Texas, **crossing railroad tracks** involves reducing speed as the crossing approaches, stopping 15 to 50 feet from the nearest rail when a warning applies, staying stopped until permitted to proceed and it is safe to proceed, and checking every track at a crossing with two or more tracks, because one train can hide another. No single source lists these steps in this order, and the Transportation Code orders only the stop and the wait.

Step by step

At a Texas all-way stop, where every approach has a stop sign, the Texas Driver Handbook teaches this order as guidance for deciding who goes first

1. Every driver stops at the stop sign
2. Traffic then goes in the order of arrival
3. When two arrive at once, the driver yields to the vehicle on the right

To let an approaching authorized emergency vehicle pass, a Texas driver follows the Transportation Code's order, unless a police officer directs otherwise

1. Yields the right-of-way to the emergency vehicle
2. Immediately drives to the right edge or curb, clear of any intersection
3. Stops and stays stopped until the vehicle has passed

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. At a Texas intersection with no sign or signal, which of these drivers yields to the other road?

- A. A driver on a three-lane road that meets a one-lane road
- B. A driver on a divided road that meets a two-lane road
- C. A driver on a paved road that meets an unpaved road
- D. A driver on a street that ends where it meets another road

2. A traffic signal at a Texas intersection shows no indication in any of its signal heads and is neither a freeway entrance ramp control signal nor a pedestrian hybrid beacon. How is it treated?

- A. As a flashing yellow signal for drivers
- B. As a stop sign for approaching drivers
- C. As an intersection with no sign or signal
- D. As a yield sign for approaching drivers

3. No traffic signal is operating at a Texas crosswalk, and a pedestrian on the other half of the roadway is approaching closely enough to be in danger. What must the driver do?

- A. Stopping and yielding because the pedestrian is in danger
- B. Slowing and passing because the driver's lane is clear
- C. Yielding only after the pedestrian enters the driver's lane
- D. Continuing because the pedestrian is on the other half

4. A police vehicle approaches a Texas driver with its flashing lights on and no siren. Under the Texas duty to yield to an emergency vehicle, what must the driver do?

- A. Nothing: the duty needs a siren as well as lights
- B. Nothing: the duty covers only fire vehicles and ambulances
- C. Yield: one kind of signal is enough for a police vehicle
- D. Yield only if the police vehicle is in the driver's lane

5. A crossing gate is lowered at a Texas railroad crossing. How far from the nearest rail must an approaching driver stop?

- A. 55 to 100 feet from the nearest rail
- B. 100 to 500 feet from the nearest rail
- C. 3 to 8 feet from the nearest rail
- D. 15 to 50 feet from the nearest rail

Go deeper

WATCH Who Goes First 0:31
Two cars stop at a Texas all-way stop at the same time. Who goes first?

WATCH One Train Can Hide Another 0:30
Two tracks, one crossing. One train can hide another, the Texas driver handbook warns. So crossing takes four steps.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/drivers-permit/texas-right-of-way

STUDY U.S. Permit Test by State (Driving) in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/drivers-permit

LESSON 14 OF 18

Texas: Speed Limits and Following Distance

Speed limits by road type and zone · Following distance and driving to conditions

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- In Texas, state the speed limits for each road type and zone and the rules on following distance.

Texas sets default speeds by road type, and it requires a driver to slow down when conditions call for it. It also requires a driver who follows another vehicle to leave room to stop. The Texas Driver Handbook (DL-7, revised January 2026) puts that room in seconds, which the Transportation Code does not. Knowing both the law and the handbook helps a Texas driver pick a lawful speed and a safe gap.

Speed limits by road type and zone

In Texas, the **basic speed law** in Transportation Code section 545.351(a) bars driving faster than is reasonable and prudent under existing circumstances. The Texas driver handbook, DL-7, adds in its glossary that this applies whatever the posted limit says. Section 545.351(c) of the same code requires reduced speed at intersections and railroad crossings, on curves and hill crests, on narrow or winding roads, and whenever a special hazard exists.

For the default speeds below, Texas Transportation Code section 545.352(d)(3) treats an area as an **urban district** when structures for business, industry or dwellings stand less than 100 feet apart over at least a quarter mile. Unless a special hazard requires less, section 545.352(b) makes these default speeds lawful in Texas:

- 30 miles per hour (mph) on a street in an urban district, other than an alley
- 15 mph in an alley
- 70 mph on a highway numbered by Texas or the United States outside an urban district, farm-to-market and ranch-to-market roads included
- 60 mph on other highways outside an urban district
- 60 mph for a school bus outside an urban district that has passed a commercial motor vehicle inspection and is on a highway numbered by Texas or the United States
- 50 mph for a school bus outside an urban district that has not passed that inspection or is on a highway not numbered by Texas or the United States

Texas requires an entity that sets a speed limit to set the same limit for daytime and nighttime (section 545.352(e)). The handbook's sign entry on page 30 speaks of day and night maximums, while the code's rule is one limit for both. The Texas Transportation Commission may set a speed limit of 75 mph where it

finds that reasonable and safe (section 545.353(h), as last amended in 2023), and other subsections allow higher limits in listed cases.

Texas law limits slow driving as well, through its ban on **impeding traffic**. A Texas driver may not drive so slowly as to impede the normal and reasonable movement of traffic, except when reduced speed is necessary for safe operation or in compliance with law (section 545.363(a)).

A **school crossing zone** is a reduced-speed zone that a local authority designates for children going to or leaving school (Texas Transportation Code section 541.302(13)). The speed sections cited above set no statewide school-zone speed, and the handbook gives no mph figure for one. A school-zone sign entry in the handbook (page 31) says the posted school-zone speed applies while the yellow light is flashing.

Sources

- Transportation Code §§545.351-545.353, 545.363
- Transportation Code §541.302
- DL-7, pp. 30, 31, 71

Following distance and driving to conditions

Transportation Code section 545.062(a) requires a Texas driver following another vehicle to leave an **assured clear distance**. That means a gap from which the driver can safely stop, considering the vehicles' speed, the traffic and the highway conditions. Stopping safely means not hitting the vehicle ahead and not veering into another vehicle, object or person.

Texas law words a safe following distance as an assured clear distance with no count of seconds, while the driver handbook DL-7 expresses it as a **time gap** of at least two seconds. Texas's driver handbook (DL-7, January 2026) advises leaving at least two seconds between a vehicle and the one ahead of it, and more in poor conditions.

The handbook's pages do not all give the same figures, and two seconds is the lowest gap that every page supports. DL-7's chapter 8 (page 45) gives a minimum gap of 2 seconds for speeds of 30 mph or less in good conditions and a gap of 4 seconds for speeds above 30 mph. Its highway section (page 48) calls for at least two seconds, and for four seconds or more in bad weather.

The handbook's **less-than-two-seconds check** (page 45) says a Texas driver who reaches a fixed object in less than two seconds after the vehicle ahead passed it is following too closely. Following too closely is the same as tailgating, which means driving too close behind another vehicle.

Driving to conditions means slowing down and leaving more room when the road or the driver's view calls for it. Stopping on a wet roadway takes substantially more distance. The handbook tells Texas drivers to slow down and lengthen the following gap on wet or crowded roads or when vision is limited, and not to drive faster than their range of vision allows. At night, a driver has to be able to stop within the distance the headlights light up.

Sources

- Transportation Code §545.062
- Federal Highway Administration, Driver Safety Issues
- DL-7, pp. 45, 48, glossary

Key terms

Basic speed law

In Texas, a driver may not drive faster than is reasonable and prudent under existing circumstances

Key facts

Reduced speed and slow driving

The Texas Transportation Code requires reduced speed at intersections and railroad crossings, on curves and hill crests, on narrow or winding roads, and whenever a special hazard exists. The glossary of the Texas Driver Handbook adds that the basic speed law applies whatever the posted limit says. Texas also bars **impeding traffic**: a driver may not drive so slowly as to impede the normal and reasonable movement of traffic, except when reduced speed is necessary for safe operation or in compliance with law.

Texas's default speed limits

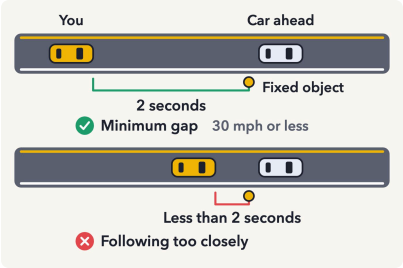
Unless a special hazard requires less, the Texas Transportation Code makes default speeds lawful. Texas treats an area as an **urban district** when structures for business, industry or dwellings stand less than 100 feet apart over at least a quarter mile. The default is 30 mph on a street in an urban district other than an alley, and 15 mph in an alley. Outside an urban district it is 70 mph on a highway numbered by Texas or the United States (farm-to-market and ranch-to-market roads included) and 60 mph on other highways.

Day-night limits, school buses and school zones

Texas requires an entity that sets a speed limit to set the same limit for daytime and nighttime. Unless a special hazard requires less, the default for a school bus outside an urban district is 60 mph if the bus has passed a commercial motor vehicle inspection and is on a highway numbered by Texas or the United States, and 50 mph otherwise. A **school crossing zone** is a reduced-speed zone that a local authority designates for children going to or leaving school.

Texas's assured clear distance

The Texas Transportation Code requires a driver following another vehicle to leave an **assured clear distance**. That is a gap from which the driver can safely stop, considering the speed of the vehicles, the traffic and the highway conditions, without hitting the vehicle ahead or veering into another vehicle, object or person. Texas law gives no count of seconds, while the Texas Driver Handbook expresses a safe following distance as a time gap of at least two seconds.



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Time gap and driving to conditions in the Texas Driver Handbook

The Texas Driver Handbook (January 2026) gives a minimum gap of two seconds at 30 mph or less in good conditions and four seconds above 30 mph; its highway section advises at least two seconds, and at least four in bad weather. Under the **less-than-two-seconds check**, a driver who reaches a fixed object less than two seconds after the vehicle ahead passed it is following too closely. Drivers should slow down and lengthen the following gap on wet or crowded roads or when vision is limited, and not drive faster than their range of vision allows.

Matched pairs

Each item on the left goes with the one on the right.

Alley in Texas → 15 mph by default, unless a special hazard requires less

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. Unless a special hazard requires less, which default speed does Texas make lawful on a highway numbered by Texas or the United States outside an urban district?

A 60 mph
B 70 mph
C 50 mph
D 75 mph

2. A Texas street has structures for business, industry or dwellings less than 100 feet apart for at least a quarter mile. Unless a special hazard requires less, what default speed is lawful there?

A 30 mph
B 40 mph
C 15 mph
D 50 mph

3. A Texas driver is traveling slowly enough to impede the normal and reasonable movement of traffic. When is that lawful under Texas law?

A When saving fuel matters more to the driver
B When the driver stays below the default limit
C When the driver is looking for an address
D When reduced speed is necessary for safe operation

4. Texas law requires a driver following another vehicle to leave an assured clear distance. Which factors does the driver consider in judging that gap?

A The posted limit, the traffic and the highway conditions
B The vehicles' speed, the traffic and the time of day
C The vehicles' speed, the traffic and the highway conditions
D The posted limit, the traffic and the time of day

5. The Texas Driver Handbook says a Texas driver is following too closely on reaching a fixed object in less than how many seconds after the vehicle ahead passed it?

A One second
B Three seconds
C Two seconds
D Five seconds

Go deeper

WATCH Fifteen in an Alley 0:30
In a Texas alley, the default speed is just 15 miles per hour.

WATCH The Two-Second Check 0:31
In Texas, the car ahead passes a fixed object. Reaching it less than 2 seconds later is following too closely.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/drivers-permit/texas-speed-limits-and-following-distance

STUDY U.S. Permit Test by State (Driving) in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/drivers-permit

LESSON 15 OF 18

Texas: Turns, Lanes, Passing and Parking

Signals, turns and turns on red · Lanes and passing · Parking, lights and distances in feet

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- In Texas, choose the legal signal, turn, lane, passing or parking action in a described situation, and state the parking and lighting distances.

A signal shows other road users what a Texas driver intends to do. The Texas Transportation Code sets exact rules for when to signal, where a turn is made, how to pass, and where a vehicle may not stop, stand or park. Many of the rules are distances in feet, and similar numbers belong to different situations. The Texas Driver Handbook (DL-7, revised January 2026) covers the same ground.

Signals, turns and turns on red

As of 30 October 2026, a Texas driver must signal to show an intention to turn, change lanes or start from a parked position (Section 545.104(a) of the Transportation Code). DL-7 (page 38) lists lane changes and turning among the times to signal.

The **turn signal** has a set length: a Texas driver intending to turn must signal continuously for not less than the last 100 feet the vehicle travels before the turn (Section 545.104(b)). The Transportation Code sets that distance for turns only. The **stop signal** works differently: a Texas driver may not stop or suddenly slow down without first giving a stop signal to the driver behind when there is an opportunity to give it (Section 545.105). The code states no distance for that signal.

DL-7 also lists slowing or stopping among the times to signal, and it applies the 100 feet to stopping as well as turning. Texas's handbook further lists entering or leaving a highway, and pulling over, among the times a driver should signal.

A Texas driver gives **hand signals** from the left side of the vehicle (Section 545.107). The arm positions are:

- left turn: the arm held horizontal;
- right turn: the arm pointed upward;
- stop or slow: the arm pointed downward.

In Texas, a bicycle operator may instead signal a right turn from the right side with the hand and arm extended horizontally.

After stopping at a steady red signal and yielding, a Texas driver may turn right (a **right turn on red**) unless a **posted notice** bans the turn. After stopping and yielding, a Texas driver may also turn left if

both streets are one-way and a left turn is permissible, unless a posted notice bans it.

The Texas Transportation Commission, a city or a county may ban a turn at a steady red signal by posting notice. These rules come from Section 544.007 of the Transportation Code, as amended effective 1 September 2025. The 2025 Texas Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (TMUTCD), effective 18 January 2026, also permits a driver facing a steady red arrow to turn right, or to turn left from a one-way street into a one-way street, in the arrow's direction after stopping, unless a device prohibits a turn on red. That turn follows the rules for a driver who has stopped at a stop sign.

Sources

- Transportation Code §544.007
- Transportation Code §§545.104, 545.105, 545.107
- TMUTCD 2025, Part 4, §4A.03
- DL-7, p. 38

Lanes and passing

As of 30 October 2026, the Texas Transportation Code sets where a right or left turn is made. A Texas right turn is made as near to the right-hand curb or edge as is practicable, meaning as near as can reasonably be done (Section 545.101). A Texas left turn is made from the **extreme left lane** that is lawfully available, meaning the lane farthest to the left that the driver may legally use.

On a Texas roadway wide enough, a driver keeps to the **right half** of the road. The exceptions in Section 545.051(a)-(b) are when the driver is:

- passing;
- obstructed, if the driver yields to a vehicle on the unobstructed portion that is an immediate hazard;
- on a road with three marked lanes; or
- on a one-way road.

A Texas driver moving more slowly than the normal speed of other vehicles uses the right-hand lane, or stays as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge. The exceptions are passing another vehicle and preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private road or driveway (Section 545.051(b)).

A Texas driver also stays within a **single lane** as nearly as practical and moves out of it only when that can be done safely (Section 545.060(a)).

Texas drivers pass on the left, keeping a safe distance, and do not return to their lane until they are safely clear of the vehicle passed (Section 545.053). A Texas driver being passed must, on an audible signal (a sound) from the passing driver, move or remain to the right in favor of the passing vehicle, and may not accelerate (speed up) until completely passed. That duty does not apply when passing to the right is permitted.

A **no-passing zone** is marked by striping on the road or, in some zones, by signs only. A Texas driver may not drive on the left side of the road in a no-passing zone (Section 545.055(b)). The exception is a left

turn: a driver may cross the striping, or the center line in a zone marked by signs only, to turn left into or out of an alley, private road or driveway.

Sources

- Transportation Code §§545.051, 545.053, 545.055, 545.060, 545.101
- DL-7, pp. 38-39

Parking, lights and distances in feet

As of 30 October 2026, Section 545.302 of the Texas Transportation Code sorts parking bans into **three tiers**. None of the three tiers applies when avoiding conflict with other traffic is necessary, or when the driver is complying with the law or the directions of a police officer or an official traffic-control device (Section 545.302(f)).

The Texas Transportation Code defines **parking** as standing a vehicle, occupied or not, other than temporarily while loading or unloading merchandise or passengers, and **standing** as halting a vehicle, occupied or not, other than temporarily while receiving or discharging passengers (Section 541.401(6) and (9)). Where stopping is prohibited, **stopping** means any halt, even a momentary one, unless necessary to avoid conflict with other traffic or to obey a police officer or a traffic-control sign or signal (Section 541.401(10)).

In the first tier, a Texas driver may not stop, stand or park, among other places:

- in an intersection;
- on a crosswalk;
- on a sidewalk;
- on a railroad track;
- on a bridge or other elevated structure on a highway, or in a highway tunnel;
- on the roadway side of a vehicle that is stopped or parked at the edge or curb of a street; or
- where a sign prohibits stopping.

In the second tier, except momentarily to pick up or discharge (let out) a passenger, a Texas driver may not stand or park, among other places:

- in front of a driveway;
- within 15 feet of a fire hydrant;
- within 20 feet of a crosswalk at an intersection; or
- within 30 feet on the approach to a flashing signal, stop sign, yield sign or traffic signal at the roadside.

In the third tier, except temporarily to load or unload merchandise or passengers, a Texas driver may not park in two places:

- within 50 feet of the nearest rail of a railroad crossing; or
- where an official sign prohibits parking.

Parking near a railroad crossing is separate from stopping for a crossing warning, where a Texas driver stops 15 to 50 feet from the nearest rail.

On a two-way Texas road, a parked vehicle's right-hand wheels must be parallel to the curb or road edge and within 18 inches of it (Section 545.303(a)). The curb distance is in inches, not feet.

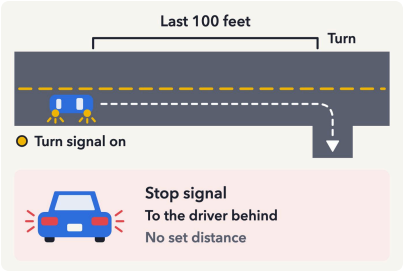
A Texas vehicle must show its required lights during **nighttime** and whenever a person or vehicle is not clearly discernible (cannot be clearly seen) 1,000 feet ahead (Section 547.302(a)). The Transportation Code defines nighttime as the period from one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise (Section 541.401(5)).

The **upper beam** is the headlights' bright setting, and the **lower beam** is the dimmer one. A Texas driver within 300 feet behind another vehicle may not use the upper beam, and a Texas driver within 500 feet of an oncoming vehicle uses the lower beam, or aims the lights so that no part of the high-intensity portion projects into the oncoming driver's eyes (Section 547.333(c)).

Sources

- Transportation Code §541.401
- Transportation Code §§545.302, 545.303
- Transportation Code §§547.302, 547.333

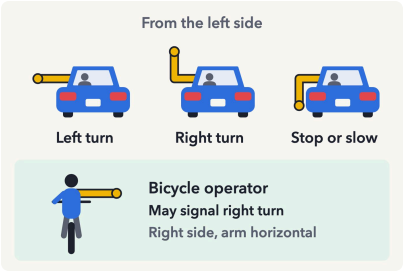
Key facts



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When a Texas driver must signal

A Texas driver must signal to show an intention to turn, change lanes or start from a parked position. The **turn signal** must run continuously for not less than the last 100 feet before the turn, a distance the Transportation Code sets for turns only. A driver may not stop or suddenly slow down without first giving a stop signal to the driver behind when there is an opportunity, and the Code states no distance for that signal. The Texas Driver Handbook further lists entering or leaving a highway, and pulling over, among the times a driver should signal.



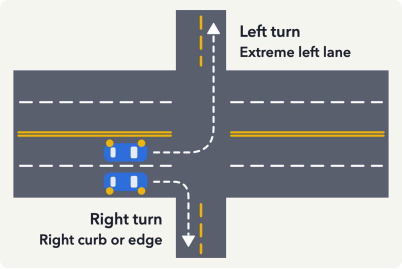
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Texas hand signals

A Texas driver gives **hand signals** from the left side of the vehicle. The arm held horizontal signals a left turn, the arm pointed upward signals a right turn, and the arm pointed downward signals stop or slow. A bicycle operator may instead signal a right turn from the right side, with the hand and arm extended horizontally.

Turning on a steady red in Texas

After stopping at a steady red signal and yielding, a Texas driver may turn right, or may turn left if both streets are one-way and a left turn is permissible. A **posted notice** can ban either turn. The Texas Transportation Commission, a city or a county may ban a turn at a steady red signal by posting notice.



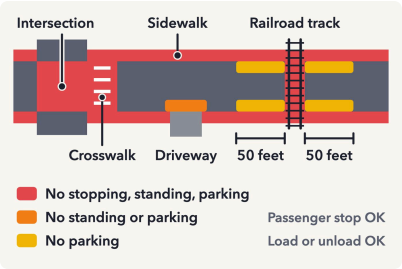
FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Texas turn positions and the right half

A Texas right turn is made as near as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge, and a left turn from the **extreme left lane** lawfully available. On a wide enough road, a driver keeps to the right half unless passing, on a road with three marked lanes, on a one-way road, or forced left of center by an obstruction (then yielding to a vehicle that is an immediate hazard). A driver moving more slowly than other traffic uses the right-hand lane or stays as close as practicable to the curb or edge, unless passing or preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private road or driveway.

Passing on the left in Texas

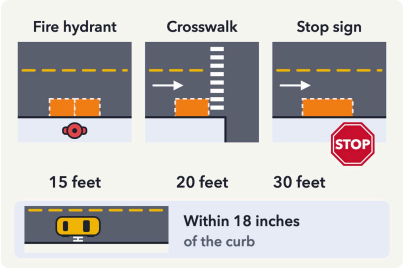
Texas drivers pass on the left, keeping a safe distance, and do not return to their lane until they are safely clear of the vehicle passed. A driver being passed must, on an audible signal from the passing driver, move or remain to the right and may not accelerate until completely passed, unless passing to the right is permitted. In a **no-passing zone**, a Texas driver may not drive on the left side of the road, but may cross the striping, or the center line where signs only mark the zone, to turn left into or out of an alley, private road or driveway.



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Texas parking bans in three tiers

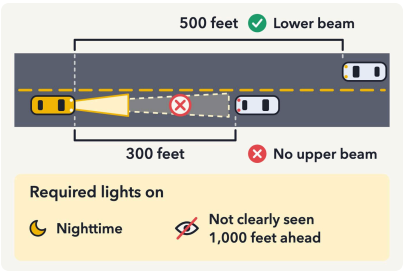
Texas law sorts parking bans into **three tiers**: no stopping, standing or parking in an intersection, on a crosswalk, sidewalk, railroad track or highway bridge, or in a highway tunnel, among other places; no standing or parking in front of a driveway, except momentarily to pick up or discharge a passenger; and no parking within 50 feet of a railroad crossing's nearest rail, or where an official sign bars parking, except temporarily to load or unload. No tier applies when needed to avoid conflict with other traffic or to obey the law, a police officer or an official traffic-control device.



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Texas parking distances in feet and inches

Except momentarily to pick up or discharge a passenger, a Texas driver may not stand or park within 15 feet of a **fire hydrant**, within 20 feet of a crosswalk at an intersection, or within 30 feet on the approach to a flashing signal, stop sign, yield sign or traffic signal at the roadside. These bans do not apply when needed to avoid conflict with other traffic or to obey the law, a police officer or an official traffic-control device. On a two-way road, a parked vehicle's right-hand wheels must be parallel to the curb or road edge and within 18 inches of it.



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Texas lights at night and headlight beams

A Texas vehicle must show its required lights during **nighttime**, the period from one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise, and whenever a person or vehicle is not clearly discernible (cannot be clearly seen) 1,000 feet ahead. A Texas driver within 300 feet behind another vehicle may not use the upper beam. A Texas driver within 500 feet of an oncoming vehicle uses the lower beam, or aims the lights so that no part of the high-intensity portion projects into the oncoming driver's eyes.

By the numbers

Generally, Texas bars standing or parking within how many feet of a fire hydrant?

15 feet

Generally, Texas bars standing or parking within how many feet of intersection crosswalks?

20 feet

Generally, Texas bars standing or parking within how many feet before a stop sign?

30 feet

Generally, Texas bars parking within how many feet of a railroad crossing's nearest rail?

50 feet

Texas bars the upper beam within how many feet behind another vehicle?

300 feet

Within how many feet of oncoming traffic must Texas headlights be lowered or aimed away?

500 feet

Matched pairs

Each item on the left goes with the one on the right.

Texas hand signal for a left turn → Arm held horizontal

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. A Texas driver is about to stop or suddenly slow down. When there is an opportunity, what must the driver do first?

- A Wait to signal until the vehicle has stopped
- B Give a stop signal to the driver behind
- C Sound the horn to warn the driver behind
- D Give a stop signal to the oncoming driver

2. A Texas driver reaches a steady red signal, and no posted notice bans a right turn. What must the driver do before turning right?

- A Wait for green, then turn right
- B Slow and yield, then turn right
- C Stop, then turn ahead of traffic
- D Stop and yield, then turn right

3. A Texas driver in a no-passing zone marked by striping must turn left into a private road. Which statement is correct?

- A The driver may pass first and then make the turn
- B The driver must wait until the zone ends
- C The driver may cross the striping to turn
- D The driver must turn at the next intersection

4. A Texas driver being passed on the left has moved right on the passing driver's audible signal. When may the driver being passed accelerate?

- A After being completely passed
- B Once the audible signal ends
- C Whenever the road ahead is clear
- D Once the pass has begun

5. A Texas driver wants to stop for only a moment to let a passenger out. At which place is that allowed?

- A On a railroad track
- B Inside a highway tunnel
- C In front of a driveway
- D Inside an intersection

Go deeper

WATCH Texas Parking in Feet 0:30
15, 20, 30, 50. Texas parking rules are full of feet. Which number goes where?

WATCH Arm Up, Turn Right 0:30
An arm points straight up from a Texas car. Which way will the driver turn?

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/drivers-permit/texas-turns-lanes-passing-and-parking

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LESSON 16 OF 18

Texas: Phones, Restraints and Road-User Laws

Phones, seat belts and child restraints · School buses · Move-over, bicycles and motorcycles

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- In Texas, state the rules on phones, seat belts and child restraints, and on school buses, move-over zones, bicycles and motorcycles.

Texas law sets rules for phone use, seat belts and child seats. It also sets rules for sharing the road with school buses, stopped emergency and tow vehicles, bicycle riders and motorcyclists. These rules protect people in and around vehicles, such as a child in a seat, a student getting off a bus, or a motorcyclist. The rules come from the Transportation Code, and the Texas Driver Handbook (DL-7, revised January 2026) words a few of them differently.

Phones, seat belts and child restraints

Texting is a form of distracted driving, which is any activity that pulls a driver's attention away from driving. The Texas ban for drivers under 18 covers any wireless device, hands-free included. The ban for all drivers works differently. It covers reading, writing or sending an electronic message unless the vehicle is stopped.

As of 30 October 2026, a Texas driver under 18 may not use a **wireless communication device** while operating a motor vehicle, except in an emergency (section 545.424). The Transportation Code defines that device as one that uses commercial mobile service, whether handheld or hands-free. DL-7 also says the ban includes hands-free devices, as do Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) pages dated 2024.

Every Texas driver commits the **texting offense** (breaks the law) by using a portable device to read, write or send an electronic message while driving, unless the vehicle is stopped (section 545.4251). The code lists six **affirmative defenses** to the texting offense:

- Using a device hands-free
- Using a device for navigation
- Using a portable wireless communication device to report illegal activity, summon emergency help, or enter information into a traffic and road-conditions app
- Reading an electronic message that the driver reasonably believed concerned an emergency
- Using certain work equipment
- Starting music on a device

The hands-free defense does not make hands-free use lawful for a driver under 18. DL-7 words its texting entry more briefly, leaving out the stopped-vehicle exception and the defenses. In a Texas

school crossing zone, a driver may not use a wireless communication device unless the vehicle is stopped or the device is used hands-free (section 545.425). DL-7's school-zone sign entry is stricter and describes use there as prohibited.

A Texas driver who transports a child younger than eight years old must keep the child secured in a **child passenger safety seat system** used as the manufacturer directs, unless the child is taller than 4 feet 9 inches (section 545.412). A separate belt rule covers different riders: a person at least 15 years old who rides in an operating passenger vehicle, in a seat with a safety belt, commits an offense by not being secured by it (section 545.413). That rule also makes the driver responsible for a child under 17 who is not required to be in a child seat, so the driver commits an offense by letting such a child ride unbelted.

Sources

- Transportation Code §§545.412, 545.413, 545.424, 545.425, 545.4251
- DL-7, pp. 3, 31, 48, 54

School buses

A Texas driver on a highway must stop before reaching a school bus that is stopped to receive or discharge a student (pick up or let off) and is operating a **visual signal** (Transportation Code section 545.066). The rule applies whether the driver approaches from either direction, from behind the bus or toward it, and it protects students as they get on or off the bus. A Texas school bus warns with its visual signal: four alternately flashing red lights (they take turns flashing), two at the front and two at the rear (section 547.701).

A Texas driver stopped for a school bus may not proceed until any one of these happens:

- the bus moves
- the bus driver signals the driver to proceed
- the visual signal is no longer actuated (no longer turned on)

In Texas, the stop rule has two exceptions:

- A driver need not stop for a school bus that is on a different **roadway**.
- On a **controlled-access highway** having separate roadways, a driver need not stop for a school bus stopped in a loading zone that is part of or adjacent to the highway where pedestrians may not cross the roadway.

The Texas Transportation Code defines a controlled-access highway as one where no one, including abutting owners or occupants, has a right of access, and entry and exit are restricted to the places and ways that the authority with jurisdiction determines (section 541.302(8)).

Both exceptions depend on where the bus is stopped. In Texas, roadways separated only by a left turn lane are not separate roadways for the school-bus stop rule. So a driver approaching a school bus across a left turn lane must still stop when the bus is operating its visual signal. In short, a Texas driver must stop for a school bus operating its visual signal from either direction on a highway, but need not stop

when the bus is on a different roadway or in a controlled-access loading zone where pedestrians may not cross.

Sources

- Transportation Code §541.302
- Transportation Code §545.066
- Transportation Code §547.701

Move-over, bicycles and motorcycles

The Texas **move-over rule** is in Transportation Code section 545.157, which was amended effective 1 September 2025. It covers a stationary (not moving) emergency, tow, Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), utility or other listed vehicle that is using its lights. A driver approaching such a vehicle must, unless a police officer directs otherwise, move out of the lane closest to the vehicle on a highway with two or more lanes in that direction, or else slow down.

Slowing down is the alternative, and in Texas the speed depends on the posted speed limit, in miles per hour (mph):

- A posted speed limit of 25 mph or more means slowing to a speed not exceeding 20 mph less than the posted limit, that is, at least 20 mph below the posted limit.
- A posted speed limit under 25 mph means slowing to a speed of no more than 5 mph.

The 20 mph is a reduction from the limit, while the 5 mph is the highest speed allowed. DL-7 words the 5 mph case differently: one page says less than 5 mph, and another leaves it out and lists fewer vehicles than the code.

A Texas bicycle rider has the rights and duties of a vehicle driver, unless the bicycle chapter (Chapter 551) alters a right or duty or a driver's right or duty cannot by its nature apply to a bicycle (section 551.101).

In Texas, a bicycle rider moving slower than traffic rides as near as practicable to the right curb or edge, unless:

- passing
- preparing for a left turn
- avoiding a hazard
- in an outside lane under 14 feet wide without a bike lane or too narrow to share

On a one-way roadway with two or more marked lanes, the rider may ride as near as practicable to the left curb or edge instead (section 551.103). Two bicycle riders in Texas may ride side by side in one lane, known as riding **two abreast**, if they do not impede traffic. A driver passes another vehicle on the left at a safe distance, and Transportation Code chapters 545 and 551 state no passing distance in feet for passing a bicyclist.

Transportation Code section 545.0605, added effective 1 September 2023, bars a motorcycle in Texas from riding between two lanes of vehicles traveling the same way, which bans **lane splitting**. The same section gives a motorcycle operator the right to use a **full lane**, and DL-7 tells drivers to allow the rider a full lane.

Sources

- Transportation Code §§545.053, 545.157, 545.0605
- Transportation Code §§551.101, 551.103
- DL-7, pp. 23, 46, 52

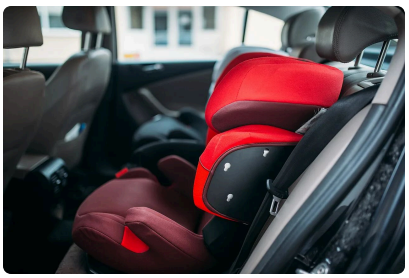
Key facts

Texas Wireless Device Ban Under 18

A Texas driver under 18 may not use a **wireless communication device** while operating a motor vehicle, except in an emergency. The Transportation Code defines that device as one that uses commercial mobile service, whether handheld or hands-free, so the ban covers hands-free use. The ban for all drivers works differently: it covers reading, writing or sending an electronic message, unless the vehicle is stopped. Texting is a form of distracted driving, which is any activity that pulls a driver's attention away from driving.

Texas Texting Offense and Its Defenses

Every Texas driver commits the **texting offense** by using a portable device to read, write or send an electronic message while driving, unless the vehicle is stopped. The code lists six affirmative defenses: hands-free use; navigation; using a portable wireless communication device to report illegal activity, summon emergency help or enter information into a traffic and road-conditions app; reading a message the driver reasonably believed concerned an emergency; certain work equipment; and starting music. The hands-free defense does not make hands-free use lawful for a driver under 18.



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Texas Child Seat and Seat Belt Rules

A Texas driver who transports a child younger than eight years old must keep the child secured in a **child passenger safety seat system** used as the manufacturer directs, unless the child is taller than 4 feet 9 inches. The belt rule covers different riders: a person at least 15 years old who rides in an operating passenger vehicle, in a seat with a safety belt, commits an offense by not being secured by it. That rule also makes the driver responsible for a child under 17 who is not required to be in a child seat. These rules protect people in a vehicle, such as a child in a seat.

Texas School Bus Stop Rule

A Texas driver on a highway must stop before reaching a school bus that is stopped to receive or discharge a student and is operating a **visual signal**, approaching from either direction. The only exceptions apply on a highway with separate roadways: a bus on a different roadway or, on a controlled-access highway, a bus in a loading zone where pedestrians may not cross. A Texas school bus warns with four alternately flashing red lights, two at the front and two at the rear. The driver may not proceed until the bus moves, the bus driver signals to proceed, or the signal is no longer actuated.



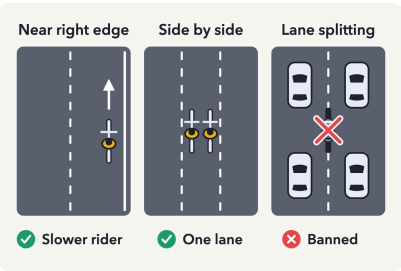
FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Texas School Bus Stop Exceptions

In Texas, a driver need not stop for a school bus that is on a different **roadway**. On a controlled-access highway having separate roadways, a driver also need not stop for a school bus stopped in a loading zone that is part of or adjacent to the highway where pedestrians may not cross the roadway. Roadways separated only by a left turn lane are not separate roadways, so the driver must still stop when the bus is operating its visual signal.

Texas Move-Over Rule

The Texas **move-over rule** covers a stationary emergency, tow, Texas Department of Transportation, utility or other listed vehicle that is using its lights. Unless a police officer directs otherwise, an approaching driver must move out of the closest lane on a highway with two or more lanes in that direction, or else slow down. Where the posted speed limit is 25 mph or more, slowing means a speed not exceeding 20 mph less than the posted limit, that is, at least 20 mph below it. Where it is under 25 mph, slowing means a speed no more than 5 mph.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Texas Bicycle and Motorcycle Rules

A Texas bicycle rider moving slower than traffic rides as near as practicable to the right curb or edge, unless passing, preparing for a left turn, avoiding a hazard, or in an outside lane under 14 feet wide without a bike lane or too narrow to share. On a one-way roadway with two or more marked lanes, the rider may ride as near as practicable to the left curb or edge instead. Two bicycle riders may ride side by side in one lane if they do not impede traffic. A motorcycle may not ride between two lanes of vehicles traveling the same way, which bans **lane splitting**.

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. Under the Texas texting offense, when may a driver read, write or send an electronic message on a portable device?

- A When the message is very short
- B When traffic is moving slowly
- C When the vehicle is stopped
- D When the road ahead is clear

2. A Texas driver transports a child who is younger than eight but taller than 4 feet 9 inches. Which Texas rule covers how that child rides?

- A The child seat rule, as the child is younger than eight
- B The belt rule, as the child is taller than 4 feet 9 inches
- C Neither rule, as the child is too young for a belt
- D The child seat rule, as the height exception starts at eight

3. A Texas driver approaches a school bus operating its visual signal. Only a left turn lane separates the driver's side of the road from the bus. What must the driver do?

- A Stop, because the bus is still on the driver's roadway
- B Slow down and pass, because the students are on the far side
- C Continue, because the bus is on a different roadway
- D Stop only if the bus is on the driver's own side of the road

4. Unless a police officer directs otherwise, what must a Texas driver do on approaching a stationary tow truck that is using its lights, on a highway with two lanes in the driver's direction?

- A Stop behind the tow truck until its lights go off
- B Keep the same lane at the posted speed limit
- C Move over only for an emergency vehicle
- D Move out of the closest lane or else slow down

5. Two bicycle riders in Texas ride side by side in one lane. When is this allowed?

- A When they are on a one-way roadway
- B When they are riding slower than traffic
- C When they do not impede traffic
- D When no bike lane is marked

Go deeper

WATCH Stop for the Bus 0:31
A school bus stops across the road, red lights flashing. In Texas, do you stop?

WATCH Move Over or Slow Down 0:29
A tow truck is stopped on a Texas highway, using its lights. What must an approaching driver do?

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/drivers-permit/texas-phones-restraints-and-road-user-laws

STUDY U.S. Permit Test by State (Driving) in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/drivers-permit

LESSON 17 OF 18

Texas: Alcohol, Insurance and Crashes

Alcohol and drug laws · Insurance and police stops · Duties after a collision

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- In Texas, state adult and minor alcohol limits, open-container and implied-consent rules, insurance minimums, and steps at a police stop or after a collision.

Texas has clear rules for alcohol, insurance, police stops and crashes. The Texas Driver Handbook (DL-7, revised January 2026) and the Texas codes behind it cover them. They define when a person is intoxicated, list the alcohol acts barred to a minor, set minimum insurance limits and name a driver's duties after a collision. These rules matter because they protect other people on the road when a driver is impaired or a crash happens.

Alcohol and drug laws

Texas Penal Code section 49.01(2) defines **intoxicated** in two ways:

- "not having the normal use of mental or physical faculties" because of alcohol, a drug or any other substance;
- having an alcohol concentration of 0.08 or more.

In Texas, that figure is a legal line, never a safe amount.

An **open container** is a receptacle holding any amount of alcoholic beverage that is open, has been opened, has a broken seal or is partly emptied. In Texas, knowingly possessing an open container in a passenger area of a motor vehicle on a public highway is an offense. The offense applies whether the vehicle is moving, stopped or parked. Exceptions include passengers in buses, taxis and limousines.

For Texas alcohol offenses, a **minor** is a person under 21. A Texas minor commits an offense by operating a motor vehicle in a public place, or a watercraft, with any detectable amount of alcohol in the system. DL-7 calls this **zero tolerance** and applies it even if the minor is not intoxicated.

A Texas minor also commits an offense by:

- consuming alcohol, with a defense and exceptions;
- purchasing alcohol, except when purchasing under the immediate supervision of a commissioned peace officer enforcing the Alcoholic Beverage Code;
- possessing alcohol, with exceptions such as possession in the visible presence of the minor's adult parent, guardian or spouse;
- falsely stating that the minor is 21 or older, or presenting a document that indicates so, to a person selling or serving alcoholic beverages.

DL-7 also lists attempting to purchase alcohol among the acts barred to a Texas minor. For consumption, it is an affirmative defense that the alcohol was consumed in the visible presence of the minor's adult parent, guardian or spouse. The consumption offense does not apply, on conditions, to a minor who requests emergency medical help for a possible alcohol overdose or reports a sexual assault. The handbook omits the defense and these exceptions.

Implied consent is set by Texas Transportation Code section 724.011(a). It follows an arrest for operating a motor vehicle in a public place while intoxicated, or for the zero tolerance offense for minors. The arrested person "is deemed to have consented" to give breath or blood specimens (samples). Zero tolerance, by contrast, makes it an offense for a minor to drive with any detectable amount of alcohol. The handbook's glossary words implied consent more broadly, as consent that comes with a license.

Sources

- Penal Code chapter 49
- Alcoholic Beverage Code chapter 106
- Transportation Code chapter 724
- DL-7, pp. 13, 55-56, 58, 73, 76

Insurance and police stops

A person may not operate a motor vehicle in Texas unless **financial responsibility** is established by a policy, bond, deposit or self-insurance (Transportation Code section 601.051). On request, a Texas driver must show evidence of financial responsibility to a peace officer or a person in a collision. An insurer's image on a wireless device counts as evidence.

As of 30 October 2026, the Texas **minimum liability coverage** includes these amounts. Each is for one collision and has been in force since 1 January 2011 (Transportation Code section 601.072(a-1)):

- $30,000 for bodily injury to or death of one person;
- $60,000 for bodily injury to or death of two or more persons;
- $25,000 for property of others.

A Texas driver must stop when a police officer gives a visual or audible signal (section 545.421(a)-(b)). For the stop itself, DL-7 lists ten suggested steps to help the driver stop safely for the officer:

1. The driver slows down and moves to the right.
2. The driver parks as far to the right as possible.
3. The driver sets the brake, turns the engine off and turns on the hazard lights.
4. At night, the driver also turns on the interior light.
5. The driver stays in the car, lowers the window if it is safe, keeps both hands visible on top of the steering wheel, and waits.
6. The driver tells the officer if the driver is transporting any type of weapon.
7. The driver says where documents are before reaching for them.
8. If asked to exit, the driver checks traffic first.

9. Passengers stay seated.
10. The driver signals and re-enters traffic once the officer releases the driver.

The ten DL-7 steps fall into these groups:

- steps 1 to 4: pulling over and parking;
- step 5: waiting with both hands visible;
- steps 6 and 7: telling the officer before reaching;
- steps 8 and 9: exiting and passengers;
- step 10: re-entering traffic.

Sources

- Transportation Code chapter 601
- Transportation Code chapter 545
- DL-7, pp. 18, 65

Duties after a collision

After a Texas collision likely to injure or kill, the driver must **stop immediately at the scene** or as close to it as possible (Transportation Code section 550.021). The driver must also return to the scene if the vehicle has not stopped there. If a collision results or is reasonably likely to result in injury or death, the driver must **remain at the scene** until complying with section 550.023. The driver must also stop without obstructing traffic more than is necessary.

Under section 550.023, a Texas driver in a collision gives a name, an address, the vehicle's registration number and the name of the driver's liability insurer. The driver also shows a driver's license if it is requested and available, and gives reasonable help.

A Texas **damage-only collision** damages only a vehicle that is driven or attended by a person. In one, the driver must stop at the scene, return if not stopped there, and remain until complying with section 550.023. The exception is a damage-only collision on a metropolitan-area freeway if each vehicle involved can be normally and safely driven. In that case, each driver must move the vehicle as soon as possible to one of these places:

- a designated collision investigation site, if available;
- a location on the frontage road;
- the nearest suitable cross street; or
- another suitable location.

The Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT) Access Management Manual defines a **frontage road** as a local street or road along an arterial highway allowing control of access and service to adjacent areas and property.

In Texas, the driver of a vehicle in a collision that injures or kills a person or leaves a vehicle unable to be driven normally and safely must notify police. The driver must do so immediately, by the quickest means.

Whom to notify depends on where the collision happened:

- in a municipality: the local police department;
- not more than 100 feet outside the limits of a municipality: the local police department or the sheriff's office;
- anywhere else: the sheriff's office or the nearest Department of Public Safety office.

Stopping comes first, and the Texas code lists the later steps in this order without stating a sequence:

1. The driver stops at the scene or as close to it as possible.
2. The driver checks for people who need aid.
3. The driver gives name, address, registration and insurer information, and shows the license if requested and available.
4. The driver gives reasonable help.
5. The driver notifies police if anyone was hurt or a vehicle cannot be driven normally and safely.

Sources

- Transportation Code chapter 550
- Transportation Code chapter 541
- TxDOT, Access Management Manual
- DL-7, pp. 59-60

Key terms

Open container

In Texas, a receptacle holding any amount of alcoholic beverage that is open, has been opened, has a broken seal or is partly emptied

Key facts

> **Intoxicated and Open Containers in Texas**
>
> In Texas, a person is **intoxicated** when not having the normal use of mental or physical faculties because of alcohol, a drug or any other substance, or when having an alcohol concentration of 0.08 or more. That figure is a legal line, never a safe amount. Separately, knowingly possessing an open container in a passenger area of a motor vehicle on a public highway is an offense, whether the vehicle is moving, stopped or parked, with exceptions such as passengers in buses, taxis and limousines. These rules protect other people on the road when a driver is impaired.

Alcohol Offenses for a Texas Minor

For Texas alcohol offenses, a **minor**, a person under 21, commits an offense by consuming alcohol, with a defense and exceptions; by purchasing it, except when purchasing under the immediate supervision of a commissioned peace officer enforcing the Alcoholic Beverage Code; by possessing it, with exceptions such as the visible presence of the minor's adult parent, guardian or spouse; and by falsely stating that the minor is 21 or older, or presenting a document that indicates so, to a person selling or serving alcohol. The Texas Driver Handbook lists attempting to purchase alcohol.

Implied Consent Versus Zero Tolerance

Texas **implied consent** follows an arrest for operating a motor vehicle in a public place while intoxicated, or for the zero tolerance offense for minors: the arrested person is deemed to have consented to give breath or blood specimens. Zero tolerance, the name the Texas Driver Handbook gives the minor offense, makes it an offense for a minor to operate a motor vehicle in a public place, or a watercraft, with any detectable amount of alcohol in the system, even if the minor is not intoxicated. The handbook's glossary words implied consent more broadly, as consent that comes with a license.

Texas Financial Responsibility and Minimum Coverage

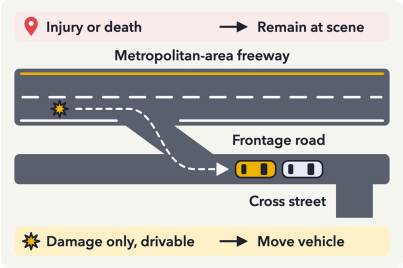
A person may not operate a motor vehicle in Texas unless financial responsibility is established by a policy, bond, deposit or self-insurance. As of 30 October 2026, the Texas **minimum liability coverage** includes 30,000 for bodily injury to or death of one person, 60,000 for bodily injury to or death of two or more persons and $25,000 for property of others. Each is for one collision and has been in force since 1 January 2011.

Stopping for a Police Officer in Texas

A Texas driver must stop when a police officer gives a visual or audible signal. For the stop itself, the Texas Driver Handbook lists ten **suggested steps** to help the driver stop safely for the officer, beginning with slowing down and moving to the right and ending with signaling and re-entering traffic once the officer releases the driver. They include telling the officer if the driver is transporting any type of weapon and saying where documents are before reaching for them.

Stopping First, Then Information and Help

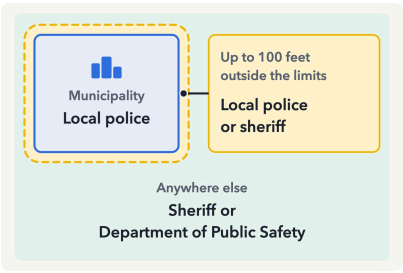
After a Texas collision likely to injure or kill, the driver must **stop immediately at the scene** or as close to it as possible, and return to the scene if the vehicle has not stopped there. Stopping comes first; the code lists the later duties without stating a sequence. The driver gives a name, an address, the vehicle's registration number and the name of the driver's liability insurer, shows a driver's license if it is requested and available, and gives reasonable help. These duties protect other people on the road when a crash happens.



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Remaining at the Scene, and the Freeway Exception

A Texas driver in a collision that results or is reasonably likely to result in injury or death must **remain at the scene** until giving information and reasonable help. A damage-only collision (damaging only a vehicle driven or attended by a person) brings the same duty, except on a metropolitan-area freeway if each vehicle can be normally and safely driven: each driver must move it as soon as possible to a designated collision investigation site if available, the frontage road, the nearest suitable cross street or another suitable location.



FlashFeed original diagram · CC-BY-4.0

Whom a Texas Driver Notifies After a Collision

In Texas, the driver of a vehicle in a collision that injures or kills a person or leaves a vehicle unable to be driven normally and safely must **notify police** immediately, by the quickest means. In a municipality, that means the local police department. Not more than 100 feet outside the limits of a municipality, it means the local police department or the sheriff's office. Anywhere else, it means the sheriff's office or the nearest Department of Public Safety office.

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. Knowingly possessing an open container in a passenger area of a motor vehicle on a Texas public highway is an offense, with exceptions. Which passengers fall under an exception?

- A Passengers in borrowed vans
- B Passengers in private cars
- C Passengers in limousines
- D Passengers in pickup trucks

2. A Texas driver under 21 operates a motor vehicle in a public place, has alcohol in the system and is not intoxicated. What is the legal result?

- A An offense since any detectable amount counts
- B An offense only when the driver drives unsafely
- C No offense unless the driver causes a collision
- D No offense since the driver is not intoxicated

3. As of 30 October 2026, which pair of amounts is the Texas minimum liability coverage for bodily injury to or death of one person, then of two or more persons, in one collision?

- A $60,000, then $30,000
- B $30,000, then $60,000
- C $25,000, then $60,000
- D $30,000, then $25,000

4. Two vehicles collide on a Texas metropolitan-area freeway, damaging only the vehicles, and each can be normally and safely driven. What must each driver do?

- (A) Each driver remains where the vehicle stopped
- (B) Each driver drives away since only the vehicles are damaged
- (C) Each driver moves the vehicle only after police allow it
- (D) Each driver moves the vehicle as soon as possible

5. A police officer signals a Texas driver to stop. Which is the first of the ten suggested steps that the Texas Driver Handbook lists for the stop?

- (A) The driver parks as far to the right as possible
- (B) The driver turns on the hazard lights
- (C) The driver slows down and moves to the right
- (D) The driver says where documents are before reaching for them

Go deeper

WATCH Under 21, Not 0.08 0:32
A Texas driver under 21 can break the law far below 0.08.

WATCH Both Hands Visible 0:31
An officer signals. A Texas driver must stop; the handbook suggests 10 steps.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/drivers-permit/texas-alcohol-insurance-and-crashes

STUDY U.S. Permit Test by State (Driving) in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/drivers-permit

LESSON 18 OF 18

Texas: Teen Licensing and the Permit Test

From permit to license · The provisional license and the video · The permit test

WHAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO

- Describe the stages from a Texas learner license to a provisional license, and the limits on a teen driver.
- Describe Texas's knowledge test: its subjects, the pass mark, the languages and the number of tries.

A Texas teen gets a driver license in two phases, a learner license first and a provisional license after it. The Texas Driver Handbook (DL-7, revised January 2026) outlines both phases. The steps carry their own ages, practice hours and driving limits, and the knowledge test has its own subjects, pass mark and languages. Knowing which rule belongs to which step keeps the path clear.

From permit to license

DL-7, the Texas handbook, describes the **Graduated Driver License (GDL) program**, through which Texas licenses minors, meaning people under 18, in two phases: the **learner license** and the provisional license. In Texas, the learner permit is called the learner license or the **instruction permit**. The route from permit to license includes the driver education classroom phase, the learner license, at least six months of holding it while practicing with a supervising driver, the in-car hours and the Impact Texas Teen Drivers program, and the driving test for the provisional license. Texas law fixes only part of that order.

A Texas learner license goes to a person who meets all of these conditions (Transportation Code section 521.222(a)):

- is 15 or older but under 18;
- has passed the classroom phase of an approved driver education course;
- meets the school-attendance rule;
- has passed each exam except the driving test.

A Texas learner license can be issued from age 15. The handbook words the age range differently, running through age 18, and a Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) learner page gives ages 15 and 17, but the Transportation Code's wording is the rule.

A Texas learner license holder may drive only with a **supervising driver** (section 521.222(d)(2)), meaning a person in the seat next to the operator who:

- is licensed for that vehicle;

- is 21 or older;
- has a year or more of driving experience.

A Texas learner license holder who is accompanied as section 521.222(d)(2) requires is exempt from the driving-hours and passenger limits that apply to drivers under 18 (section 545.424(c)).

A Texas learner or hardship license must be held for six months or more before a Class A, B or C license, other than a hardship license, can be issued to a person under 18 (section 521.204(b)). A hardship license is a restricted license for a minor with a necessity to drive.

Texas DPS (page dated 27 November 2024) lists these hours for a teen license:

- 30 hours of behind-the-wheel practice, at least 10 of them at night, with a licensed driver 21 or older present;
- 7 hours of in-car observation;
- 7 hours of in-car driving.

That page requires at least 10 of the 30 practice hours to be at night, so the night hours are part of the 30, not extra. In-car observation and in-car driving are separate 7-hour requirements. A DPS page dated 29 September 2020 gives a Texas teen driver education course 24 classroom hours, and the block method completes all 24 first.

Sources

- Transportation Code, chapter 521
- Transportation Code, chapter 545
- DPS, Teen Provisional License
- DPS, Driver Education Course
- DL-7, pages 1 to 3

The provisional license and the video

A Texas license for a person under 18, the **provisional license**, requires the applicant to be at least 16 years old (Transportation Code section 521.204(a)). The minimum age is 16 for the provisional license and 15 for the learner license.

Under Transportation Code section 521.083, a Texas **Class C** license authorizes its holder to drive a vehicle or combination of vehicles not described for a Class A or B license, and a vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating under 26,001 pounds towing a farm trailer rated at not more than 20,000 pounds.

A Texas Class C license for an applicant under 18 requires all of these (section 521.204(a)-(b)):

- age 16 or older;
- a driver education certificate;
- a high school diploma or equivalent, or qualifying school enrollment;
- written parental or guardian permission for school-record checks and absence notices;

- passing the exam;
- plus, except for a hardship license, a learner or hardship license held for at least six months.

A Texas learner license lets the holder drive only with a qualified supervisor beside them, while a provisional license allows driving alone with limits on night hours and passengers. The **driving-hours limit** says a Texas driver under 18 may not drive after midnight and before 5 a.m. unless for work, a school-related activity or a medical emergency (section 545.424(a-1)(1)). The **passenger limit** says a Texas driver under 18 may not carry more than one passenger under 21 who is not a family member.

A Texas **hardship license**, also known as a minor's restricted driver license (MRDL), can be issued when a necessity to drive is established. Its applicant is exempt from holding a learner license for six months first (Transportation Code section 521.204(b) and DPS's hardship license page).

A DPS page dated 22 September 2020 describes **Impact Texas Drivers (ITD)** as a DPS driver-safety program with a teen video, Impact Texas Teen Drivers (ITTD), and an adult video, Impact Texas Adult Drivers (ITAD). On that page, ITAD is a 1-hour video for ages 18 to 24 in adult courses and for those 25 and older. The page lists ITTD as a 2-hour video for ages 15 to 17 in parent-taught or minor driver education courses.

A Texas minor completes the Impact Texas Teen Drivers video after finishing the behind-the-wheel driver education requirements and before taking the skills examination (37 Texas Administrative Code section 15.62(a)(1)). Proof of completing an Impact Texas Drivers video counts for 90 days (37 Texas Administrative Code section 15.62(b)).

Sources

- Transportation Code, chapter 521
- Transportation Code, chapter 545
- 37 Texas Administrative Code 15.62
- DPS, Impact Texas Drivers
- DPS, GDL and Hardship License

The permit test

The **knowledge test** is one of the exams a Texas applicant passes before receiving a learner license, also called an instruction permit. Under Transportation Code section 521.161(b), the Texas driver license examination tests:

- whether the applicant can recognize and understand English-language highway signs that regulate, warn or direct traffic;
- knowledge of traffic laws;
- knowledge of a motorist's duties toward bicyclists;
- knowledge of the effect of wireless devices and other distractions;
- the applicant's vision.

A Texas applicant must score 70 percent correct or better on each knowledge test. That 70 percent is the **pass mark**, a share of correct answers rather than a count of questions. No official question count was found in DL-7, the DPS pages, the Transportation Code or the Texas Administrative Code rules.

The Texas driver license knowledge test is offered in English or Spanish only, under 37 Texas Administrative Code section 15.52 and a DPS page dated 22 September 2020. The Texas Spanish-language examination is identical to the English one except that directions and written material are in Spanish; the text of highway signs stays in English (section 521.162).

A Texas applicant gets three tries at each element of the examination per application. In the Transportation Code's terms, that is three examinations of each element (section 521.161(d)).

Age also changes the driver education an applicant needs. A Texas applicant under 25 needs a **driver education certificate** (section 521.1601), unless the applicant holds a valid driver's license issued by another state. The handbook links this requirement to the Less Tears More Years Act.

Texas DPS says an applicant aged 18 through 24 applying for a first Texas driver license takes a six-hour **adult driver education course** (DPS page dated 25 November 2024). DPS also says the course is waived for a new resident 18 or older surrendering a valid, unexpired license from another state, and that none is required from age 25. The six-hour adult course is separate from the teen course, which has 24 classroom hours (DPS page dated 29 September 2020).

Sources

- Transportation Code, chapter 521
- 37 Texas Administrative Code 15.52
- DPS, Testing in Other Languages
- DPS, Apply for a License
- DL-7, page 7

Key terms

GDL program

The Texas handbook's two-phase program for licensing minors: a learner license, then a provisional license

Key facts

The Texas Graduated Driver License Route

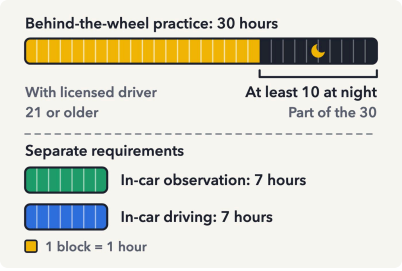
Texas licenses minors through the **Graduated Driver License (GDL) program**, which the Texas handbook describes in two phases: the learner license and the provisional license. The route from permit to license includes the driver education classroom phase, the learner license, at least six months of holding it while practicing with a supervising driver, the in-car hours and the Impact Texas Teen Drivers program, and the driving test for the provisional license. Texas law fixes only part of that order.

Who Can Get a Texas Learner License

A Texas **learner license**, also called an instruction permit, goes to a person who is 15 or older but under 18, has passed the classroom phase of an approved driver education course, meets the school-attendance rule and has passed each exam except the driving test. A Texas learner license can be issued from age 15. The Texas handbook words the age range differently, but the Transportation Code's wording is the rule.

Supervision and the Six-Month Hold

A Texas learner license holder may drive only with a **supervising driver**, a person in the seat next to the operator who is licensed for that vehicle, is 21 or older and has a year or more of driving experience. A learner license holder who is accompanied as the Transportation Code requires is exempt from the driving-hours and passenger limits. A Texas learner or hardship license must be held for six months or more before a Class A, B or C license, other than a hardship license, can be issued to a person under 18.



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Texas Teen Practice and Classroom Hours

A Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) page dated 27 November 2024 lists 30 hours of **behind-the-wheel practice** for a teen license, at least 10 of them at night, with a licensed driver 21 or older present. The night hours are part of the 30, not extra. The page also lists 7 hours of in-car observation and 7 hours of in-car driving as separate requirements. A DPS page dated 29 September 2020 gives a Texas teen driver education course 24 classroom hours.

Requirements for the Provisional License

A Texas Class C license for an applicant under 18, the **provisional license**, requires age 16 or older, a driver education certificate, a high school diploma or equivalent or qualifying school enrollment, written parental or guardian permission for school-record checks and absence notices, and passing the exam. Except for a hardship license, it also requires a learner or hardship license held for at least six months. A Texas hardship license can be issued when a necessity to drive is established, and its applicant is exempt from holding a learner license for six months first.

Limits for Texas Drivers Under 18

A Texas learner license lets the holder drive only with a qualified supervisor beside them, while a provisional license allows driving alone with limits on night hours and passengers. The **driving-hours limit** says a Texas driver under 18 may not drive after midnight and before 5 a.m. unless for work, a school-related activity or a medical emergency. The passenger limit says a Texas driver under 18 may not carry more than one passenger under 21 who is not a family member.

The Impact Texas Drivers Videos

The Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) describes **Impact Texas Drivers (ITD)** as a driver-safety program with a teen video (ITTD) and an adult video (ITAD). DPS lists the adult video as a 1-hour video for ages 18 to 24 in adult courses and for those 25 and older. DPS says the completion certificate is valid for 90 days.

Subjects on the Texas Driver Examination

The Texas **driver license examination** tests whether the applicant can recognize and understand English-language highway signs that regulate, warn or direct traffic. It also tests knowledge of traffic laws, of a motorist's duties toward bicyclists and of the effect of wireless devices and other distractions, as well as the applicant's vision.

Pass Mark, Languages and Tries

A Texas applicant must score 70 percent correct or better on each knowledge test, which is the **pass mark**. The Texas driver license knowledge test is offered in English or Spanish only, under Texas rules and a Texas Department of Public Safety page dated 22 September 2020. The Spanish-language examination is identical to the English one except that directions and written material are in Spanish, and the text of highway signs stays in English. A Texas applicant gets three tries at each element of the examination per application.

Self-test

Answer each question from memory, then check your work against the answer key.

1. Texas DPS (page dated 27 November 2024) lists 30 hours of behind-the-wheel practice for a teen license. What is the minimum number of those hours that must be at night?

A. 15 hours
B. 10 hours
C. 20 hours
D. 7 hours

2. A Texas learner license holder may drive only with a supervising driver who is licensed for that vehicle. What minimum age and minimum driving experience must that person also have?

A. 18 or older, with six months or more of driving experience
B. 21 or older, with six months or more of driving experience
C. 18 or older, with a year or more of driving experience
D. 21 or older, with a year or more of driving experience

3. What is the greatest number of passengers under 21 who are not family members that a Texas driver under 18 may carry?

A Two
B None
C One
D Three

4. For how many days does proof of completing an Impact Texas Drivers video count in Texas?

A 90 days
B 60 days
C 100 days
D 45 days

5. What is the minimum age for the Texas provisional license?

A 16 years
B 14 years
C 15 years
D 18 years

6. Which of these is a subject that the Texas driver license examination tests?

A The applicant's hearing
B The applicant's reaction time
C Duties toward bicyclists
D Vehicle maintenance tips

7. What is the lowest share of correct answers that passes each Texas knowledge test?

A 75 percent
B 70 percent
C 60 percent
D 65 percent

8. How many tries at each element of the examination does a Texas applicant get per application?

A 2 tries
B 4 tries
C 1 try
D 3 tries

9. An applicant asks to take the Texas driver license knowledge test in Vietnamese. What does a Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) page dated 22 September 2020 allow?

A English, Spanish or Vietnamese
B English or Spanish only
C Any language, on request
D English only

10. Which parts of the Texas Spanish-language examination are in Spanish rather than English?

A Directions and written material
B Only the directions
C Written material and the text of highway signs
D Directions and the text of highway signs

Go deeper

WATCH After Midnight 0:29
A Texas teen with a provisional license can drive alone. But not at 1 in the morning.

WATCH Signs Stay in English 0:28
In Texas, the permit test can be taken in Spanish. Yet its highway signs still read in English.

ONLINE This lesson on the web flashfeedlearningapp.com/study-guides/drivers-permit/texas-teen-licensing-and-the-permit-test

STUDY U.S. Permit Test by State (Driving) in the FlashFeed app flashfeedlearningapp.com/packs/drivers-permit

Answer key

Lesson 1: Road Signs: Shapes, Colors and Key Meanings

1. B YIELD sign

A YIELD sign means giving the right-of-way and stopping only when necessary. A STOP sign is the one for which a full stop is always required, so it is not the answer.

2. A DO NOT ENTER sign

The MUTCD requires a DO NOT ENTER sign at listed locations, including where a two-way roadway becomes one-way. A WRONG WAY sign may be added to supplement a DO NOT ENTER sign, but it is an option rather than the required sign.

3. C ROAD WORK sign

A ROAD WORK sign gives a general warning of obstructions or restrictions ahead. A Signal Ahead sign is different: it is required when a primary traffic control device cannot be seen from far enough away.

4. D Grade Crossing sign

The crossbuck belongs only to the Grade Crossing sign, at the railroad crossing itself. The Grade Crossing Advance Warning sign comes before a grade crossing and uses the circle instead.

5. B Orange

In a work zone, warning signs are normally diamonds with a black legend and border on orange, except the Grade Crossing Advance Warning sign, which stays yellow.

Lesson 2: Traffic Signals and Pavement Markings

1. D Continues crossing

Under the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, at a flashing UPRAISED HAND pedestrians must not start to cross, but anyone already crossing continues. Stopping where standing is the tempting mistake: the flashing hand rules out starting, not finishing.

2. A A flashing UPRAISED HAND

A pedestrian countdown is displayed only during the flashing UPRAISED HAND, although not every flashing hand has a countdown. The steady UPRAISED HAND is a different indication: it means do not enter.

3. C Flashing green

A flashing green indication has no meaning and is not allowed to be used. A flashing red, a flashing yellow and a steady yellow each carry a meaning.

4. B That the movement the arrow indicates is permitted

A green arrow permits the movement the arrow indicates. An arrow shows one direction only, so it does not open every movement. A steady yellow warns that red will follow, and a flashing red means stopping first.

5. D Where crossing is discouraged

A normal-width solid white lane line is used where crossing is discouraged. Passing with care is permitted by a broken yellow center line, and a stop line marks where a stop is intended or required.

Lesson 3: Seeing, Space and Stopping

1. D Looking well down the road and at the vehicle ahead

Looking far enough ahead means looking well down the road, not only at the vehicle directly ahead, because stopping or changing lanes can take a lot of distance. Watching that vehicle more closely does not extend the view.

2. A A vehicle can still be alongside in a blind spot

A blind spot is an area alongside a vehicle that the driver cannot see. Mirrors help a driver see around the vehicle, but they do not allow a driver to see everything, so an empty mirror does not mean an empty blind spot.

3. C Keeping space all around the vehicle

Keeping space around the vehicle on all sides gives that time. Staying alongside another vehicle is risky, because the other driver may change lanes suddenly and turn into the driver's vehicle.

4. B Looking over the shoulder

Enhanced mirror settings shrink the blind spots, but the handout still says to look over the shoulder before changing lanes. Mirrors alone do not allow a driver to see everything.

5. A Counts seconds until the vehicle reaches the same spot

After the vehicle ahead passes the landmark, the driver counts seconds until the driver's vehicle reaches the same spot, and only then compares the count with the target. Each step needs the one before it.

6. D Covers more ground toward the hazard

During the time the driver perceives and reacts, the vehicle keeps moving at the same speed toward the hazard. Reaction time does not shorten at higher speeds, so a faster vehicle covers more ground in that time.

7. B It becomes four times longer

Braking distance does not double when speed doubles. In the example, going from 20 to 40 mph makes it four times longer. That figure is for braking distance only, not the whole stopping distance.

8. C A driver stopping on a wet roadway

Substantially more distance is needed to stop for a fatigued driver, a distracted driver, a driver on a down slope, and when stopping on a wet roadway. A dry roadway, a level road and a rested, alert driver are not on that list.

9. D A road that is under repair

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's examples are bad weather, a road under repair and an area at night that is not well lit. A road in good repair, a well-lit area and dry, clear weather are the opposite cases.

10. C The distance covered while the driver is braking

Braking distance is the distance the vehicle travels, in ideal conditions, while the driver is braking, from the time the brakes are applied until it stops. Distance covered before the brakes are applied belongs to the other parts of stopping distance.

Lesson 4: Sharing the Road

1. A People may be crossing out of the driver's view

Drivers are advised never to pass a vehicle stopped at a crosswalk because there may be people crossing where the passing driver cannot see. A car backing up, changing lanes or a signal changing is not the reason given.

2. D Not to underestimate its speed

Drivers are advised not to underestimate the speed of bicyclists. Assuming the speed is low, or not judging it at all, does not follow that advice.

3. B Move left first to get turning room

When turning right, large trucks and buses may first move to the left to get enough room to turn. Moving right toward the curb is the opposite of what is described.

4. C To allow extra space

The six calls are to pay attention, keep distance, slow down, watch for pedestrians, allow extra space and avoid distractions. Clearing the zone quickly or following closely behind runs against them.

5. B The full width of the lane, at all times

A 7 May 2015 advisory from the Department of Transportation and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration tells drivers to allow a motorcycle the full width of a lane at all times, not half of it or only the width it takes up.

Lesson 5: Alcohol, Drugs, Fatigue and Distraction: How They Impair Driving

1. D Drowsiness, but not decision-making or coordination

Caffeine may help with drowsiness but not with alcohol's effects on decision-making or coordination. There is no quick cure for alcohol impairment, so coffee does not sober a driver up; only time helps.

2. A Each can amplify the impairing effects of the other

Using two or more drugs at the same time, alcohol included, can amplify each drug's impairing effects. Marijuana does not offset the alcohol: several scientific studies indicate that the rumor it makes a safer driver is false.

3. B Visual, manual and cognitive

Texting and similar tasks involve all three types of distraction at the same time: the eyes leave the road, the hands leave the wheel and the mind leaves driving. A text is therefore not only a visual distraction.

4. C It is not always enough against drowsy driving

Coffee or an energy drink alone is not always enough against drowsy driving. It might help a driver feel more alert, but the effects last only a short time, and the driver might not be as alert as he or she thinks.

5. C Impairment starts at lower levels than the legal limit

A legal limit is a legal line, not a safe amount: impairment starts at lower blood alcohol levels than the limit, so staying under it does not make it safe to drive.

Lesson 6: Night, Bad Weather and Vehicle Emergencies

1. B The right side of the lane

A driver should not look directly into the oncoming headlights and should look toward the right side of the lane instead. Looking straight at the lights is what the guidance rules out.

2. A Slowing down, no cruise control

Slowing down and not using cruise control are two of the National Weather Service's small decisions for driving in fog. Slowing down with cruise control still on gets only half of it right.

3. D Release the accelerator and avoid the brakes

With little or no traction, a driver who is hydroplaning should release the accelerator and avoid applying the brakes. Braking, even after releasing the accelerator, goes against the instruction to avoid the brakes.

4. C Eases the foot off the gas

Recovery starts with staying calm and easing the foot off the gas. Pressing harder on the gas works against recovery. The wheels are straightened only gently, as control comes back, and the parking brake is not one of the steps.

5. C With care, ready to let go if it starts to skid

The parking brake is applied with care, and the driver is ready to let go of it if the vehicle starts to skid. Applying it hard and fast goes against that caution.

6. A Get everyone out of the vehicle

In NHTSA's order, everyone gets out first; only then can the group move away from the tracks and the vehicle. The aim is to get people away before a train arrives, because a freight train can take a very long distance to stop.

Lesson 7: California: Right of Way

1. B The driver on the left yields to the vehicle on the right

For an intersection controlled from all directions by stop signs, California law has the driver on the left yield to the vehicle on that driver's immediate right, with no exception for a terminating highway. The handbook's all-way-stop order gives the same result.

2. A Stopping and going on with caution only when it is safe

A California driver must stop at an intersection whose signals are not working, and may go on with caution only when it is safe. Slowing and going through skips the required stop, and waiting for the signals adds a wait the rule does not require.

3. D Yielding because an intersection has an unmarked crosswalk

A California driver must yield to a pedestrian crossing in a marked crosswalk or in an unmarked crosswalk at an intersection, so painted lines are not required. The pedestrian is not the one who must yield here.

4. C 300 feet

California bars other motor vehicles from following within 300 feet of an emergency vehicle responding under the Vehicle Code's exemption. The bar is 300 feet, not 50, 100 or 1,000.

5. D Going around a closed crossing gate

California bars a driver from going through, around or under a closed railroad crossing gate. Stopping when a flagman warns is required, ten feet is outside the seven-and-a-half-foot zone where parking is barred, and a bus carrying passengers may stop 15 to 50 feet away.

Lesson 8: California: Speed Limits and Following Distance

1. C 65 mph

California's general maximum is 65 mph, except that the Vehicle Code lets the Department of Transportation declare and post 70 mph on some state highways. On a two-lane undivided highway the maximum is 55 mph unless a higher limit is posted after a survey.

2. D 25 mph

The Vehicle Code sets 25 mph there during school hours or the noon recess, in the version in effect only until 1 Jan 2031, so 30 and 35 mph do not apply. California's handbook words the zone differently, as within 500 feet of a school while children are outside or crossing the street.

3. B 15 mph

The Vehicle Code sets 15 mph there, except where a flagperson is on duty or a signal device is not warning of a train. The business and residence district limit is a separate rule.

4. A Only when it is closer than is reasonable and prudent

California's general following rule treats a gap as too close when it is closer than is reasonable and prudent for your speed, the traffic and the road. That rule sets no fixed time or distance, so a gap can be too close at any speed, even if the vehicle ahead never brakes hard.

5. B Three seconds

California's driver handbook teaches three seconds behind the vehicle ahead; two, four and five seconds are not its figure. The Vehicle Code's general following rule sets no time or distance.

Lesson 9: California: Turns, Lanes, Passing and Parking

1. A In the leftmost lane for that direction, near its left edge

A California left turn is approached as close as practicable to the left-hand edge of the extreme left lane lawfully available to traffic going that way, and is not begun before the vehicle enters the intersection. Signaling does not change the lane.

2. D To prepare for a left turn

A center left-turn lane may be used only to prepare for or make a left turn, or a U-turn where otherwise permitted by law. Passing, waiting for a parking space and traveling on to the next intersection are not permitted uses.

3. C At an intersection or an opening in a divided highway

In a business district, California allows a U-turn only at an intersection or at an opening in a divided highway. A clear road, a driveway or parking lot entrance, or a broken center line does not make a U-turn lawful there.

4. B It bars the pass while the view is obstructed

California bars passing on the left on a crest or curve where the view is obstructed. Signaling, a slower vehicle ahead, or no oncoming traffic in sight does not lift the bar while the view stays obstructed.

5. A Only for an approaching emergency vehicle

No driver may cross double parallel solid lines to the right of an HOV lane to enter or exit it, except when leaving the lane for an approaching emergency vehicle displaying a red light or siren. Signaling or slow traffic does not change that.

Lesson 10: California: Phones, Restraints and Road-User Laws

1. B To let the call go to voicemail

California's handbook says to let a ringing cell phone go to voicemail rather than answer it, so picking up an urgent call, holding it to the ear or replying by text is not the advice. If a driver must return or make a call, the handbook says to pull safely off the road.

2. C Facing the rear of the vehicle

A child under 2 rides rear-facing unless the child weighs 40 or more pounds or is 40 or more inches tall, subject to the exceptions in the Vehicle Code. A forward-facing position does not meet the rule for a child below both limits.

3. D When the red light and stop arm cease operation

A driver who must stop may not proceed until the flashing red light and the stop signal arm, if equipped, cease operation. The bus driver's wave, a wait of a few seconds, or other traffic moving does not end the stop.

4. A Change to a lane not next to it

The duty is a change to a lane not adjacent to the stationary vehicle, with due regard for safety and traffic conditions, if practicable and not prohibited by law. It does not apply if the stationary vehicle is not adjacent to the highway or is separated from it by a protective physical barrier.

5. B 300 feet

A California bicycle's white front light must be visible from 300 feet in front and from the sides at night. The red rear reflector or light is the one that must be visible from 500 feet to the rear.

Lesson 11: California: Alcohol, Insurance and Crashes

1. C 0.01 percent

A driver of any age who is on DUI probation has a limit of 0.01 percent, which is lower than the 0.08 percent adult limit.

2. A In the trunk of the vehicle

An opened or unsealed cannabis container, or loose flower not in a container, is an infraction unless it is in the trunk, so the other places listed do not qualify. A qualified medical patient may carry it if it is sealed, resealed or closed.

3. D $30,000

For policies issued or renewed on or after 1 January 2025, the minimum for one person's injury or death is $30,000. The other two limits cover more than one person and property damage, and have their own figures.

4. B Stop immediately at the scene

After a crash that injures anyone other than the driver, or kills anyone, a California driver must stop immediately at the scene. Stopping at the nearest spot that will not impede traffic is the rule for a crash with property damage only.

5. A Stay in unless told to get out

California's handbook lists staying inside unless told to get out, moving completely onto the right shoulder and rolling down the window before the officer makes contact, among six actions. Getting out, the left shoulder and a raised window are not on that list.

Lesson 12: California: Teen Licensing and the DMV Written Test

1. D Both the minor and the signer

Under the Vehicle Code, the signer is jointly and severally liable with the minor for damages from the minor's negligent or wrongful driving, so the minor's own liability does not replace the signer's.

2. A 15 years and 6 months

The Vehicle Code sets the minimum at 15 years and 6 months, which the California Department of Motor Vehicles' page words as 15 and a half. Waiting until 16 years and 6 months, or applying at 14 years and 6 months, misstates it by a full year.

3. C 50 hours, 10 of them at night

A California minor must have practiced driving for 50 hours, and 10 of those hours are at night. Fifteen night hours would overstate the requirement even though the 50-hour total matches.

4. B 11 p.m. to 5 a.m.

The limit runs from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. in the first 12 months, unless a parent or guardian, a licensed driver 25 or older, or a licensed or certified driving instructor supervises. An earlier 10 p.m. start is not the rule.

5. D Six months

Three or more points in 12 months bring a six-month suspension and one year of probation, both running their full length past the 18th birthday. The 30-day period is the restriction that two points bring.

6. B Simple English on traffic signs

The Vehicle Code requires the examination to cover the code itself, the simple English used on traffic signs, and what signs and signals mean. Advertising signs, maps and registration forms are not on that list.

7. C 3 attempts

A California minor has three attempts at the drive test. Each knowledge test also allows three attempts, so a fourth attempt is not the rule for either test.

8. A Blind spot monitor

California's handbook allows a backup camera or blind spot monitor, though neither replaces checking the mirrors and blind spots by eye. It bars driver assistance systems such as adaptive cruise control and lane departure features.

9. A 10 days

A California driver who moves must notify the DMV of both the old and new address within 10 days, so 20 or 30 days would be too long.

10. B Once in any 18 months

In California a judge may offer traffic violator school for a one-point violation only once in any 18 months, and the Vehicle Code has the court tell the person of that limit; 12, 24 and 36 months are not the limit.

Lesson 13: Texas: Right of Way

1. D A driver on a street that ends where it meets another road

A driver on a street that ends yields to the other road. In the other three the yield runs the opposite way: an unpaved road yields to a paved road, and a road with one or two lanes yields to a divided road or one with three or more marked lanes.

2. B As a stop sign for approaching drivers

Texas law treats a signal that shows no indication in any signal head as a stop sign, except a freeway entrance ramp control signal or a pedestrian hybrid beacon. It is not an uncontrolled intersection, where the yield rules apply.

3. A Stopping and yielding because the pedestrian is in danger

Where no traffic signal is operating, a Texas driver must stop and yield to a pedestrian in a crosswalk on the driver's half of the roadway or approaching from the other half closely enough to be in danger. Being on the other half does not excuse continuing.

4. C Yield: one kind of signal is enough for a police vehicle

For a police vehicle, either kind of signal is enough to trigger the Texas duty to yield, so its flashing lights alone mean the driver must yield; no siren is needed.

5. D 15 to 50 feet from the nearest rail

When a warning applies, a Texas driver stops no closer than 15 feet and no farther than 50 feet from the nearest rail, and a lowered gate is one such warning. The other ranges are too close or too far.

Lesson 14: Texas: Speed Limits and Following Distance

1. B 70 mph

Texas law makes 70 mph the default on a highway numbered by Texas or the United States outside an urban district, farm-to-market and ranch-to-market roads included. Other highways outside an urban district default to 60 mph.

2. A 30 mph

That stretch is an urban district, and Texas law makes 30 mph the default on a street there other than an alley, unless a special hazard requires less. Faster defaults apply on highways outside an urban district, not on a street inside one.

3. D When reduced speed is necessary for safe operation

Texas law bars slow driving that impedes traffic, except when reduced speed is necessary for safe operation or in compliance with law. Saving fuel, looking for an address or staying below the default limit is not an exception.

4. C The vehicles' speed, the traffic and the highway conditions

The gap must let the driver stop safely, considering the vehicles' speed, the traffic and the highway conditions. The posted limit and the time of day are not factors the code names.

5. C Two seconds

The Texas Driver Handbook's less-than-two-seconds check treats a Texas driver who reaches a fixed object in less than two seconds after the vehicle ahead passed it as following too closely. Three or five seconds is not the figure in that check.

Lesson 15: Texas: Turns, Lanes, Passing and Parking

1. B Give a stop signal to the driver behind

The Transportation Code bars stopping or suddenly slowing down without first giving a stop signal to the driver behind, when there is an opportunity. The signal comes first and goes to the driver behind, not to oncoming traffic.

2. D Stop and yield, then turn right

After stopping at a steady red signal and yielding, a Texas driver may turn right unless a posted notice bans the turn. Slowing down is not stopping, and waiting for green is not required first.

3. C The driver may cross the striping to turn

A Texas driver may not drive on the left side of the road in a no-passing zone. The exception is a left turn: the driver may cross the striping, or the center line where signs only mark the zone, to turn left into or out of an alley, private road or driveway.

4. A After being completely passed

A Texas driver being passed may not accelerate until completely passed, so a pass that has begun, an ended signal or a clear road ahead does not lift the bar. That duty does not apply when passing to the right is permitted.

5. C In front of a driveway

A Texas driver may not stand or park in front of a driveway except momentarily to pick up or discharge a passenger. An intersection, a railroad track and a highway tunnel are first-tier places, where even stopping is barred.

Lesson 16: Texas: Phones, Restraints and Road-User Laws

1. C When the vehicle is stopped

The texting offense covers reading, writing or sending an electronic message while driving, unless the vehicle is stopped. Slow traffic is still driving. The Texas Driver Handbook words its entry more briefly, leaving out the stopped-vehicle exception.

2. B The belt rule, as the child is taller than 4 feet 9 inches

The Texas child seat rule covers a child younger than eight unless the child is taller than 4 feet 9 inches, so this child is outside it. The belt rule covers the child instead: it makes the driver responsible for a child under 17 who is not required to be in a child seat.

3. A Stop, because the bus is still on the driver's roadway

Roadways separated only by a left turn lane are not separate roadways for the school-bus stop rule, so the driver must still stop while the bus operates its visual signal. The different-roadway exception does not apply across a left turn lane.

4. D Move out of the closest lane or else slow down

Unless a police officer directs otherwise, the driver must move out of the closest lane on a highway with two or more lanes in that direction, or else slow down. The rule covers tow vehicles, not only emergency vehicles.

5. C When they do not impede traffic

Two Texas bicycle riders may ride side by side in one lane if they do not impede traffic. A one-way roadway, the lack of a marked bike lane or slower speed does not by itself allow it.

Lesson 17: Texas: Alcohol, Insurance and Crashes

1. C Passengers in limousines

Passengers in buses, taxis and limousines fall under the exceptions to the Texas open container offense. Passengers in pickup trucks, private cars and borrowed vans are not among the exceptions named.

2. A An offense since any detectable amount counts

A Texas minor commits an offense by operating a motor vehicle in a public place with any detectable amount of alcohol in the system, which the Texas Driver Handbook calls zero tolerance. It applies even if the minor is not intoxicated.

3. B $30,000, then $60,000

The Texas minimum is $30,000 for bodily injury to or death of one person and $60,000 for two or more persons in one collision. The $25,000 figure is for property of others, so it does not belong in either person limit.

4. D Each driver moves the vehicle as soon as possible

On a metropolitan-area freeway, when each vehicle involved can be normally and safely driven, each driver must move the vehicle as soon as possible to an investigation site if available, the frontage road, the nearest suitable cross street or another suitable location, not stay put.

5. C The driver slows down and moves to the right

The Texas Driver Handbook lists slowing down and moving to the right first, and parking as far to the right as possible comes next. Turning on the hazard lights, and telling the officer where the documents are, both come later in the list, and the handbook calls all ten steps suggested.

Lesson 18: Texas: Teen Licensing and the Permit Test

1. B 10 hours

Texas DPS requires at least 10 of the 30 practice hours to be at night, so the night hours are part of the 30, not extra. The 7-hour figures belong to in-car observation and in-car driving.

2. D 21 or older, with a year or more of driving experience

The supervising driver is licensed for that vehicle, is 21 or older and has a year or more of driving experience. Age 18 is too young, and six months of experience falls short of a year.

3. C One

A Texas driver under 18 may not carry more than one passenger under 21 who is not a family member, so one is the most. The rule caps such passengers; it does not bar them all.

4. A 90 days

Proof of completing an Impact Texas Drivers video counts for 90 days in Texas, so 60 days is too short and 100 days too long.

5. A 16 years

A Texas license for a person under 18, the provisional license, requires the applicant to be at least 16 years old. The minimum age is 15 for the learner license.

6. C Duties toward bicyclists

The Texas driver license examination tests knowledge of a motorist's duties toward bicyclists, along with highway signs, traffic laws, wireless devices and other distractions, and vision. The other options are not among its subjects.

7. B 70 percent

The pass mark is 70 percent correct or better on each Texas knowledge test. It is a share of correct answers, not a count of questions. A score of 75 percent passes but is not the lowest, and 60 or 65 percent falls short.

8. D 3 tries

A Texas applicant gets three tries at each element of the examination per application, which the Transportation Code words as three examinations of each element. Two tries is one short of the rule.

9. B English or Spanish only

A DPS page dated 22 September 2020 says it can offer the knowledge test only in English or Spanish, so a test in Vietnamese is not available. English alone is too narrow, since Spanish is offered too.

10. A Directions and written material

The Texas Spanish-language examination is identical to the English one except that directions and written material are in Spanish; the text of highway signs stays in English.

Sources

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