The Big Decision to Begin Driver Education

Getting a license is an important milestone for teens and parents, but being a beginning driver carries special risks. Parents are in the best position to determine when their teen is ready to begin driver education, progress to independent driving, and have increased driving privileges. Graduated Driver Licensing laws are minimums for young drivers. Parents need to determine their own additional family rules.

Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for teens.

A teen’s first year behind the wheel is critical. Graduated Driver Licensing is designed to limit teens to safer driving environments while they build their skills and gain driving experience with the goal of reducing traffic crashes.

Parents Need to be Good Role Models:
Teens mimic their parents’ driving behaviors. Therefore, parents should obey all traffic laws, correct any unsafe driving habits, and refrain from using electronic devices while driving.

Parents Need to Monitor Their Teen’s Driving: It takes 3-5 years for novice drivers to be exposed to the myriad of situations they will encounter. Parents who control access to the vehicle keys and ride along with them throughout their driving experience are in a better position to monitor their driving. Various types of monitoring devices and programs are available as well that flag and notify parents of risky behaviors.

Tips for Parents:
This resource provides an outline for the Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) and driver education process and is intended for parents to keep and refer to as their teen goes through the steps.

Parents are strongly encouraged to attend driver education parent meetings when available in their area and to read the free Michigan’s Graduated Driver Licensing: A Guide for Parents publication and refer to it as their teen goes through the process of learning to drive.

Parents should also visit Michigan.gov/TeenDriver for additional Michigan teen driving information such as the publications mentioned in this brochure, and additional information about GDL, driver education and how to find a certified driver education program in your area.

Michigan Graduated Driver Licensing
An Outline of the Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) and Driver Education Process

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Applying for a Level 1 Learner’s License:
- Must be at least age 14 and 9 months.
- Must pass a vision and health screening.
- Parent or legal guardian must accompany teen to the Secretary of State (SOS) office and sign the application form.

Documents required at the SOS office:
- Proof of Social Security number, legal presence, identity, and Michigan residency, and a Michigan driver education segment 1 certificate of completion.

See list of eligible documents at Michigan.gov/TeenDriver.

Level 1 Learner’s License Restrictions:
- Teens must be supervised at all times by a licensed parent, legal guardian, or designated driver age 21 or older. Seatbelts are required for everyone in the front seat and everyone under age 16 in the vehicle. Teens are prohibited from texting while driving and from using a hand-held cellphone while driving.

Level 1 Learner’s License Restrictions:
- Teens must hold a Level 1 Learner’s License a minimum of 6 months. Parents must present a driving log and certify the minimum required supervised driving time was completed (50 hours including 10 at nighttime). The driving skills test includes a vehicle inspection, basic controls skills test, and an on-road driving test.

Applying for a Level 2 Intermediate License:
- Must be at least age 16.
- Must be 90 days crash and violation free.
- Parent or legal guardian must accompany their teen to the SOS office and sign the license application.

Documents required at the SOS office:
- Proof of Social Security number, legal presence, identity, and Michigan residency, and a Level 1 Learner’s License, Michigan Driver Education Segment 2 Certificate of Completion, and a Driving Skills Test Certificate.

Level 2 Intermediate License Restrictions:
- Teens may drive without supervision, but they have restrictions. No more than one passenger who is younger than age 21. No driving between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. Exceptions to these nighttime and passenger restrictions include when additional passengers are immediate family members, when driving to or from work or as part of work, or to or from an authorized activity. No hand-held cellphone use. No texting. Seatbelts are required for everyone in the front seat, and everyone under age 16 in vehicle.

Parent-Teen Driving Agreement:
- No passengers, no nighttime driving, no electronic communication or entertainment devices, and require seatbelts by all in the vehicle regardless of age.

Level 3 License:
- Teens must be age 17, have held a Level 2 Intermediate License for 6 months, and be 12 months crash and violation free. A new license is mailed automatically, unless the parent or guardian requests that their teen remain at Level 2. Teens with a Level 3 License have no state-imposed license restrictions.

Parent’s Required Supervised Driving:
- The major reason for crashes among newly licensed drivers is inexperience. Driver education introduces teens to the mechanics of driving, but it is just the beginning of the learning process. From there, parents need to continue practice driving with their teens while they gain experience in all types of situations and conditions in order to reduce their risk of crashing. After teens are issued a Level 1 Learner’s License, parents are required to log a minimum of 50 hours of supervised driving time with their teens, including 10 hours at night.

Segment 2 Driver Education:
- Teens must hold a Level 1 Learner’s License a minimum of 3 months. A driving log must be presented showing 30 of the 50 hours of parent supervised driving time was completed, including 2 of 10 nighttime hours. Segment 2 includes a minimum of 6 hours of classroom instruction and a written exam.

Driving Skills Test:
- Teens must hold a Level 1 Learner’s License a minimum of 6 months. Parents must present a driving log and certify the minimum required supervised driving time was completed (50 hours including 10 at nighttime). The driving skills test includes a vehicle inspection, basic controls skills test, and an on-road driving test.

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Additional family rules to consider:
- No passengers, no nighttime driving, no electronic communication or entertainment devices, and require seatbelts by all in the vehicle regardless of age.

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GRADUATED DRIVER LICENSING (GDL) CHECKLIST
Keep this checklist in an accessible place to help you prepare for each step of the GDL process

To begin Segment 1 Driver Education:
- At least age 14 years and 8 months

To apply for Level 1 Learner’s License:
- At least age 14 years and 9 months
- Pass a vision and health screening

Things to bring to SOS:
- Parent or legal guardian must accompany teen to sign application form
- Proof of Social Security number, legal presence, identity, and Michigan residency
- Michigan Driver Education Segment 1 Certificate of Completion

To take the Driving Skills test:
- Have Level 1 Learner’s License at least 6 months
- Completed minimum 50 hours of parent supervised driving time, including 10 hours at night

To apply for Level 2 Intermediate License:
- At least age 16
- 90 days violation and crash free

Things to bring to SOS:
- Parent or legal guardian must accompany teen to sign license application
- Proof of Social Security number, legal presence, identity, and Michigan residency
- Level 1 Learner’s License, Michigan Driver Education Segment 2 Certificate of Completion, and a Driving Skills Test Certificate

Level 1 Learner’s License Restrictions:
- Teens must be supervised at all times by a licensed parent, legal guardian, or designated driver age 21 or older
- No hand-held cellphones
- No texting
- Seatbelts required for everyone in front seat, and everyone under age 16 in vehicle

Level 2 Intermediate License Restrictions:
- Teens are permitted to drive without supervision, but with restrictions:
  - No more than one passenger under age 21 except when additional passengers are immediate family members or when driving to or from work or as part of work or an authorized activity
  - No driving between 10:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. except to or from work or as part of work, or to or from an authorized activity
  - No hand-held cellphones
  - No texting
  - Seatbelts required for everyone in front seat, and everyone under age 16 in vehicle

Additional family rules to consider:
- No passengers
- No nighttime driving
- No electronic communication or entertainment devices (including no Bluetooth)
- Seatbelts required by all in the vehicle regardless of age

To begin Segment 2 Driver Education:
- Have Level 1 Learner’s License at least 3 months
- Completed 30 of the minimum 50 hours of parent supervised driving time, including 2 of the 10 hours required at night

To earn Level 3 License:
- Must be age 17 or older
- Have Level 2 Intermediate License for at least 6 months
- 12 months violation and crash free
- Parent/guardian may request that their teen remain at Level 2 and not automatically advance to Level 3

Be sure to check out: Michigan.gov/TeenDriver