

LIFE
SKILLS
HANDBOOKS

Car *and Driver*

Becoming a Good Driver | Buying a Car
Maintenance and Repair | Driving and the Law

Becoming a Good Driver

Getting a driver's license is a big deal. But becoming a good driver is about much more than just passing the driving test. You'll need to know how to handle a vehicle in **hazardous** conditions. Knowing how to navigate, or get around, in new places is also important. Drivers must be aware of local laws too. These may be different in each state.

What's Your Story?

Meet Diego

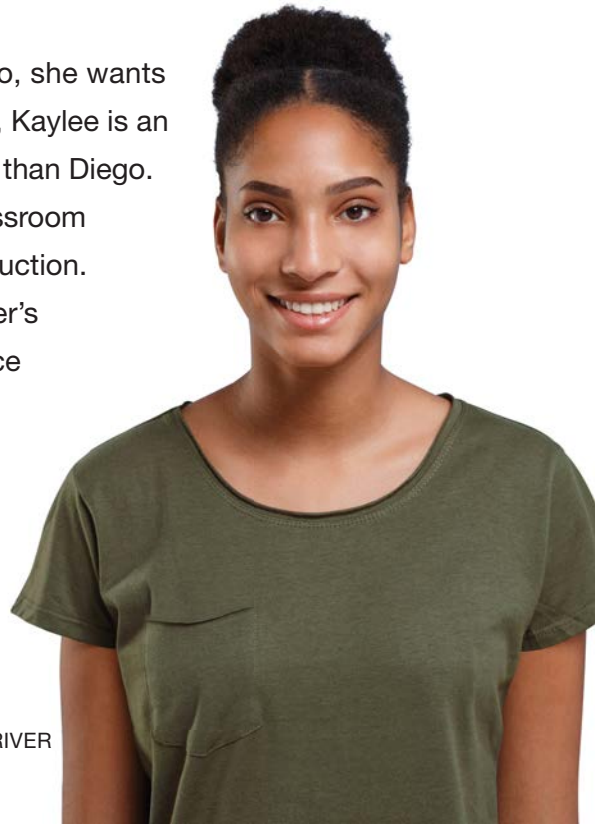
Diego is almost 16. He's eager to learn how to drive. A few years ago, his family moved. The state where they used to live was largely **rural**. There, Diego could have already had a license. People could get a learner's **permit** when they turned 14. Where Diego lives now, the laws are different.



He got his permit at 15. But he can't get his license until he's 16. Classroom and behind-the-wheel instruction taught by professionals must also be completed.

Meet Kaylee

Kaylee is 18 years old. Like Diego, she wants to get a driver's license. However, Kaylee is an adult and lives in a different state than Diego. As a result, she doesn't need classroom training or behind-the-wheel instruction. But she does have to get a learner's permit. Then she'll need to practice driving before taking her test.



Meet Megan

Megan is 25 years old. For most of her life, she has lived in a big city. Like many people there, she's never had a driver's license. Public transportation is used to get around. But in a few months, Megan will be moving to a suburb. Few things are close to her new home. There are not many buses. She'll have to drive anywhere she wants to go. This includes getting to and from her job. The area is also known for bad weather. It is often rainy and foggy. Because of her age, Megan doesn't have to take driver training. However, she thinks she will be a better driver if she does.



Chapter 1

Learning to Drive

In the United States, driving laws are determined at the state level. Age requirements and restrictions vary from state to state. Before you make plans for learning to drive, get to know the rules in your state.

Diego's Plan

Diego's state has **graduated licensing laws**. These are common in most states. The laws set different levels of restrictions and privileges for drivers. They are usually based on a driver's age and amount of training and experience. First, new drivers get a learner's permit. Later, they can get a driver's license.

In Diego's state, getting a learner's permit requires taking a class in driver's education. His high school offers this class. Diego has decided to sign up for it. In this one-semester course, he'll learn the rules of the road. He'll also get some tips on safe driving. The class will prepare him for the written test needed to get a learner's permit.

After Diego gets his learner's permit, he can take behind-the-wheel training. For that, he will attend a driving school. A professional instructor will give him four 90-minute lessons.

Diego's state has another rule. Drivers under 18 must complete 50 hours of supervised driving practice. Ten of those hours must be at night. Diego's parents will help him complete the required time behind the wheel. Then he will take his driving test at the local testing station.

Because Diego is under 18, his driver's license will be restricted. In his state, that means he won't be able to drive between 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. Diego also won't be allowed to have more than one passenger in the car with him.

Taking Your Driving Test

Are you ready to take your driving test? This may also be called a road test. Find out what you need to bring with you by visiting the website of your state's Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). You might need to have any or all of the following:

- a completed driver's license application (signed by a parent or guardian if you're under 18)
- your learner's permit and proof of having completed training
- one or more valid forms of identification
- payment for the license fee
- proof of auto insurance
- your glasses or contact lenses (if needed to pass the vision test)
- a parent or guardian (if you're under 18)
- a registered and inspected vehicle that operates properly



Restricted Licenses

Drivers under 18 usually have restrictions on the hours they can drive. Most states don't allow teens to drive late at night. They can't drive early in the morning either. Exceptions are sometimes made. For example, teens may be able to drive during restricted hours if they are with an adult. Driving to work or school might also be allowed.



In addition, most states don't allow teen drivers to have more than one or two teenage passengers. This restriction usually applies for the first six months after getting a driver's license. But be aware that it may last longer. Exceptions are sometimes made if an adult is present or the passengers are family members.

Kaylee's Plan

To get her learner's permit, Kaylee will read her state's driver's handbook. Then she'll take the written test. After she has her permit, she'll begin behind-the-wheel training. Her older sister is going to help her. By law, Kaylee can practice driving only with a person who is over 25. They must also have a valid driver's license.

Kaylee doesn't need a certain number of hours of behind-the-wheel practice. Her state doesn't require that. There is no specified amount of time for how long she must keep her learner's permit either. As soon as she feels ready, Kaylee can take the driving test. Because she's 18, her license will be unrestricted.



Risk Factors for Teen Drivers

Teens make up about 6% of all drivers. But they account for 8% of all car accident deaths. Why is this age group at such high risk for accidents? There are a few reasons. Teen drivers:

- don't often recognize hazards.
- are not skilled at identifying risks.
- may be eager to take risks.
- often get distracted by cell phones and texting.
- don't always use seat belts.
- may still be learning how to master complex driving tasks.
- tend to use alcohol and drugs.
- often have passengers.
- have little experience driving at night.

Megan's Plan

Megan's state doesn't require her to take behind-the-wheel training from a professional instructor. But will she be able to pass the driving test without it? This worries her. She looks into the cost of professional instruction. It won't be cheap. Still, Megan thinks the extra training will be worth it.





Finding a Driving School

You can search online to find a professional driving school in your area. Most driving schools offer several kinds of programs. Some provide the minimum training required by the state. Others provide extra services. These might include pickup/drop-off and practice tests. Usually, the greater the number of services provided, the higher the cost of the program.

Before you sign up for a program, be sure to find out how much it costs. Get the price in writing. Also figure out the number and length of sessions. Finally, make sure the school and its instructors have been approved by the state.

