

<http://www.iihs.org/laws/graduatedLicenseIntro.aspx>

## **Licensing systems for young drivers**

New drivers have elevated crash rates. This is particularly true for drivers younger than 18. Young novice drivers are at significant risk on the road because they lack both the judgment that comes with maturity and the skill that comes with experience. Graduated licensing is a system designed to delay full licensure while allowing beginners to obtain their initial experience under lower risk conditions. There are three stages: a minimum supervised learner's period, an intermediate license (once the driving test is passed) that limits unsupervised driving in high-risk situations, and a full-privilege driver's license available after completion of the first two stages. Beginners must remain in each of the first two stages for set minimum time periods. Forty-six US states and the District of Columbia currently have all three stages, but the systems vary in strength.

In an optimal system, the minimum age for a learner's permit is 16; the learner stage lasts at least 6 months, during which parents must certify at least 30-50 hours of supervised driving; and the intermediate stage lasts until at least age 18 and includes both a night driving restriction starting at 9 or 10 p.m. and a strict teenage passenger restriction allowing no teenage passengers, or no more than one teenage passenger.

These tables list licensing requirements for the 50 US states and the District of Columbia. During the 1990s, many states moved toward graduated licensing. Some have enacted virtually all the elements of graduated licensing, while others have enacted only parts. Another area in which the laws differ is enforcement. Some states prohibit police from stopping young drivers solely for night driving violations or passenger restrictions (secondary enforcement). The Institute has evaluated the licensing systems using criteria designed to estimate the strength and likely effectiveness of the systems in reducing injuries. In particular, strong or optimal restrictions on the initial license phase and how long the restrictions last beyond the 16th birthday are credited. No state has an optimal graduated licensing system.

The Institute assigned licensing systems points for the key components of graduated licensing. Good systems scored 6 or more points. Fair systems scored 4 or 5 points. Marginal systems scored 2 or 3 points. Poor systems scored less than 2 points. Regardless of point totals, no state was rated above "marginal" if intermediate license holders could be younger than 16 or it allows unrestricted driving before age 16, 6 months. The following schedule was used to assign points.

Learner's entry age: 1 point for learner's entry age of 16

Learner's holding period: 2 points for •6 months; 1 point for 3-5 months; none for <3 months

Practice driving certification: 1 point for •30 hours; none for <30 hours

Night driving restriction: 2 points for 9 or 10 pm; 1 point for after 10 pm

Passenger restriction: 2 points for •1 underage passenger; 1 for 2 passengers; none for 3; where supervising driver may be <21, point values were determined including the supervising driver as a passenger

Driver education: Where completion of driver education changed a requirement, point values

Duration of restrictions: 1 point if difference between minimum unrestricted license age and minimum intermediate license age is 12 or more months; night driving and passenger restrictions were valued independently

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