



Chapter 3 INTERMEDIATE LICENSES FOR DRIVERS UNDER 18—GRADUATED LICENSE PROCEDURES

Drivers under 18 years old are required to go through graduated steps of driving experience to gain full, unrestricted Driver License status. The graduated Driver License steps are designed to incrementally teach young drivers how to drive by requiring minimum levels of driving experience and a safe driving history record before allowing teenage drivers to receive a “full-fledged” Class D driver license. Motor vehicle crashes are the major cause of death for young people between the ages of 15 and 20. By requiring more supervised practice, the State of Tennessee hopes to save lives and prevent tragic injuries.

There are four steps to becoming a full, unrestricted Driver License holder:

1. Learner Permit
2. Intermediate Restricted License
3. Intermediate Unrestricted License
4. Regular Driver License.

The above four steps are part of the Graduated Driver License Program. A license issued under the first three steps will have “GDL” printed in the bottom left corner. See page 15 for pictures of graduated licences.

Learner Permit

- You must be 15 years old and pass the standard written and visual exams.
- You must hold a learner permit for 180 days in order to move to the Intermediate Restricted License step.
- You may drive a car only when accompanied by a license driver 21 years or older who is riding in the front seat of the vehicle.
- You may not drive between the hours of 10 P.M. and 6 A.M.
- Driver and passengers must wear a seat belt.



Intermediate License

There are two Intermediate License levels for drivers under 18 years of age. The first level is the Intermediate Restricted License and the second level is the Intermediate Unrestricted License.

First Level - Intermediate Restricted License

- You must be sixteen (16) years old and pass the driving test.
- You must have held a learner permit for 180 days.
- You cannot have tickets for driving offenses that add up to more than six (6) points on your driving record during the

immediate 180 days preceding your application.

- You must have verification from a parent, legal guardian or licensed driving instructor stating you have fifty hours (ten hours at night) of driving experience. Certification of driving experience must be made on the official form (SF-1256) provided by the Department of Safety. This form is available at all DL Stations or may be downloaded from our web site. This form must be signed by either a parent, legal guardian or licensed driving instructor.
- Driver and passengers must wear a seat belt.

Second Level - Intermediate Unrestricted License

To move from the Intermediate Restricted to the Unrestricted License, you must be 17 years old and meet the following conditions:

- You must have held an Intermediate Restricted License for one (1) year.
- You cannot have accumulated more than six points on your driving record.
- You cannot have had a traffic accident that was your fault.
- You cannot have 2 seat belt violations.
- Driver and passengers must wear a seat belt.
- No additional tests are required.

Final Level - Regular Driver License

You may obtain a Class D regular driver license when you are 18 years of age, or when you graduate from high school or receive a GED, whichever is sooner. The word “Intermediate” will be removed from your license when you move to the Regular Driver License. However, the license will still include the “Under 21” indicators.

Hardships may be issued at age fourteen and will always expire on the driver’s **sixteenth** birthday. Hardships automatically serve as a Learner Permit (PD) once the holder turns fifteen (15) years of age.

If driver did not have the Hardship License for the minimum of 180 days by the time the Hardship expires on the sixteenth birthday, the driver will have to be re-issued the learner permit. This permit must be carried for the remainder of time to complete the required 180 days before the issuance of an Intermediate Restricted is allowed. The Hardship license cannot be renewed.

New Residents Under 18

If you are fifteen years old and have a valid permit from the state you used to live in, then a Tennessee learner permit is the only thing that you will qualify to have issued. You must hold a valid permit for a total of 180 days and turn sixteen years old before being eligible for the Intermediate Restricted License Class D. The length of time that you held the permit your previous state may be included in the 180-day period as long as you can provide a certified driving record from your

Examples of the license documents issued under the Graduated Driver License (GDL) Program are shown below.

Learner Permit



Front of PD Card

Tennessee

**Learner Permit
GDL Restrictions**

- Must have licensed driver age 21 or older in front seat
- Cannot drive between 10:00 PM - 6:00 AM
- Seatbelt use is mandatory for all passengers age 4 through 17

Back of PD Card

For the next level of GDL the teen driver must:

- Hold the valid learner permit for at least 180 days.
- Maintain a safe driving record with less than six points.
- Acquire a minimum of 50 hours of behind the wheel driving experience, including 10 hours at night.

PENALTIES:

IF YOU:	YOU MUST:
Get 6 or more points on your driving record during the 180 days prior to applying for the next level...	...continue to hold the learner permit until your record has been clear for 180 days.

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Intermediate Restricted



Front of IR Card

Tennessee **INTERMEDIATE GDL RESTRICTIONS**

- Only one passenger allowed, UNLESS:
 - 1 passenger is 21 or older and has a valid driver license, or
 - All are siblings from driver's house going to / from school (WP*)
- Cannot drive between 11:00 PM - 6:00 AM at night, UNLESS:
 - Accompanied by a parent, guardian OR a licensed driver age 21 or older, who has been designated by the parent or guardian (WP)
 - Driving to or from work, or scheduled specifically-identified school sponsored activities (WP)
 - Hunting or fishing between 4:00 AM to 6:00 AM with a valid hunting or fishing license.
- Seatbelt use is mandatory for all passengers age 4 through 17

**NOTE: WP indicates that written permission from parent/guardian identifying the person(s), event, or work place is needed.*

Back of IR Card

In order to proceed to the next level of GDL you must:

- Hold the valid Intermediate Restricted license for a least 1 year.
- Maintain a safe driving record with less than six points.
- Not contribute to an accident.
- Not get a 2nd seatbelt or 2nd moving violation.

PENALTIES:

FOR:	YOU MUST:
6 or more pts., contributing to accident, or 2nd seatbelt ticket	...hold Intermediate Restricted license for an additional 90 days
2nd moving violation...	...complete a Driver Ed. Class
Contributing to fatal accident, or a forged approval letter	...drop back to a learner permit until you are 18 years old

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Intermediate Unrestricted



Note: No Restriction Card issued with this level. No driving restriction applied at this level.



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previous state. The certified driving record must be issued within the 30 days immediately preceding the date of the Tennessee application. **This certified driving record must show no violations or accidents on the record.** If there are any violations on the previous state record you will be required to retain the Tennessee Learner Permit until your driving record can be reviewed by the Department of Safety’s Driver Improvement Section to see if the record complies with Tennessee’s “less than 6 points” requirement.

If the applicant is 16 years old and holds a valid license (regular, provisional, probationary, graduated, etc.) from a previous state (issued at least 90 days before applying for a Tennessee license), the application will be for an Intermediate Restricted license.

If the applicant had an out-of-state license for LESS than 90 days, an Intermediate Restricted License can only be issued if a clear driving record from the previous state is provided. The driving record must confirm:

1. That a valid learner permit and/or license class has been held for a combined period of at least 180 days. (e.g. - Georgia permit held for 120 days + Georgia license held

for 60 days = 180 days total) and

2. That there are **no** violations or accidents on the driving record. If there are any violations on the record, a learner permit only may be issued until the previous state record can be reviewed and evaluated by the Department of Safety’s Driver Improvement Section. It must comply with Tennessee’s “less than 6 points” requirement.

Regardless of the length of time a license is held in the previous state, a Tennessee Intermediate Restricted license must be held for a **full year** before qualifying for the Intermediate Unrestricted license.

- After graduating from high school or after receiving a GED before age 18 a regular Class D operator’s license may be issued as described on page 1 (Chapter 1).

Restriction Cards for Learner Permit and Intermediate License Holders

A driver with a learner permit will be given a “Restriction Card” to carry along with the permit that explains the restrictions of driving with the permit. The Restriction Card

Unsafe driving incidents or violations that could result in the suspension or automatic downgrade of license level under The GDL Program are outlined in the following table:

GDL Penalties (Table: 3.1)			
Incident	After PD Issued	After Intermediate Restricted Issued	After Intermediate Unrestricted Issued
(a) Six or more points on driving record	Requires the applicant to continue to hold the learner permit for an additional time period until they are able to maintain a record with less than 6 points for 180 consecutive days	Adds 90 days to the minimum 1 year teen required to hold Intermediate Restricted (Total = 1 year & 3 months)	If any of the violations listed in (a), (b), (c) or (d) occurred during the time the teen had an Intermediate Restricted license, but the DOS did not receive notice from the court until <i>after</i> we had already issued the teen an Intermediate Unrestricted license, the penalties in the preceding column will still apply. The teen will be “dropped back” to an Intermediate Restricted license for 90 days.
(b) Contributing to the occurrence of an accident	N/A	Adds 90 days to the minimum 1 year teen required to hold Intermediate Restricted (Total = 1 year & 3 months)	
(c) Conviction of a 2nd Seatbelt violation	N/A	N/A Adds 90 days to the minimum 1 year teen required to hold Intermediate Restricted (Total = 1 year & 3 months)	
(d) Conviction of a 2nd Moving violation	N/A	Requires completion of a certified driver education course	
(e) Forged letter of parental approval	N/A	Revocation of Intermediate Restricted and Re-issuance of a Learner Permit only until teen reaches the age of 18	If DOS notified <i>after</i> Intermediate Unrestricted issued, teen’s Intermediate privileges will still be revoked and a Learner Permit re-issued until the 18th birthday.
(f) Contributing to the occurrence of a fatal accident	Must maintain a Learner Permit only until teen reaches the age of 18	Revocation of Intermediate Restricted and Re-issuance of a Learner Permit only until teen reaches the age of 18	Revocation of Intermediate Unrestricted and Re-issuance of a Learner Permit only until teen reaches the age of 18



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also explains the requirements for advancing to the Intermediate Restricted level of the Class D license. An example of the PD Restriction Card is shown on page 15.

- Both levels of the Intermediate License (Restricted and Unrestricted) show the license class as Class D and have the words Intermediate Driver License displayed in the yellow header bar on the front of the license.
 - A driver with the first level Intermediate Restricted (IR) Class D will be given a “restriction card” to carry along with the license that explains the restrictions of driving with the IR. The Restriction Card also explains the requirements for advancing to the Intermediate Unrestricted level of the Class D license. An example of the IR Restriction Card is shown on page 15.
- A driver with the second level Intermediate Unrestricted (IU) Class D does not have any restrictions on driving. Therefore there is no restriction card for this license level.

Additional Documentation Requirements for Minors

In addition to the documentation requirements described in Chapter 2 (Proof of Identity, TN Residency, Social Security Number and U.S. Citizenship / Lawful Permanent Resident) all applicants under the age of eighteen (18) must also meet the requirements described in this section.

Minor/Teenage Affidavits

Applicants under eighteen years old must have an adult sign a Minor/Teenage Affidavit and Cancellation form, available at all driver license stations. This form confirms that the adult signing the form joins in the application for the license and will be responsible for the actions of the minor driver. This includes assuming financial responsibility for the minor driver. It must be signed by a parent, a step-parent living at the same address as the applicant, legal guardian, or a grandparent authorized by the parent, step-parent or guardian.

If adults cannot accompany the minor to the driver license station to sign the form, it may be completed ahead of time and signed before a notary public.

If a grandparent is assuming financial responsibility for the youth, the grandparent must bring a notarized statement authorizing this, signed by the parent, a step-parent, custodian or guardian, as appropriate. The statement is not on a department form, but should be in the following general format:

- If a minor applies for an additional class of license (such as motorcycle), the parents or legal guardian will be required to sign a **second** teenage affidavit for that license type.

“I do hereby authorize _____
to sign for a driver license for _____.”
Signed: _____

(Notary certificate)

Proof of School Attendance/Progress

Applicants under the age of 18 must prove they are either enrolled in or have already graduated from high school. Acceptable proof of this status must be provided to the examiner in one of the following methods:

1. If the applicant has graduated, the applicant must **bring the original high school diploma or G.E.D. certificate** when applying (no photo copies).
2. If still enrolled in a Tennessee school, the applicant must **ask the school to complete a Certificate of Compulsory School Attendance (Form SF1010). The applicant must take the original, completed form to the driver license station.** This form is only valid for **30 days** from the date of signing by the school official.

NOTE: During the traditional summer vacation months, a properly completed SF1010 form signed within the last 30 days of the school year will be accepted throughout the summer until 30 days after the start of the following school year (e.g. a form signed in May is accepted through Aug/Sept, approximately).

3. If the applicant is enrolled in school outside of Tennessee (or in an approved private or church school in Tennessee without access to the SF1010 forms), the applicant must provide a statement from the school principal or headmaster **on official school letterhead specifically confirming that the applicant is not truant and is making satisfactory progress in their school.**
- Grade cards or school transcripts are not acceptable as proof of compliance with this law. Due to the various grading scales, evaluation of excused / unexcused absences and other factors that differ from school system to school system, the Driver License personnel are not authorized to interpret the information in these documents. It is the responsibility of the school system or Department of Education to confirm the applicant's eligibility. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide satisfactory documentation of this requirement.
4. If the applicant is being **Home Schooled, the documentation required is:**
 - A **letter from the Superintendent's Office** in the county/city of the applicant's legal residence, confirming that the parent has registered their “intent to home school” with the County/City School System.



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- **Verification of Home School Enrollment (Department of Safety Form SF-1193)** signed and completed by the parent or legal guardian of the applicant affirming the attendance and satisfactory progress of the applicant in the home school courses.
- 5. The Tennessee Department of Education does NOT recognize the completion of Internet or “correspondence school” courses and documentation from these sources is NOT acceptable to the Department of Safety as meeting the requirements for licensing of minors

If a student fifteen years old or older drops out of school, the school is required to notify the Department of Safety which suspends the student’s driving privileges. The first time a student drops out, he or she may regain the privilege to drive by returning to school and making satisfactory academic progress. However, there is no **second** chance. The second time a student drops out, he or she must wait to turn 18 years old before being eligible to apply for a license again.

If a person who dropped out returns to school, the appropriate school official can certify the student has returned by completing a different section of the Certificate of Compulsory School Attendance. The official will give the student a pink copy of the form to take with them to a driver license station. The student will be required to pay a \$20 reinstatement fee, in addition to the appropriate application and license fees. Other fees may be added as well, depending on the individual’s history.

Teen Driver FAQs

1. What is the Graduated Driver License law?

The graduated driver licensing system places certain restrictions on teens under the age of 18 who have learner permits and driver licenses.

2. What are the restrictions for those with learner permits?

Anyone under the age of 18 who has a learner permit is prohibited from driving between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. When driving, permit holders must have a licensed driver age 21 or older in the vehicle with them in the front seat.

3. How long must I have a learner permit before applying for an Intermediate Restricted license?

- Anyone under the age of 18 must have their learner permit for a minimum of six months before applying for an intermediate restricted license.
- The minimum age for applying for an intermediate restricted license is 16.
- If someone with a learner permit has driving offenses adding up to 6 or more points on their driving record during the 180 days before applying for the Intermediate Restricted license, the applicant has to continue to hold

the learner permit until his/her record has less than 6 points for a full 180 consecutive days.

- After the record is clear for 180 consecutive days (i.e., less than 6 points), the driver may move to the next level, an Intermediate Restricted License.

4. What are the restrictions for an Intermediate Restricted License?

A. Those with an intermediate license can only have **one** other passenger in the vehicle

UNLESS:

- One or more of the passengers is age 21 or older and has a valid, unrestricted license; OR
- The passengers are brothers and sisters, step-brothers or step-sisters, adopted or fostered children residing in the same house as the driver and going to and from school AND the Intermediate License holder has in their possession written permission from their parent or guardian to transport their siblings.

B. Those with an Intermediate Restricted License are prohibited from driving between the hours of 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. **UNLESS** they meet one of the following circumstances::

- They are accompanied by a parent or guardian;
- They are accompanied by a licensed driver 21 or older who has been designated by the parent or guardian. This designation must be in writing and be in the possession of the teen driver;
- They are driving to or from a specifically identified school sponsored activity or event and have in their possession written permission from a parent or guardian to do this;
- They are driving to or from work and have in their possession written permission from a parent or guardian identifying the place of employment and authorizing the driver to go to and from work; OR
- They are driving to or from hunting or fishing between 4 a.m. and 6 a.m. and have in their possession a valid hunting or fishing license.

5. What would happen to an Intermediate Restricted License holder caught with a forged or fake letter regarding permission to drive outside of the allowed hours?

A driver with an Intermediate Restricted License who is convicted of having a forged or fraudulent letter or statement will have his/her Intermediate Restricted License revoked and will be reissued a learner permit until he/she reaches the age of 18.

6. What will an Intermediate license look like?

You may view examples of these licenses on page 15.

7. How long must an Intermediate Restricted License be held?

Teens must hold their Intermediate Restricted License for a **minimum of one year**. After one year, an unrestricted Intermediate license may be applied for. There is a \$2



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application fee. The word “Intermediate” will still be on the license, but the restrictions will be lifted.

HOWEVER: If a teen driver (1) has received six or more points (the equivalent of two minor traffic citations) on their Intermediate Restricted License, (2) has contributed to a traffic crash, or (3) has been convicted of a second seatbelt violation, he/she will have to wait an additional 90 days to apply for an Unrestricted Intermediate License. This means he/she is required to hold the Intermediate Restricted License for a total of **15 months**.

ALSO: If the teen driver gets a second moving violation while holding the Intermediate Restricted Driver License, an approved Driver Education class **MUST BE COMPLETED** before receiving an Intermediate Unrestricted Driver License.

NOTE: At age 18, a driver could apply for a regular unrestricted license without the word “Intermediate” printed on it. There is an \$8 duplicate fee unless the driver chooses to keep the license with the word “Intermediate” on it until that license is at the end of its five-year renewal cycle.

8. Are there any teens not required to complete the steps in the Graduated Driver License program?

The Graduated Driver License requirements **do not apply** to anyone age 18 and older OR anyone under the age of 18 who has graduated high school or received their GED.

GDL At-a-Glance Review

Table: 3.2



	LEARNER PERMIT CLASS PD	INTERMEDIATE RESTRICTED	INTERMEDIATE UNRESTRICTED	REGULAR CLASS D
Requirements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must be 15 years old Vision Exam Knowledge Test SF 1010 Form (<i>Proof of Compulsory School Attendance and Satisfactory Progress</i>) Parent or Legal guardian must sign Teenage Affidavit of Financial Responsibility Birth Certificate* Social Security Number ** Proof of citizenship or lawful permanent Resident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must be 16 years old Held a valid PD for 6 months Certification of 50 hours behind-the-wheel experience, including 10 hours at night Cannot have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> six or more points on driving record during the 180 days immediately preceding application Driving Test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 17 years old Held a valid Restricted Intermediate for 1 year Cannot have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> six or more points on driving record have been at fault in a traffic crash have been convicted of a 2nd seatbelt violation <p><i>[these would add a 90 day waiting period to the 1 yr Intermediate Restricted duration]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must be at least 18 years of age Optional: can apply for a duplicate of license without 'the word "Intermediate" on' the face
Fees:	\$10.50, any age under 18 years old.	Age 16 = \$24.50 Age 17 = \$21.00 Age 18 = Eligible for regular driver license	Age 17 = \$2.00 Age 18 = Eligible for regular driver license (\$8 duplicate fee if had Intermediate license)	\$8.00 or \$12.00, regular duplicate fee depending upon if 1 st or subsequent duplicate
Issued for:	12 months	until age 21	Same expiration date @ age 21	Same expiration date @ age 21
Restrictions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must have licensed driver age 21 or older in front seat Cannot drive between 10:00 PM - 6:00 AM Seatbelts mandatory for all passengers age 4 thru 17 (or child restraint device if under age 4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only one passenger Cannot drive between 11:00 PM - 6:00 AM Seatbelts mandatory of all passengers age 4 thru 17 (or child restraint device if under age 4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seatbelts mandatory for all passengers age 4 thru 17 (or child restraint device if under age 4) No additional restrictions, however, license still states "Intermediate" prominently on the face of the license 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No restrictions and license looks like regular "Under 21 license"

* See Chapter 2, page 11 for information on acceptable forms of identification

** See Chapter 2, page 9-10 for more information in SSN requirements