

How to Get Your Driver License or Take a Driver's Ed Course

Learning to drive is one of the most important skills you can develop. Driving can help you improve decision making skills, promote independence, and increase job opportunities.

However, driving is a privilege and may not be appropriate for everyone.

You will need the support of your Foster parents to get your license, if you are under age 18. Once you are over age 18, you do not need your Foster parents' permission to get your license, but you will need their permission to drive their car.

Even if you cannot get your license, you may still be able to take a driver's education course to help you learn to drive. Ensuring your safety and the safety of others on the road is essential, and this guide can help you know whether or not you are ready to drive. Additionally, this guide explains what is generally required to take a driver's education course or get a driver license.

Evaluating Driving Readiness

The first step in the process of getting a license is to make sure that you are ready to accept responsibility for your safety and the safety of others on the road. These are some questions that you can discuss with your Foster parents and caseworker to consider whether you are ready to drive.

1. Are you going to school regularly, making satisfactory grades, and staying out of trouble?
2. Are you using drugs or alcohol?
3. Do you have any medical or physical problems that could make it unsafe to drive?
4. Do you have any psychological or behavioral issues that could make it dangerous for you to drive?
5. Do you follow rules at school and at home?
6. Do you behave in a way that shows an acceptable level of maturity?
Do you use good judgment despite peer pressure?

Even if you are ready to drive, you will still need your Foster parents to agree to let you get your license if you are under 18. Additionally, you will need the support of your Foster parents if you are over 18 and plan on driving the family car.

Foster parents can be held responsible for your actions while you are driving and may have to pay higher insurance rates. Foster parents are not required to allow you to drive but can do so if they are willing to accept this responsibility.

The Sponsoring Adult for Youth under 18

In Tennessee, applications for a permit or driver license from teens under 18 must be accompanied by a Minor/Teenage Affidavit Form.

You will need an adult to sign this form before you can get a permit or license. By signing this form, that adult takes responsibility for your actions while you are driving. This form must be signed by your parent, stepparent, grandparent, or guardian. If none of those people are

available to sign the form, another responsible adult can sign, as long as that adult is willing to accept responsibility for you.

Examples of other responsible adults include an adult sibling, a Foster Parent, an aunt or uncle, or another adult you have a close relationship with. Even if you cannot find a sponsoring adult, you may still be able to take a driver's education course. Once you turn 18, you no longer need a sponsoring adult.

Driver's Education

In Tennessee, you don't have to take a driver's education course to get your license, but they provide important skills and discounts on insurance. It is strongly recommended that you take a driver's education course before getting your license and DCS can pay for this course. Contact your caseworker for help signing up for a driver's education course.

Courses may be offered by schools or through other providers. Most courses include 30 hours of classroom instruction and 6 hours of behind the wheel training. You can even take the written and driving tests through some courses. You don't need a permit to participate in most classes, but you should make sure to get information about whether you have to have a permit before you sign up for the course. Even if you cannot find a sponsoring adult to help you get a license before you turn 18, you may still be able to take a driver's education course.

Graduated Driver Licensing

Tennessee has a graduated driver license program, which means that you get greater driving privileges over time. There are four stages in the graduated driver license program*:

1. Learner's Permit - You are allowed to drive with a licensed driver age 21 or older in the vehicle with you. You have to have a permit for at least 180 days before you can get an intermediate license.
2. Intermediate Restricted License - You are allowed to drive without an adult in the car, but you do have some restrictions, such as the number of passengers allowed in the car while you are driving. After a year of having a restricted license, you can get an unrestricted license, described below.
3. Intermediate Unrestricted License - With this license, you no longer have the extra rules that come with the restricted license, but this license still has bigger consequences for driving violations than a regular license.
4. Regular Driver License - At age 18 or when you get a high school diploma or GED, you can have a regular driver license.

*These descriptions do not include all of the restrictions placed on each type of license. Please see the [Comprehensive Driver License Manual](#) for full descriptions.

Requirements

If you are under the age of 18, the first step to getting a license is to apply for a permit.

To get your Learner's Permit, you must:

1. Be 15 years old
2. Be able to pass a vision test
3. Pass the written knowledge exam
4. Have a sponsoring adult who will sign the Minor/Teenage Affidavit Form

5. Provide proof of school attendance/progress. School offices can provide the necessary paperwork.

To get your Intermediate Driver License, you must:

1. Be 16-years-old
2. Have held a permit for 180 days
3. Be able to pass the driving test
4. 50 hours of behind the wheel driving experience including 10 hours at night (documented by the 50-Hour Certification Form).
5. Have a sponsoring adult who will sign the Minor/Teenage Affidavit Form
6. Provide proof of school attendance/progress. School offices can provide the necessary paperwork.

If you are over the age of 18, you can apply directly for your license.

To get a Regular Class D License, you must:

1. Be able to pass a vision test
2. Be able to pass a written knowledge exam
3. Be able to pass the driving test

Going to the Driver Service Center

If you can satisfy all of the requirements above and your sponsoring adult feels you are ready, you can get your license or permit.

To get your permit or license you will need to visit a Driver Services Center. Before you go, make sure you have the all the paperwork you need. You will need to bring proof of citizenship or lawful residence,

two proofs of identity, proof of Tennessee residency and your Social Security Number.

Visit the Department of Safety's [documents page](#) to make sure you have everything. The checklist also has examples of each required document.

Make sure you look at the column for Driver License to make sure you're looking for the right documents.

If you took a driver's education course, make sure to bring any paperwork you were given stating that you passed the written or driving tests.

If you did not receive a certificate that you passed the driving test from your driver's education course, you will need to make an appointment to take the driving test. Information and phone numbers for scheduling an appointment can be found here.

Assistance Provided By DCS

Your caseworker can help answer questions about the process and help you decide, with your Foster parents, whether you are ready to drive. DCS can also pay some of the costs associated with driving.

If you are under age 18 or in Extension of Foster Care, DCS can pay for your driver's education course and driver testing fees and can provide a transportation grant, if eligible.

If you are in Extension of Foster Care, DCS can also help with insurance premiums.

Helpful Hints

1. Practice the written test before you take it. The Department of Safety has an app for iPads that provides a practice test, or you can access the online version [here](#).
2. To get your proof of school attendance or progress, ask your school to complete a Certificate of Compulsory School Attendance (Form SF1010). This form is only valid for 30 days after it is completed unless school is out for the summer. If you want to get your permit or license during the summer, ask for the form during the last 30 days of the school year. That form will still be good until school starts back.
3. Some driver service centers allow you to “Join the Line” via text, phone, or the internet. This allows you to get in the line of people waiting before you arrive and cuts down the time you have to wait.

If you are going to Franklin, Memphis/Summer Avenue, Nashville/Centennial, or Oakland Driver Service Centers check out how to [Join the Line](#).

4. Your Foster Parent should make sure they are fully informed about the responsibility and liability that comes with allowing you to drive. They should check with their insurance company to find out about any rate increase that might occur when a member of the household gets their driver license.
5. Whenever you are driving you must have insurance coverage. Talk with your Foster Parent and/or caseworker about paying for insurance.

Drive Safely! Remember that every time you get behind the wheel you are responsible for your safety and the safety of others on the road.

Speeding tickets, seatbelt fines, accidents, or other traffic violations can keep you from moving to the next level or even move you back a level in the graduated driver license program. They are also expensive, and they can make your insurance more expensive for a long time!

NOTE: This guide does not contain all the relevant information about driver's education and driver licenses.

Check out the [Comprehensive Driver License Manual](#) for more information.

Details for You

Visit this page about [Getting your License](#) for information from the Department of Safety that includes all the information you need, plus downloads for documents you need to get your driver's license.