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Preparing for Your Driving Test



DMV's Goal

One of the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) major goal is keeping all drivers licensed for as long as it is safe to do so, while enhancing highway safety by increasing driver competency. DMV recognizes that the independence and mobility that driving provides are important factors in the quality of life for most Californians.

DMV Wants You to Pass

Many people take their driving test when they have not sufficiently prepared, practiced enough, or practiced the right way. The DMV examiner will ride with you only to make sure that you can drive safely and obey traffic laws.

Your driving test will last about 20 minutes. The test consists of basic actions you will encounter while driving, such as:

- Left and right turns.
- Stops at controlled/uncontrolled intersections.
- Straight line backing.
- Lane changes.
- Driving in regular street traffic.
- Driving on the freeway (if required).

Study this brochure and the *California Driver Handbook* (DL 600). Relax and do your best.

What to Expect?

Expect to be treated with respect, fairness, and courtesy during the entire examination process. Contact the office manager if you are not.

Who Takes a Driving Test?

A driving test is required if you have:

- Never been licensed in California or any other state or you hold a driver license (DL) from a foreign country.
- A vision-related problem.
- A limited term DL for specified physical and mental (P&M) conditions.
- A physical condition (except corrective lenses) for which DMV imposes a restriction or you have a restriction on your DL and request the restriction be removed.
- An out-of-state junior, provisional, or probationary DL.
- Been licensed out-of-state but do not have the DL to surrender.

Driving tests for DL renewals or holders of out-of-state or U.S. territory DLs are normally waived, if the DL is presented. However, DMV may require a driving test at any time.

Is the Same Criteria Used In All Driving Tests?

The driving test for the noncommercial Class C (basic) DL is the same for all drivers regardless of age. An adult driver takes the same type of driving test as a teen driver. However, a driver with a P&M condition may take a different version of the driving test containing additional test elements.

Preparing for Your Driving Test

- **Get enough practice.** Some drivers need more practice than others. Minors (under 18 years old) must complete 50 hours of behind-the-wheel training (10 hours must be night driving) before taking a driving test. When you practice, pretend you are taking a driving test. Ask your accompanying driver to calmly point out your mistakes. Ask questions about particular driving situations that may have confused you and correct your mistakes. The next time you practice, try to correct any driving errors you made before. The DMV examiner is there to ensure you have demonstrated that you can handle your vehicle in regular traffic situations, not to trick you. During your driving test, the examiner will note how you obey the rules of the road and traffic signs and/or signals. They will note other areas in which you may need improvement.
- Practice **safe driving tips**. To improve your driving skills:
 - Steer smoothly at all times.
 - Accelerate smoothly. Don't rev the engine or make it stall.
 - Stop the vehicle gently. Start braking well ahead of where you must stop to avoid sudden movement. Know where to stop. Be aware of crosswalks. If your view is blocked at a crosswalk, move forward carefully and look both ways before entering the intersection.
 - Be sure your vehicle is in the correct gear. Don't grind the gears. Don't coast to a stop.
 - Always obey the posted speed limits. If needed, reduce your speed to adjust for existing weather, road, and other traffic conditions. Remember to turn on your headlights if you need to use your windshield wipers in poor weather conditions.
 - Follow at a safe distance. Use the 3 second rule. Increase your following distance in bad weather or poor visibility.

- Know what the traffic signals mean and obey them at all times.
- Always use the proper lane and start a turn from the correct lane into the correct lane.
- Signal for all lane changes and turns.
- Always look for potential hazards (scan), and check your mirrors frequently. Always look over the proper shoulder before making lane changes or pulling away from the curb.
- Drive defensively. Anticipate another driver's errors.

Review the *California Driver Handbook* (DL 600), *Parent-Teen Training Guide* (DL 603), *Senior Guide for Safe Driving* (DL 625), *Driving Test Criteria* (DL 955), Pre-Drive Checklist (Safety Criteria), *Preparing For Your Supplemental Driving Performance Evaluation* (DL 956), Safe Driver Check List, videos and sample tests available at dmv.ca.gov. These tools provide detailed instructions on how to correctly perform the driving actions required on a driving test, the laws, rules of the road, and safe driving practices.

Other Test Information

For your safety, ask the examiner to show you their DMV identification (ID) badge before the test begins. Only the examiner or other DMV authorized personnel, are permitted during your driving test. If you have any questions, ask the examiner **before** your driving test begins. During the test, the examiner will ask questions and give you directions but they will not engage in general conversation.

IMPORTANT: Technology such as back up cameras and self-parking cannot solely be used on a driving test.

Test Vehicle Requirements

The vehicle you use for your driving test must be safe to drive. Before the test, the examiner checks for:

- 2 license plates. The rear plate must show current registration.
- Functioning front and back turn signals and brake lights.
- A working horn designed for the vehicle.
- Tires with no bald spots.
- Adequate brake pressure (you will be asked to step on the brake pedal to see if it works properly).
- A driver's side window that rolls down.
- A windshield that allows a full unobstructed field of view for you and the examiner.
- 2 rear view mirrors. One must be on the left, outside of the vehicle.
- Driver and front passenger doors that open from both the inside and outside.
- A glove box which is securely closed.
- A passenger seat permanently attached to the vehicle.
- Working safety belts, if the vehicle was manufactured with safety belts.
- Working emergency/parking brake.

You will be asked to locate the controls for the vehicle's headlights, windshield wipers, defroster, and emergency flashers. You must demonstrate how to use the parking brake.

IMPORTANT: The behind-the-wheel driving test will be rescheduled if the vehicle does not meet the above requirements or if you refuse to use your seatbelt(s) during the driving test.

Financial Responsibility

You must show that your vehicle is properly insured before the driving test begins (or the test will be postponed) by providing one of the following:

- A document with a liability insurance policy or surety bond number.
- An assigned risk insurance card with the name of the assigned insurance company, file number, and current coverage dates.
- A current insurance binder or copy of an insurance policy signed or countersigned by an insurance company representative.
- A DMV-issued certificate of self-insurance or acknowledgment of cash deposit.
- A written confirmation from the insurer that the person is insured.
- A rental vehicle contract (the applicant must be listed on the contract as an insured driver).

IMPORTANT: If a rental vehicle is used for the driving test, the contract **must** not indicate driving tests are excluded.

After Your Driving Test

Possession of a DL means you have met the driving test requirements. However, in everyday driving you will have to deal with many situations you did not encounter on your driving test. The best way to deal with unexpected situations is to always use the same safe driving habits and responsible attitude you demonstrated on your driving test.