



# Montana's Graduated Driver Licensing Law



## 1 - LEARNER'S LICENSE/ INSTRUCTION PERMIT

**WHEN:** Starts with the **learner's license** obtained in a state-approved driver education program as early as age 14½ or with an **instruction permit** without driver education as early as age 16. Driving supervision only by a licensed parent/ guardian or a licensed adult authorized by a parent/guardian.

**HOW LONG:** One year – minimum of six months. **Supervised driving** is for a minimum of **six months and 50 hours - 10 hours must be at night**. Practice in varied weather, traffic and road conditions.

**CONDITIONS:** **Seat belts required:** each occupant must wear a seat belt. The driver must remain **free from traffic violations and alcohol/drug offenses**.

## 2 - RESTRICTED LICENSE

**WHEN:** Teens may apply to drive independently after successful completion of Step 1, with parent/guardian certification of 50 hours of supervised driving practice, and no traffic violations and alcohol/drug offenses.

**HOW LONG:** One year.

**CONDITIONS:** **Seat belts required:** each occupant must wear a seat belt.

**Curfew:** Darkness increases crash risk, so night driving is restricted. Not allowed to drive between 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m., unless travel is for school, church, work, or farm-related activities.

**Limit passengers:** For the first six months may have only one passenger; for the second six months may have up to three passengers. More allowed if they are family members or supervised by a licensed driver adult driver.

**Penalties for violating the GDL law:** **First Offense** – not less than 20 hours or more than 60 hours of community service. **Second Offense** – suspension of restricted driver's license for six months.

## 3 - FULL PRIVILEGE DRIVER'S LICENSE

**WHEN:** Upon successful completion of Steps 1 and 2 or when driver reaches age 18, whichever comes first.

Montana's **GRADUATED DRIVER LICENSING** (GDL) law (MCA 61.5.132-135) is a three-step program that reduces the risk while new drivers under age 18 develop and improve their driving skills. Teens still get to drive—with supervision—and gradually gain experience to begin driving on their own, but with **restrictions** on night driving and passengers. Young drivers face the highest crash risk in darkness and each teen passenger doubles the crash risk. Safety research is clear that newly licensed drivers should start driving with no young passengers.

Learning to drive is a complex, ongoing process which requires **responsibility** and thousands of miles of **practice** to develop competence, skill, and judgment. Just like with sports and music, good habits and abilities grow through experience and good coaching. After teens have their full privilege license, parents should **continue** to drive with their teen, monitor, model, and enforce the rules, and encourage safe driving habits.