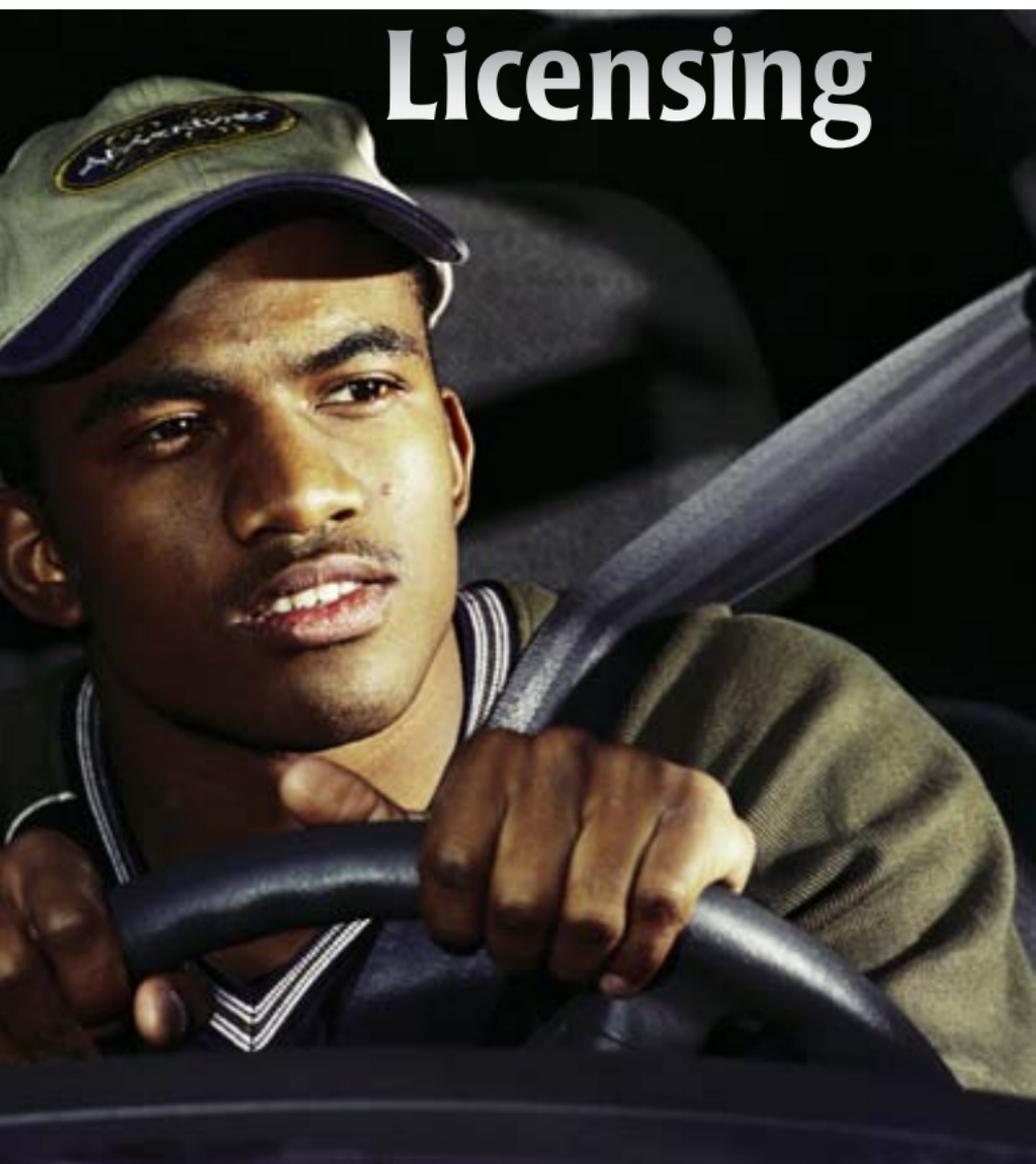


Graduated Driver Licensing



Q Questions
& Answers

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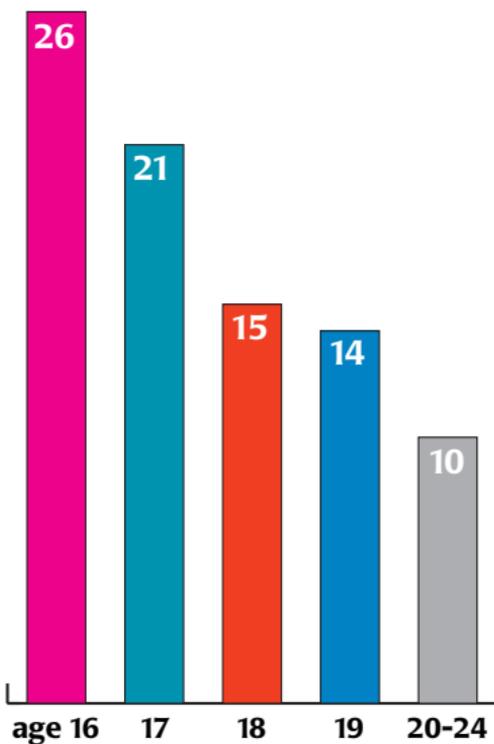
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Q What is graduated driver licensing?

It's a system to phase in young beginners to full driving privileges. It introduces them to driving in a low-risk way, as they become more mature and develop their driving skills. Versions of graduated licensing are in effect in New Zealand; Victoria, Australia; and several Canadian provinces. Beginning with Florida in 1996, graduated licensing also has been adopted in almost all US states.

There are 3 stages to a graduated system: supervised learner's period; intermediate license (after passing road test) that limits driving in high-risk situations except under supervision; and a license with full privileges.

The best systems include a learner's stage, beginning no earlier than age 16 and including 30-50 or more hours of supervised driving, followed by a license at 16½ or older with strong restrictions on night driving and on other teens riding in the vehicles. The night restrictions should start at 9 or 10 pm, and no more than 1 teen passenger should be allowed in a vehicle with a newly licensed driver any time unless there's a supervisor. These restrictions should extend until the 18th birthday.



Crash involvements per million miles driven, by driver age



Most states impose some of the core requirements, and some states impose other requirements. Some require everyone in a vehicle with a teen driver to use safety belts. Some impose penalties so that violations result in license suspension or delay a beginner's advancement to the next licensing stage. More than half of all US states prohibit beginners from using cellphones while driving, and many states ban young beginners from texting. For more about the licensing law in your state, go to www.iihs.org/laws/state_laws/grad_license.html.

Q Why target young people? Why not target beginning drivers of all ages?

Graduated licensing could apply to all first-time drivers. But in the United States young people make up the majority of beginners, and their crash rates are particularly high. Sixteen year-olds have higher crash rates than drivers of any other age, including older teenagers.

Two factors in particular work against young drivers. One is their inexperience behind the wheel and the other is immaturity. Young drivers tend to overestimate their own



driving abilities and, at the same time, underestimate the dangers on the road. Young beginners are more likely than older drivers to take risks such as speeding and, because of their inexperience behind the wheel, they're a lot less able to cope with hazardous driving situations.



All teenagers are beginners when they first get behind the wheel. They need time to develop their driving skills in low-risk settings.

Distractions of any kind in the vehicle present even bigger problems. Teen passengers riding with beginners can increase the risk of a crash by distracting the driver and by creating peer pressure for the driver to take more risk behind the wheel.

Q Isn't it unfair to restrict all teenagers' driving privileges? Why not just penalize the problem drivers?

We know some of the characteristics of younger drivers who are more likely to get into crashes, but it isn't possible to identify such drivers adequately and then intervene before they crash. Many state licensing systems impose bigger penalties when young people commit traffic violations. However, most of the young drivers who are fatally injured in crashes don't have prior violations or crashes.

The logic of addressing all young people is that they all are beginning drivers. They all need time to develop driving skills in low-risk settings.

Q Has graduated licensing reduced crashes?

Yes. Research indicates positive effects on the crash experience of young drivers in the United States as well as in other countries including Canada and New Zealand. US states that have adopted elements of graduated licensing have experienced crash reductions of about 10 to 30 percent.

A national study found that teen licensing laws rated good are associated with a 30 percent lower rate of fatal crashes per population of 15-17 year-olds, compared with licensing laws that are rated poor. A similar study found that good-rated laws reduce the insurance collision claim rates of 16 year-olds by 20 percent. These findings are consistent with the results of earlier national evaluations, which found that states with 3-stage graduated systems had fewer fatal crashes per population of 16 year-olds, compared with states without such systems.





Q What are night driving restrictions?

They're different from a curfew, which is a means to get people home by a specified time. Communities often adopt curfews to reduce behavior that's criminal or mischievous, while the idea of night driving restrictions is to protect beginners by keeping them from driving unsupervised during high-risk hours.

Q Are night restrictions critical components of graduated licensing?

Yes, 4 of 10 teen deaths on the road occur from 9 pm to 6 am, and night driving restrictions are associated with a 40-60 percent crash reduction during the restricted hours. A national study found much lower fatal crash rates of 15-17 year-olds under laws with strong restrictions. Those beginning at 9 pm cut the rates an estimated 18 percent, compared with no restriction. The reduction was 12 percent where driving was restricted after midnight. A study based on insurance claims reported similar results.

Q How early should night driving restrictions begin?

More than half of all fatal crashes that occur at night and involve 16 year-olds happen before midnight. This is when more young people are on the road, so driving restrictions for young beginners should start at 9 or 10 pm.

Risk when driving

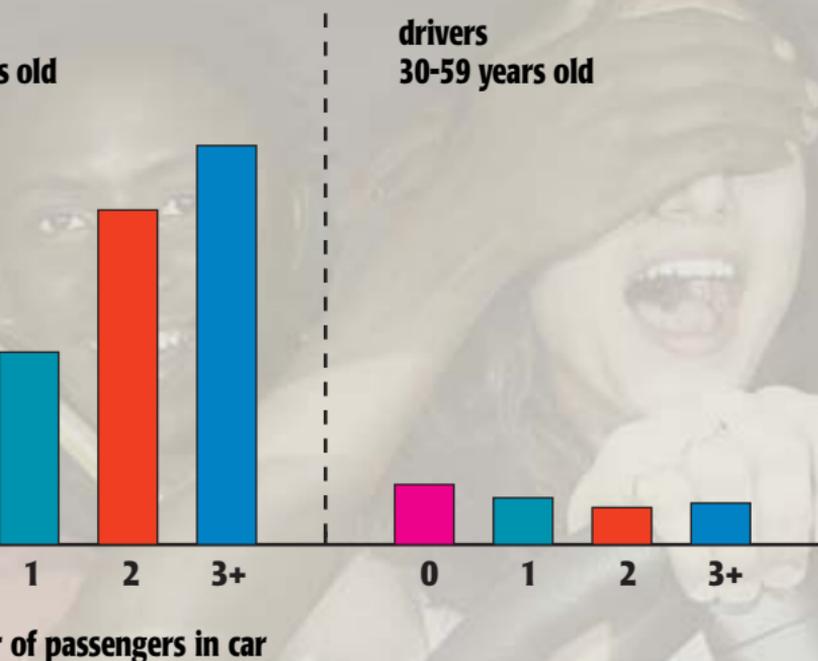
Driver deaths per 10,000 trips, by number of passengers



Q Are passenger restrictions important?

Yes, they're essential because passenger presence is such a big contributor to the teen death toll. Fatal crash risk for teen drivers increases incrementally with 1, 2, or 3+ passengers. With 3 or more, fatal crash risk is about 3 times higher than when a beginner drives alone. Restrictions make a difference. A national study found a 21 percent reduction in the fatal crash rate of 15-17 year-olds when beginners were prohibited from driving with any teenagers in their vehicles versus allowing 2 or more. Allowing only 1 teen passenger reduced the rate 7 percent.

ing with passengers by driver age and passenger presence



Q Do parents support graduated licensing?

Yes. Based on a national survey conducted in 2010, parents of teens favor licensing policies as strong or stronger than in US states now. Two-thirds of the parents prefer starting learners at 16 or older. More than half support intermediate licensing at 17 or older. A large majority favor night driving restrictions beginning by 10 pm or earlier and restricting teenage passengers to 1 at most. Nearly half said these restrictions should last at least until age 18. There's also support for long learner periods with a lot of practice driving and enhanced penalties for violating licensing restrictions. These responses mirror previous surveys.

Q Are teenagers subject to graduated licensing allowed to drive to school, work, and extracurricular activities?

Yes, all states allow exceptions so that teenagers may drive for specified purposes during restricted hours. An important factor in the crashes that occur at night is the combination of more difficult driving conditions and distractions caused by teen passengers. Young people going to work are unlikely to have teen passengers.

Graduated licensing delays full licensure, but studies indicate it doesn't hinder social life very much. Sixteen year-olds have largely similar patterns of social life and work whether they live in states where many, some, or few 16 year-olds are licensed. Another concern is the administrative burden on states that have to issue waivers. Maryland examined this when it implemented a night driving restriction and found it wasn't a problem.

Q Does graduated licensing offset the importance of licensing at older ages?

No, both are important. Even after controlling for the effects of graduated licensing, teenagers in states with older licensing ages have lower fatal crash rates and fewer insurance collision claims. Delaying licensure from 16 to 17, for example, lowers the fatal crash rate among 15-17 year-olds by 13 percent and reduces collision claim rates 9 percent among 16-year-old licensed drivers. The fatal crash rate for teenagers also is lower in states where laws delay the minimum age at which teenagers can get learner's permits.

New Jersey is the only US state that licenses at 17. This policy eliminates most crashes involving drivers who are 16, but a concern is whether the benefit is offset by higher crash rates among 17 year-olds. Studies confirm that the combined crash rate of 16 and 17 year-olds in New Jersey is far lower than in neighboring states with younger licensing ages. New Jersey's graduated licensing system also reduces crashes among 18 year-olds, a group that's largely unaffected by the graduated systems in effect in other states.



Teens may drive during restricted hours to work or school activities.

Q Can driver education reduce the need for graduated licensing?

No. A good education course emphasizing on-the-road driving can teach basic vehicle control skills. But if driver education is offered or required, it needs to be in the framework of an effective graduated licensing system to reduce crashes. Driver education hasn't been shown to reduce subsequent crash rates among beginning drivers.

Completion of driver education shouldn't reduce the time a beginner is restricted under a state's graduated licensing system. Nor should driver education negate the importance of an extended period of practice driving under supervision.



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