

Questions and answers on the introduction of a more difficult Restricted Driver Licence test

Rationale	1
Features of the new Restricted Driver Licence test	1
Test sites	4
Practicing for the Restricted Driver Licence test	7
Changes for motorcyclists	8

Rationale

Why has the restricted driver licence test become more difficult?

The changes to the Graduated Driver Licensing System (GDLS) aim to improve the safety of young and novice drivers.

Young drivers are most at risk during the first 6-12 months of their restricted licence phase, when they start to drive solo (without supervision). Evidence shows that novice drivers who accumulate a higher level of supervised driving experience in the learner stage of a GDLS have a much lower likelihood of crashing when they start driving solo.

Increasing the challenge of the restricted licence test will encourage learner drivers to get more supervised practice before they sit the test. 120 hours of supervised practice is recommended.

When will the new restricted licence test be in place?

The new restricted licence test gets underway on 27 February 2012.

Features of the new Restricted Driver Licence test

How will the test change?

The new Restricted Driver Licence test has been developed to assess the higher skill levels expected of today's more experienced licence applicants. It is longer than the previous test allowing a more comprehensive assessment of the applicant's safe driving skills. The new Restricted Driver Licence test requires a more consistent and wider range of traffic situations than the old test.

While the test retains an immediate failure category for illegal and/or unsafe behaviours, it introduces critical errors for serious driving errors that do not meet the threshold for an immediate failure error.

How was the new test developed?

The new Restricted Driver Licence test was developed from the Australian VicRoads Drive Test and adapted to suit New Zealand conditions.

What are the main features of the new Restricted Driver Licence Test?

The test comprises two stages and is expected to take about one hour to complete.

It includes:

- conducting a pre-drive vehicle safety check,
- conducting a 45 minute practical drive, and
- feedback to the applicant on their performance at the end of the test

The on-road practical test is made up of two stages:

Stage 1 takes 10 minutes and is a set of relatively simple driving tasks conducted in a less complex traffic environment. It is designed to determine whether the applicant is a sufficiently skilled and safe driver to proceed to the more challenging driving tasks and environments of Stage 2 of the test.

An applicant who does not achieve a satisfactory score in Stage 1 is not permitted to undertake Stage 2 of the test. This means applicants who are not ready to tackle the more challenging tasks in Stage 2 are screened out before they can pose a danger to themselves and other road users.

Stage 2 of the test takes 35 minutes and is designed to assess the applicant's ability to perform more challenging tasks in moderately challenging environments.

To pass the new Restricted Driver Licence test, an applicant must demonstrate safe decision-making, observance of road rules and satisfactory car-handling skills throughout the whole test.

How is the new test conducted, assessed and scored?

The new Restricted Driver Licence test consists of a series of assessable driving tasks that occur on a standardised test route. Each task is assessed using a standard set of criteria. There are seven assessable driving tasks in Stage 1 and 18 in Stage 2. For more detail, refer to the *Restricted Licence Test Guide* on the NZTA's website.

During the test the applicant will be assessed against three different assessment criteria:

1. **Task Assessment Items** which assess aspects of driving performance during the execution of each Assessable Task. There are a number of assessable items assigned to each driving task.

2. **Critical Errors** which are recorded at any time they occur during the restricted licence test, whether during an assessable task or not.
3. **Immediate Failure Errors** are also recorded at any time they occur and result in the immediate failure of the test.

Critical Errors: during the test, the testing officer records a Critical Error if the driver performs an illegal driving action that does not cause another road user to take evasive action.

A Critical Error is a serious driving error that does not meet the threshold for an Immediate Failure Error. Most illegal driving actions are classified as Critical Errors (except errors that endanger any road user, which are classified as Immediate Failure Errors). Critical Errors include:

- driving too slowly
- driving too fast
- failing to look
- failing to signal
- blocking a pedestrian crossing
- mounting a kerb
- stalling the vehicle
- incomplete stop at a stop sign
- other illegal action.

Immediate Failure Errors: recorded at any time they occur during either stage of the test regardless of whether or not the applicant was undertaking an Assessable Task at the time of the error. All driving actions resulting in immediate danger to any road user or to property are classified as Immediate Failure Errors and would usually be when the applicant is operating the vehicle carelessly, dangerously or recklessly. Immediate Failure Errors are the most dangerous errors of all, and result in immediate failure of the test. Immediate Failure Errors include:

- Testing officer intervention
- failure to carry out an instruction
- collision
- failure to Give Way
- excessive speed
- stop at a dangerous position
- failure to Stop
- other dangerous action.

Determining Pass or Fail: the driver's result does not depend on a single test score, but on a combination of the number of Immediate Failure Errors, Critical Errors and overall performance during specific driving tasks. To pass the new test, the driver must:

- not accumulate too many Critical Errors in either Stage 1 or Stage 2 (no more than one Critical Error before the end of Stage 1 and no more than two Critical Errors over the entire test),
- not incur any Immediate Failure Errors, and
- score at least the overall test pass mark.

Has the cost of sitting the new Restricted Driver Licence test changed?

The total cost of the tests required as part of the graduated driver licence system (the Restricted Driver Licence test and the Full Driver Licence test) has not changed as a result of strengthening the Restricted Driver Licence test. However, the test fees for the restricted and full licence tests have been swapped to reflect their altered duration.

The test fee for sitting the Restricted Driver Licence test is now \$86.60 (inc GST).

The test fee for sitting the Full Driver Licence test is now \$59.90 (inc GST).

Restricted Driver Licence tests booked to be taken on or after 27 February 2012 will cost \$86.60, regardless of when they're booked.

Will tested drivers receive feedback on their performance and areas where improvement is required?

Yes, feedback will be provided to drivers whether they pass or fail the Restricted Licence Driver test.

Will the pass rate be affected by the new Restricted Driver Licence test?

The NZTA expects the pass rate to reduce in the early days of the new test. It will however, climb back to normal rates over time as candidates acquire more practice.

Test sites

Will there be new testing routes?

Yes. As the new, more difficult Restricted Driver Licence test requires more complex driving scenarios, new routes have been developed. The strengthened test requires test sites with multiple lanes and a minimum level of traffic to achieve the level of challenge required.

This means testing will not be able to be held in some centres that do not offer the necessary variety of traffic situations or levels of traffic required by the new test.

Where will the Restricted Driver Licence testing be available from 27 February?

Whangarei	Te Awamutu	Nelson
Orewa	Taumaranui	Blenheim
Kerikeri	Gisborne	Papanui
Waitakere (Westgate)	Napier	Rangiora
Pukekohe	Hastings	Oamaru
Manukau	Taupo	Greymouth
Howick (Meadowlands)	Palmerston North	Ashburton
Penrose	Feilding	Timaru
Albany (Northcross)	Levin	Riccarton
Thames	Paraparaumu	Sockburn
Tauranga	Dannevirke	Dunedin
Mt Maunganui	New Plymouth	Westport
Whakatane	Hawera	Alexandra
Rotorua	Masterton	Queenstown
Tokoroa	Wanganui	Gore
Hamilton	Porirua	Invercargill
Morrinsville	Lower Hutt	Balclutha
	Wellington	

Where will the Restricted Driver Licence test be withdrawn from 27 February?

Location	Total number of Restricted Driver Licence tests carried out during		Alternative service available
	2011 and (weekly average)		
Kaitaia*	288 (5.5)		Kerikeri
Kaikohe	216 (4.2)		Kerikeri
Dargaville	234 (4.5)		Whangarei
Warkworth	275 (5.3)		Orewa
Turangi	16 (0.3)		Taupo or Taumaranui
Cambridge	503 (9.7)		Hamilton
Huntly	0		Hamilton
Matamata	264 (5.1)		Tauranga/Hamilton
Paeroa	106 (2.0)		Morrinsville
Waihi	293 (5.6)		Tauranga
Whangamata	42 (0.8)		Tauranga/Morrinsville
Te Kuiti	167 (3.2)		Taumaranui/Hamilton

Te Puke	314 (6.0)	Tauranga
Kawerau	126 (2.4)	Whakatane/Rotorua
Opotiki	140 (2.7)	Whakatane
Stratford	314 (6.0)	Hawera/New Plymouth
Taihape	56 (1.1)	Fielding
Marton	55 (1.1)	Palmerston North/ Fielding
Waipukerau	193 (3.7)	Hastings
Wairoa	128 (2.4)	Gisborne/Hastings
Ruatoria	6 (0.1)	Gisborne
Ohakune	27 (0.5)	Taupo/Rotorua
Takaka	56 (1.1)	Nelson
Motueka	229 (4.4)	Nelson
Upper Hutt	723 (14)	Lower Hutt
Kaikoura	57 (1.1)	Christchurch/Blenheim/Rangiora
Winton	53 (1.0)	Gore
Otautau	18 (0.3)	Invercargill
Te Anau	32 (0.6)	Invercargill
Wanaka	57 (1.1)	Alexandra/Queenstown
Akaroa	5 (0.1)	Christchurch
Fairlie	0	Timaru
Geraldine	97 (1.9)	Timaru
Waimate	71 (1.4)	Timaru
Hokitika	47 (0.9)	Greymouth
Mosgiel	320 (6.1)	Dunedin

* The NZTA is currently developing a test for Kaitia that meets the criteria of the new Restricted Driver Licence. It is expected a Restricted Driver Licence test will be available in Kaitia by May 2012.

Will other NZTA services be available in centres where the Restricted Driver Licence test is withdrawn?

Yes. Services such as the Learner Licence test and vehicle licensing will be available in centres where the Restricted Driver Licence test is withdrawn. This means access will be maintained for people to enter the Graduated Driver Licence Scheme.

It might be difficult for some learner drivers to achieve the recommended 120 hours of practice before sitting their Restricted Driver Licence test. How will the NZTA help people get the practice they need?

The NZTA already provides a range of resources to help learner drivers and their supervisors gain information and the skills they need to progress through the Graduated Driver Licence Scheme, eg safe teen driver programme (www.safeteedriver.co.nz).

In addition, the NZTA in partnership with the New Zealand Automobile Association is currently investigating ways it can partner with commercial and community groups to develop a scheme to help disadvantaged groups of learner drivers achieve the recommended 120 hours of supervised driving practice. The investigation includes researching what is currently available within New Zealand and similar schemes overseas.

How does the NZTA ensure test routes are nationally consistent?

The NZTA ensures nationally consistent test routes by:

- auditing test routes
- providing training for testing officers responsible for designing test routes
- certifying testing officers responsible for designing test routes
- providing comprehensive written guidance and resources to support TOs to design compliant test routes
- authorising and monitoring the national set of test routes.

Will the Full Licence test be affected by the changes to the restricted licence test?

Yes. The Full Licence test has changed to a 30 minute appointment from its previous length of one hour. It will not include as many elements as it had previously as those criteria are now assessed during the restricted licence test.

Practicing for the Restricted Driver Licence test

How much supervised practice does a learner driver need?

The NZ Transport Agency and ACC recommend learner drivers get 120 hours of supervised practice before they sit their restricted driver licence test.

The Practice programme (www.practice.co.nz) was developed by the NZTA and ACC to provide resources for learner drivers and their guide. It's a free learn-to-drive plan designed for 16-19 year olds.

Why is 120 hours of supervised practice recommended?

Internationally, best practice recommends that it takes 120 hours of supervised driving practice to develop the experience necessary to cope consistently in complex driving situations. Research suggests that crash rates among young drivers who have completed around 120 hours of supervised driving practice may be up to 40% lower than young drivers who have completed around 50 hours once they start driving solo.

How long will it take to gain 120 hours practice?

People who wish to progress to their restricted licence after the minimum six month period on a learner licence will need to do more than four hours of supervised practice per week to get the recommended 120 hours.

This can be done by incorporating supervised driving practice into daily routines such as commuting but will also require young drivers to gain experience on longer trips, on unfamiliar routes and in a range of conditions so they get a variety of practice.

Should young drivers be encouraged to undertake professional driving lessons?

Well-structured and comprehensive lesson plans from a professional driving instructor together with high levels of supervised driving experience in a broad range of driving situations is the best way to learn to drive.

Changes for motorcyclists

Has the Restricted Driver Licence test for motorcyclists also changed?

As an interim step, changes introduced as part of the strengthened Restricted Licence Test for drivers also apply to motorcyclists.

The NZTA continues to develop a new test specifically for motorcyclists. It is intended that the new test will become more difficult to encourage a higher level of rider skill, similar to that required of car drivers. The new Restricted motorcycle driver test is expected to be introduced in mid-2012.