

Learning to drive

Getting your car licence

Factsheet

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This factsheet explains how to get your car licence, which allows you to drive a light vehicle (up to 4500kg on your learner or restricted licence and up to 6000kg on your full licence). Cars, vans and utes are light vehicles. It outlines the three graduated stages, the process to get each stage and any conditions which you must comply with when driving.

Three stages to get your licence

The graduated driver licensing system has three stages: learner, restricted and full. Each stage has a test you have to pass. There's a theory test to begin stage 1, and practical driving tests to begin stages 2 and 3. See the chart at the end of this factsheet for an overview of the three-stage graduated driver licensing system. As you move from one stage to the next you're given a new licence, with different requirements and more responsibilities. Normal road rules apply at all times.

Where to apply

You can apply at any NZ Transport Agency driver licensing agent. These are selected branches of:

- Automobile Association (AA)
- Vehicle Testing New Zealand (VTNZ).

Go to www.nzta.govt.nz/agent or look in the *Yellow pages* to find a branch near you.

Making your application

Each time you apply for a licence stage, you will need to:

- fill out an application form (DL1) - you can download the form at www.nzta.govt.nz/form-DL1
- present evidence of your identity (see the Identification requirements section)
- prove your eyesight meets the required standard (see the Eyesight requirements section)
- have your photograph taken and provide a signature
- pay the appropriate application fee (this is separate to the test fee - see the What it costs section).

Stage 1 - learner licence

You must get a learner licence **before** you learn to drive on the road. To apply for a learner licence, you must be at least 16 years of age.

Obtaining a learner licence

To get your learner licence, you must apply at a driver licensing agent and:

- meet the application requirements (see the Making your application section)
- pay the learner licence test fee (see the What it costs

section)

- pass the learner licence theory test (see the Passing your theory test section).

Learner licence conditions

- You must not drive on your own. You must be accompanied by a supervisor at all times (see the Who can be a supervisor section).
- When learning to drive a light motor vehicle you may carry passengers, provided your supervisor agrees.
- You must display learner (L) plates on the front and rear of the vehicle at all times when you're driving. You can obtain L plates from most driver licensing agents.
- If you are learning to ride a moped, you do not need a supervisor. However, you do need an L plate on the rear of your moped, you must not carry any passengers and you must not ride between 10pm and 5am.

Your new learner licence will be valid for five years. You can now drive on the open road and gain the skills and experience that will enable you to progress to the next stage. When you feel ready, you can apply for your restricted licence.

If you do not progress during the five year period, you will need to pass a theory test once your licence has expired before your learner licence can be issued for a further five years.

Stage 2 - restricted licence

To apply for a restricted licence, you must be at least 16½ years of age and have held a current learner licence for at least six months. You will need to:

- meet the application requirements (see the Making your application section)
- book a time to sit the restricted practical test (see the Booking your practical test section)
- pay the restricted licence test fee (see the What it costs section)
- pass the restricted licence practical driving test (see the Passing your practical tests section).

Restricted licence conditions

- You can drive on your own, between 5am and 10pm.
- If driving between 10pm and 5am you must be accompanied by a supervisor (see the Who can be a supervisor section).
- If you sit the restricted test in an automatic vehicle, a condition will be imposed on your licence limiting you to driving only automatic vehicles. This condition does not apply when you are accompanied by a supervisor.
- You must not carry passengers unless you have a supervisor with you. The only passengers you can carry without a supervisor are:
 - your spouse or partner (partner means a civil union partner or de facto partner)

- your parent or guardian
- a child who lives with you and is under the care of you or your spouse or partner, eg you or your spouse are their parent or guardian
- a relative who lives with you and who receives a social security benefit, eg the domestic purposes, invalid's, sickness, unemployment or widow's benefits
- someone you look after as their primary caregiver.

Your new restricted licence will be valid for five years. During this time you should continue to build on your existing skills and experience to enable you to progress to a full licence with no restrictions. When you feel ready, you can apply for your full licence.

If you do not progress during the five year period, you will need to pass a theory test once your licence has expired before your restricted licence can be issued for a further five years.

Stage 3 - full licence

Drivers under 25 years of age

You will need to be at least 18 years of age and have held a current restricted licence for 18 months before you can apply for your full licence.

If you present an approved advanced driving course certificate* the minimum age reduces to 17½ and the length of time you must have held a current restricted licence reduces to 12 months.

Drivers 25 years of age or over

If you are 25 years of age or over you must have held a current restricted licence for at least six months before you can apply for your full licence. This period reduces to three months if you present an approved advanced driving course certificate.*

*The approved advanced driving courses are Street Talk or Defensive Driving.

Obtaining a full licence

To get your full licence, you must apply at a driver licensing agent and:

- meet the application requirements (see the Making your application section)
- book a time to sit the full practical test (see the Booking your practical test section)
- pay the full licence test fee (see the What it costs section)
- pass the full licence practical driving test (see the Passing your practical tests section).

Once you hold a full licence, you can drive either automatic or manual vehicles, regardless of the type of vehicle you sat your test in.

Identification requirements

You must present evidence of your identity each time you apply for a driver licence.

Evidence of identity

Acceptable evidence of your identity must confirm your full name and date of birth.

You may only have to provide a single document if you have one of the following:

- your New Zealand photo driver licence (which can be current or expired up to two years), or
- your current New Zealand passport.

If you do not have either of these documents, you will need to provide two other acceptable forms of evidence of identity such as:

- your New Zealand birth certificate and a student ID or 18+ card, or
- your New Zealand birth certificate and a utility bill.

If neither of the documents you provide has a photo you will also need to provide a verified image (see Factsheet 20 *Identification for driver licencing* for further information and a full list of acceptable identity documents).

All documents must be original documents. Photocopied or scanned documents are not acceptable.

Evidence of name change

If you want to change the name on your driver licence or if the name on your identity documents is not the same as the name on your licence, you will need to bring acceptable evidence of name change. This must be an original (not a copy) of one of the following:

- your marriage or civil union certificate
- your dissolution of marriage (or civil union) order
- a certificate of annulment
- a deed poll certificate, change of name certificate, or a birth certificate showing both names
- a statutory declaration confirming change of name which has been registered with the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Eyesight requirements

You must prove that your eyesight is up to standard each time you apply for a new licence class. You can:

- pass an eyesight screening check at a driver licensing agent, or
- present a satisfactory eyesight certificate or medical certificate (no more than 60 days old).

The certificate must be issued by a New Zealand registered optometrist or health practitioner, for example your usual doctor (GP), a registered nurse or nurse practitioner, or a specialist if appropriate. If you don't pass the eyesight screening check at the agent, you'll need to provide a certificate instead.

If you have sight in only one eye, or have only one eye (monocular vision) you'll need to present an eyesight certificate.

Who can be a supervisor

A supervisor is a person who:

- holds a current full New Zealand driver licence for the class of vehicle you are learning to drive, and
- has held their full New Zealand driver licence for at least two years (or where their full New Zealand licence has been held less than two years, they have held an equivalent overseas driver licence for at least two years), and
- does not have a supervisor condition on their New Zealand licence.

What it costs

You pay an application fee and a test fee for each licence stage.

Learner licence application fee	\$48.20
Learner licence test fee	\$45.70
Total	\$93.90

Restricted licence application fee	\$48.20
Restricted licence test fee	\$86.60
Total	\$134.80

Full licence application fee	\$49.60
Full licence test fee	\$59.90
Total	\$109.50

If you don't pass a test, then you will need to pay another test fee when rebooking. You won't be charged another application fee.

Booking a practical driving test

Make sure you are ready for your practical test.

The restricted and full tests are tough tests that assess your driving skills. It is recommended that you get plenty of practice (as least 120 hours if you have a learner licence) before you sit a practical test. More information about the restricted and full practical test contents can be found at www.nzta.govt.nz/practical-tests.

You can book a time to sit your restricted or full licence practical licence test:

- online at www.nzta.govt.nz/online, or
- at a driver licensing agent.

If you book online then you must allow an extra 30 minutes prior to your test, or visit a driver licensing agent prior to your test, to complete the application requirements (eg having your photo taken and eyesight checked).

Check what time the licensing agent opens on the day of your test. If your test is early in the morning and the agent isn't open you won't be able to complete the requirements listed above. This means you'll need to visit an agent on a day prior to your test.

Check the location of your test. Not all test sites have driver licensing agents. This means that if your test is booked at a testing-only site, you will need to visit a driver licensing agent at another location to complete the application requirements before your new licence can be issued.

Changing or cancelling your test

If you have booked a theory or practical test and want to change or cancel your test, you will have to pay a further fee. You can change your test online at www.nzta.govt.nz/online.

Where there are two or more complete working days (excluding weekends and public holidays) between the day you change or cancel your test and the date of your appointment, you will need to pay a rescheduling fee of \$16.40.

Where there are less than two complete working days (excluding weekends and public holidays) between the day you change or cancel your test and the date of your appointment, you will not

pay a rescheduling fee but will need to pay a further test fee.

You may be eligible for a refund of the first test fee paid where the cancelled test time was subsequently filled by another person. If the test fee is refunded, a processing fee of \$16.40 will be deducted.

You can obtain a refund application form (DL13) online at <http://www.nzta.govt.nz/licence/photo/fees-refunds.html> or by calling us on 0800 822 422.

Passing your theory test

The learner licence theory test is a computer-based, 35-question, multi-choice test that assesses your knowledge of road rules and safe driving practices.

All the information you require to pass the theory test can be found in *The official New Zealand road code*. *The official New Zealand road code* can be purchased from many bookstores and driver licensing agents. It's also available online at www.nzta.govt.nz/roadcode.

You can also practise the theory test online at <http://www.roadcodepractice.co.nz>.

Passing your practical tests

The restricted and full licence tests are practical driving tests that assess your ability to apply your knowledge of road rules and safe driving practices.

Don't be late

The test can't be rushed. If you're late, your test will be cancelled. You'll have to rebook and pay another test fee (see the Changing or cancelling your test section).

Carry your driver licence

Make sure that your photo driver licence is current and that you have it with you. If you arrive for the test and your licence isn't current or you don't have it with you, you won't be able to sit the test. You'll need to rebook and pay another test fee.

Pre-drive vehicle check

The testing officer will look over your vehicle before the test to ensure it is roadworthy. They'll check the tyres, indicators, brake lights etc, and make sure your vehicle has a current warrant of fitness (WoF) or certificate of fitness (CoF), a valid licence label and a road user charges (RUC) label (if it runs on diesel). If your vehicle isn't roadworthy, the test won't proceed (even if it has a current WoF or CoF). You'll need to rebook and pay another test fee. Vehicles displaying trade plates or being driven on a space-saver tyre cannot be used to sit a practical driving test.

Taking a support person

When you sit a practical driving test you can choose to have a support person accompany you during the test. If you are considering bringing a support person, please read the Taking a support person information in *The official New Zealand road code*.

In-car video cameras

The testing officer may attach a small video camera to the front windscreen at the beginning of your practical test.

The camera records the test and enables the testing officer's

performance to be audited. It also assists in investigating complaints where the test result is disputed.

If you do not wish for your test to be recorded, please inform the testing officer.

The role of the testing officer

A testing officer undertakes many tasks during the test, including directing the applicant around the route, observing and marking driving behaviour and keeping an eye on safety. Because of this, it is unlikely that they will have time to engage in other conversation during the test.

Further information

A test day checklist and further information on what the test involves and how to prepare for the test can be found in *The official New Zealand road code* and on our website at www.nzta.govt.nz/practical-tests.

After the test

After you pass the test you'll be given a temporary licence, valid for 21 days, to use while your photo driver licence is manufactured and mailed to you, which should take two to three weeks.

Driver responsibility

You must have your licence with you at all times while driving, as the law requires that you must produce your licence immediately,

when requested by an enforcement officer. Failure to do so can result in an instant fine.

It's illegal to drive, or attempt to drive, under the influence of alcohol. If you're suspected of being under the influence of alcohol, breath and/or blood tests may be required.

If you're under 20 years of age, there is a zero alcohol limit. This means if you drive after consuming just one drink, you can be charged with drink-driving.

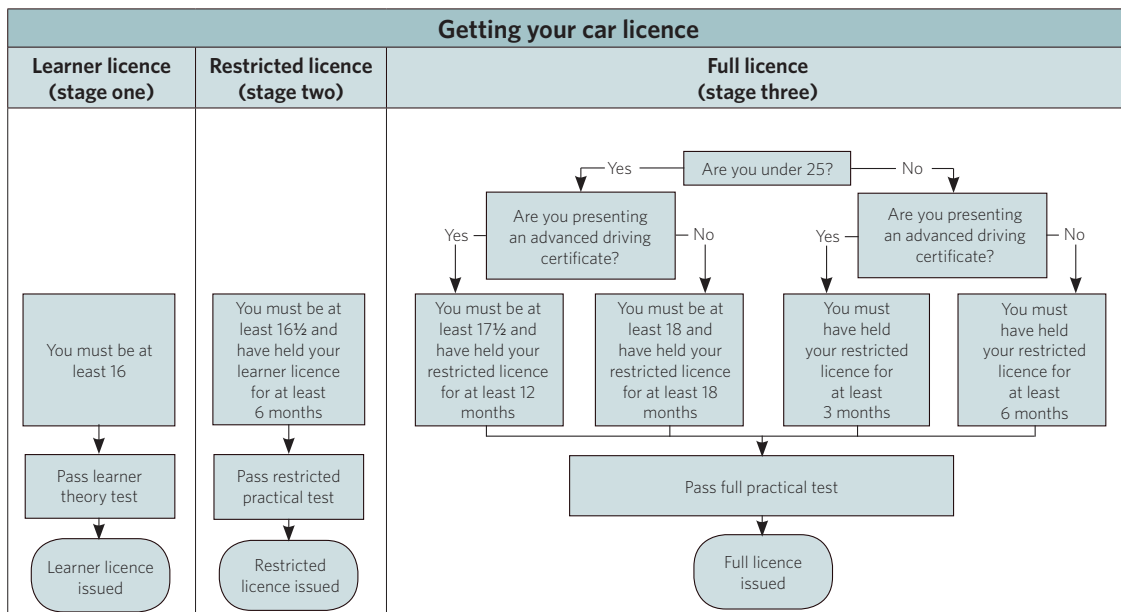
If you're 20 or older, the legal alcohol limit is 50 milligrams per 100 millilitres of blood or 250 micrograms per litre of breath.

It's illegal to drive, or attempt to drive, under the influence of drugs. If an enforcement officer suspects you're under the influence of drugs, you can be required to undertake a compulsory impairment test. If you fail the impairment test, then a blood test will be required.

Where you can find out more

- Email us: info@nzta.govt.nz.
- Call our contact centre: 0800 822 422.
- Write to us: NZ Transport Agency, Private Bag 11777, Palmerston North 4442.

This chart outlines the process for obtaining a car licence.



The information in this factsheet is a general guide only. It is not the source of the law and should not be used in place of authoritative legal documents. Some factsheets are updated frequently and print versions can quickly become out of date. If the currency of the information you are reading is important, check the factsheet index on our website (www.nzta.govt.nz/factsheets) or call us on 0800 822 422.

Contact details

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