

Intermediate license laws for teen drivers

Found here: <https://www.dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/teens.html>

If you're under 18, you'll be issued an intermediate driver license and must follow these laws:

Driving with passengers:

- First 6 months: No passengers under 20 years old, except for immediate family members (spouse, child, stepchild, or siblings, either by birth or by marriage).
- Next 6 months: No more than 3 passengers under 20 years old who aren't members of your immediate family.

Nighttime driving

- For the first 12 months, you can't drive between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. unless you're with a licensed driver 25 years or older. The only exceptions are driving for agricultural purposes and transporting farm products or supplies under the direction of a farmer as described in RCW 46.20.070.

No cell phones

- You aren't permitted to use wireless devices while driving, even with a hands-free device. This includes talking on cell phones and sending or receiving text messages. You may only use a wireless device to report an emergency.

Penalties for violations and accidents

- First violation: Passenger and nighttime restrictions will apply until you're 18. We'll send a warning letter to you and your parent/guardian for the following:
 - Get a ticket for violating the restrictions.
 - Get a ticket for violating a rule of the road.
 - Are involved in an accident where:
 - You get a ticket or are determined to have caused the accident.
 - No one involved in the accident receives a ticket.
 - The cause of the accident can't be determined.
 - Only your car was involved in the accident.
- 2nd violation: License suspended for 6 months (or until you're 18, whichever comes first). We'll notify you and your parent/guardian before we take any suspension action.
- 3rd violation: License suspended until you're 18. We'll notify you and your parent/guardian before we take any suspension action.

Note: We don't determine who caused an accident. If you'd like a copy of your collision report, contact the Washington State Patrol records division at [360.570.2355](tel:360.570.2355).

Warning letters and penalties until age 18

Once you've driven safely for 1 year the passenger and nighttime driving restrictions expire, but the penalties for other violations will apply until you're 18.

Frequently asked questions

Do I have to get a new license when I turn 18?

No, the intermediate driver license automatically becomes a regular driver license.

How do police enforce the intermediate license laws?

They enforce them as a "secondary action." This means that if a teen driver is stopped for a traffic offense, the officer can cite the driver for any violations of intermediate license restrictions.

If I have a drug or alcohol-related offense or Minor in Possession (MIP), can I get my intermediate license?

No, you'll have to wait until you're 18 if you're convicted of any of the following while you have an instruction permit:

- Driving under the influence — [RCW 46.61.502](#)
- Physical control of vehicle under the influence — [RCW 46.61.504](#)
- Driver under 21 consuming alcohol — [RCW 46.61.503](#)
- Alcohol or drug violations — [RCW 46.20.265](#)

If I have a license from another state, do the intermediate license laws apply to me?

Yes. When a driver under 18 with a valid out-of-state license becomes a Washington resident, they must get an intermediate WA license. They must meet all the same requirements.