

Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) Summary

August 2022

Minnesota, like nearly all states, licenses new drivers through a graduated driver licensing (GDL) system that limits some aspects of driving privileges until the driver gains experience. The system is basically divided into three stages: (1) **instruction (or learner's) permit**, which always requires the presence of a licensed driver; (2) **provisional licensure**, which is an intermediate stage for youth drivers that allows unsupervised driving with some limitations (particularly on passengers, nighttime driving, and use of electronic devices); and (3) **full licensure**. There is also a less common farm work license for farm-related driving situations (as well as a medical license, which is not discussed in this summary).

The following table outlines requirements in each GDL stage. It identifies the prerequisites for initial issuance of each permit or license, driver accompaniment requirements, and restrictions that apply when operating a vehicle. The table does not address scenarios for license renewal, reinstatement of lost driving privileges, previous licensing in another state, license endorsements, motorized bicycle permits, and enhanced or commercial licenses. It also does not include public safety prerequisites generally applicable to all potential drivers.¹

GDL System Overview

Feature	(1) Instruction Permit	Farm Work License	(2) Provisional License	(3) Full License (Under 21)
Description	Permit to begin learning to drive	Specialized provisional license for minors to assist in farm work ^a	Restricted license for minors	Regular, unrestricted driver's license
Prerequisites				
Minimum age	15	15	16	17 ^b
Duration of prior GDL stage	None	Held instruction permit, with no minimum length of time	Held instruction permit and/or farm work license for 6 months	If under age 18: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Held provisional license for preceding 12 months

¹ The general prerequisites include: person is not legally incompetent; person is not drug-dependent; person is not deemed inimical to public safety; person has no physical or mental disability that prevents ordinary control over the vehicle; person is able to understand traffic signs; and license is not suspended, revoked, or canceled. Minn. Stat. § 171.04, subd. 1.

Feature	(1) Instruction Permit	Farm Work License	(2) Provisional License	(3) Full License (Under 21)
				If age 18: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Held instruction permit for 6 months If age 19 or over: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Held instruction permit for 3 months
Driver's education	If under age 18: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Currently enrolled in driver's education ▪ Completed (1) 30 hours of classroom instruction, or (2) 15 hours of classroom in a program that provides classroom and behind-the-wheel concurrently^d If age 18 or over: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None required 	Completed driver's education ^e	Completed driver's education ^e	None required
Minimum supervised driving time^c	None required	At least 50 hours (or 40 hours if supplemental parental curriculum completed), of which at least 15 hours must be at night	At least 50 hours (or 40 hours if supplemental parental curriculum completed), of which at least 15 hours must be at night	If under age 18: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At least 10 hours with provisional license If age 18 or older: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None required
Examinations	Knowledge exam Eye exam	Road exam Eye exam	If holding instruction permit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Road exam ▪ Eye exam If holding farm work license: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eye exam 	All: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eye exam If age 18 or over: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Road exam

Feature	(1) Instruction Permit	Farm Work License	(2) Provisional License	(3) Full License (Under 21)
Prior violations	If under age 18: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have no convictions^f at any point in time for (1) certain alcohol violations^g, or (2) crash-related moving violations If age 18 or over: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No prerequisites 	Have no convictions in past 6 months for (1) certain alcohol violations ^g , or (2) crash-related or noncrash-related moving violations Have no convictions ^f while not in possession of an instruction permit, at any point in time, for (1) certain alcohol violations ^g , or (2) crash-related moving violations	Have no convictions in past 6 months for (1) certain alcohol violations ^g , or (2) crash-related or noncrash-related moving violations Have no convictions ^f while not in possession of an instruction permit, at any point in time, for (1) certain alcohol violations ^g , or (2) crash-related moving violations	If under age 18: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have no conviction in past 12 months for (1) certain alcohol violations^g, (2) crash-related moving violations, or (3) more than one noncrash-related moving violation If age 18 or over: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No prerequisites
Other conditions	Parent/guardian approval Application and fees (totaling \$15.50) ^h	Parent/guardian approval Application and fees (totaling \$18.50) ^h Signed supervised driving log Farm work affidavit Property tax statement or rental agreement for agricultural land	Parent/guardian approval Application and fees (totaling \$18.50) ^h Signed supervised driving log	If under age 18: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent/guardian approval All: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Application and fees (totaling \$31.25)^h
Requirements and Restrictions				
Driver accompaniment	If under age 18: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent/guardian or licensed driver age 21 or older in front passenger seat 	If driving only to perform farm work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None required 	None required	None required

Feature	(1) Instruction Permit	Farm Work License	(2) Provisional License	(3) Full License (Under 21)
	If age 18 or over: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adult licensed driver in front passenger seat 	Otherwise: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent/guardian or licensed driver age 21 or older in front passenger seat 		
Passenger restrictions	No restrictions Note: driver must always be accompanied (see Driver accompaniment section)	If unaccompanied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No passengers If accompanied by parent/guardian: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No restrictions 	If unaccompanied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For the first 6 months: up to 1 passenger under age 20 ▪ For the second 6 months: up to 3 passengers under age 20 ▪ Note: no restrictions for immediate family members If accompanied by parent/guardian: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No restrictions 	No restrictions
Nighttime driving	No restrictions Note: driver must always be accompanied (see Driver accompaniment section)	If unaccompanied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Operation only during daylight hours If accompanied by parent/guardian: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No restrictions 	For first 6 months, no operation 12 a.m. to 5 a.m. unless: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accompanied by licensed driver age 25 or older; ▪ Driving between home and work or certain school events; or ▪ Driving as part of work Otherwise: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No restrictions 	No restrictions

Feature	(1) Instruction Permit	Farm Work License	(2) Provisional License	(3) Full License (Under 21)
Driver use of electronic devices	If under age 18: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No cell phone use ▪ No messaging device use If age 18 or over: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No handheld cell phone use ▪ No messaging device use 	No cell phone use No messaging device use	No cell phone use No messaging device use	No handheld cell phone use No messaging device use
Other operating restrictions	No other restrictions	If unaccompanied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Must drive only to perform farm work ▪ Operation only within 40 miles of farmhouse If accompanied: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No other restrictions 	No other restrictions	No other restrictions
Expiration	2 years	2 years	2 years	Earlier of 4 years or at age 21

Notes

- ^a A farm work license is treated as a limited form of provisional licensure that allows unaccompanied driving only when performing farm work.
- ^b Age is not specified in statute, but a full license could be obtained at age 17 if all qualifications are met.
- ^c Driving supervisor must be a licensed driver who is age 21 or older. Minn. Stat. §§ [171.04](#), subd. 1 (1)(iii); [171.055](#), subd. 1 (a)(5)(i).
- ^d Currently, no driver’s education programs offer concurrent classroom and behind-the-wheel instruction.
- ^e Requires at least 30 hours of classroom instruction and 6 hours of behind-the-wheel instruction. Minn. Rules Parts [7411.0520](#), [7411.0555](#).
- ^f If convicted for any of the listed offenses, the person cannot obtain driving privileges until age 18. Minn. Stat. §§ [171.05](#), subd. 1b; [171.055](#), subd. 1 (c).
- ^g Alcohol violations include: DWI, underage drinking and driving, open container law, and implied consent law. Minn. Stat. §§ [169A.20](#), [169A.33](#), [169A.35](#), [169A.50](#) to [169A.53](#).
- ^h Amount includes a technology surcharge and a filing fee. It excludes fees for endorsements and duplicates, as well as fee differences for enhanced cards. Minn. Stat. §§ [171.06](#), subd. 2; [171.061](#), subd. 4. Minn. Stat. §§ [171.04](#), [171.041](#), [171.05](#), [171.055](#), [171.06](#), [171.061](#), [171.27](#), [169.475](#).



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