

Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) Summary

October 2020

Minnesota, like almost all other states, licenses new drivers in a graduated driver licensing (GDL) system that limits some aspects of driving privileges until the driver gains experience.

The GDL 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 but carries various 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 table below 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, enhanced licenses, or endorsements and commercial licenses. It also does not include public safety prerequisites generally applicable to all potential drivers.¹

Feature	(1) Instruction Permit	Farm Work License	(2) Provisional License	(3) Full License (Under 21)
Description	Initial permit for beginning to learn to drive	Specialized provisional license for minors to assist in farm work ⁱ	Restricted license for minors	Regular, unrestricted driver’s license
Prerequisites				
Minimum age	15	15	16	17 ⁱⁱ

¹ General prerequisites include: person not legally incompetent; person not drug-dependent; person not 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)
Duration of previous 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 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
Minimum supervised driving timeⁱⁱⁱ	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
Driver's education	If under age 18: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Currently enrolled in driver's education ▪ Completed (1) classroom portion, or (2) 15 hours of classroom in a program that provides classroom and behind-the-wheel concurrently If age 18 or over: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None required 	Completed driver's education	Completed driver's education	None required
Examinations	Written exam Eye exam	Road exam Eye exam	If holding instruction permit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Road exam ▪ Eye exam 	If holding provisional license: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eye exam If age 18 or over:

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			If holding farm work license: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eye exam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Road exam ▪ Eye exam
Prior violations	If under age 18: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have no convictions^{iv} at any point in time for (1) certain alcohol violations^v, 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 ^v , (2) crash-related moving violations, or (3) noncrash-related moving violations Have no convictions ^{iv} while not in possession of an instruction permit, at any point in time, for (1) certain alcohol violations ^v , or (2) crash-related moving violations	Have no convictions in past 6 months for (1) certain alcohol violations ^v , (2) crash-related moving violations, or (3) noncrash-related moving violations Have no convictions ^{iv} while not in possession of an instruction permit, at any point in time, for (1) certain alcohol violations ^v , 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^v, (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 steps	Parental approval Application and fees (totaling \$16.25) ^{vi}	Parental approval Application and fees (totaling \$19.25) ^{vi} Signed supervised driving log Farm work affidavit Property tax statement or rental agreement for agricultural land	Parental approval Application and fees (totaling \$19.25) ^{vi} Signed supervised driving log	If under age 18: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parental approval All: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Application and fees (totaling \$32.00)^{vi}
Requirements and Restrictions				
Accompaniment while driving	If under age 18: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent/guardian or licensed driver age 21 or 	If driving only to perform farm work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None required 	None required	None required

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	older in front passenger seat 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 		
Passengers	No restrictions Note: driver must always be accompanied (see Accompaniment while driving)	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 first 6 months: up to 1 passenger under age 20 ▪ For 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
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

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Nighttime driving	No restrictions Note: driver must always be accompanied (see Accompaniment while driving)	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 at least age 25; ▪ 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
Other 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
Other				
Expiration	2 years	2 years	2 years	Earlier of 4 years or at age 21
<p>Notes</p> <p>ⁱ A farm work license is treated as a hybrid between an instruction permit and provisional license. It allows driving unaccompanied only when performing farm work.</p> <p>ⁱⁱ Age is not specified in statute, but a full license could be obtained at age 17 if all qualifications are met.</p> <p>ⁱⁱⁱ 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).</p> <p>^{iv} 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).</p> <p>^v 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.</p>				

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<p>^{vi} Amount includes (1) technology surcharge, (2) filing fee, and (3) a temporary fee increase from August 1, 2019, to June 30, 2022. It excludes any endorsements or fee differences for enhanced cards. Minn. Stat. §§ 171.06, subd. 2; 171.061, subd. 4. Minn. Stat. §§ 169.475, 171.04, 171.041, 171.05, 171.055, 171.06, 171.061, 171.27.</p>				



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