



# GDL: Graduated Driver Licensing in Montana



## STEP 1 LEARNER LICENSE

**WHEN:** Starts with the Learner License obtained in a state-approved driver education program no earlier than age 14½ or with a Learner License without driver education at age 16 or older.

Teens with a Learner License can **ONLY** be supervised by a licensed parent/guardian or licensed adult authorized by the parent/guardian.

The parent/guardian who signed the driver license application is legally liable for any damages or losses resulting from a crash when the teen driver is behind the wheel.

**HOW LONG:** One year.

**Supervised driving** is for a minimum of **six months and 50 hours - 10 hours must be at night**. Practice in varied weather, traffic, and road conditions.

**CONDITIONS: Seat belts use required:** each occupant must wear a seat belt. The driver must remain free from traffic violations and alcohol/drug offenses.

## Penalties—GDL Law Violations

**First Offense** – Not less than 20 hours or more than 60 hours of community service.

**Second Offense** – Suspension of restricted driver license for six months.

## STEP 2 GDL RESTRICTED LICENSE

**WHEN:** Teens may apply to drive independently after successful completion of Step 1, with parent/guardian certification of 50 hours of supervised driving practice, and no traffic violations and alcohol/drug offenses.

**HOW LONG:** One year or when driver reaches age 18.

**CONDITIONS: Seat belt use required:** each occupant must wear a seat belt.

**Curfew from 11 pm to 5 am:** Darkness increases crash risk, so night driving is **not allowed between 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m.**, unless travel is for school, church, work, or farm-related activities.

**Limit passengers:** For the **first** six months may have only **one passenger**; for the **second** six months may have up to **three passengers**. Others allowed if passengers are family members or the teen is being supervised by a licensed adult driver.

## STEP 3 FULL PRIVILEGE DRIVER LICENSE

**WHEN:** Upon successful completion of Steps 1 and 2 or when driver reaches age 18.

Montana's **GRADUATED DRIVER LICENSING (GDL)** law (MCA 61.5.132-135) is a three-step program that reduces the risk while new drivers under age 18 develop and improve their driving skills. Teens still get to drive—with supervision—and gradually gain experience to begin driving on their own, but with **restrictions** on night driving and passengers.

Young drivers face the highest crash risk in darkness and each teen passenger doubles the crash risk. Safety research is clear that newly licensed drivers should start driving with no young passengers.

Learning to drive is a complex, ongoing process that requires **responsibility** and thousands of miles of **practice** to develop competence, skill, and judgment. Just like with sports and music, good habits and abilities grow through experience and good coaching.

After teens have their full privilege license, parents should **continue to drive** with their teen, monitor, model, and enforce the rules, and encourage safe driving habits.

