

The Shopfront

YOUTH LEGAL CENTRE

Driving – information for young people

Fact Sheet 1 - getting a driver licence in New South Wales

Where can I get my licence?

You can only get a NSW driver licence from the Roads and Traffic Authority, NSW (RTA). To find your nearest RTA motor registry, look up www.rta.nsw.gov.au or the telephone directory.

For information about getting a motorcycle licence, see Fact Sheet 9 - Motorbikes and Scooters.

How does the licensing system work?

All up, it takes at least 4 years to get a full licence. There are four major steps involved.

- First you must get a learner licence – your “Ls”. A learner licence is valid for 3 years and you must hold it for at least six months.
- From Ls, you go up to a provisional P1 licence, which you hold for at least 12 months.
- From P1, you progress to a provisional P2 licence, which you must hold for at least 24 months.
- Finally, from P2, you go to a full licence.

To qualify for each step up, you must satisfy certain conditions and pass a test. You must also obey a number of important rules.

Step 1: Getting your Ls

To get your Ls you must:

- be at least 16 years old
- pass a Driver Knowledge Test (DKT)
- go to a RTA motor registry to prove your identity
- pay the DKT fee (\$36 each attempt) and a learners' licensing fee (\$25)

Before taking the DKT, make sure you study the *Guide for New Drivers* and the *Road Users Handbook*. The study material is available from the RTA website or any motor registry. You can also do a practice DKT on the RTA website.

Once you get your Ls, you must hold it for at least 6 months and record 50 hours (if issued before 1 July 2007) or 120 hours (if issued after 1 July 2007) of driving into your Learner Driver Log Book. When you have done this, and if you are 17 years or older, you can take the test for your P1 licence.

Special rules for learner drivers

While on your Ls, you must obey these rules:

- be supervised at all times by a full Australian licensed driver
- display 'L' plates on the front and back of the car. Plates must be displayed on the outside of the car.
- never drive above 80km/h
- don't drink any alcohol before driving
- don't tow any other vehicle
- don't supervise another L driver

If you don't obey these rules, it's an offence. The penalties can be severe and you could lose your licence.

Step 2: Getting your P1 licence

To be eligible for your P1 licence, you must:

- be at least 17 years old
- have held your Learner's licence for at least 12 months (the 12 month tenure is exempted if over the age of 25)
- have logged at least 120 hours (20 hours at night) driving time on your Ls
- pay the Driving Ability Road Test (DART) fee (\$44 each attempt) and a P1 licensing fee (\$46)
- pass the Driving Ability Road Test (DART). Before taking the test, you will need to read A Guide to DART, which is available online or from any motor registry

Your P1 licence is issued for 18 months.

Special rules for P1 drivers

As a P1 driver, you must obey these rules:

- display the red 'P' plates on the front and the back of the car. Plates must be displayed on the outside of the car.
- never drive above 90km/h
- don't drink any alcohol before driving
- don't get 4 or more demerit points (note that, from 1 July 2007 you will get 4 points for **any** speeding offence)
- don't supervise a learner driver
- obey towing restrictions (you are only allowed to tow light trailers up to 250kg unloaded weight, and you must always display a P plate on the back of the trailer)

If you don't obey these rules, it's an offence. The penalties can be severe and you may lose your licence.

Step 3: Getting a P2 licence

After 12 months of holding a P1 licence, you can proceed to the P2 licence by passing the Hazard Perception Test (HPT).

The HPT is a touch-screen computer test which measures your ability to recognise and respond to potentially dangerous situations. A Hazard Perception Handbook is available online or from motor registries. You can also practice the test at the RTA website.

A P2 licence is issued for 30 months and you must hold it for at least 24 months before progressing to your full licence.

Special rules for P2 drivers

As a P2 driver, you must obey these rules:

- display the green 'P' plates on the front and the back of the car
- never drive above 100km/h
- don't drink any alcohol before driving
- don't get 7 or more demerit points
- don't supervise a learner driver

If you don't obey these rules, it's an offence. The penalties can be severe and you could lose your licence.

Extra restrictions on L, P1 and P2 licences

In the last few years, the government has introduced several new laws which replace extra restrictions on P1 and P2 drivers.

Passenger restrictions

If your P1 or P2 licence is *re-issued* after you were *disqualified* for a driving offence, you will only be allowed to carry *one* passenger for the first 12 months.

This restriction only applies if the *driving offence* was committed *on or after 11 July 2005*. It does not matter when you first got your P1 or P2 licence.

New passenger restrictions that apply to all P1 licence holders under the age of 25.

If you are on your P1s and are under 25, you must not drive at any time between 11pm and 5am with more than one passenger under the age of 21, unless you are driving an emergency vehicle.

You may apply for an exemption from the passenger restrictions if there are exceptional circumstances (for example, you have to drive your younger siblings around and there is no one else who can do this).

High performance vehicle restriction

If you got your P1 licence for the first time or had it re-issued *after 11 July 2005*, you are not allowed to drive certain types of high performance cars.

This restriction also applies to P2 licences but only if your P1 licence was first issued/re-issued on or after 11 July 2005.

As a general guide, "high performance vehicles" are cars that have:

- eight or more cylinders;

- a turbocharged engine;
- a supercharged engine; or,
- had substantial engine performance modifications.

A list of these “high performance vehicles” is listed on the RTA website. It is updated as required. You must check this site to see if your car is listed.

Restrictions on use of mobile phones

A learner or P1 driver must not use *any* mobile phone while driving, whether hand-held or hands-free. For more information see Fact Sheet 8 – Driving and Mobile Phone Use.

Extra demerit points for speeding

P1 drivers will incur 4 demerit points for exceeding the speed limit by less than 30 km/h. This will result in automatic licence suspension. for more information see Fact Sheet 3 – Demerit points and Fact Sheet 4 – Speeding.

Step 4: Getting a full licence

You may get a full licence:

- if you have held your P2 licence for 2 years; and,
- if you pass the Driver Qualification Test (DQT). The DQT is a combination of an advanced hazard perception test and a further test of the road rules and safe driving. You can practise the test at the RTA website.

Losing your licence

You could lose your licence if you incur too many demerit points, commit a serious traffic offence or fail to pay your outstanding fines.

There is no demerit point system for learner’s licence holders, but your Ls could be cancelled if the RTA decides your driving record is unsatisfactory.

For more information, see *Fact Sheet 2 - Unlicensed driving*, *Fact Sheet 3 – Demerit points*, *Fact Sheet 4 – Speeding* and *Fact Sheet 5 - Serious traffic offences and courts*.

Updated August 2008

The information in this fact sheet contains a basic summary of the law in New South Wales. It is not legal advice. This means that if you need legal advice, you should see a lawyer.

For more information, visit us on www.shopfront.org or contact us at:

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