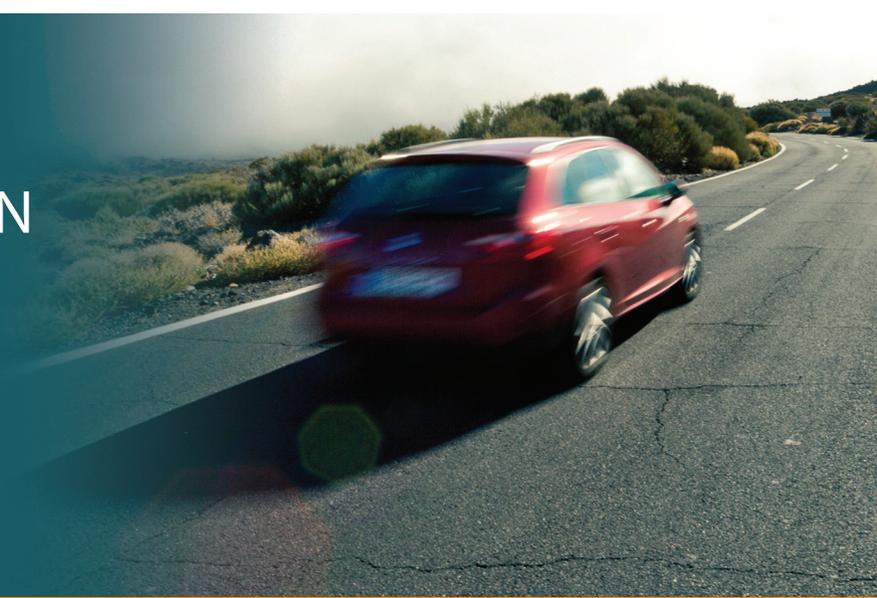




DRIVER EDUCATION STANDARDS



Questions & Answers

1. Is driver education an important tool to help young drivers learn to drive?

Yes. Driver education and behind the wheel training are an efficient means for new drivers to learn how to drive. It provides a safe and controlled environment while teens develop their driving skills. Driver education dates back to the early 1930s and is recognized and promoted as a safety measure which remains popular today.

2. Does driver education have proven safety benefits?

Historically, research studies have not shown a link between driver education and reduced crash involvement. Recent studies in Nebraska (2015) and Oregon (2014) suggest that driver education holds promise for reducing collisions, although these studies do have some limitations that provide context for positive findings and should be a consideration in future efforts to evaluate the safety effects of driver education.



3. Are there other benefits associated with driver education?

Yes. Driver education courses provide new drivers with an opportunity to practice behind the wheel, to develop confidence driving, to obtain their license sooner, and to prepare for the driving test. Participation in a driver education course can also qualify a teen driver for lower insurance rates.

4. Who offers driver education?

Driver education programs may be offered by public secondary schools or commercial driving schools that are privately owned and operated (including safety agencies). In some instances young drivers may be able to choose between the former and the latter. Driver education courses are often developed and regulated by government agencies, and can also be delivered by them in some instances.

5. How long are driver education courses?

In the United States, driver education courses typically include 30 hours of classroom teaching and 6 hours of behind-the-wheel training. In Canada, participants are required to complete 25 hours of classroom teaching and 10 hours of on-road training. However, these requirements can vary widely depending on the course selected. Online driver education programs are now increasingly available in some jurisdictions in addition to, or in lieu of, classroom instruction.

6. Is driver education a substitute for parental supervision?

No. Driver education should be used to complement supervised driving with parents, not replace it. Substituting driver education for parental supervision may undermine the safety benefits of GDL. A New GDL Framework developed by the Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF) with the support of the National Safety Council (NSC) and NHTSA, recommends teen drivers complete 12 months in the learner stage and a minimum of 50 hours of supervised driving, with 80 to 120 hours being considered optimal. The Framework also proposes driver education programs include a mandatory parent orientation course that highlights the rationale of GDL programs and the requirements. Parental involvement is encouraged throughout the GDL process, and reports or debriefing to parents at the end of the course should include recommendations for areas in which teen drivers need improvement.

7. What are the effects of “time discounts” for participation in driver education?

With the advent of GDL programs in the 1990s, several jurisdictions began offering time discounts to drivers who completed a driver education course. A time discount enables teens enrolled in driver education to obtain their full license faster and typically reduce the length of participation in the GDL program. The use of these discounts is not recommended. Of concern the time discount reduces the length of the learner phase of GDL, which is considered the most important part of the GDL program. The use of time discounts has been shown to actually compromise the safety benefits of GDL and teen drivers who receive a time discount have higher crash rates than those that do not.



8. Have there been recent improvements to driver education programs?

Yes. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) funded a series of projects designed to improve the quality, consistency and delivery of driver education programs in the U.S., and to create appropriate tools to inform and guide state initiatives to strengthen state driver education programs. A broad cross-section of experts representing different disciplines was engaged in this initiative to provide jurisdictions with the most current research and practice regarding this road safety issue.

In addition, NHTSA supported the formation of the Association of National Stakeholders in Traffic Safety Education (ANSTSE) in 2010. With their support, the Association developed National Teen Driver Education and Training Administrative Standards (NTDETAS), which combine the outputs from the various projects to create a comprehensive resource for jurisdictions. The NTDETAS were initially published in 2009, and a revised version was published in 2017. The Standards are available at www.anstse.info.

9. Are there any new developments in driver education?

Yes. The administration, content, and delivery of driver education continue to evolve, especially since the formation of ANSTSE and the development of NTDETAS. Multi-staged driver education, first proposed by NHTSA in 1994, is also still being considered.

The new GDL Framework similarly recommends jurisdictions regulate driver education to meet driver education standards (NTDETAS) using a multi-phased approach. Phase 1 of driver education includes theoretical instruction that teaches basic vehicle handling skills and rules of the road to learners as well as in-vehicle training. Phase 2 consists of advanced instruction regulated by jurisdictions to teach safe driving practices including perceptual and decision-making skills (e.g., hazard perception training, training for driving in high-risk situations such as highway driving). Phase 2 driver education should be delivered just prior to the on-road test, or alternatively, or in addition, in the first few months after the road test when teens are driving independently for the first time and experiencing their highest crash risk.



Traffic Injury Research Foundation

The mission of the Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF) is to reduce traffic-related deaths and injuries. TIRF is a national, independent, charitable road safety institute. Since its inception in 1964, TIRF has become internationally recognized for its accomplishments in a wide range of subject areas related to identifying the causes of road crashes and developing programs and policies to address them effectively.

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