

Q. Texting is a very popular activity for teens. Is it legal to text and drive in Pennsylvania?

A. No, it is illegal for ANY driver to text and drive in Pennsylvania. Drivers of all ages are prohibited from using their phones or any similar devices for the purposes of reading, writing or sending a text message while driving a motor vehicle. This includes all “apps” on a phone (email, games, social media, etc.), except for selecting or entering a phone number. Because texting while driving is considered a primary offense, a police officer can pull a driver over if the officer sees a driver texting.

Q. Can a teen be pulled over for not wearing a seatbelt?

A. If the driver is a teen under the age of 18, it is now a primary offense if any person in the car under the age of 18 is not properly fastened into the vehicle (either by seat belt or appropriate car seat for children). This means a police officer may stop the vehicle and issue a citation merely for the seat belt infraction.



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QUESTIONS and ANSWERS



**for Teen Drivers
in Pennsylvania**

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR TEEN DRIVERS IN PENNSYLVANIA

Teen drivers have fatal crashes at four times the rate of adult drivers, merely because of their age and inexperience. Laws regarding teen drivers in Pennsylvania are designed to increase driver training, reduce distractions, require teen drivers and underage passengers to buckle up, and prohibit texting while driving.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), fatalities in crashes that involved a 16- or 17-year-old driver have increased dramatically in recent years. In addition, more than half of teen driver and passenger deaths are the direct result of the failure to use seat belts.

Here are some questions and answers about teen driving laws in Pennsylvania.

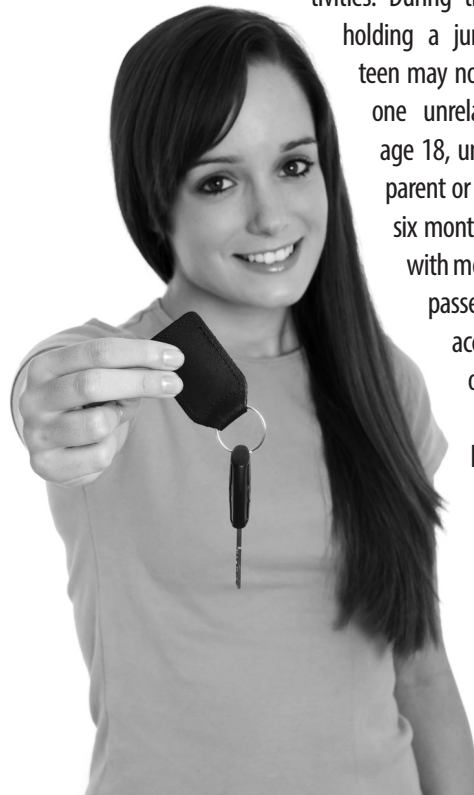


Q. What are the steps in Pennsylvania's three-stage licensing process for teen drivers?

A. STAGE 1: At age 16, teens may apply for a learner's permit. They will need to visit a state Driver's License Center with their Social Security card, a completed medical clearance form, and a parent or guardian. After passing the vision and written exams, the teen will be issued a learner's permit.

With a learner's permit, teens may only drive with a licensed driver who is at least 21 years old (or a licensed spouse or guardian who is at least 18 years old) sitting in the front seat. Between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m., the teen must be supervised by a licensed parent, guardian, or spouse. Teens are required to practice driving for at least 65 hours, including 10 hours at night and 5 hours during inclement weather, with a parent or a legal guardian before they're allowed to test for a junior license. Learner's permits are valid for one year.

STAGE 2: At age 16 and 6 months, a teen may obtain a junior license after having a learner's permit for at least 6 months. The teen must make a road test appointment (done online at www.dmv.state.pa.us or by calling 1-800-423-5542).



With a junior license, teens may drive unsupervised between 5 a.m. and 11 p.m. Outside of these hours, teens may drive only if accompanied by a parent, guardian or spouse, with certain exceptions for work, charity and volunteer activities. During the first six months of holding a junior driver's license, a teen may not drive with more than one unrelated passenger under age 18, unless accompanied by a parent or guardian. After the first six months, teens may not drive with more than three unrelated passengers under 18, unless accompanied by a parent or guardian.

If the junior driver has been involved in a reportable accident for which the junior driver is partially or fully responsible in PennDOT's opinion, the one-person passenger limit will apply until age 18.

STAGE 3: At age 17 and 6 months, teens are eligible for a full unrestricted license if they have held a junior license for 12 months, remained crash- and conviction-free, and have taken a certified driver education course. Without driver education, teens can get an unrestricted license at age 18. The state does not place night or passenger limits on those with unrestricted licenses.

Q. Does the passenger restriction for a junior license apply to family members?

A. No. There is no restriction on having a brother, sister, stepbrother, stepsister or adopted or foster children living in the same household as the junior driver present in the vehicle when the junior license holder is driving. Also, the restriction does not apply if the junior driver has a parent or legal guardian in the vehicle. In any case, there cannot be more people in the vehicle than there are seat belts.

Q. What constitutes a reportable crash?

A. A reportable crash is one in which an injury or a fatality occurs or at least one of the vehicles involved requires towing from the scene.