

What Parents Need to Know About Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL)

The Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) is a three-stage licensing systems that includes a learner or supervised practice driving phase, an intermediate stage that allows for unsupervised driving but includes restrictions that address risk, and a full licensure stage where all provisions are lifted.

Virginia's GDL laws are not meant to penalize teen drivers, but to help them stay safe while they gain valuable driving experience.

Studies have found that the following restrictions work to reduce the number of car crashes among young drivers:

Curfew Restrictions

If you are under age 18, Virginia law prohibits you from driving midnight to 4 A.M. except when driving:

- to or from a place of business where you are employed;
 - to or from an activity that is supervised by an adult and is sponsored by a school or by a civic, religious, or public organization;
 - with a licensed spouse age 18 or older, parent or other adult acting in loco parentis who is occupying the front passenger seat,
 - in case of an emergency, including responding to emergency calls as a volunteer firefighter or rescue squad personnel.
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Restrictions on the Number of Passengers

If you are under age 18, you may carry only one passenger under age 21, unless accompanied by a licensed parent, or other adult acting in place of a parent, in the front passenger seat. However, after you have held your license for one year, you may carry up to three passengers under age 21 in the following situations:

- Travel to and from a school-sponsored activity;
- A licensed driver 21 or older is in the front passenger seat; or
- In case of an emergency.

Learner's permit holders may not carry more than one passenger under age 18. (Passenger restrictions do not apply to family members)

Cellular Telephone/Wireless Telecommunications Device Restrictions

Virginia's cellular telephone law prohibits the use of cell phones while driving, regardless of whether such device is or is not hand-held.

You can **only** use a cell phone or any other telecommunications device for a driver emergency and the vehicle must be lawfully parked or stopped.

Seat Belt Use

Virginia's seat belt law requires anyone younger than 18 years of age who is occupying the front and/or rear seats of a vehicle to use safety belts. A driver transporting anyone younger than 18 must ensure that those passengers are properly restrained regardless of where they are seated.