

North Carolina Driver's Handbook

A Step-by-Step Guide to
Getting Your License



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Part 1: Getting your Learner's Permit & License

Getting Your Learner's Permit

- Before You Go to the NCDMV
- Your Visit to the NCDMV
- Getting Your Learner's Permit

Getting Your Driver's License

- Preparing for Your Driving Skills Test
- Taking the Driving Skills Test

Getting Your Learner's Permit

Plan Your Visit to the Driver License Office

1 Make an appointment online

Appointments can help you avoid long waits, but they are not mandatory. Make an appointment online at <https://skiptheline.ncdot.gov/>.



2 Request an interpreter

If you need an interpreter, schedule an appointment with the NCDMV.

- The interpreter can translate what is happening during your visit, but they cannot translate the tests themselves.
- Call 919-715-7000 Monday through Friday, 8am to 5pm.



3 Walk-in

No appointment? No problem. You can still visit the NCDMV during business hours.

- Be prepared to wait. Interpreters may not be available for walk-ins.
- Remember to check in as soon as you get to the Driver License Office.



Bring a Friend!

Having a friend or family member for support can be helpful, but they cannot translate tests for you.



Office hours and rules can change. Visit the North Carolina Division of Motor Vehicles (NCDMV) website for details:

www.ncdot.gov

Getting Your Learner's Permit

Plan Your Visit to the Driver License Office

Getting a learner's permit involves a few steps to prepare yourself for your visit to the Driver License Office.

1 Gather the Required Documents

You'll need to bring documentation to prove several things.

Documents Checklist:

- Proof of your full name and date of birth
- Proof of your North Carolina residence address
- Proof of your Social Security Number or documentation of your legal presence in the U.S.
- Proof of vehicle liability insurance from a North Carolina-licensed insurance company



Fees are listed on the NCDMV website.
www.ncdot.gov

Out-of-State Transfers



Moving Within NC



DMV Office Information

If you have a driver's license from another state, you have 60 days to transfer it to a North Carolina license. You can find more information about this process on the NCDMV website.

If you move after getting your learner's permit or driver's license, you must update your address with the NCDMV. You can do this online at <https://www.ncdot.gov/dmv/license-id/renewal-replacement> or in person at a Driver License Office.

Check the official NCDMV website at <https://www.ncdot.gov/dmv/offices-services/online/Pages/default.aspx> for current office hours, appointment scheduling, and a complete list of required documents.

Getting Your Learner's Permit

Plan Your Visit to the Driver License Office



To get your learner's permit, you need to pass three tests.
To get your driver's license, you will also need to pass a driving skills test.



Vision Test

- An NCDMV examiner will assess your vision to make sure it meets the minimum standards for safe driving.
- Wear your eyeglasses or contacts if you normally use them.
- If you need corrective lenses to see well, you must wear them every time you drive.



Knowledge Test (learner's permit)

- Written test with multiple-choice questions about traffic laws and safe driving practices.
- The test is based on the information in the North Carolina Driver Handbook.
- This test is available in English, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, German, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Vietnamese, and Spanish.
- If you need additional assistance, you can request an audio test in English.



To pass: Answer 20 out of 25 correctly



Traffic Sign Test

- The NCDMV examiner will show you 12 different traffic signs.
- The signs will be presented based on their color, shape, symbol, or message.



To pass: Identify 9 out of 12 signs correctly



Driving Skills Test (for driver's license only)

- This test is required to obtain a driver's license, but not a learner's permit.
- During the driving skills test, an NCDMV examiner will ride in your car and evaluate your ability to handle various driving situations safely.
- The examiner will give you instructions in English, and you will need to follow them carefully.

Getting Your Learner's Permit

Rules for Practice Driving



Congratulations on passing the written knowledge test! Now you have a learner's permit, which allows you to practice driving under certain restrictions.

Learner's permit restrictions

- Always have a licensed driver over 18 in the passenger seat.
- Obey all traffic laws and speed limits.

DRIVER LICENSE

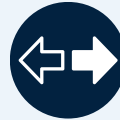


Tips for driving with your learner's permit



Review the North Carolina Driver Handbook

Focus on sections about safe driving practices and rules of the road.



Use Your Turn Signals Properly

Signal your intentions well before turning or changing lanes.



Practice with a Licensed Driver

Continue to improve driving skills, especially in areas of less confidence.



Check Your Mirrors Frequently

Monitor the areas behind and beside your vehicle continuously.



Pay Attention to Your Surroundings

Be vigilant about other vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, and potential hazards like traffic signals.



Maintain a Safe Following Distance

Keep enough space between your car and the one ahead to react safely to sudden stops.



Shoulder Check Before Turning

Make sure no vehicles are in your blind spot before turning.



Come to Your Test Feeling Relaxed and Prepared

Stay calm and composed to help perform your best during the test.

Preparing for Your Driving Skills Test

Tips for Safe Driving

To get your driver's license in North Carolina, you will need to pass the driving skills test. The driving skills test is your chance to demonstrate your ability to handle a vehicle safely on the road. Here are some things to practice to help you prepare.

Vehicle Control

- Approaching intersections, stop signs, and traffic signals
- Stopping quickly and safely
- Reversing and backing up
- Safely stopping, starting, and parking
- Using the clutch (*if applicable*)

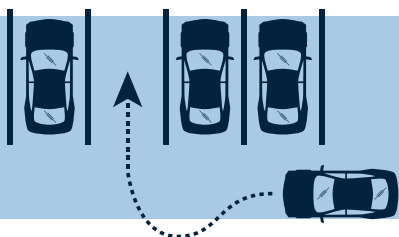


Road Awareness

- Checking your mirrors regularly
- Driving in different traffic lanes (changing lanes)
- Following and passing other vehicles safely
- Yielding the right of way to pedestrians and other vehicles

Driver Control and Comfort

- Maintaining proper posture while driving



Maneuvering

- Making turns correctly
- Performing a three-point turn



Signaling and Communication

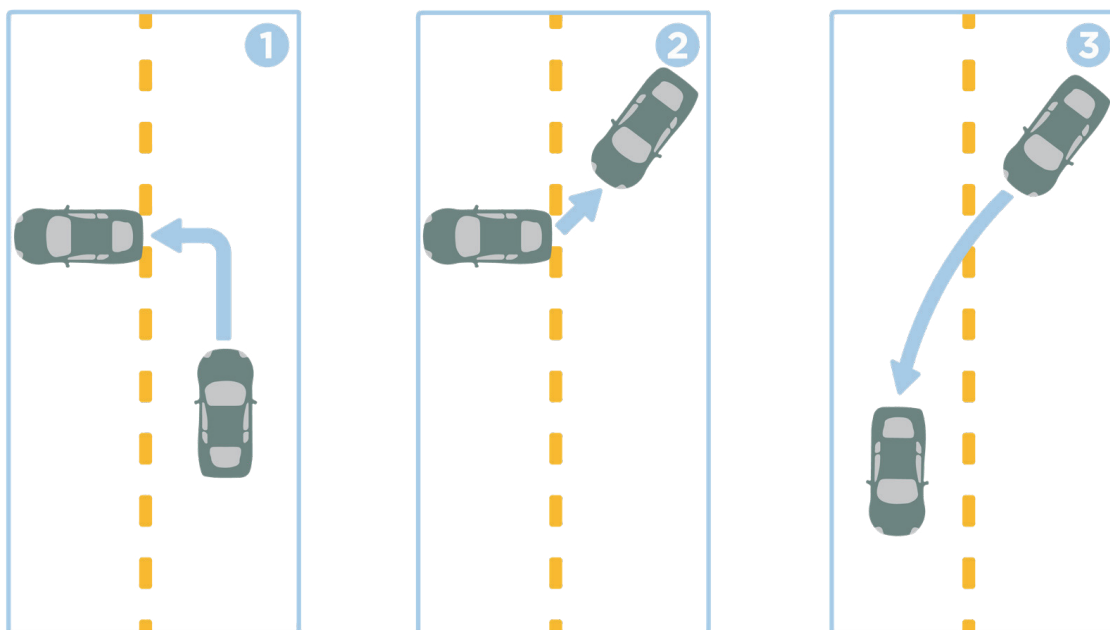
- Using turn signals
- Using hazard lights and horn properly

Preparing for your Driving Skills Test

Tips for Safe Driving

To perform a three-point turn

1. Start from the far-right side of the road.
2. Check for other traffic and make sure it's clear to proceed.
3. Signal left and slowly move forward while turning the steering wheel to the left. Your goal is to position your vehicle close to the left curb or edge of the street.
4. Stop completely.
5. Slowly back up while turning the steering wheel to the right.
6. Turn until your vehicle is almost facing the opposite direction and close to the right curb or edge of the street.
7. Stop completely again.
8. Move forward slowly while turning the steering wheel to the left.
9. Straighten out your vehicle until you are back in the correct lane of traffic.



Taking Your Driving Skills Test

Passing the Test and Becoming Licensed

The driving skills test is the final step towards obtaining your North Carolina driver's license.

Here's what to expect:

- Make an appointment at the NCDMV (see pages 5 & 6)
- The NCDMV examiner will give you instructions. Follow these instructions carefully and precisely.
- The test will cover a variety of driving maneuvers. This may include starting from a curb, stopping at stop signs and traffic signals, turning corners, reversing, and navigating different traffic situations.
- The examiner will be assessing your overall driving skills. This includes your ability to control the vehicle, make safe decisions, and follow the rules of the road.



Tips for success

Practice, practice, practice

The more comfortable you are behind the wheel, the better your chances of success.

Be courteous and professional

A positive attitude can go a long way. Don't be afraid to ask questions if you're unsure about something. It's better to clarify instructions than make a mistake.

Arrive at your test on time

This shows respect for the examiner's time and demonstrates your responsibility.

Stay calm and focused

Take your time, don't rush, and trust your driving skills.

Once you pass the driving skills test, you'll be issued your official North Carolina driver's license. ***Congratulations!*** Now you have the freedom and responsibility to drive safely and legally on the road.

Part 2:

Driving Rules in North Carolina

Learning the Road

Understanding the Road

- Traffic Signs
- Pavement Lines
- Intersections & Highways

Signals & Lights

- Turn Signals & Headlights
- Traffic Signals
- Horn & Hazard Lights

Rules of the Road

- General Safe Driving
- Safe Maneuvers

Additional Resources

Driving Violations

Interacting with Police

Taking Care of Your Vehicle

Safe Driving

Driver Safety

- Drowsy Driving
- Distracted Driving

Seat Belts & Child Seats

Handling Different Conditions

- Bad Weather
- Night Driving
- Handling Emergencies
- Crashes

Sharing the Road

- Motorized Vehicles
- Non-motorized Vehicles & Pedestrians
- Other Considerations



Understanding the Road

Traffic Signs

Road signs are your guide to safe driving. Here's a breakdown of the different types to help you understand what they mean.

Stop, Yield, and Obey the Rules

Regulatory Signs (usually black and white rectangles): These tell you the law, like speed limits and turning rules. Important ones like STOP, YIELD, and DO NOT ENTER are red.

<p>Stop Sign Make a complete stop, look both ways, and yield to pedestrians and other vehicles.</p>	
<p>Yield Sign Slow down or stop to let other vehicles go first, especially at intersections.</p>	
<p>Wrong Way / Do Not Enter You're going the wrong direction! Turn around immediately.</p>	
<p>Speed Limit The maximum speed you can go. Some signs have minimum speed limits too.</p>	
<p>No Turn These tell you which turns you cannot make (left, right, or U-turn).</p>	
<p>No Passing Zone Don't change lanes or pass other cars in this zone</p>	
<p>Lane Drop The lane you're in ends soon. Change lanes or let others merge in.</p>	

Understanding the Road

Traffic Signs

Parking Regulations

Parking Signs

Indicate where parking is allowed, like handicap parking or no parking bus stops.



No Parking

These tell you where parking is not allowed.



Lane Regulations

One Way

Traffic only flows in one direction. Follow the arrow.



Keep Left / Right

The road will shift in that direction ahead. Stay in the correct lane.



Safety Signs

School Zone

Slow down and watch for children. Be prepared to stop for crossing pedestrians.



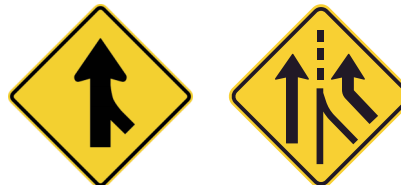
Railroad Crossing

Stop if you see or hear a train. Never drive around lowered gates.



Merging Traffic

Be prepared to slow down, speed up, or change lanes to allow traffic merging into yours.



Understanding the Road

Traffic Signs

Be alert for potential dangers. Warning signs (usually yellow diamonds) warn you of upcoming hazards so that you can slow down, be prepared to stop, and proceed with caution.

Warning Signs

<p>Stop Ahead, Signal Ahead, Yield Ahead</p> <p>Prepare to stop or slow down.</p>	 Stop Ahead  Signal Ahead  Yield Ahead
<p>Divided Highway Ends / Begins</p> <p>Two-way traffic is ahead.</p>	 Divided Highway Begins  Divided Highway Ends  Two-Way Traffic
<p>Cross Road, Side Road</p> <p>Be ready to slow down and look out for oncoming traffic.</p>	 Cross Road  Side Road
<p>Traffic Circle</p> <p>Slow down and yield to traffic already in the circle. Follow it to the right until your exit.</p>	
<p>Road Closed</p> <p>Find another way!</p>	 
<p>Hills, Curves, Winding Roads</p> <p>Slow down before entering these.</p>	 Hill  Winding Road  Falling rocks
<p>Deer Crossing, Cattle Crossing, Farm Machinery</p> <p>Watch out for animals or slow-moving vehicles.</p>	 Deer Crossing  Cattle Crossing  Farm Machinery  Horse Crossing



Understanding the Road

Traffic Signs

Warning Signs

<p>School Crossing Stop for pedestrians in the crosswalk.</p>	
<p>Low Clearance Don't enter if your vehicle is too tall.</p>	
<p>Slippery When Wet Slow down, avoid sudden braking or turns, and increase following distance.</p>	
<p>Bumps, Dips, Road Narrows Slow down for uneven road surfaces and narrower lanes.</p>	
<p>Pavement Ends, Loose Gravel Be careful and slow down on these surfaces.</p>	


Construction

<p>Detour Follow the signs for a rerouted road.</p>	
<p>Work Zone Slow down, there may be workers on the road or shoulder. Obey flagger instructions and turn on headlights.</p>	



Understanding the Road

Traffic Signs

Information

<p>Advisory Speed</p> <p>This is the recommended safe speed for current conditions.</p>	
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Finding Your Way

<p>Guide Signs <i>(usually green, blue, or brown)</i></p> <p>These help you navigate by showing directions, routes, distances, and services.</p>	
<p>Highway Guide Signs <i>(green with white letters)</i></p> <p>Tell you about upcoming exits, roads, places, and gas stations.</p>	
<p>Mile Markers <i>(green posts)</i></p> <p>Mark every mile on the highway, starting from the state border.</p>	

Importance of following road signs

- Following road traffic signs helps prevent accidents by providing clear instructions and warnings to drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists, reducing the risk of collisions and ensuring the safe flow of traffic.
- Adhering to road traffic signs is a legal requirement. Ignoring them can result in fines, penalties, and legal consequences, as well as potential increases in insurance premiums.

Understanding the Road

Pavement Lines

Lines on the Road: Your Guide to Staying in Your Lane

The lines painted on the road help keep traffic flowing safely. Here's what the different colored lines mean:

Yellow Lines: Separating Opposing Traffic

- **Single yellow line (broken):** You can cross this line to pass a car in front of you, but be careful! Make sure there's no oncoming traffic before switching lanes.
- **Double yellow line (solid):** This is a no-passing zone! Don't cross this line to pass other vehicles.
- **Solid yellow line with a broken yellow line (mixed):** You can only pass when the broken line is next to your lane. Don't pass if the solid yellow line is next to you.



SINGLE YELLOW LINE (BROKEN)



DOUBLE YELLOW LINE (SOLID)



SOLID YELLOW LINE WITH A
BROKEN YELLOW LINE (MIXED)

White Lines: Staying in Your Lane

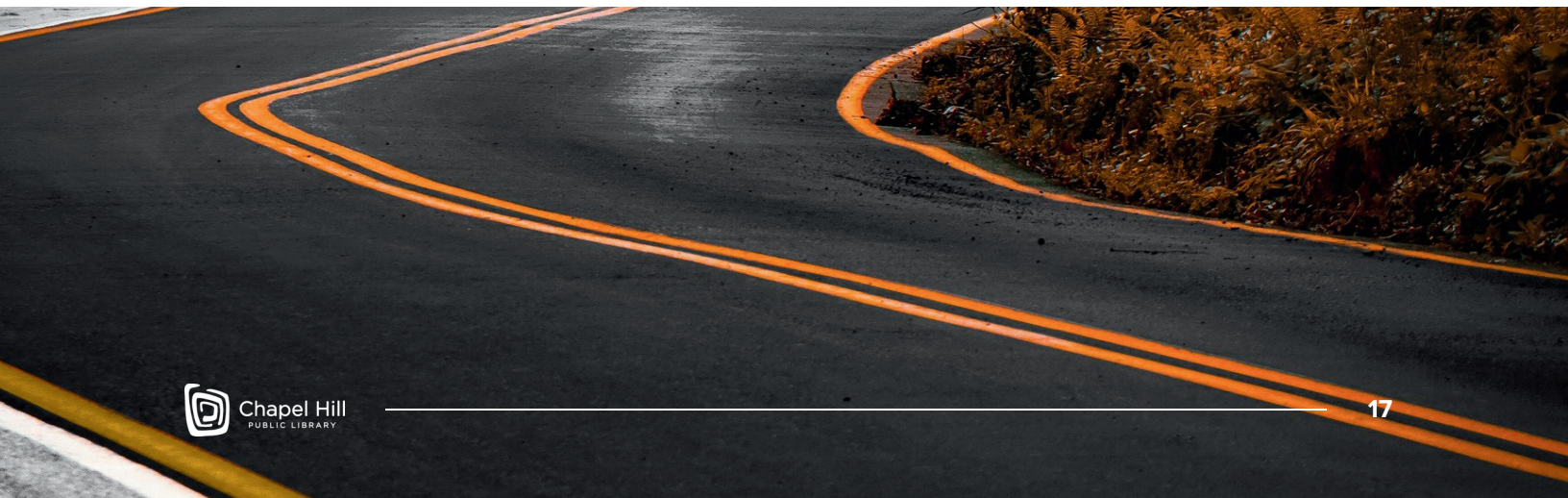
- **Solid white lines:** These lines mark the edge of the road. Don't cross them! They are there to keep traffic separated.
- **Broken white lines:** These lines separate lanes going in the same direction. You can change lanes across these lines, but always check your mirrors and blind spots first to make sure it's safe.



SOLID WHITE LINES



BROKEN WHITE LINES



Understanding the Road

Intersections and Highways

What is an Intersection?

An intersection is where two or more roads meet or cross. It's important to be careful at intersections because they can be dangerous. More than one-third of fatal car crashes happen at intersections. Slow down and pay attention to road signs and traffic signals near intersections. Remember to follow the right-of-way rule at intersections.

Here are some different types of intersections you'll encounter:

1 Stop Sign

- When you see a stop sign, come to a complete stop.
- Yield to traffic on the through-street.
- Only move forward or turn when it is safe.

2 No Stop Sign or Signal

- If there is no stop sign or signal at an intersection, yield to vehicles that are already moving through the intersection.
- If two vehicles arrive at the intersection at the same time, the one to the right can go first.

3 Four-Way Stop Sign

- At a four-way stop sign, all vehicles must come to a complete stop.
- The first vehicle to arrive at the stop sign may go first.
- If two vehicles arrive at the intersection at the same time, the one to the right has the right-of-way.

4 Roundabouts

- Roundabouts, also known as traffic circles, require a different approach.
- When approaching a roundabout, slow down and yield to the traffic already in the roundabout. Give large trucks and buses extra room, as they may drive across lanes.
- Follow the circle to the right until you reach the road you want to exit on.
- If there is an emergency vehicle with flashing lights in the roundabout, do not enter.

Interstate Highways

Interstate highways are different from regular roads. Here are some things to know about navigating the interstate:

- They have multiple lanes of traffic, separate lanes for vehicles traveling in opposite directions, and no railroad crossings, sharp curves, stop signs, or traffic signals.
- They also have higher speed limits. When driving on an interstate highway, it's important to plan your trip in advance.

Understanding the Road

Intersections and Highways

How to Drive on the Interstate:

- To enter the interstate, stay in the right lane and accelerate until you are moving at the same speed as other traffic.
- Signal and merge safely.
- Remember not to tailgate and follow the “two-second” rule.
- Obey the speed limit and drive in the right lane unless you are passing another vehicle.
- If you miss your exit, continue to the next one and never back up or turn around on an interstate highway.
- If you need to stop, do not stop in a travel lane. Move to the shoulder.
- Make sure to stop and rest every 100 miles.

Signals and Lights

Turn Signals and Headlights

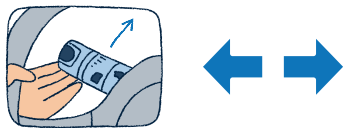
Hand Signals and Turn Signals

Driving is a conversation! You need to tell other drivers what you're going to do. Here's how to use signals, lights, and your horn to stay safe:

Signal

When to Use

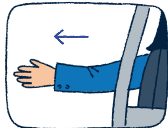
Turn Signals



- Every time you turn or change lanes. The sooner you signal, the better.
- At least 100-200 feet before turning or stopping.

Hand Signals

Left Turn



Right Turn



Stopping



- Only if your turn signals aren't working.
- Before turning left.
- Before turning right.
- Before slowing down or coming to a complete stop.

Lights

When to Use

Headlights



- At night.
- During rain, fog, or low visibility conditions.

Low Beams



- For city driving and rain.

High Beams



- For open roads with no oncoming traffic.
- Turn off when you see headlights approaching.

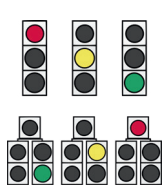

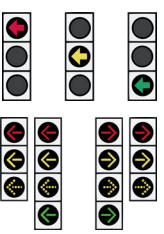
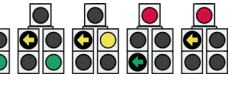
Taillights and Brake Lights

- They should be on whenever your headlights are on.
- Tap your brakes to light them up before slowing down to signal to drivers behind you.

Signals and Lights

Traffic Signals

Traffic signals are like colored instructions that help keep traffic flowing smoothly and safely at intersections. Here's a breakdown of the different light colors and what they mean for drivers:

Category	What It Means	Traffic Light
<p>Basic Traffic Lights</p> 	<p>These are the usual lights you see at intersections to control traffic flow.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Light: Go straight through the intersection if it's safe. • Yellow Light: Slow down and prepare to stop safely at the red light coming up. • Red Light: Stop completely before the intersection line.
<p>Turning Right on Red</p> 	<p>In most cases, you can turn right on red after coming to a complete stop as long as there's no sign saying "NO TURN ON RED" and you yield to any pedestrians crossing the street.</p>	<p>Turning right on red (unless prohibited)</p>
<p>Turning Arrows</p> 	<p>These special arrows tell you when it's safe to turn left or right.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Arrow: Your turn lane has the right of way to turn in that direction. • Yellow Arrow: The green arrow for your lane is about to turn red. Stop safely if possible, or finish your turn if you're already in the intersection. • Red Arrow: Turning traffic must stop and wait for a green arrow before proceeding.
<p>Mixed Signals (Arrows & Circles)</p> 	<p>If there are both arrow signals and circle signals, follow the arrow signals for turning lanes and the circle signals for going straight.</p>	<p>Both arrows and circles</p>
<p>Flashing Lights</p>	<p>These lights require extra caution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flashing Red Light: Treat it like a stop sign. Come to a complete stop and then proceed with caution when it's safe. • Flashing Yellow Light: Slow down and use extra care as you approach the intersection.
<p>Special Pedestrian Beacons</p>	<p>These yellow lights are activated by pedestrians or emergency vehicles.</p>	<p>Hybrid Beacons: If the beacon turns yellow or red, slow down and stop completely until pedestrians or emergency vehicles have crossed safely.</p>

Signals and Lights

Horn and Hazard Lights

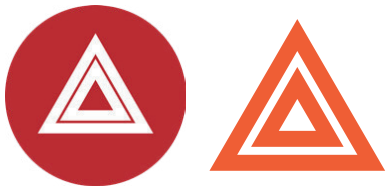
Hazard Lights

Emergency Flashers

Make all four turn signals flash at once by pressing this button.

Use them when your car is stopped and could be a danger:

- Parked on or next to the highway.
- Broken down in traffic.
- At an accident scene.



HAZARD LIGHTS BUTTON



Horn

Use your horn to warn others of danger:

- To prevent an accident.
- To alert pedestrians crossing the road unsafely.
- If another car is driving in the wrong lane.



Remember:

Be clear and polite with your signals, lights, and horn to keep the road safe for everyone.

Rules of the Road

Right-of-way, Speed Limits, Passing and Lane Changing

General Safe Driving

This table is a helpful guide for new drivers on the rules of the road. It explains the meaning of common traffic signs and provides safe driving tips to follow.

Topic

Safe Driving Tips

Maintain a Safe Speed



- Generally, the speed limit is 55 miles per hour (mph) on roads outside of cities and towns unless otherwise posted.
 - In cities and towns, the default speed limit is typically 35 mph unless otherwise posted.
 - Don't go faster than the speed limit. It's harder to control your car and stop safely if you're speeding.
 - Try to stay close to the speed limit, but not too slow either. Slowing down too much can hold up traffic.
 - When it's raining, snowing, or foggy, slow down even more to give yourself more time to react to things on the road.
-

Leave Enough Space



- Give yourself plenty of space between you and the car in front of you.
 - The faster you go, the more space you need to stop safely.
 - A good rule of thumb is the two-second rule: watch that car pass a fixed object (like a sign) and count two seconds before your car reaches the same spot.
 - Never pass on the shoulder or the median of the road.
-

Be Predictable

- Always turn on your blinker (turn signal) before you turn.
 - Slow down before you make a turn.
 - Be extra careful of motorcycles, bikes, and people walking when you're turning - they can be hard to see.
-

Yielding the Right-of-way



- Always stop and let people walking (pedestrians) cross the street in front of you.
- Yield at a yield sign by slowing down or stopping to let someone else go if they got there first.
- Let cars already on the highway go before you enter.
- The same goes for roundabouts—wait for any cars already in the circle to pass before you enter.



Rules of the Road

Right-of-way, Speed Limits, Passing and Lane Changing

Safe Maneuvers



Curves

- Slow down a bit before you enter a curve.
 - Don't slam on your brakes, but ease off the gas pedal instead.
 - Stay in your lane and hug the right side of the road as much as possible.
 - As you straighten out of the curve, you can slowly pick up speed again.
-

Changing Lanes

- Before changing lanes, take a quick look in your rear view mirror and side mirror.
 - Then, turn your head and look over your shoulder to check your blind spot (the area you can't see in your mirrors).
 - If the coast is clear, turn on your blinker and then smoothly change lanes.
-

Passing

- Before passing another car, look in your mirrors and blind spots to make sure it's clear.
- Use your turn signal and only pass when there's enough space in the other lane.
- When you pass, give the other car plenty of space.
- Once you're safely passed, check your mirror again before turning off your blinker and merging back into your lane.
- Never pass in areas where it's not allowed, like on the median, shoulder, or with a double yellow line, or in an intersection.
- Don't speed up to pass someone who's trying to pass you—let them pass safely.

Rules of the Road

Right-of-way, Speed Limits, Passing and Lane Changing

Backing Out

- Before backing out, check behind your car for any people or objects in the way.
- Adjust your seat and mirrors so you can see all around you.
- Use your mirrors and backup camera if you have one, but also turn around and look over your shoulders to check your blind spots.
- Slowly back out when it's safe.

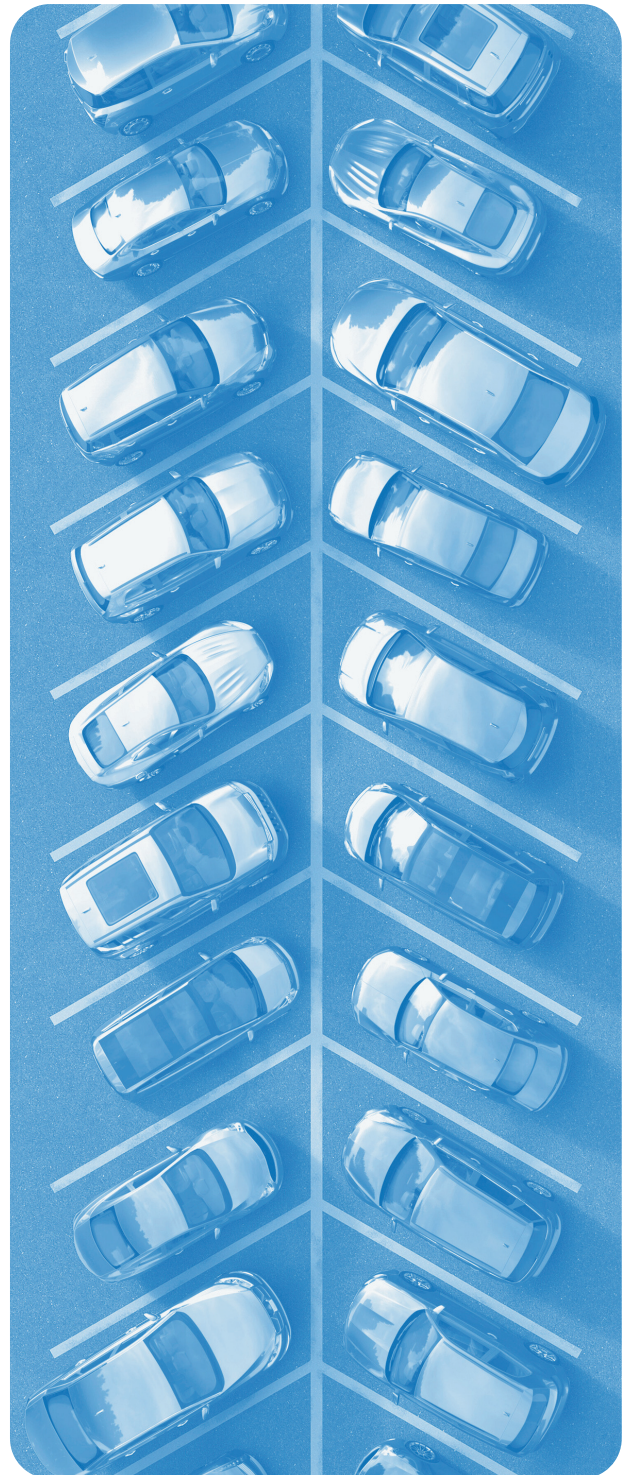
Parking

- Only park in spots that are marked for parking.
- Generally, avoid parking on the left side of the road unless it's a one-way street.
- Don't park in places like intersections, driveways, crosswalks, sidewalks, or bridges.
- Don't park right next to another car (double parking).
- Don't park in handicapped spots unless you have a permit.
- Don't park anywhere with a "No Parking" sign.



Tip

- Trucks have significant blind spots in front, back, and on both sides. These blind spots are called NO-ZONES.
- Avoid driving in the NO-ZONE of a truck, as the truck driver will not be able to see you.
- If you cannot see the truck driver in their side-view mirror, they cannot see you.



Driver Safety

Safe Driving Habits and Defensive Techniques

Being in good physical and mental shape is important for driving safely. It's crucial to stay alert and focused while driving. If you're not feeling well, you might not be as attentive or quick to react.

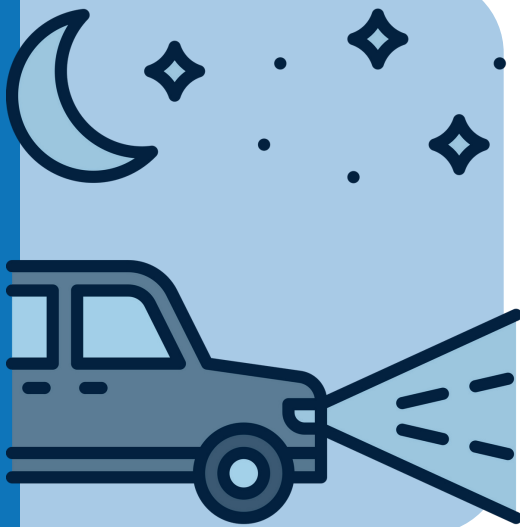


Drowsy Driving

Many people get drowsy, or sleepy, while driving. Drowsiness can be dangerous while driving, especially if you are alone. Pay attention to how you are feeling.

Here are some warning signs of drowsiness:

- Difficulty remembering the last few miles driven.
- Hitting a rumble strip or drifting out of your lane.
- Frequent yawning or struggling to keep your eyes open.
- Trouble focusing or staying alert.



Tip

To avoid drowsy driving accidents:

- Get a good night's sleep before going on a long trip.
- Take breaks every two hours during long drives.
- Stretch your legs and walk around.
- If you feel tired, stop and take a short nap for 15-45 minutes.
- Consuming caffeine can provide temporary relief.
- Avoid driving more than 300-400 miles per day.
- Refrain from taking medications that induce drowsiness.



Driver Safety

Safe Driving Habits and Defensive Techniques

Distracted Driving

Anything that takes your focus away from driving is a distraction. Some common distractions are:

- Talking to people in the car.
- Eating, drinking, or smoking while driving.
- Texting or using your phone.
- Adjusting the radio or music.

Being distracted while driving can cause accidents and put you, your passengers, and others at risk. It's important to stay focused and avoid distractions. Some distractions are against the law.

- It is illegal to text or email on your phone while driving.
- Avoid talking on the phone while driving unless necessary.
- Let them go to voicemail.
- It is illegal for drivers under 18 to use a phone while driving, except to call 911 in an emergency.
- It is illegal for school bus drivers to use phones while driving.



Practicing safe driving etiquette keeps you and others safe.

Seat Belts & Child Seats

Seat Belt Laws and Child Safety Rules

Buckle Up Everyone—It's the Law in North Carolina!

Everyone in your car needs to be buckled up for safety, no matter their age.

Adults: Wear both the lap belt (goes low across your hips) and shoulder belt (across your chest, not your neck). Make sure your seat is pushed back as far as possible.

Children under 8 years old and under 80 pounds: They need a properly fitted child safety car seat.

Kids aged 8 to 12: Everyone buckles up in the back seat, the safest spot for them.

Important! Never put babies or young children in the front seat with an airbag. An airbag opening during a crash can seriously hurt them.

Here are some other safety reminders:

Riding in truck beds:

Kids under 16 can only ride in the back of a pickup truck if:

- They're wearing a seatbelt.
- An adult is sitting next to them.
- It's an emergency.
- The truck is being used for farm work.

Never leave kids or pets alone in a car: It's dangerous, even for a short time. They could overheat or get sick from carbon monoxide fumes.

Handling Different Conditions

Driving in Rain, Snow, Fog, and at Night



Bad Weather

Rain: Slow down by at least 5-10 mph when it starts raining. Turn on your headlights and wipers. Avoid deep puddles and don't use cruise control.

Fog: Slow down and use low beam headlights. Look carefully for cars and other obstacles.

Snow and Ice: Go slow, use low beams and wipers, and increase following distance. Brake gently to avoid skidding.

Poor Visibility: Pull over as far as possible, turn on hazard lights, and wait safely away from traffic.



Night Driving

Headlights: Use them from sunset to sunrise and in low visibility. Use low beams in town and high beams on open roads without oncoming traffic.

Night Dangers: Reduced visibility, tired drivers, drunk drivers, and blinding headlights.

Night Driving Tips:

- Briefly flash your high beams if oncoming traffic doesn't dim theirs.
- Use low beams, slow down, stay right and use the edge of the road as a guide.
- Avoid looking directly into oncoming headlights, and don't speed.
- Park on the road shoulder with emergency lights on if needed.



Remember:

Drive with caution in bad weather and at night. Be prepared for emergencies and know how to react to stay safe on the road.

Handling Different Conditions

Driving in Rain, Snow, Fog, and at Night



Handling Emergencies

Brake Failure: Shift to low gear, use the emergency brake, signal, and find a safe place to stop.

Stuck Gas Pedal: Tap the pedal, try to lift it with your foot, shift to neutral, brake firmly, and find a safe place to stop.

Tire Blowout: Hold the wheel tight, keep the car straight, slowly take your foot off the gas, then brake gently, use your signal, and find a safe place to pull over.

Car Breakdown: Pull onto the shoulder, turn off the engine, have passengers exit from the passenger side, stand away from traffic, and call for help if needed (use hazard lights and a white cloth on the door handle if dark).

Skidding/Hydroplaning:

- Let go of the gas pedal.
- Avoid slamming on the brakes.
- Don't turn the wheel sharply.
- Steer in the direction of the skid (if back skids right, turn right; if back skids left, turn left).



Crashes

If a Crash Seems Likely: Honk your horn, grip the wheel, steer right, avoid oncoming traffic, and if possible, drive off the road to a safe area.

If You're About to Be Hit: Grip the wheel, try to move away, brake if you can, and brace yourself depending on the direction of impact.

After a Crash: Stop, move your car to the shoulder if possible, call 911 for injuries or damage, exchange information with other drivers, and write down details if unable to communicate.

Sharing the Road

Driving with Pedestrians, Bicycles, and Motorcycles

This guide has tips to help everyone use the road safely and respectfully. Remember, we all want to reach our destinations in one piece! Below are some safe driving tips when encountering certain types of vehicles when out on the road.

Motorized Vehicles

School Buses



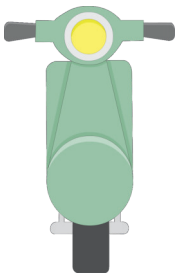
- Watch out for school bus stops!
 - Never pass a stopped bus with flashing red lights and its stop sign out.
 - All traffic must stop for stopped buses on two-lane roads and roads without a middle lane.
 - On a four-lane road with a middle lane, only traffic following the bus needs to stop.
-

Police Cars, Ambulances, Fire Trucks



- Move over for flashing lights and sirens.
 - Pull to the right curb and stop completely when you see or hear them coming.
 - Don't start driving again until they've passed you completely.
 - Give extra space to stopped emergency vehicles on highways, maybe even move to another lane.
-

Motorcycles & Scooters



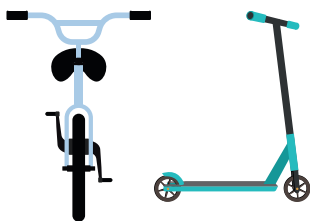
- They follow the same rules as cars.
- They ride in the middle of the lane and can be hard to see, so be super careful and check your mirrors before changing lanes.
- Everyone on a motorcycle needs a helmet.
- They might use hand signals to turn or slow down.
- When passing a motorcycle, make sure there's no oncoming traffic, use your turn signal, and move into another lane safely.

Sharing the Road

Driving with Pedestrians, Bicycles, and Motorcycles

Non-Motorized Vehicles

Bikes & Scooters



- Just like cars, bikes follow the road rules.
- They can ride in the middle of the lane too, so be careful and check your mirrors before changing lanes.
- Bikers use hand signals to turn or slow down.
- When passing a bike, make sure there's no oncoming traffic, use your turn signal, and move into another lane safely.
- Be patient and share the road with bikers.

Pedestrians

Walkers



- Let people crossing the street go first (yield).
- Stop your car and wait if they're already in the road.
- They should also follow traffic lights and use crosswalks.
- If someone steps out in front of you, tap your horn to warn them and slow down.
- Stop completely if they don't.

Sharing the Road

Driving with Pedestrians, Bicycles, and Motorcycles

Other Considerations

Tractors & Farm Equipment



- Share the road with farm equipment and be patient if you're stuck behind them.
 - They might use hand signals to turn or slow down.
 - When passing farm equipment, make sure there's no oncoming traffic, use your turn signal, and move into another lane safely.
 - Never pass farm equipment in a no-passing zone.
-

Funeral Processions



- You might see a line of cars with their headlights on. This is a funeral procession.
 - You can pull over to the side of the road to let them pass.
 - The first car can drive through a green light, and the rest of the procession can follow without stopping.
 - Don't cut them off or try to squeeze in between cars.
-

Big Rigs & Trucks



- Stay way back from big trucks and trailers!
- They need more space to stop and turn, so watch their turn signals carefully before passing.
- Big vehicles have big blind spots where they can't see you, so don't hang out right next to them.
- Tall trucks can make wind gusts when they pass, so hold onto your steering wheel tight.
- Big trucks take longer to stop than cars, so be extra careful when you're around them.
- They might lean a little in windy weather or on slippery roads.

Driving Violations

Common Driving Violations

Driving violations can happen when you break the rules of the road. Here's a breakdown of the consequences and key points to remember:

Consequences of Driving Violations



Fines and Court: You might have to pay a fee and go to court.

Points on License: Getting convicted can add points to your driving record.

License Suspension/Loss: Too many points can lead to license suspension or even loss.

Jail Time: Serious violations may result in jail time.

Alcohol, Drugs & Driving

Danger: Driving under the influence (DUI) is extremely dangerous and increases the risk of accidents and injuries.

Alcohol's Effects: Alcohol slows reaction time, impairs judgment, reduces coordination, and makes you drowsy.



North Carolina Laws:

- No alcohol allowed while driving, including beer.
- Open containers are prohibited in moving vehicles.
- Minimum age of 21 to purchase alcohol.
- Selling alcohol to anyone under 21 is illegal.

DUI Enforcement: Police can pull you over and ask for a breath or blood test. A blood alcohol level (BAC) of 0.08 or higher leads to license suspension and court. Refusing the test results in a license suspension for at least 30 days.

Penalties: First DUI conviction means license suspension for a year. Second offense could lead to jail time and license loss for four years.

Driver License Points



North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles (NCDMV): Tracks your driving violations and assigns points.

Impact of Points: Points can increase your car insurance costs.

- 7 points may require taking a driving class.
- 12 points can lead to license suspension.

Driving Violations

Common Driving Violations

Minor Violations

- Didn't leave enough space between you and the car in front (but it was safe).
- Didn't let a walker or biker go first when you should have.
- Forgot to stop at a stop sign or red light (and it was safe).
- No light on your bike at night (if required).
- Threw litter out of your car window.
- Forgot to buckle your child in properly (if required by law).
- Driving without a license (but you got it fixed right away).
- Didn't have car insurance (but you got it now).
- Didn't report a tiny bump (like a fender bender, no one hurt).

Moderate Violations

- Speeding (within a reasonable range, e.g., exceeding the limit by 10-15 mph).
- Illegal passing.
- Running a stop sign/red light (no accident).
- Aggressive driving.
- Following too closely (dangerous situation).
- Driving without a valid license or motorcycle endorsement (motorcycles only).

Serious Violations

- Driving under the influence (DUI).
- Refusing a blood/breath alcohol test (repeatedly).
- Reckless driving.
- Speeding excessively.
- Racing with another vehicle.
- Manslaughter/death by vehicle (related to DUI).
- Assault with a motor vehicle.
- Failing to stop and help after an accident.
- Speeding to avoid arrest (with endangerment).
- Trying to obtain a license by fraudulent means.
- Failing to yield right-of-way and causing serious injury.



Interacting with Police

Knowing Your Rights During a Traffic Stop

Being pulled over by the police can be nerve-wracking, but knowing what to do can help the situation go smoothly.

Before the stop



What to do

- Stay calm.
- Turn on your right turn signal to show you're pulling over. Find a safe place to stop your car (shoulder, parking lot).
- If unsure it's a real police officer, call 911 to confirm before stopping.
- If there's no safe place to stop right away, turn on hazard lights and slow down.
- Let the officer know you see them.
- Continue driving slowly and safely until you find a spot to pull over.



What NOT to do

- Don't panic or speed up.
- Don't try to outrun the officer.
- Don't speed up or try to escape.



During the stop



What to do

- Stop your car, turn off the engine, and roll down your window.
- Turn off the radio and silence any electronics.
- If it's nighttime, turn on your interior light.
- Stay in your car unless the officer asks you to get out. Keep your seatbelt on unless asked to take it off.
- Put both hands on the steering wheel. Tell your passengers to put their hands on the seat in front of them.
- Be calm and avoid sudden movements.
- If the officer isn't in uniform, you can ask to see their ID if you're unsure. Politely ask for clarification if you don't understand something the officer says.



What NOT to do

- Don't argue or make excuses.
- Don't get out of the car without permission.
- Don't be afraid to ask for identification.

Interacting with Police

Knowing Your Rights During a Traffic Stop

During the stop



What to do

- By law, you must provide your name, driver's license, and car registration if asked.
- Wait for the officer to ask before reaching for them. Tell the officer before reaching for any documents.
- You have the right to choose whether to answer additional questions.
- If you're unsure about a question, politely ask the officer to explain it. You can say you don't understand and need clarification.



What NOT to do

- Don't argue about showing your ID or registration.
- You don't have to answer every question, but answer basic questions like your name and license information.

After the stop



What to do

- If you get a ticket, you can ask questions about it. Don't argue with the officer. You can argue your case in court later.
- Take the ticket and sign it. Signing doesn't mean you admit guilt.
- If the officer wants to arrest someone in your car, stay calm and don't resist.
- You can ask questions about the arrest.
- You can explain your side of the story in court later.



What NOT to do

- Don't argue or get angry.
- Don't try to fight back or run away.



Feeling mistreated?

If you believe the officer acted unfairly, you can file a report with their police department later. Don't argue with the officer about it at the time.

Taking Care of Your Vehicle

Basic Maintenance Tips

Driving a safe car is important everywhere, but in North Carolina there are some specific things you need to do to keep your car legal and on the road.

Annual Inspection

Every year in North Carolina, you need to get your car inspected by a licensed mechanic at an NC Inspection Station. This is like a checkup for your car to make sure everything is safe. Try to get your inspection done before your car registration expires. You can easily find an inspection station near you online or by asking around.

Brakes, Lights, and Tires

STOP, SEE, and STAY SAFE

These three things are crucial for safe driving:

- **Brakes (STOP):** Your brakes should feel firm and stop your car smoothly without any weird noises. If they feel different, have a mechanic check them right away.
- **Lights (SEE):** Make sure all your lights (headlights, taillights, turn signals) are working properly so you can see and be seen at night and in bad weather.
- **Tires (STAY SAFE):** Check your tires regularly for any cuts, cracks, or worn treads. If they look bad, it's time for new ones! Also, check the air pressure in your tires once a month and inflate them if they're low or let out some air if they're too full.

Exhaust System

A leak in your exhaust system can be dangerous because it can release harmful fumes. If you think your exhaust might be leaking, get it checked by a mechanic and fixed as soon as possible.

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