



New York Permit Study Guide

Getting your New York learner permit is a big step, and this study guide is designed to make it easier. We've laid out the key topics in a way that's simple to follow and easy to understand so you can feel confident on test day.

Learn more about:

- » [Rules of the Road](#)
- » [Road Signs and Traffic Signals](#)
- » [Safe Driving Practices](#)
- » [Alcohol and Drug Laws](#)
- » [Parking and Stopping Regulations](#)

No fluff — just the info you need to pass your test and begin driving safely.

Rules of the Road

Driving in New York can be challenging. You'll need to navigate busy streets, complex intersections and ever-changing driving conditions. But whether you're cruising through the city or rural highways, knowing the rules of the road can make all the difference in ensuring safety and avoiding costly mistakes.

Here's a breakdown of how these rules work, along with some other important guidelines every driver should keep in mind.

Right-of-Way Laws

Right-of-way in driving refers to the legal rule determining who has the priority to proceed in a traffic situation. Right-of-way rules help prevent roadway conflicts, including accidents, and improve traffic flow.

Emergency Vehicles

- Pull over to the right side of the road when emergency vehicles with lights and sirens are present. Remain at a full stop until emergency transport has passed.
- Always **clear the intersection first** before pulling over.

Intersections

- **Intersections without traffic controls:** When signs or signals aren't present, yield to vehicles approaching from your right.
- **Four-way stops:** The driver who arrives at the intersection first has the right-of-way. When two vehicles arrive simultaneously, the driver on the right proceeds first.
- **Left turns:** Yield to vehicles already in the intersection before turning.
- **Right turns:** Always let pedestrians, cyclists and other traffic pass before making your turn.

- **Crosswalks:** Pedestrians have the right-of-way at marked crosswalks.

Turning

Basic Steps for Turning

- **Check traffic** behind you and signal at least 100 feet before turning. In high-speed areas, signal at least 200 feet before turning.
- **Look for pedestrians** and cyclists in the crosswalk.
- **Turning right: Move to the rightmost lane** and slow down before reaching the turn.
- **Turning left:**
 - **Move into the leftmost lane** or turning lane if available.
 - **Yield to oncoming traffic** unless you have a green arrow.
 - **Wait in the intersection (if necessary).** If oncoming traffic is heavy, enter the intersection and wait until it's clear before proceeding. If the light turns yellow, make sure oncoming traffic has stopped before safely completing the turn.

Speed Limits

- **School zones:** 15 to 20 mph
- **Residential areas:** 25 to 30 mph
- **Urban roads:** 30 to 45 mph
- **Highways:** 55 mph unless otherwise posted
- **Rural interstate highways:** 65 mph

Always obey the posted speed limit, and adjust your speed accordingly based on **weather conditions**, **road conditions** and **traffic flow**.

In areas without a posted speed limit, the maximum speed is 55 mph.

In New York City and certain other locations, the

default speed limit is 25 mph unless signage indicates otherwise.

Seat Belts

Seat Belt Requirements

- **All occupants must wear a seat belt regardless of seating position.**
- Drivers and passengers over 16 can be fined if they're not buckled up.

Child Restraint Laws

- **Children under two years old** must be secured in a **rear-facing car seat**.
- **Those two to four years old** can use a **forward-facing car seat** with a harness.
- **Kids aged four to seven** need a **booster seat** and seat belt.
- **Kids under 16** must buckle up in the back seat.

Traffic Signals

- **Red light:** Stop completely before the crosswalk or intersection. You are permitted to take a right turn at a red light only if there is no signage prohibiting the action and traffic is clear.
 - In New York City, turning right on a red light is off-limits unless signs explicitly state otherwise
 - **Flashing red light:** Stop and move forward when safe.
 - **Red arrow:** You are not allowed to turn whichever way the red arrow is pointing.
- **Yellow light:** Yellow lights warn drivers that the light will soon turn red. Slow down and prepare to stop — do not speed up to beat a red light.
 - **Flashing yellow light:** Decrease your speed and use caution.
 - **Yellow arrow:** The protected turning period is ending, and you should prepare to stop unless it is unsafe to do so.
- **Green light:** Move forward if the way is clear.
 - **Green arrow:** After yielding to other drivers or pedestrians, you can proceed in the arrow's direction.

Passing

Passing Rules

- **Always check your blind spot** before changing lanes.
- **Pass only when it is safe** and legally allowed.
- **Do not go over the speed limit when passing** another car.

Lane Markings

- **Single solid yellow line:** No passing allowed.
- **Double solid yellow lines:** Passing isn't allowed in any direction.
- **Broken yellow line:** You can pass if it is safe.
- **Solid white line:** Lane changes are discouraged.
- **Dashed white line:** Lane changes are OK when safe.

Passing on the Left

- **First, confirm passing is permitted.** Ensure there are no **oncoming vehicles** or obstacles that could pose a risk.
- **Indicate your intention to change lanes** by turning on your left turn signal.
- **Do a mirror and shoulder check** to confirm no vehicles are in your blind spot.
- **Steer into the left lane at a safe and legal speed** to pass the vehicle ahead.
- **Signal right and merge back into your original lane** once there is enough space between the other vehicle and yourself.

Passing on the Right

- **You are usually able to pass other drivers on the right**, but not by moving onto a shoulder unless there is signage allowing it.
- **Situations where it is OK to pass on the right:**
 - If the car in front of you is turning left and there's enough room on the right to safely pass.
 - When you're on a multi-lane road or highway where traffic is moving in the same direction and you're in the right lane.

Road Signs and Their Meanings

Before you get behind the wheel, one of the most important things to know is road signs. They're everywhere, telling you where to go, what to avoid and what's coming up next.

Whether you're driving through busy city streets or out on the open highway, knowing these signs helps you stay safe and avoid tickets. This isn't a complete list, but it does cover the most common signs on the road.

Traffic Signs and Signals

Sign Colors

- **White:** These can come in a variety of shapes and usually communicate regulations within the area. While lettering and symbols on these signs are typically black, they can also be red.
- **Yellow:** Yellow is frequently used for warning signs, and they are usually diamond-shaped.
- **Green:** Signs with a green base and white letters often provide information like highway directions or exits.
- **Blue:** Blue signage informs drivers of upcoming services like rest stops and gas stations.
- **Brown:** Brown signs feature parks, recreational areas and historic sites.

Common signs

Regulation Signs



Stop: This sign tells drivers to come to a complete stop and yield right-of-way to other vehicles and pedestrians at intersections. Always stop before the stop line, crosswalk or intersection.



Yield: Decrease speed when approaching and entering an intersection. Be sure to stop and give the right-of-way to vehicles and pedestrians within or coming toward the intersection.



No Parking: Parking is prohibited in the marked vicinity.



One Way: Traffic moves only in the direction of the arrow on the signage.

Warning Signs



Curve Ahead: Be prepared to adjust your speed for an upcoming curve.



Pedestrian Crossing: Be aware of people crossing the road.



Slippery When Wet: Reduce speed in rainy conditions.



Deer Crossing: Be prepared for animals crossing the road.

Route Signs



Interstate Signs (red, white and blue): These mark major highways. For example, I-87 runs north-south through the state.

Work Area Signs



Workers Ahead: Slow down and be ready for lane shifts, reduced speed limits or workers nearby.



State Route Signs (black and white): Show numbered highways that are managed by New York State.



Flagger Ahead: A person with a stop/slow paddle may be controlling traffic — follow their signals.



County Route Signs (blue and yellow): Used for local roads maintained by counties. These are not as common but good to understand.



Lane Closed: Get ready to merge well in advance. Don't wait until the last second.



Detour: Follow the marked alternate route. GPS may not always catch the update right away.



Safe Driving Practices

No matter where you're headed in New York, safe driving starts with staying alert and ready for the unexpected. That's where defensive driving comes in.

Defensive driving is a mindset that helps you stay aware, anticipate hazards and react quickly to avoid accidents. Adopting defensive driving techniques helps safeguard yourself and others, even in the toughest road conditions. In addition, being prepared for emergency situations can make all the difference in keeping everyone safe.

So what is defensive driving? It's all about **staying aware, anticipating hazards and avoiding accidents** — even when other drivers make mistakes. The goal is to **actively protect yourself** and others on the road.

Key Principles of Defensive Driving

Stay Alert and Focused

- Keep your eyes on the road and hands on the wheel.
- Stay focused: Skip the texts, ditch the snacks and keep your hands off the radio.

Maintain a Safe Following Distance

- Use the **three-second rule** to keep space between you and the car in front. If someone brakes suddenly, you'll have time to react.
 - How the three-second rule works:
 - Pick a fixed object on the road ahead (like a sign, tree or overpass)
 - Once the car in front passes the object, count to three.
 - If you pass the object before you say three, you need more space. In this case, you should slow down a bit and increase your distance.

- In bad weather or unsafe conditions, count longer than three seconds.

Control Your Speed

- Drive at a safe speed for the current conditions.
- The posted speed limit may be unsafe in conditions like rain, snow or fog. Slow down and exercise caution.

Use Your Mirrors and Check Blind Spots

- Look **before** changing lanes, merging or backing up.
- Don't rely solely on technology like blind-spot monitors — turn your head and check manually.

Avoid Aggressive Driving and Road Rage

- Let aggressive drivers pass and don't engage.
- If someone is tailgating, safely move over instead of speeding up.

Drive for the Conditions

- Wet, icy or foggy roads require **slower speeds, longer stopping distances and extra caution.**
- Use headlights in low visibility, but never turn on high beams in fog.

What to Do When You Encounter an Aggressive Driver

Stay Calm and Don't Engage

- Avoid making eye contact, gesturing or reacting in a way that could worsen the situation.
- Keep your emotions in check — don't take their behavior personally.

Give Them Space

- If an aggressive driver is tailgating, safely move over and let them pass.

- Don't speed up or try to block them. This can make the situation worse.

Avoid Retaliation

- Don't honk excessively, brake-check or try to teach them a lesson.
- Retaliation can turn into full-blown road rage, making the situation dangerous.

Report Dangerous Behavior

- If an aggressive driver is threatening your safety or others, **call 911** and report them.
- If possible, provide a description of the car (make, model, color and license plate) and driver.

Avoid Stopping Near Them

- If they follow you, don't go home or pull over in a secluded area.
- Instead, drive to a **police station, fire station or well-lit public area** and seek help.

New York Cellphone Laws

No Handheld Devices

- Using a handheld phone or device while driving is **illegal**, except in emergencies. First-offense penalty: **\$50 to \$200 fine** and **up to five points** on your license.

Hands-Free Devices Are Allowed

- You can use **Bluetooth** or voice commands while driving. You can only touch your phone to activate, begin or end a call.

Texting While Driving

- **It is illegal to text and drive** while you're behind the wheel and the car is in motion. First offense penalty: **up to \$200 fine** and **up to five points**.

School Zones

- **No phone use** (even hands-free) in school zones.

Emergency Situations

Brake Failure

- **Don't panic.** Shift to a lower gear.
- **Pump the brakes** quickly — this can build pressure in your brake system.
- Use the **emergency brake** slowly and steadily.
- Steer toward a safe area, like the shoulder or an exit.

Tire Blowout

- **Grip the wheel firmly.**
- Don't slam on the brakes.
- Gently ease off the gas and let the car slow down.
- Steer straight and pull over safely.

Skidding or Hydroplaning

- **Take your foot off the gas.**
- **Steer** in the direction you want to go.
- **Don't brake hard.** That can make things worse.

Engine Failure

- Shift to neutral and **steer safely off the road.**
- Try to restart once you're stopped.
- Use **hazard lights** to alert others.

Sudden Obstacle in the Road

- **Look for space** to safely steer around it.
- Tap brakes lightly to warn drivers behind you.
- Never swerve suddenly — that can cause a rollover or hit another car.

School Bus Regulations

Kids can be unpredictable and don't always look both ways before crossing the street. That's why school bus regulations are particularly strict.

- If the bus has its red lights flashing and the stop arm is out, you must stop.
- This applies whether you're behind the bus or

coming from the other direction **unless** you're on a divided highway (with a physical barrier or unpaved median).

School Bus Passing Violation

- First violation: \$250 minimum fine
- Second violation within 18 months: \$275 minimum fine
- Third Violation or more within 18 months: \$300 minimum fine

Special Driving Situations

Driving in the Rain or Snow

- **Slow down** — even if you're in a rush. Wet or icy roads are slippery.
- **Use your headlights**, not your hazards, when visibility is low.
- Increase the space between yourself and the car ahead. Braking takes longer in bad weather.
- Clear snow off your whole car, not just the windshield. It's the law. Flying snow can blind other drivers.

Night Driving

- Dim your **high beams** when you're within 500 feet of another car.
- Watch for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Take it easy on the gas. Darkness hides more than just deer.

Hills, Curves and Country Roads

- Use lower gears when going **down steep hills**. Don't ride the brakes.
- **Slow before curves**, not during them.
- On rural roads, **watch for animals**, especially at dawn and dusk.

Bridges, Tunnels and Railroad Crossings

- In tunnels and underpasses, **turn on your headlights**. It's the law.
- Don't change lanes on bridges or in tunnels.
- At **railroad tracks**, stop if lights are flashing or gates are down — never try to beat a train. NY law requires you to **stop at least 15 feet** from the tracks when required.

Work Zones

- **Slow down** and obey posted signs even if workers aren't visible.
- Fines are doubled in many NY work zones.
- Stay alert for sudden lane shifts, cones and flaggers.



Alcohol and Drug Laws

If you're getting behind the wheel in New York, it's important to know the rules when it comes to alcohol. Even one drink can affect your ability to drive. Law enforcement takes impaired driving very seriously.

Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) Limits

General Drivers

- BAC of **0.08% or higher** is illegal and considered driving while intoxicated (DWI). Driving with a BAC between 0.05% and 0.07% can still result in penalties for driving while ability impaired (DWAI).
- Penalties: **Hefty fines, a revoked license** and even possible jail time.

Commercial Drivers

- BAC **0.04% or higher** is illegal.

Drivers Under 21

- Zero tolerance law: **BAC of 0.02% or higher** can result in penalties and \$225 in fees.

Drug-Impaired Driving

Legal Drugs

- You can be arrested for impaired driving, even if you're on prescribed medications.

Illegal Drugs

- Driving under the influence of **illegal drugs** is prohibited.
- **Penalty:** Same as alcohol-related offenses.

Penalties for Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) or Driving While Ability Impaired (DWAI)

Violation Type	Offense	Fine	Jail Time	License Action
Aggravated DWI (BAC 0.18+)	First (Misdemeanor)	\$1,000 to \$2,500	Up to one year	One-year revocation
	Second Within 10 Years (Felony)	\$1,000 to \$5,000	Up to four years	18-month revocation
DWI or DWAI-Drug (BAC 0.08+ or drug impairment)	First (Misdemeanor)	\$500 to \$1,000	Up to one year	Six-month revocation (DWI), six-month suspension (DWAI-Drug)
	Second Within 10 Years (Felony)	\$1,000 to \$5,000	Up to four years or five days jail or 30 days community service (if prior within five years)	One-year revocation
DWAI - Combination (Alcohol + Drugs)	First (Misdemeanor)	\$500 to \$1,000	Up to one year	Six-month revocation
	Second Within 10 Years (Felony)	\$1,000 to \$5,000	Up to four years	One-year revocation
DWAI (BAC 0.05 to 0.07)	First (Traffic Infraction)	\$300 to \$500	Up to 15 days	90-day suspension
	Second (Within 5 Years)	\$500 to \$750	Up to 30 days	Six-month revocation
	Third Within 10 Years (Misdemeanor)	\$750 to \$1,500	Up to 180 days	Six-month revocation

Parking and Stopping Regulations



Parallel Parking Steps

- **Look for a space that's at least a few feet longer than your car.** Don't try to squeeze into a spot unless you're confident there's room.
- **Line your car up so your rear bumper is even with the other car's rear bumper.** Leave about two to three feet between your car and theirs.
- **Start backing up slowly and turn your wheel all the way to the right.** You want your car to angle in toward the curb.
- **When your front bumper clears the car ahead, start turning left.** As the front end swings in, straighten the wheel, then turn left to tuck the front of your car into the space.
- **Straighten out and adjust as needed.** You want to end up about six to 12 inches from the curb and not too far forward or back.
- **Make sure you're centered in the space** and not sticking out. Your wheels should be straight.

Parking Regulations

Types of Parking

In New York, there are three legal categories of parking restrictions: No Parking, No Standing and No Stopping. Each means something slightly different, and knowing the difference can save you from getting a ticket.

- **No Parking** zones are areas where you can't park your car, but you can stop temporarily to pick someone up or drop them off. You must not leave the car unattended.
- **No Standing** means you can stop only briefly to pick up or drop off passengers, but the driver must stay in the vehicle.
- **No Stopping** is the strictest category. You cannot stop your car for any reason, whether it's to park, pick up, drop off or even for an emergency

(unless it's necessary for safety or directed by law enforcement).

Places You Are Not Allowed to Park or Stand

- **Within 15 feet of a fire hydrant.**
- **Within 20 feet of an intersection or crosswalk** so drivers have a clear view of oncoming traffic and pedestrians.
- **Designated bus stops or taxi stands** — these areas need to be clear for public transportation.
- **Directly on sidewalks or blocking crosswalks.** This is illegal, as it can endanger pedestrians and obstruct the flow of foot traffic.
- **In front of private or public driveways.** This is generally illegal, as it blocks access.
- **Bike lanes**, especially in New York City.

Additional Guidelines

- **Always watch for posted signs indicating No Parking or No Standing.** These signs can vary by neighborhood and time of day, so pay attention.
- **Don't park on or too close to railroad tracks.**
- **Parking is prohibited on or within a bridge or tunnel**, or even the approaches.





From Studying to Steering

Learning to drive doesn't have to be hard. The [official NYS Driver's Manual](#) is your foundation, but if flipping through 100+ pages makes your eyes glaze over, study this guide and take [our free practice test](#). They're built to help you make sense of it all — minus the headache. Learn at your pace, mess up, try again. You'll get there. When you do, it'll be worth it.