

Texas DMV Study Guide

It's easy to feel overwhelmed when preparing for your Texas learner's permit test. But with our guide, it doesn't have to be stressful. This study guide is designed to help you understand the rules of the road, traffic laws and safe driving practices so you can pass your test. Each section breaks down key concepts in clear, easy-to-understand language and includes tips to help you remember what's most important.

Start here with Right-of-Way, one of the most common topics on the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) permit test.

Right-of-Way

Right-of-Way Laws

The right-of-way is the legal right for one vehicle or pedestrian to proceed before another in traffic. When you “yield the right-of-way,” you are letting another person go first because traffic rules or safety require it.

General Rules

- Never assume you have the right-of-way. It must be yielded by others to be safely exercised.
- Even if you have the legal right-of-way, always check your surroundings before proceeding. Always do everything possible to avoid a collision.
- When turning left, always yield to:
 - Oncoming vehicles going straight.
 - Pedestrians and cyclists crossing your path.
- When turning right on red, stop completely and yield to:
 - Cross traffic and pedestrians with the right-of-way.
- Pedestrians always have the right-of-way, even at unmarked crosswalks and intersections.
- Never pass a vehicle that has stopped to let a pedestrian cross.
- Right turns: Yield to pedestrians, cyclists and other vehicles before completing the turn.

Right-of-Way Situations

Uncontrolled Intersections

- When two vehicles approach an intersection at the same time, the driver on the left must yield to the driver on the right.

Controlled Intersections

- **At a four-way stop, the vehicle that arrives first has the right-of-way.**
- If vehicles arrive at the same time:
 - The vehicle on the right goes first.
 - The vehicle turning left must yield to oncoming traffic.

Four-Way Stops

- Whoever reaches an intersection first has the right-of-way. If two vehicles arrive simultaneously, the driver on the left must yield to the driver on the right.

Emergency Vehicles

- When an emergency vehicle (fire truck, ambulance, police car) is approaching with sirens sounding or lights flashing, it always has the right-of-way. Whether the approaching vehicle is in your lane or not, you must pull over to the right side of the road to clear a path. Only proceed after the emergency vehicle has fully passed and you are sure no more are approaching.
 - If you are at an intersection, do your best to clear the intersection to avoid blocking emergency vehicles.

School Buses

- No matter what direction you are approaching from, you must stop when a school bus is flashing red lights with an extended stop arm.
- You can only proceed when either:
 - The bus retracts its extended stop arm and begins moving forward.
 - The bus driver signals you to move forward.
- School bus passing violation penalties:

Violation	Penalty
First conviction	\$500 to \$1,250 fine
Second conviction and subsequent convictions within a five-year period	\$1,000 to \$2,000 fine and possible license suspension (up to six months)
Collision causing bodily injury while passing a stopped school bus	Class A misdemeanor punishable by a fine up to \$4,000 and/or up to one year of jail time
Collision causing serious bodily injury with a prior conviction for passing a school bus and causing serious injury	180 days to two years in jail and possible fines up to \$10,000

Railroad Crossings

- Trains always have the right-of-way.
- Stop between 15 and 50 feet from railroad tracks when:
 - Warning lights flash or gates are lowered.
 - You see a train approaching.
 - Signaled by a traffic official or traffic control device.
- Never drive around lowered gates or try to “beat” a train.
 - No Parking: Parking is prohibited in the marked area.
 - One Way: Traffic flows only in the direction of the arrow.
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Warning Signs

- Curve Ahead: Be prepared to adjust your speed.
- Pedestrian Crossing: Watch for people crossing the road.
- Slippery When Wet: Reduce speed in rainy conditions.
- Deer Crossing: Be prepared for animals crossing the road.

Work Area Signs

- Road Work Ahead: Slow down and be ready for lane shifts, reduced speed limits or workers nearby.
- Flagger Ahead: A person with a stop/slow paddle may be controlling traffic — follow their signals.
- 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 reflect current conditions.

Route Signs

- Interstate Signs (Red, White and Blue): Mark major highways. For example, I-35 runs north-south through the state.
- State Route Signs (Black and White): Show numbered highways that are managed by the state of Texas.
- County Route Signs (Blue and Yellow): Used for local roads maintained by counties. This is less common, but good information to know.

Right-of-Way Situations



Right-of-Way Situations

Lane Lines

- **White Lines:** Separate lanes of traffic moving in the same direction.
 - **Broken White Line:** You may change lanes when safe.
 - **Solid White Line:** Changing lanes isn't allowed.
- **Yellow Lines:** Separate traffic moving in opposite directions.
 - **Broken Yellow Line:** Passing is allowed when safe.
 - **Solid Yellow Line:** Passing prohibit
 - **Double Solid Yellow Lines:** No passing in either direction.
- **Solid and Broken Lines:** When yellow solid and broken lines are paired together, you are permitted to pass or change lanes while inside the lane with the broken lines.

Sign Colors

- **Crosswalks:** Stacked white solid lines indicate pedestrian crossing areas and show where vehicles must stop at intersections or traffic signals.
- **Stop Lines:** SA solid line painted across a lane, usually just before an intersection and paired with a stop sign. When present, drivers must stop behind the line and proceed only when it's safe and legal to do so.

Construction and Maintenance Zones

When you're driving through a construction or maintenance area in Texas, safety should be your top priority. These zones are designed to protect both workers and drivers, but they can also be hazardous if you're not paying attention.

When Entering a Construction Zone or Maintenance Area:

- **Slow Down:** Obey the posted work zone speed limit even if you don't see workers.
 - Speeding in a work zone can result in high fine amounts.
- **Obey Flagger Directions:** Flagger instructions override traffic signals and signs.
- **Keep a Safe Following Distance:** Be prepared for sudden braking or lane changes.
- **Be Aware of Your Surroundings:** Passing is allowed when safe.

What Is a Flagger?

- A flagger is a person who controls traffic in and around construction or maintenance zones to help keep both drivers and workers safe. Make sure to always follow their instructions.

Signaling, Passing and Turning

Signaling

Signaling means using turn signals (blinkers), brake lights or hand and arm signals to communicate your intended actions to other drivers, cyclists and pedestrians.

When to Signal

- **Turning Right or Left:** Always signal at least 100 feet before turning.
- **Changing Lanes:** Before moving into another lane, signal and check your mirrors and blind spots. Only change lanes when it's safe.
- **Merging:** Use your signal when entering or exiting a freeway or merging into traffic.
- **Pulling Over or Leaving the Curb:** Signal when pulling out from a parked position or pulling over to the side of the road..

- **Passing Another Vehicle:** Signal before you pass and again when returning to your lane.
- **Turning at Intersections and Driveways:** Even if no one seems to be around, always signal before turning into or out of a street, driveway or parking lot.

Common Hand Signals

- **Left Turn:** Extend your left arm straight out.
- **Right Turn:** Extend your left arm out and bend it upward at the elbow.
- **Stop or Slow Down:** Extend your left arm out and bend it downward at the elbow.

Passing

When Passing is Allowed

- The center line is broken on your side of the road.
- You can see far enough ahead to complete the pass safely.
- There are no oncoming traffic or other hazards (like hills or curves).
- You are traveling on a multi-lane road or highway where passing is allowed.

Passing Basics

- The left lane is the standard lane for passing.
 - Only pass on the right in specific, legal situations (like when the driver ahead is turning left or on multi-lane roads).
- Look in your mirrors, blind spots and beside you to make sure your surroundings are clear before passing.
- Do not pass near intersections, railroad crossings, hills, curves or wherever a solid yellow line is present.
 - Passing in these areas is typically prohibited and unsafe.
- Only start to pass if you can see far enough ahead to complete the maneuver safely.
- You can increase speed slightly to pass safely, but you must stay within the legal speed limit.

Passing on the Right

- Passing on the right is allowed only in certain situations, such as:
 - When the driver ahead is turning left and you have room to pass safely.
 - On a multi-lane road where traffic moves in the same direction. Never pass on the right by driving off the pavement or onto the shoulder.

How to Safely Pass on the Right

- Check mirrors and blind spots to make sure the lane is clear.
- Signal your intention to move into the right lane.
- Move smoothly into the right lane and maintain a safe, steady speed.
- Pass quickly without lingering beside the other vehicle.
- Signal and return to your lane only when you're well ahead of the vehicle you passed.

Blind Spots

Blind spots are areas around your vehicle that you can't see by using only your mirrors. Every vehicle has them, and they can easily hide others on the road. Knowing where your blind spots are and how to check them is a key part of safe driving. The bigger the car, the bigger its blind spots.

Turning

Making a proper turn is one of the most important skills in safe driving. Improper turning is one of the most common contributors to crashes and confusion on the road.

Turning Basics

- Know where you're turning before you reach the intersection or street.
- Ensure you are in the correct lane.
- Always use your turn signal at least 100 feet before you turn.
- Look both ways before starting the turn.
- Reduce your speed before entering the turn in order to maintain control and prevent drifting into another lane.

- Keep both hands on the steering wheel and turn it smoothly.
- Stay in your own lane as you turn by following the lane markings.
- As you complete the turn, straighten your steering wheel and accelerate smoothly.
- Switch off your turn signal after you've finished the turn.

Turning Right

- Approach the intersection in the rightmost lane.
- Signal and slow down.
- Ensure pedestrians aren't crossing the street.
- Stay close to the right curb and don't swing wide into the other lane.

Turning Left

- Approach in the leftmost lane.
- Yield to oncoming traffic and pedestrians.
- Keep your wheels straight while waiting to turn so you don't get pushed into traffic if hit from behind.
- When it's safe, turn into the leftmost lane of the street you're entering.

U-Turns

- Only make a U-turn when it's legal and safe. Make sure there are no posted "No U-Turn" signs.
- Texas law states that you must be able to see at least 500 feet in both directions.
- Yield to all other traffic before turning.

Parking, Stopping and Standing

Types of Parking

In Texas, parking regulations fall into three main categories: No Parking, No Standing and No Stopping. Each has a slightly different meaning, and understanding the distinction can help you avoid fines.

- **No Parking:** You cannot leave your vehicle unattended here. You are allowed to stop briefly to pick up or drop off passengers.
- **No Standing:** Stopping to pick up or drop off passengers is not allowed, and parking is prohibited at all times. This rule is stricter than "No Parking."
- **No Stopping:** This is the most restrictive rule. You may not stop your vehicle for any reason — parking, picking up or dropping off passengers — unless it's required for safety or directed by law enforcement.

Where Parking or Idling Is Never Permitted

You may not stop, stand, idle, or park in the following locations:

- On a sidewalk or in front of a driveway.
- Within an intersection or on a crosswalk.
- On highways or freeways, except in emergencies.
- On a bridge, overpass or in a tunnel.
- In front of a fire lane or where emergency vehicle access is blocked.
- Within 20 feet of a fire station driveway, or within 75 feet on the street opposite the fire station entrance.
- Where signs prohibit stopping, standing or parking.
- On railroad tracks.

Disabled Parking

Who Can Use Disabled Parking

- Only vehicles displaying a valid disability parking placard or license plate may park in designated disabled spaces.
- Placards are issued to individuals with mobility impairments, certain medical conditions or temporary disabilities.

Disabled Parking Placards

- Placards must be hung from the rearview mirror when the vehicle is parked.
- Both permanent and temporary placards are valid, but temporary ones have an expiration date.
- Misusing a placard (e.g., lending it to someone who isn't authorized) can result in fines and criminal charges.

Speed Limits

Passing

Texas sets speed limits to keep traffic flowing safely and consistently. These limits vary depending on the driving situation.

- **Normal Speed Limits City Streets:** 30 mph unless otherwise posted.
- **Alleys:** 15 mph unless otherwise posted.
- **Beach and Country Roads:** 15 mph unless otherwise posted.
- **Highways and Freeways:** 70 mph unless otherwise posted. Some highways in West Texas are 80 to 85 mph.
- **Rural Highways:** 75 mph unless otherwise posted.
- **School Zones:** 20 mph when lights are flashing or during designated times unless otherwise posted.
- **Residential Areas:** 30 mph unless otherwise posted.

Special Driving Situations

Roundabouts

- Slow down as you approach a roundabout.
 - Use signs, lane markings and yield signs to determine the correct lane.
- Choose the correct lane before entering.
- Yield to traffic already in the roundabout.
 - Vehicles inside the circle have the right-of-way.
 - Look to your left and enter only when there is a safe gap.

- Yield to pedestrians in crosswalks before you enter and after you exit.
- Don't stop inside the roundabout.
- Use your turn signal when exiting.
 - Signal right as you approach your exit.

Headlights

Disabled Parking Placards

- Use headlights 30 minutes after sunset to 30 minutes before sunrise.
- Use headlights when visibility is reduced to 1000 feet or less. This includes:
 - Smoke
 - Rain
 - Fog
 - Snow
 - Dust storms

High Beams

- You must dim your high beams:
 - Within 500 feet of an oncoming vehicle.
 - Within 300 feet when following another vehicle.

Never use high beams:

- In fog, snow, smoke or heavy rain (they cause glare and make it harder to see).
 - When approaching or crossing intersections, if other vehicles are present.
 - Around sharp curves or hills where oncoming traffic may suddenly appear.

Vehicle Breakdowns

- Move your vehicle off the roadway if it can be done safely, as required by Texas law.
- Turn on your hazard lights immediately to warn other drivers of a problem.
- Stopping on the shoulder can be dangerous, especially on highways; remain in your vehicle and call for assistance unless briefly checking the car.

Driving in the Rain or Snow

- Slow down on wet or icy roads.
- Use your headlights when visibility is low.
- Keep extra space between you and the car in front. Braking takes longer in bad weather.
- Your whole car should be clear of snow so that you don't blind other drivers.

How to Steer Out of a Skid

- Stay calm and avoid slamming the brakes.
- Ease off the accelerator.
- Steer smoothly in the direction you want the front of the vehicle to go.
 - **Rear-Wheel Skid (Oversteer)**
 - This is when the back of your car fishtails or swings out.
 - Look where you want to go.
 - Steer in the direction of the skid.
 - Example: If the rear end slides right, steer right.
 - Once traction returns, straighten the wheel smoothly.
 - **Front-Wheel Skid (Understeer)**
 - This occurs when you try to turn, but the vehicle continues straight.
 - Avoid turning the wheel more.
 - Allow the front wheels to regain grip, then steer normally through the turn
- When the vehicle starts responding, don't jerk the wheel. Overcorrecting can cause a second skid or spin out.

How to Steer Out of a Skid

- If your brakes feel soft or stop working, pump the brake pedal rapidly.
- Gradually engage the emergency brake.
- Steer onto a safe, uphill road or grassy shoulder to help slow your vehicle.
- Turn on your hazard lights immediately to alert traffic behind you. Honk your horn if necessary to warn pedestrians or nearby drivers.
- After the vehicle stops, turn off the engine and

call for roadside assistance. Do not attempt to turn on the car again and drive.

Floods

- Water depth is deceptively dangerous.
 - As little as six inches of water can reach the bottom of many cars, causing them to lose control or stall.
 - 12 inches of water may be enough to float many passenger cars.
 - Two feet of rushing water can carry away pickup trucks, SUVs and most other vehicles.
- If your vehicle stalls in flood water, quickly get out and seek higher ground.
- Don't try to drive through flooded roads even if it appears to be shallow.

Texting While Driving

- It is illegal to read, write or send electronic messages while operating a vehicle in Texas.
 - That means you can't text or message while driving, even if traffic is slow or you're stopped at a light.
- **Penalties for Violating the Texting Ban**
 - For a first offense, you can be fined between \$25 and \$99.
 - Repeat offenses carry a fine of up to \$200.
 - If a texting-while-driving violation causes a crash resulting in serious injury or death, the offense can be elevated to a Class A misdemeanor. This is punishable by up to one year in jail and a fine of up to \$4,000.

Drugs and Alcohol

Drug and Alcohol Impairment

It is illegal to drive while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The legal threshold for Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) varies by age.

- **Drivers 21 and Older:** legally intoxicated at a BAC of 0.08% or higher.
- **Drivers Under 21:** zero tolerance — any detectable alcohol is illegal.
- [Penalties \(page 58 of the Texas Driver Handbook\)](#)

Vehicular Crashes

What to Do in a Crash

- **Stop Immediately**
 - You must remain at the scene until legal obligations are fulfilled, even if the crash is minor.
- **Provide Your Insurance Information**
 - At the scene, drivers must provide:
 - Name and address
 - Driver's license number
 - Vehicle registration information
 - Insurance information
- **Offer Necessary Assistance**
 - If someone is injured or killed, the driver must stop and provide reasonable assistance, including calling 911.
 - Police must be called when an injury or property damage over \$1,000 occurs.

Drivers Involved in a Crash Must Have Financial Responsibility:

- Proof of insurance or other coverage is required.
- Failure to maintain insurance can result in license suspension and fines.

Hit and Run Penalties

- First offense resulting in car damage (under \$200 in damages): Class C misdemeanor and a max fine of \$500.
- First offense resulting in car damage (more than \$200 in damages): Class B misdemeanor, up to \$2,000 in fines and/or 180 days in jail.
- First offense resulting in injury: State imprisonment for up to five years or jail for up to a year. May result in a maximum fine of \$5,000.
- First offense resulting in bodily injury: Third degree felony, max fine of \$10,000 and imprisonment between two to 10 years.
- First offense resulting in the death of a person: Second degree felony resulting in a maximum \$10,000 fine and state imprisonment for two to 20 years.

Ready for The Exam?

We're glad you used our study guide to prepare for your exam. By now, you are likely to feel more confident in your abilities and are ready to move on to the next step.

But if you want to keep studying, be sure to review the DPS [Texas Driver Handbook](#). Studying both documents together will give you the best chance of passing your learner's permit test on the first try.