A Message to Massachusetts Motorists
from the Registry of Motor Vehicles

Dear Motorist,

The MassDOT Registry of Motor Vehicles is pleased to provide you with this updated Driver's Manual. The manual is a helpful guide and a reminder that a driver's license is a privilege, and with that comes the responsibilities of understanding and following the laws, and keeping you and other drivers safe on the road.

Please read the rules of the road in order to prepare for your learner's permit exam and road test and a lifetime of safe driving, bicycling, and walking. Some of the important points in the manual include:

REAL ID - You need a REAL ID, or other acceptable ID such as a valid passport, to fly within the United States. See page 6 for more information.

Hands-Free Electronics While Driving - Massachusetts law prohibits operators of motor vehicles from using any electronic device, including mobile telephones, unless the device is used in hands-free mode. Drivers are not permitted to hold or support any electronic device. Teen drivers are not allowed to use any electronic devices, even in hands-free mode. Fines and other penalties will be imposed for violators of the "hands-free law." See page 39 for more information.

Out-of-State Violations - Out-of-state motor vehicle violations impact your record just as if they occurred in Massachusetts. Do not ignore them. If you fail to pay or appear in another jurisdiction for a violation, the RMV will take action against you when learning of these events. See page 58 for more information.

Move-Over Law - You must be cautious and reduce your speed to a speed that is reasonable and safe for the road conditions when you approach a stationary emergency vehicle with flashing lights. See page 104 for more information.

It's important that you stay up to date on changes aimed at increasing safety for all. One way to stay connected is to look for updates in this manual online. We are proud to offer the Driver's Manual as a fully accessible PDF on our website, Mass.Gov/RMV. In addition to English, the manual is currently available online in 15 languages.

The RMV looks forward to serving you because, together, we can keep our roads safe.

For the latest RMV news, follow @MassRMV on X (formerly Twitter).

For information on vehicle registrations, plates, titles, and insurarance, please visit Mass.Gov/RMV

Revised April 2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Sharing the Road

A User's Manual for Public Ways

Most public ways, including urban streets, country lanes, main roads, secondary roads, and suburban or rural roads, are meant to be shared by all of us. "Us" includes pedestrians, persons riding on bicycles or motorcycles, persons riding in passenger vehicles or buses, and persons operating commercial motor vehicles or trailers, or combinations of those vehicles. Some ways, such as Interstate highways and expressways, are designed exclusively for use by motor vehicles and trailers traveling at high speeds. Other public ways are specifically designed for slower speeds or for travel by lighter vehicles and may restrict or prohibit certain vehicles. Public ways come in various lengths and widths with various features: one-way, two-way, multiple lanes, High Occupancy Vehicle lanes (HOV), center dividers, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and hard or soft shoulders.

Although the bulk of this manual provides information about the use of public ways for motor vehicles and trailers, the goal of the RMV in producing it is to make all users of public ways aware that our public streets and roads are meant to be shared except where the law provides for limited uses. Bicycling and walking may be used in conjunction with transit, so always pay attention.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Obtaining Your License. 1
Who Needs a Massachusetts License? 2
Who is Eligible for a Massachusetts License?. 3
License Descriptions and Classifications 6
REAL ID and Standard Massachusetts Cards (License/ID) . . . 6
License Classes 6
License Length 7
Restrictions. 8
Junior Operator License Law 9
Requirements to Obtain a JOL 9
JOL License Restrictions 9
Identification Requirements. 12
Social Security Numbers and License Numbers. 13
Appeals 14
Applying for a License 14
Getting a Learner's Permit 15
Driving With Your Permit. 18
Taking the Road Test 20
Receiving Your New License. 27
Converting Your License From Another Jurisdiction 27
Junior Operator License Conversion 27
Permit Conversion. 28
Conversions from a U.S. Territory, Canada, or Mexico 28
Voter Registration 29
Veteran's Indicator 29
Organ and Tissue Donor Program 30
License/ID Fees 31

Chapter 2 Safety First. 33
Passenger Vehicle Safety. 34
Car Safety Kits 35
Safety/Seat Belt Law 35
How Safety/Seat Belts Work. 36
Myths About Safety/Seat Belts 37
Air-Bag Safety 38
Inside the Vehicle 38
Distracted Driving Law/ Hands-Free Mobile (Cell) Phone Use .39
Driving Defensively. 41
Your Health and Physical Condition 42
Checking Your Vehicle's Condition 42
Safe Distances Around Your Car 43
Braking and Stopping 44
Using Your Horn, Headlights, and Emergency Signals 45

Advanced Driver Assistance Systems. 46
Night Driving. 46
Drowsy Driving 46
Driving in Rain or Fog. 47
Winter Driving. 48
Vulnerable Road Users Law 49
Pedestrians. 49
Bicycles and Mopeds 50
Motorcycles 51
Motorcycle Safety. 52
Motorized Bicycle (Moped) Safety 52
Motorized Scooter Safety 53
Limited Use Vehicle Safety. 53
Low Speed Vehicle Safety 54
Bicycle Safety Law Changes 54

Chapter 3 Keeping Your License 55
Motor Vehicle Violations and Penalties. 56
Civil Motor Vehicle Infractions. 56
Criminal Violations 57
Out-of-State Violations 58
At-Fault Crashes. 58
Surchargeable Events. 59
Driver Retraining Course 59
Driving Records 60
License Suspension or Revocation 61
Reasons for License Suspension 61
Mandatory License Suspensions Chart. 62
Mandatory Permit Suspensions (Junior Operators 16 1/2 to 18 . Years) Chart 63
Mandatory License Suspensions (18 Years and Older) Chart. 64
Criminal Offenses and Suspensions Chart 66
When Your License Is Suspended or Revoked 67
Penalties For Operating Under the Influence of Alcohol or Drugs Chart 68
License Suspension Periods for Failed Chemical Tests Chart 69
License Suspension Periods for Refusing a Chemical Test Chart 70
Alcohol, Drugs, and Driving 71
Alcohol 71
Ignition Interlock Devices 73
Buying, Possessing, or Transporting Alcohol 74
False or Altered Licenses/Identification Cards 74
Illegal Drugs, Medicine, and Other Controlled Substances. . . .74
Reasons for License Nonrenewal 75

Chapter 4 Rules of the Road 77
Dangers of Speeding 78
Speed Limits 79
Traffic Signals 80
Motor Vehicle Signals 80
Pedestrian Signals 82
Traffic Signs 83
Stop and Yield Signs 86
Regulatory Signs 86
Warning Signs 86
Guide Signs 86
Railroad Crossings 86
Roadway Construction/Maintenance (Work Zones) 87
Pavement Markings 89
White Lane Lines 89
Yellow Lane Lines 90
Words and Symbols 90
Stop Lines, Yield Lines, and Crosswalks 91
Channelizing Islands 92
Crossing Guards 92
Lanes, Intersections, and Turns 93
Signaling 93
Using Lanes 93
Highway Driving 94
Intersections 96
Turns 97
Backing Up 99
Right-of-Way Rules 99
Courtesy Crashes 102
Rules for Passing 102
Road Respect/Sharing the Road 104
Parking 109
Parking Regulations 110
Miscellaneous Rules of the Road 111
Rules for Pedestrians 112
Laws for Bicyclists and Motorists in the Presence of Bicyclists . . . 112
The Danger of Open Doors to Bicyclists 116
Bicycle Boxes 116
Separated Bicycle Lanes 117
Common Bicycle Crash Scenarios 117

Chapter 5 Special Driving Situations 119
Moving Emergency Vehicle. 120
Stationary Emergency and Maintenance Vehicles 120
If You are Stopped by a Police Officer 121
Driving Emergencies. 123
Traffic Crashes 128
If You Are Involved in a Crash 129
Hit and Run Crashes (Leaving the Scene Without Identifying . . Yourself). 130
If You Witness a Crash. 131
Reporting a Crash 131
Drive Smart and Save - "Green Driving" Tips. 132

*This document is published by the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, for the benefit of residents and visitors alike. While it contains a great deal of information about RMV policies and state laws, it is important to note that this is **not** a legal document. Every effort is made to present the most accurate, error free, and up-to-date information. However, RMV policies and fees change from time to time, as do laws governing motor vehicles.*

The RMV will make every effort to post information about changes to the fees, policies, procedures, or laws referenced in this Driver's Manual that may affect your ability to obtain a Learner's Permit, Driver's License, or Identification Card. Relevant changes will be posted on the RMV's website at Mass.Gov/RMV. If you do not have access to a computer, you may call the RMV's Contact Center at 857-368-8000 (from the 339/617/781/857 MA area codes or from outside of MA) or 800-858-3926 (from all other MA area codes). Or, you can call 877-RMV-TTDD if you are deaf and hard of hearing.

The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) has changed a great deal since its inception in 1903. There are now nearly five million licensed drivers in our state. And today, more than ever, the Agency is committed to increasing efficiency and improving customer satisfaction through technology and innovative initiatives.

Enhanced computer technology continues to strongly impact customer service. Through the RMV's website (Mass.Gov/RMV) you can start certain license/ID card transactions and conduct such transactions as scheduling a road test, paying your road test/license fees, renewing a registration, renewing a license or Massachusetts ID Card, ordering a special plate, paying a traffic citation, ordering a duplicate license/ID, ordering a duplicate title, changing your address, verifying the issuance of a driver's education certificate, checking the status of a registration or title, changing your organ donor status, or canceling plates. You can also download forms, view this *Driver's Manual,* and learn the latest "rules of the road." Over the Internet, the RMV also invites you to ask questions and offer suggestions for improving RMV services.

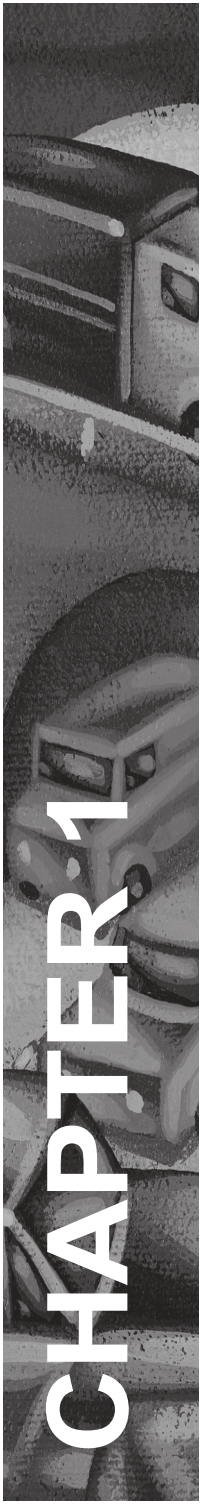
The RMV will continue to explore other ways to improve its relationship with you, such as through our partnership with AAA, which allows AAA members to process certain RMV transactions at AAA branches.



How to Use This Manual

For *new drivers,* this manual is a useful tool for understanding the licensing process and for studying the rules of the road. For *experienced drivers,* this manual offers more than the procedure for obtaining a learner's permit. It provides valuable information on RMV policies, changes to driving laws, and safe driving tips. Keep this manual in your vehicle and refer to it whenever you have a question.

Obtaining Your License



If you are a Massachusetts resident (or even a non-resident), you must have a valid driver's license to operate a motor vehicle on any public road, highway, or other way permitting access to the public.

Through the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV), the Commonwealth of Massachusetts issues five license classes with various privileges and restrictions to residents of Massachusetts. Class A, B, and C licenses, which are known as commercial driver's licenses (CDLs), allow you to operate large vehicles, like trucks and buses. The Class D license, which is most common, is for passenger vehicles, vans, and small trucks. The Class M license allows you to operate motorcycles.

Who Needs a Massachusetts License?

All Massachusetts residents need to obtain a valid Massachusetts license in order to operate a motor vehicle in Massachusetts.

Out-of-State/Out-of-Country Residents

Out-of-State U.S. Residents: A U.S. resident, who is at least 16 years of age and lives outside of Massachusetts, may drive in Massachusetts using a valid out-of-state driver's license issued by their state/territory of residence. This rule applies to licensed visitors and travelers from other U.S. states and territories and to residents of nearby states who commute to work in Massachusetts.

Out-of-Country Residents: Massachusetts Law (Chapter 90, Section 10) allows certain validly licensed drivers of other countries to operate validly registered motor vehicles in Massachusetts. The country that issued the license must enforce standards for motor vehicle operation equivalent to Massachusetts (as determined by the RMV).

If you are a visitor from another country, you may drive private passenger vehicles in Massachusetts if you are over 16 and have a valid (not suspended or revoked) driver's license issued by your home country to operate the same type of vehicle. If the foreign license is not printed in English or does not contain English translations of the important information fields on the license, a translation into English will be needed.

Whether you have a U.S. or foreign driver's license, you must have your valid out-of-state or out-of-country driver's license in your possession when driving in Massachusetts. If an English translation of a foreign license is required, you should also have that available with the foreign license. A violation of Section 10 is a criminal violation and a first offense is subject to a fine of $500.

Moving to Massachusetts: If you become a resident of Massachusetts, you must obtain a Massachusetts driver's license to retain your driving privileges. There is no grace period.

Licensing Rules for Military Personnel

If you are in active military service and want to drive in Massachusetts, you must have a valid driver's license from your home state. If you are a permanent resident of the Commonwealth, you must have a valid Massachusetts license. Following are exceptions:

- If you are returning from active duty outside the United States and have a driver's license issued by a branch of the Armed Forces based in another country, you may drive with that license in Massachusetts for up to 45 days.
- If you have a Massachusetts driver's license that expired during your active service, you may use that license to operate a motor vehicle for

up to 60 days after your honorable discharge from military service. If you choose to exercise this option, you must carry your expired license and proof of your discharge with you when you drive.

Questions?
RMV Contact Center: 857-368-8000
(from the 339/617/781/857 MA area codes or from outside of MA)
800-858-3926 (from all other MA area codes)
The deaf and hard of hearing can call toll free at 877-RMV-TTDD (1-877-768-8833).
Contact Center Hours: Monday–Friday 9 a.m.–5 p.m.
Or visit: Mass.Gov/AsktheRMV

Who is Eligible for a Massachusetts License?

Anyone who is a Massachusetts resident, is at least 16 years old, and has not had a driver's license or the right to operate revoked may apply to begin the process of obtaining a Class D or Class M License with a reservation at any RMV Service Center.

Massachusetts Driver's License Limited to Massachusetts Residents

By law, a Massachusetts driver's license or ID card (except for a Liquor ID card) can only be issued to a resident of Massachusetts. Licenses cannot be issued for the convenience of business persons or tourists from other states or countries who may be here temporarily or to non-residents who own property or temporarily live in Massachusetts but maintain their legal residence outside the state. To obtain a license, you must meet all the requirements for a driver's license under the law, including the requirement that you be a legal resident of Massachusetts.

Massachusetts law requires those convicted of sex offenses to register with their local police departments. For more information, call 1-800-93-MEGAN.

Age Requirement

No person under the age of 16 may drive in Massachusetts. This is true even if you have a driver's license (or learner's permit) issued in a state or U.S. territory or another country that allows operation of a motor vehicle by a person less than 16 years of age.

- To apply for a Class D (passenger vehicle) or a Class M (motorcycle) learner's permit, you must be at least 16.
- You can obtain a learner's permit at age 16, but you may not receive a Class D or a Class M driver's license until you are at least 16 1/2 and have had your permit in good standing for six consecutive months and have completed a driver education training program approved by the RMV.

Note: You must be at least 18 years old to apply for a Commercial Driver's License (Class A, B, or C).

Parent/ Guardian Consent

Customers applying for permits, licenses, or identification cards who are under age 18 (minors) must obtain written consent from a parent, a legal guardian, a social worker, or a boarding school headmaster. For a learner's permit, or identification card, a person gives written consent by signing the back of the permit / license / ID application.

If the person signing the back of the application is not a parent, documentation of the person's guardian status must be shown at the time of the permit / ID application and, for a license, at the time of the road test. **Forging a signature may result in license suspension or revocation.**

Facial Image Policy

All applicants for a learner's permit, driver's license, identification card, liquor identification card, or disability placard must have their photo-image captured by the RMV.

This is to ensure that the image contained on the issued document and in the RMV's database is the actual image of the person who provided the identification information to the RMV when applying for the document. It is also to aid law enforcement officers in the proper identification of the person whose image is contained on the document.

The captured image must be a straightforward looking view of the applicant. All of the applicant's facial features must be visible (e.g. eyes, nose, mouth, cheeks, etc.). The appearance must provide a clear view of the applicant's face as a whole. A solid or transparent facial cover (scarf, veil, eyeglasses/sunglasses, goggles, surgical or dust mask, etc.) is not acceptable. Eyeglasses, including reading or prescription glasses, are not allowed, even if the applicant normally wears them. A hat or other head cover is not acceptable, but if worn for medical or religious reasons, it may be allowed if it does not hide any facial features. Natural facial hair and hairpieces may be acceptable unless the overall effect disguises the person's true facial appearance or facial features are obscured. Permanent facial tattoos are acceptable but temporary tattoos are not. Bluetooth headsets are not acceptable.

Vision Screening Requirements

Testing your vision is a necessary part of ensuring that you are capable of operating a motor vehicle safely. An RMV clerk will screen your vision when you apply for a learner's permit or driver's license. You will be screened for visual acuity, color vision, and peripheral vision. If you normally wear contact lenses or corrective lenses to see at a distance, then you must wear them during the vision screening examination.

To be eligible for a Class D or M license, your vision must be at least 20/40 visual acuity in your better eye (corrected) and at least 120 degrees of horizontal peripheral vision (both eyes together) for a full license. If your corrected vision is between 20/50 and 20/70 in the better eye, you may be eligible for a daylight only license. If you fail the vision screening examination, decline to take the examination, or are unable to take the vision screening examination, you may submit an original RMV Vision Screening Certificate (VSC) that your ophthalmologist or optometrist has completed. The RMV may accept this Vision Screening Certificate in lieu of the vision screening examination to demonstrate compliance with the minimum vision standards to obtain a driver's license.

You can download the Vision Screening Certificate from the RMV's website (Mass.Gov/RMV) or pick up a copy at many eye-care providers.

For information on other vision and physical qualifications necessary to hold a Massachusetts driver's license, or for more information regarding the voluntary reporting procedure for medical conditions, please call Medical Affairs at 857-368-8020. You can also visit the Medical Standards webpage (https://www.mass.gov/info-details/medical-standards-for-passenger-class-d-and-motorcycle-class-m-drivers-licenses).

Driving Record Verification

When you apply for a permit or license, or renew a license, you will be required to provide a list of the states you have been licensed in for the past ten years, as well as all out-of-state license numbers you have had. The RMV's licensing computer system checks your name, birth date, Social Security Number, and any out-of-state driver's license numbers with the Problem Driver Pointer System (PDPS), which stores information about license suspensions and revocations for drivers in all 50 states. If your record matches PDPS, you will not be allowed to continue the application process until all out-of-state suspensions or convictions are resolved.

You cannot hold a driver's license in multiple states. Massachusetts is part of the State-to-State program, which checks valid driver licenses and state issued ID cards issued by other participating states. State-to-State will cancel any driver's license or state issued ID card issued by the other participating state when a Massachusetts license or ID Card (excluding a Liquor ID) is issued.

REAL ID and Standard Massachusetts Cards (License/ID)

You need to choose either a REAL ID Massachusetts Driver's License or ID Card or a Standard Massachusetts Driver's License or ID Card. The cost is the same for both card types (see *License/ID Fees* section).

What You Need to Travel

You need a REAL ID, or other acceptable ID such as a valid passport, to fly within the United States or enter certain federal buildings.

A REAL ID Card issued by Massachusetts is compliant with the federal REAL ID Act of 2005. This type of license or ID Card can be used to access certain federal facilities and to board flights within the United States. If you have a passport or other acceptable ID, you may never need a REAL ID. More information about REAL ID can be found at Mass.Gov/ID.

A Standard Massachusetts Card may be a driver's license or ID Card. A Standard Massachusetts Driver's License offers the same driving privileges as a REAL ID Massachusetts Driver's License. However, it is NOT an acceptable form of identification for the federal purposes mentioned above.

If you have a Standard Massachusetts Card, you need to show a passport or alternative form of federally acceptable identification to board a domestic flight or access certain federal facilities. The Transportation Security Administration publishes a list of alternative forms of identification at tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/identification.

All driver licensing requirements (age, operator fitness, and written and road testing) are the same for both card types. The documentation and application requirements are different for the two card types. They also look different, with different markings and words printed on the face of the cards. Visit Mass.Gov/ID for more information.

You may hold only one driver's license or ID Card at a time.

License Classes

The table on the next page summarizes Massachusetts license types. Your driver's license is considered a primary form of identification, showing proof of identity, residence, age, and signature.

In addition to listing your personal information, a license or an ID issued to you by the RMV features an image of your photo and signature, which is stored on the RMV's central computer.

Massachusetts Driver's Licenses	
License Class	**Vehicles Permitted**
A	Any combination of vehicles with a gross combination weight rating (GCWR) of 26,001 or more pounds, provided the GVWR of the vehicle(s) being towed is in excess of 10,000 pounds. (Holders of a Class A license may, with any appropriate endorsements, operate all vehicles within Class B, C, and D.)
B	Any single vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 26,001 or more pounds, or any such vehicle towing a vehicle not in excess of 10,000 pounds GVWR. (Holders of a Class B license may, with appropriate endorsements, operate all vehicles within Class C and D.)
C	Any single vehicle or combination of vehicles that does not meet the definition of Class A or Class B, but is either designed to transport 16 or more passengers including the driver, or is required to be placarded for hazardous materials under 49 CFR 172.500 or any other federal regulation. (Holders of a Class C license may operate all vehicles within Class D.)
D	Any single vehicle or combination of vehicles that does not meet the definition of Class A, Class B, Class C, or Class M. (Typically passenger vehicles such as cars, SUVs, or family vans).
M	Any motor vehicle defined as a motorcycle in M.G.L. c. 90, § 1.

For information on Commercial vehicle (Class A, B, or C) restrictions or endorsements, see the CDL Manual on Mass.Gov/RMV.
For information on Motorcycle (Class M) licenses, see the Motorycle Manual on Mass.Gov/RMV.

License Length

A Massachusetts driver's license is valid for a maximum of five years and typically expires on your birthday.

A REAL ID License or ID card can be issued for a period of less than five years if an applicant's authorized lawful presence (as established by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security) is for a shorter period. The

minimum acceptable period of lawful presence is 12 months. However, an applicant who can prove that they meet the minimum 12 month period can be issued a REAL ID License or ID card even if they will only be present for a shorter period. The license fee will be prorated if it is less than five years and the license will not expire on your birthday.

A Standard License will always be valid for five years.

You can renew your license or ID up to one year before its expiration date.

Vertical licenses and identification cards with the words "Under 21" printed on them are issued to anyone who obtains or renews a license or identification card while under the age of 21. If you renew your license or ID card before your 21st birthday, you will receive a vertical license or ID card. This license or ID card will remain valid to expiration, even after you turn 21. A horizontal license may be obtained after your 21st birthday.

Restrictions

Restrictions are limitations placed on your driving privileges. Your driver's license may be issued with various restrictions, which are indicated by code letters on the front and back of your license.

List of Restrictions

The RMV may apply any of the following restrictions to a license:

2 Medical Log / Glucose Required
A Use with Certified Driving Instructor Only
B Corrective lenses
C Mechanical Aid
D Prosthetic Aid / Personal Medical Aid
E CMV Automatic Transmission
G Daylight Only
H Limited to Employment
I JOL Limited / Other
J Other
K CDL - Intrastate Only
L CDL - Vehicles without Airbrakes
M CDL - Except Class A Bus
N CDL - Except Class A & B Bus
O CDL - Except Tractor/Trailer
P No Passengers in CMV Bus
Q Class D Automatic Transmission

R Bioptic Telescoping Lens
S Proof of Blood Sugar Level
T Ignition Interlock
U 3 Wheeled Motorcycle
V Medical Variance
W Intrastate Medical Waiver
X CDL - No Cargo in CMV Tanker
Y Restrict to 14 Passenger Capacity
Z CDL - Air Over Hydraulic

Medical Restrictions

Medical Affairs, which reviews license applications listing physical or mental conditions that may affect a driver's abilities, may issue driving restrictions related to your current medical condition. For example, if you pass the driver's license vision test by wearing glasses or contact lenses, your driver's license will be issued with a "Corrective Lenses" restriction (code letter B) and you must wear your corrective lenses when you drive. If you need a mechanical aid or prosthetic device (adaptive equipment) to operate a motor vehicle, Medical Affairs will issue your license with restriction(s). It considers license applications on a case-by-case basis, and you may be required to provide a physician's letter for medical clearances or special driving-related equipment.

Junior Operator Restrictions

The Junior Operator restriction (code letter I) is added to the licenses of all operators under age 18. For a complete description of the Junior Operator Law and driving restrictions for operators under 18, see the *Junior Operator License Law* section below.

The Junior Operator License Law

Any motor vehicle operator or motorcyclist between the ages of 16 1/2 and 18 is considered a Junior Operator. The Junior Operator Law has several requirements and restrictions that significantly affect the operation of a motor vehicle by a person who has a Junior Operator's License (JOL). The basic purpose of the law is to provide new drivers supervised opportunities in which to develop good driving skills, while keeping those drivers free of the possible distractions caused by friends under age 18 who are present while the drivers are behind the wheel.

Requirements to Obtain a JOL

An applicant for a driver's license between ages 16 1/2 and 18 must comply with several requirements to obtain a JOL:

- Have a valid learner's permit for at least six consecutive months

before taking the road test. (Any suspension will invalidate the permit and the six months will start to run anew when the suspension is lifted.)

- Maintain a clean driving record for at least six consecutive months before taking the road test.
- Successfully complete an RMV-approved driver education and training program, which includes 30 hours of classroom instruction; 12 hours of in-car, behind-the-wheel training; and six hours of in-car experience observing other student drivers.
- Complete at least an additional 40 hours of supervised, behind-the-wheel driving as shown by a certified statement provided by a parent or guardian.

  The RMV will accept 30 hours of driving supervised by a parent or guardian if the applicant completed a driver skills development program.
- A parent or guardian must participate in two hours of instruction on the driver's education curriculum (unless they have participated within the past five years).
- Pass a final exam to have a driver's education certificate electronically filed with RMV.

JOL License Restrictions

The following restrictions apply to all Junior Operators:

- You may not operate a motor vehicle within the first six months after receiving your JOL while any person **under age 18** is in the vehicle (other than you or an immediate family member), unless you are accompanied by a person who is at least 21 years old, has at least one year of driving experience, holds a valid driver's license from Massachusetts or another state, and is occupying a seat beside you.

  General Rule: The passenger restriction that applies to you as a JOL holder under age 18 is lifted once you complete the six-month period (or the portion that applies to you) or you reach age 18, whichever occurs first.

  The six-month passenger restriction period will stop running, temporarily, during any suspension. When your JOL is reinstated, you will still have to complete the remainder of the six-month restriction period that existed at the beginning of the suspension period, unless you have already turned 18.

See Chapter Three for a list of the penalties and fees you will face for violating any of these restrictions.

- As the holder of a JOL, you may not operate a motor vehicle between 12:30 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. unless you are accompanied by one of your

parents or your legal guardian. If you are found operating a motor vehicle in violation of this restriction, you may be charged with operating a motor vehicle without being licensed. This is a criminal violation.

Note: The law states that between 12:30 a.m. and 1:00 a.m. and between 4:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m., the provisions of the law shall be enforced by law enforcement agencies only when a Junior Operator of a motor vehicle has been lawfully stopped for a violation of the motor vehicle laws or some other offense. This is called "secondary enforcement." However, it is still illegal for you to operate during those times without a parent present in the car.

- If you violate the passenger restriction or the night restriction, you will be subject to a license suspension of 60 days for a first offense, 180 days for a second offense, and one year for subsequent offenses. For a second or subsequent offense, you will also be required to complete a Driver Attitudinal Retraining course. The law requires the RMV to impose this suspension in addition to any other penalty, fine, suspension, revocation, or requirement that may be imposed in connection with a violation committed at the time you were violating the passenger or night restriction.
- You may not operate a motor vehicle that requires a **commercial driver's license** (CDL).
- You will be suspended for one year if you are under 18 when you have committed certain driving offenses and alcohol or drugs were involved (180 days if age 18 to 21), **in addition to any penalty assessed by a court or other law.** (For details, see the *License Suspension or Revocation* section of Chapter Three.)
- You will be ineligible for a full license until you have completed the period of suspension imposed while operating with a JOL and you reach age 18.
- You will face additional suspension periods of one year for a first drag racing offense and three years for a subsequent offense. For a first speeding offense, you will be suspended for 90 days; for a subsequent offense, you will be suspended for one year.
- **Drivers under 18 may not use any mobile electronic device for any reason while operating a motor vehicle.** The only exception is for reporting an emergency. See the *Distracted Driving Law/ Hands-Free Cell Phone Use* section of Chapter Two for more information.

Identification Requirements

The federal REAL ID Act established minimum standards that states must follow when issuing and producing driver's licenses and ID cards. The federal government requires that individuals present a license or ID marked as a REAL ID, or other federally acceptable form of identification, to board domestic flights or enter certain federal facilities. Visit Mass.Gov/ID for up-to-date REAL ID information in Massachusetts.

To apply for a permit, license, or ID card, you must provide identification documents. These required documents will be different for REAL ID Cards and Standard Massachusetts Cards.

All Driver's License and Massachusetts Identification Card applicants must present the following:

REAL ID Driver's License/ID Card (valid for federal purposes)	Standard Driver's License/ID Card (not valid for federal purposes)

• 1 document that proves your lawful presence in the U.S.
• 2 documents that prove your Massachusetts residency
• 1 document that proves your Social Security Number OR a Social Security Number Denial Notice with non-U.S. Passport, Visa, and I-94
	• Depending on the documents presented, 1 or 2 documents that prove your identity / date of birth
	• 1 document that proves your Massachusetts residency
	• Social Security Number requirement (ONE of the following)
	  • A Social Security Number that validates electronically
	  • A Social Security Number Denial Notice with non-U.S. Passport, Visa, and I-94
	  • A *No Social Security Number Affidavit* - only allowed for certain customers presenting specific document types and only for Standard Driver's Licenses (NOT for Massachusetts ID Cards)

The identification documents must be from the *Acceptable Identification Document* list (see Mass.Gov/ID) and must be satisfactory to the RMV. You may need to provide the required identification for each different type of document you apply for, even if you already have a Massachusetts permit, license, or ID.

All documents must be originals unless otherwise indicated. Photocopies will not be accepted. Laminated documents are not acceptable.

Save time by starting your application online at Mass.Gov/RMV. Completing all the information in the application and indicating which documents you will bring will help ensure your transaction is successful.

Note 1: Foreign diplomats and other foreign government officials, their family members, and personal assistants/employees who have been issued a U.S. Department of State driver's license are not eligible to obtain a Massachusetts driver's license.

Note 2: If your visa includes additional forms, such as F1 and F2 or M1 and M2, both of which require an I-20, that form must be submitted as well.

Identification requirements are subject to change at any time. Visit Mass.Gov/ID for the most current information.

The Registry will initiate electronic checks for most identification documents with national and state databases. This process provides validity responses back to the RMV within seconds for the vast majority. However, some checks will require additional time for research or may be subject to manual review. This does not mean that your transaction has been denied. It simply means the verifying information is not readily available and additional time is required. These cases are generally resolved within three to five business days, but in rare occasions may be up to twenty days. Your Customer Service Representative will provide you with additional instructions.

Social Security Numbers and License Numbers

You must meet the Social Security Number (SSN) requirement to apply for any permit, license, or ID, including a replacement or a renewal. When you submit an application, the Registry will attempt to validate the SSN you provide against computer records at the Social Security Administration (SSA). If you do not have an SSN, you may request an application for one by calling 1-800-772-1213 or visiting SSA.Gov/ssnumber.

If you have applied for an SSN with the SSA and been denied, you must present the written Denial Notice (not more than 60 days old) the SSA provided you and all of the following:

- Proof of your current visa status
- An I-94 Record of Arrival & Departure (either a paper version from US Customs and Border Protection or a printout of an electronic version downloaded from their website: CBP.Gov/i94)
- Your current non-U.S. Passport

If you do not have an SSN and cannot apply for one, you can present a *No Social Security Number Affidavit* and apply for a Standard Driver's License (see Mass.Gov/ID for more information).

For information on obtaining an SSN, call 1-800-772-1213. To obtain a replacement SSN, visit SSA.Gov

Appeals

If your permit, license, or ID card application is denied, you may file an appeal within ten days after you received a written denial from the RMV. Any additional time required by the informal review does not extend the ten-day period. A formal appeal may be filed only with the Board of Appeals on Liability Policies and Bonds at the address below with a check or money order for $50.

Board of Appeal on Motor Vehicle Liability,
Policies and Bonds Division of Insurance
One Federal St., Suite 700 • Boston, MA 02110
617-521-7794 • State.Ma.US/DOI

To obtain a form online to appeal a decision of the RMV to the Division of Insurance's Board of Appeal, go to *State.Ma.US/DOI* and enter "appeal form" in the search box.

Applying for a License

You must obtain a learner's permit before you can apply for any license. To get a learner's permit, you must complete an application, present identification, pay a fee, pass a vision exam, and pass a learner's permit exam. Your learner's permit does not become a license until you pass the road test and have paid all license fees. If your learner's permit expires, you must re-take the learner's permit exam and pay the required fees.

If you are a new Massachusetts resident and have an out-of-state driver's license, you may be eligible to convert your license without testing. For information on license conversion and foreign license policies, visit Mass.Gov/RMV.

Save time by starting your application online at Mass.Gov/RMV. Completing all the information in the application and indicating which documents you will bring will help ensure your transaction is successful.

Make sure you visit the offical RMV website: Mass.Gov/RMV. Several similar looking, third party websites claim to offer RMV services and information, but may charge extra fees and your personal and financial information may not be safe with them.

Getting a Learner's Permit

You must be at least 16 years old to apply for a Class D or M learner's permit. The learner's permit exam that you must take tests your understanding of Massachusetts motor vehicle laws and safe driving practices. A learner's permit gives you permission to drive (accompanied by a licensed operator at least 21 years old) while you practice your driving skills and prepare for your road test. A permit is valid up to two years.

When applying for a learner's permit, you can prepay your license and road test fees at that time. You can also use the "Pay My Road Test and/or License Fees" transaction on Mass.Gov/RMV to pay these fees before or after you take the road test. If fees have been paid, your driver's license will be automatically sent to you, and you will not need to visit an RMV Service Center after passing the road test.

To earn your learner's permit, take the following steps:

1. Study all of the information contained in this manual.
2. Complete a learner's permit application, make a reservation to visit an RMV Service Center, and submit the application at the service center. This application can be completed online at Mass.Gov/RMV to save you time when you visit a service center. If you are under 18, you must have your parent or guardian sign your application.

   In completing the application, you will be required to disclose whether you have a physical, mental, or medical condition or are taking any medications that might affect your ability to operate a motor vehicle.
3. Meet all of the RMV's identification requirements (visit Mass.Gov/ID for more information).
4. Pay a $30 learner's permit exam fee, which covers the cost of your exam.
5. Have your photo-image and signature captured electronically.
6. Pass a vision test at the service center or submit an RMV vision screening certificate from your medical practitioner.

7. Pass a learner's permit exam based on information in this manual.

Learner's permit exams can be taken in the service center when you submit your application. They are also available online at Mass.Gov/RMV after you submit your application. If you pass the exam online but cannot print the permit, you can call the RMV Contact Center at 857-368-8110. The RMV will print the permit and mail it to you in five-seven business days.

A learner's permit is a document that grants conditional driving privileges. This document is not intended to be used as an identification document for travel. This means that it will not be accepted by most airlines, cruise ships, etc., for travel as a state-issued photo ID.

Learner's Permit Exam Procedures

Each learner's permit exam has 25 multiple-choice questions. Topics covered on the exam include alcohol misuse, suspensions, and JOL violations, as well as rules of the road and identifying road signs. To pass the exam, you must answer 18 questions correctly within the allotted time of 25 minutes.

RMV Full Service Centers have automated testing stations (ATS), which are easy-to-use videoscreen kiosks that use a computer program to deliver learner's permit exam questions visually. The learner's permit exam is available in multiple languages (for a Class D or M permit) through the ATS and online. You have about one minute to answer each question. Learner's permit exams can also be taken online at Mass.Gov/RMV after visiting a service center.

You must study the contents of this manual to be able to pass the learner's permit exam.

Driver's Manuals and other reference materials cannot be used during the learner's permit exam and are not allowed in the testing area. You also are not allowed to wear or use any electronic device (including electronic optical devices), regardless of the purpose of the device. Audio devices or headphones cannot be used or worn, unless they are being used for taking an audio exam. Hats cannot be worn (unless for medical or religious reasons).

Usage of a Driver's Manual, other reference material, or electronic device during the learner's permit exam is considered cheating.

If you are caught cheating or trying to cheat on an exam, you will fail and be subject to further investigation. If you are found responsible for cheating, you will not be allowed to hold any type of driver's license or permit for 60 days.

Foreign Language Tests

If English is not your primary language, you may ask to take the learner's permit exam in a foreign language. The RMV currently offers Class D and M learner's permit exams in a variety of languages. Class A, B, and C learner's permit exams are only available in English.

Class D and M learner's permit exams are available in the following languages:

Albanian • American Sign Language (ASL) • Arabic • Armenian Burmese • Cambodian (Khmer) • Cape Verdean Creole Chinese (simplified) • Chinese (traditional) • Farsi • French German • Greek • Gujarati • Haitian/Creole • Hindi • Hungarian Italian • Japanese • Kiswahili • Korean • Laotian • Nepali • Pashto Polish • Portuguese (Brazilian) • Russian • Serbo-Croatian (Latin) Somali • Spanish • Tagalog/Filipino • Thai • Turkish • Ukranian Urdu • Vietnamese

Audio Exams

Audio exams are available through the ATS and for online exams. This feature allows you to hear an automated voice read the test questions and possible answers through headphones. Audio exams are available in all the languages listed above for Class D and M exams, and in English only for CDL exams (per federal regulation). The time limit for Class D and M audio exams is 25 minutes.

Anyone can choose to take an audio exam. The exam does not need to be scheduled in advance and you do not need to present any additional documentation to be eligible.

If you want to use the audio feature for your exam, you should bring a set of headphones with you to the RMV Service Center. Every ATS has a splitter on the bottom of the machine with a universal connection for headphones.

Testing Accommodations

If you have a cognitive or physical disability that would prevent you from taking a standard exam, you may request a reasonable accommodation, which could include:

- Extended time
- Reader - A designated RMV employee reads the exam questions aloud to you, also known as a one-on-one verbal exam

To request a reasonable accommodation, call 857-368-8105 and leave a message that includes your name, your telephone number, the specifics of your request, and the service center where you would like to take your exam. You will then be contacted by the RMV regarding your request.

You may be required to provide documentation supporting the need for a requested disability-related testing accommodation. Appropriate documentation depends on the nature of the disability and the specific testing accommodation requested. The RMV will let you know whether your request was approved.

For up-to-date information on interpreter or translation services for foreign language exams, visit Mass.Gov/RMV.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Accommodations

To request an ASL interpreter, call 857-368-8105 and leave a message that includes your name, your telephone number, and the service center where you would like to take the exam. The RMV will contact you to schedule the exam and request the interpreter.

Driving With Your Permit

You must carry your learner's permit whenever you drive until you earn a Junior Operator's License or a full driver's license.

A Class D learner's permit allows you to drive a passenger vehicle with the following limitations:

- You must be accompanied by a licensed operator who occupies the passenger seat next to you and is at least 21 years old, holds a valid driver's license from Massachusetts or another state, and has at least one year of driving experience.
- If you are under 18, you may not drive between 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. unless accompanied by a parent or legal guardian who is a validly licensed operator with at least one year of driving experience.

A Class M learner's permit allows you to operate a motorcycle with these limitations:

- You may not carry a passenger.
- You can drive only during daylight hours (between sunrise and sunset).
- You must wear a US DOT standard helmet.
- You must wear eyeglasses, goggles, or a protective face shield unless the motorcycle you are driving has a windshield or screen.

With a Class D or Class M learner's permit, you may operate motor vehicles in another state as long as doing so does not violate that state's laws.

See Chapter Three for a list of the penalties and fees you will face for violating any of these restrictions.

Driver's Education

The RMV requires drivers under age 18 to take professional driving lessons at a local high school or driver school. Professional driving instruction can help you become a more skillful, knowledgeable driver, and it can increase your chances of passing the Class D or Class M road test on your first try. Another benefit of learning to drive through a licensed school is the ability to use a school vehicle for your road test and a school instructor as your test sponsor.

All professional driver schools in Massachusetts, including public and private high schools, must be licensed and monitored by the RMV. More information can be found at Mass.Gov/RMV.

You can also obtain information on driving instruction by contacting your local high school.

If you doubt a driver school's credentials, ask to see a license certificate, which the RMV issues.

To apply for a Class D or M driver's license when you are between 16 1/2 and 18 years old, you *must* complete a driver's education program, pass a final exam, and have a driver's education certificate electronically on file with the RMV from a licensed driver school or a high school program that is approved by the RMV. The fact that you have fulfilled this requirement will be available on your RMV record at the time of your road test.

You must also complete 40 hours of supervised driving (30 hours if you completed a driver skills development program), and your parent or guardian must participate in two hours of the driver's education curriculum (unless he/she already attended in the past five years).

Driver Education Certificate Department, Registry of Motor Vehicles
P.O. Box 55889, Boston, MA 02205-5889

If you recently moved to Massachusetts and had already completed a driver's education program in another state, you must complete an *Application to Convert Out-of-State Driver Education Certificate* (available on Mass.Gov/RMV) and follow the instructions on the application. Verification will be made with the state that originally issued your driver's education certificate. If the other state's requirements meet or exceed Massachusetts' requirements, a new driver's education certificate will be electronically filed with the RMV. Once this is done, you may book your road test.

To convert an out-of-state driver's education certificate, the program you completed must meet or exceed Massachusetts minimum requirements for classroom and in-car instruction. If you have any questions, call the RMV at 857-368-8110.

Taking the Road Test

The next step toward earning your Massachusetts driver's license is taking a road test with an RMV examiner. Whether you are applying for your first license or completing a license conversion that requires a road test, you must have a learner's permit of the proper class to schedule a test. Road test procedures are described in the following pages.

If you are obtaining a motorcycle license, or adding a motorcycle class to your Massachusetts driver's license, you do not have to take a road test if you have successfully completed the Massachusetts Rider Education Program (MREP), approved by the RMV.

For a Class D license, you are not allowed to attempt more than six road tests in a 12-month period. For a Class M license, if you fail two road tests, you must enroll in and successfully complete a beginner rider course before you can schedule another test.

Scheduling a Road Test

The best way to schedule, cancel, or reschedule your road test is online at Mass.Gov/RMV. You can also call the RMV Contact Center. There is no additional fee if you cancel or reschedule with more than 72 hours notice.

If you schedule your road test through a professional driving school, please verify that the school is certified by the RMV. A list of certified driving schools can be found online at Mass.Gov/RMV. Driving instructors can only sponsor a road test if their school is certified.

For up-to-date information on interpreter or translation services for road tests, visit Mass.Gov/RMV.

For information on road tests for vehicles with ignition interlock devices, see the *Ignition Interlock Devices* section in *Chapter Three*.

If you fail a road test or do not appear for your scheduled test, you must wait at least 14 days before taking another test.

Road tests are scheduled close together; you must be on time for your test. If you are late for your appointment, you will not be tested and you will be required to pay the road test fee.

All fees must be paid before you can schedule a new road test.

Massachusetts Rider Education Program

The Massachusetts Rider Education Program (MREP) is designed to reduce the number of motorcycle related fatalities and injuries by increasing the availability of Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) approved training courses for motorcycle riders and to increase awareness and education for both riders and other drivers. If you successfully complete an MREP course, you do not need to take an RMV Class M road test.

If you are under 18 years old, the MREP basic rider course is required to obtain a Class M license. You must also have a driver's education certificate.

For information on motorcycle rider courses for both beginner and experienced drivers, call 857-368-2903 or visit Mass.Gov/RMV.

The RMV has a Motorcycle Manual. This manual focuses exclusively on motorcycles and is available online at Mass.Gov/RMV. Study this manual if you want to get a Class M learner's permit or add a motorcyle class to your Class D license.

Policies on Cancellations and Fees

Road tests will be canceled automatically when the Governor declares a state of emergency. If the Governor declares an emergency in a particular region, only road tests in that region will be canceled.

Road Test Examiners may also cancel road tests when weather conditions are considered unsafe. To determine if your road test has been canceled, please visit Mass.Gov/RMV for posted notifications or call the RMV's Contact Center. In any of the preceding cases, you may schedule a new road test at no additional fee. However, you *will* be charged the road test fee if you...

- Fail the test
- Are unprepared for the test
- Are refused the test because your vehicle fails to pass the examiner's inspection
- Do not bring a qualified sponsor
- Fail to appear for or are late for your test
- Cancel or reschedule your test with less than 72 hours notice

Rejected Road Tests

Road Test Examiners may reject road tests for the following reasons:

- You or your sponsor are showing signs of alcohol or substance impairment
- An odor of alcohol or cannabis is coming from you or your sponsor, including from clothing or inside the vehicle
- Minor children, babies, or animals are present in the vehicle and cannot be left unsupervised at the Service Center. Trained service animals are allowed in the vehicle, but emotional support animals are not.

Being Prepared for the Road Test

Refer to this page to prepare for your road test: www.mass.gov/guides/road-test-information

On the day you take your Class D road test, you must fulfill several requirements:

1. Have a completed road test application, and have your parent or guardian complete the parental consent section if you are under age 18.

   In completing the application for the road test, you will be required to disclose whether you have a physical, mental, or medical condition or are taking any medications that might affect your ability to operate a motor vehicle. If you do, prior to taking a road test, you must submit medical clearance from your physician. The Road Test Examiner will review your application and either approve it or forward it to Medical Affairs for appropriate review.
2. Have your printed learner's permit.
3. Bring a qualified sponsor (see the *Sponsor Requirements* section). The sponsor must have their current valid license with them.

   Note: A sponsor is not required for a Class M road test.
4. Provide an acceptable, properly equipped, legally registered vehicle (with the registration certificate) to use in your test (see the *Passenger Vehicle Requirements* section).

If you are under age 18, you must maintain a clean driving record for the six consecutive months immediately preceding the date you apply for the test. You will not be able to take the test if you...

- **Have experienced any surchargeable incidents (e.g., at-fault crashes, moving violations) under Massachusetts law or the law of another state**
- **Have had your permit suspended for committing drug or alcohol related motor vehicle violations**
- **Have been convicted for violating any drug or alcohol related laws in Massachusetts or another state**

Note: Even if you had a clean driving record for six consecutive months immediately preceding the date you first booked the road test, if the RMV receives notice of an event that would cause the six-month clean driving period to be interrupted between the date the test was booked and the date of the test itself, you will not be allowed to take the road test when scheduled. A new clean driving record of at least six months will have to be established, unless you reach 18 years of age prior to that time.

For a Class M road test, you must bring your printed learner's permit, a completed license application form, and a properly equipped, legally registered motorcycle, but you are not required to bring a sponsor. If you are under 18 years old, you are not eligible for an RMV Class M road test and must complete the MREP basic rider course to get a Class M license.

Sponsor Requirements

For a Class D license, including a JOL, you need a sponsor for your road test, even if you have a valid foreign driver's license. When you arrive at the test location, you must be accompanied by a licensed operator who...

- Is at least 21 years old
- Has had at least one year of driving experience
- Has a valid driver's license issued by their home state. Holders of foreign driver's licenses are not eligible to be sponsors.

Operators are not allowed to sponsor more than three different applicants within a one year period without approval from the RMV Road Test Program.

If you are not accompanied by a sponsor, you will not be given a Class D road test.

Passenger Vehicle Requirements

To be acceptable to the examiner, the vehicle you bring to the road test must meet all requirements in this section.

In general, the vehicle you use for your Class D road test should be safe and in good working order. You must show your vehicle registration to the examiner and the vehicle must be properly inspected. Your test will be canceled if the examiner believes your vehicle is unsafe. In addition to being safe, your vehicle must have these features:

- Adequate seating so that the examiner may sit next to you and your sponsor may sit in the rear seat behind the driver. You may not use a vehicle that does not have a seat for your sponsor. Sponsors may not sit in the bed of a two passenger pickup truck.
- An accessible parking brake so the examiner can make an emergency stop. The parking brake can be manual or electric (push or pull button). It is up to the individual examiner to determine if the parking brake would be accessible to them in an emergency. To help ensure that brake access will not be a problem, you should bring a vehicle to the test that has a centrally located parking brake. If you have any questions about whether a vehicle is acceptable, you should take it to the scheduled road test location on the business day prior to the scheduled test.

  If you are prevented from taking the road test only because the examiner determined that they could not access the braking system, you will not be charged a fee for that scheduled test.

  Driving instruction vehicles must have a second foot brake for instructors or examiners and must display proper signage.

  Parking brakes must work properly and will be tested by the examiner before the road test. Massachusetts regulation 540 CMR 4.04 (4)

requires that parking brakes be tested by accelerating the motor to 1,200 to 1,300 RPMs with the vehicle in the lowest gear. The examiner will not allow the road test to proceed if the parking brake does not work as required by law.

In some larger vehicles, like certain minivans, the parking brake is too far from the examiner to be easily accessible in an emergency. These vehicles are *not* suitable for road tests and may be rejected by the examiner.

- If your test vehicle is registered out of state, you must show the examiner proof of insurance coverage equal to Massachusetts minimum limits, which are $25,000/$50,000 for bodily injury and $30,000 for property damage.
  A policy or a certificate that lists coverage limits serves as proof of a vehicle's insurance.
- If you are renting the vehicle you are using for your road test, you must show your examiner your rental agreement and a letter from the rental company, on its letterhead, that authorizes you and your sponsor to use the vehicle for a driver's license road test. You are not required to provide this information for leased vehicles.

A vehicle cannot be used for a road test if one of its tires has been replaced by a "donut" (limited use spare) tire.

Road Test Policy for Vehicles with Dealer, Farm, and Repair Plates

You cannot take a road test in a passenger vehicle that is registered with a "dealer" plate unless you can prove, to the satisfaction of the examiner, that you are the dealer, or spouse of the dealer, or a salesperson who works at the dealership. A vehicle with a farm plate can be used, if acceptable to the examiner, but only if the applicant can prove, to the satisfaction of the examiner, that the applicant is a member of the family or an employee of the farmer. If displaying a farm plate, the vehicle cannot be a passenger vehicle, but may be a pickup truck with an acceptable rear seat for a sponsor. You will not be allowed to take a road test in a vehicle with a repair plate.

Passenger Vehicle Test Procedures

Road test videos are available online at Mass.Gov/RMV in the road test section. These videos will help you prepare for the road test and show you what to expect during the test.

You should arrive approximately 15 minutes early for your scheduled road test appointment. If you are late, you may not be able to take your road test.

Before your road test, the RMV examiner will inspect your vehicle to ensure that it is properly registered, that all equipment is in good working

order, and that the vehicle provides a safe, adequate, and clean seat for the examiner and easy access to the brake.

During your Class D road test, you must prove you have the skills and abilities needed to operate most private passenger vehicles, small trucks, vans, and SUVs. Most newer vehicles are equipped with "specialized features", such as backing sensors, back-up cameras, automatic parallel parking, and GPS-guided independent operation. These features substantially assist a driver with certain driving, parking, or backing skills. These devices will not need to be disabled. However, your driving skills and abilities without relying only on these specialized features will be tested. If adaptive equipment for a legitimate medical condition is installed in the vehicle and necessary for operation, or if you need to use specialized features, a “mechanical/software aid” restriction will be added to a license.

After the examiner inspects and approves the vehicle, the driving test will begin. Only you, the examiner, and your sponsor are allowed in the vehicle during the test. The examiner will sit in the seat next to you; your sponsor must sit in the seat behind you. **No children or pets are allowed.** Trained service animals are allowed in the vehicle, but emotional support animals are not. A language interpreter may also be allowed in the vehicle. You and your sponsor/interpreter are not allowed to converse unless authorized by the examiner.

The examiner’s goal is to observe your driving performance. During a road test, you should be prepared to demonstrate your ability to...

- Use hand signals
- Start the engine
- Start and stop the vehicle
- Parallel Park
- Back the vehicle approximately 50 feet
- Make left - right turns
- Start, stop, and turn the vehicle on a hill
- Turn around between curbs (three point turn)
- Enter and leave intersections
- Recognize and obey traffic signs, lights and signals, and other rules of the road
- Use good driving sense

In addition to judging your overall driving skills, the examiner will note how well you follow general good-driving procedures, including whether you...

- Use good driving posture, with both hands always placed properly on the wheel
- Drive in the proper lane and look carefully and signal properly before changing lanes

- Maintain enough distance between your vehicle and the one ahead of you
- Always drive at safe speeds to comply with speed limits and varying traffic conditions
- Properly yield the right-of-way
- Are generally aware of your actions and particularly those of other drivers

The RMV has a Motorcycle Manual. This manual focuses exclusively on motorcycles and is only available online at Mass.Gov/RMV. Check it out for important information you need to get a motorcycle license and to be a safer rider.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Road Tests

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you can schedule a road test by calling 1-877-RMV-TTDD (1-877-768-8833). Describe your request, the location where you would like to take your road test, and include your phone number, residential address, and e-mail address. The Driver Licensing Department will then contact you to book the road test. Once the test is booked, they will contact the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to arrange for an interpreter.

Before the start of the road test, the examiner will explain the elements of the test and how to effectively communicate during the test. You and the interpreter will also be provided with a written description of the road test and the required elements to review before starting the test.

If you have any questions during the road test, you will be allowed to pull over to the side of the road (when safe to do so) and communicate with the examiner.

For up-to-date information on interpreter or translation services for road tests, visit Mass.Gov/RMV.

Common Reasons for Failing a Road Test

- You were driving in a way that may have caused a crash or in a way the examiner considered dangerous.
- You violated a motor vehicle law, rule, or regulation.
- You demonstrated a lack of experience safely operating a motor vehicle.
- You refused to follow or drove contrary to the examiner's instructions.
- You didn't know the hand signals (see page 93).
- You were at fault in a crash with another motor vehicle, pedestrian, or object.

Note: The RMV has a zero tolerance policy for violent or abusive conduct by road test applicants and sponsors.

Receiving Your New License

To avoid visiting an RMV Service Center after you pass your road test, you can either pay your road test and license fees at the time you schedule the test, or you can pay online at Mass.Gov/RMV using the "Pay My Road Test and/or License Fees" transaction.

If you pass the road test, have prepaid for your license, and have no outstanding obligations, the examiner will validate your learner's permit and it will become a temporary license, valid up to 60 days (unless the permit expires before that). The RMV will manufacture your new, permanent photo-image license and mail it to you. If you are over the age of 20, but still have a photo on file from when you were under 20, you will need to make a reservation to visit a service center to obtain your license.

If you pass the road test and have not prepaid for your license, within 60 days, you must either pay online or make a reservation to take the permit with the road test results indicated to a service center. Please note, however, that if you pay online and do not visit a service center, you will not receive a temporary license. (Note: If you do not pay within 60 days of passing your road test, you may be required to retake the road test at your expense.)

If your permanent license does not arrive in the mail within 30 days, please call the RMV Contact Center.

Whenever you operate a motor vehicle in Massachusetts, the law requires you to carry a valid driver's license on your person or within easy reach inside your vehicle.

Massachusetts driver's licenses are produced at a secure location and are generally mailed to you within 10-14 business days after you visit the RMV Service Center.
At the service center, you will receive a receipt that serves as a temporary license and provides proof of driving privileges while the permanent license is being manufactured. The receipt is not valid for identification. This means that it will not be accepted by most airlines, cruise ships, etc., for travel as a state-issued photo ID.

Converting From Another Jurisdiction

Junior Operator License Conversion

License Conversion for a Junior Operator requires that you provide a certified copy of your driving record from the state you are leaving, in addition to meeting the RMV's identification requirements (visit Mass.Gov/ID for more information). You must also have a Massachusetts driver's education certificate electronically on file with the RMV (see *Driver's Education* section) and you must log an additional 40 hours of supervised

driving (30 hours if you completed a driver skills development program) as shown by a certified statement provided by a parent or guardian.

You will be subject to all of the provisions of the Massachusetts JOL law (See the *Junior Operator License Law* section). The only exception is the period of time you will be subject to the passenger restriction, which depends on your driving record. If your record indicates you have had a valid license for a full six months, without suspension or revocation, you will not be subject to the passenger restriction.

To convert an out-of-state driver's education certificate, the program you completed must meet or exceed Massachusetts minimum requirements for classroom and in-car instruction. If you have any questions, call the RMV Contact Center.

Permit Conversion

Class D and M Learner's Permits may be converted to an equivalent Massachusetts issued permit if you meet the RMV's identification requirements (visit Mass.Gov/ID for more information). To be eligible for conversion, you must present the current out-of-state permit issued less than two years ago. You must also provide a certified driving record (not more than 30 days old).

If you are under 18 years old, your parent or guardian must sign the permit application. You will not be required to take the learner's permit exam; however, you will need to pay the applicable fee. A converted permit will be dated to reflect the issue date of the original permit in order to meet the six month experience requirement for applicants under 18. The Massachusetts issued permit will expire two years from the adjusted issue date or, for REAL ID applicants, at the end of your authorized stay in the U.S. (whichever comes first).

Conversions from a U.S. Territory, Canada, or Mexico

When converting a permit or license from one of the 14 U.S. Territories, Canada, or Mexico, you must meet the RMV's identification requirements. You must submit an original certified driving record from your home territory or country. Driving records must be no more than 30 days old. See Mass.Gov/RMV for the translation policy for foreign language documents.

An original certified driving record is required from the 14 U.S. Territories, Canada, and Mexico because the driving records of those jurisdictions are not available for electronic review by the RMV through the Problem Driver Pointer System.

The 14 U.S. Territories consist of the following:
American Samoa • Baker Island • Guam • Howland Island • Jarvis Island • Johnston Atoll • Kingman Reef • Midway Islands • Navassa Island • Northern Mariana Islands • Palmyra Atoll • Puerto Rico • U.S. Virgin Islands • Wake Islands

Source - The Worldfact Book (U.S. CIA-2004)

A Puerto Rican birth certificate will only be accepted for identification if it was issued on or after July 1, 2010. For more information on the Puerto Rican birth certificate law, visit the Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration website.

Voter Registration

If you are a U.S. citizen and legally eligible to vote, your information will be sent to the appropriate election office when you conduct a permit, license, or ID transaction. This information will be used to register you to vote or update your current voter registration.

You will receive a receipt and voter information in the mail from election officials. This mailing will include information about enrolling in a political party. It will also allow you to decline to register to vote.

You must be a U.S. citizen and at least 16 years old to register to vote.
You must be at least 18 years old to be eligible to vote.

If you are registered to vote and you change your address, your information will be forwarded first to the Secretary of State's Central Voter Registry and then to your local election office, which will send you a confirmation notice in the mail.

For more information on registering to vote or the election process, call the State Election Line at 1-800-462-VOTE or 617-727-2828.

Veteran's Indicator

If you are a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces and were honorably discharged, you can choose to have the word "Veteran" printed on your license or ID card. The Veteran's Indicator can be added when you apply for, renew, or order a duplicate permit, license, or ID card. There is no additional fee for the Veteran's Indicator. If your license or ID card is not eligible for renewal, you can obtain a free duplicate with the Veteran's Indicator. Regular transaction fees apply for other transactions. One of

the following documents must be presented as proof of honorable discharge in person with a reservation at an RMV Service Center:

- A DD-214 that indicates honorable discharge
- A DD-215 that indicates honorable discharge
- An Honorable Discharge form

The information on the form must be typed (not handwritten).

Organ and Tissue Donor Program

Every day, 17 people in the United States die waiting for organ transplants. Currently, there are over 120,000 total patients waiting for an organ transplant in the United States. Thousands more await life enhancing tissue transplants.

When you apply for a Massachusetts driver's license or identification card, you will have the opportunity to become an organ and tissue donor. By registering as an organ and tissue donor with the RMV, you will be entered into the Massachusetts Donor Registry, which is legal consent for donation. However, you should also share your decision to donate with your family and friends so that they know about your decision to become an organ and tissue donor.

You can register as an organ donor, or change your organ donor status, anytime on Mass.Gov/RMV.

Even if you are currently a registered donor, you still need to check "yes" on question one of the license or ID card renewal form in order to remain in the donor registry.

If you have any questions, please contact one of the organ donor organizations listed below.

For more information on organ and tissue donation:
Visit neds.org or unos.org
Call New England Organ Bank at 1-800-446-6362
Call LifeChoice Donor Services at 1-800-874-5215

When you renew your license or ID online at Mass.Gov/RMV, or order a duplicate license or ID, you will have the choice to give $2 to the Organ and Tissue Donor Registration Fund. This $2 will be added to the renewal or duplicate fee.

Note: The RMV is required by law to provide certain information identifying organ and tissue donors to federally-designated organ procurement organizations and other federally registered non-profit eye and tissue banks serving the Commonwealth.

Organ Donor FAQs *(see Mass.Gov/RMV for more FAQs)*

Q. What does the heart symbol on my license/ID represent?

A. It indicates that you are in the Massachusetts Donor Registry and have consented to organ/tissue donation.

Q. Can I be an organ/tissue donor if I don't have the heart symbol on my license/ID?

A. Yes. You can register as an organ/tissue donor anytime on Mass.Gov/RMV.
You don't need to get a new license/ID. Your license/ID won't have the heart symbol, but your name will be in the Donor Registry's database. When it is time to get a new license/ID, the heart symbol will then be printed on it.

Q. What is the Massachusetts Donor Registry?

A. The Donor Registry is a database that contains the names of everyone who has signed up to be an organ and tissue donor at the RMV. The database is checked (via computer) when necessary. This eliminates the need to look for a donor card or a license that could be misplaced or lost.

Q. Do you need to carry a donor card with your license (in addition to the heart symbol)?

A. No, you do not need to carry a donor card if you have the heart symbol on your license. The heart symbol indicates that you are in the Massachusetts Donor Registry and have consented to organ/tissue donation. The Donor Registry is checked whenever an individual becomes a potential candidate for donation.

Q. Will it cost my family anything if I donate organs/tissues?

A. Organ and tissue donation is completely free. A donor's family is not charged.

License/ID Fees

Learner's permit exam fee - $30.00

The learner's permit exam fee covers the cost of processing your application and administering your learner's permit exam. If you fail the

exam or your permit expires, you will be charged this fee again for another examination.

Road test fee - $35.00

The RMV charges a flat fee for any license application. This fee covers the cost of processing your application and scheduling a road test. If you fail the road test, do not appear for the road test, are rejected by the examiner, or cancel your appointment with less than 72 hours notice, you will still be charged the $35 fee, which must be paid prior to a new test being booked. For more details on road testing, see the *Taking the Road Test* section.

License issue/renew fee - Class D - $50.00

License issue/renew fee - Class M - $50.00

The RMV charges a driver's license fee so it can issue a tamper-resistant, Class D or Class M license. Fees for licenses issued for less than five years will be prorated based on length of issuance.

Duplicate or amended license - $25.00

The RMV charges a fee for any change that results in the reissuance of a license.

Out-of-state conversion fees

Class A* - $140.00

Class B* - $140.00

Class C* - $140.00

Class D* - $115.00

*To add motorcycle privileges (Class M) to any of these license classes, you must pay an additional $3.00 per year. The Class M privilege will expire the same time as the existing license. If your license is eligible for renewal when you add the Class M privilege, it may be best for you to renew the license at the same time.

Class M only - $115.00

Class D or M permit conversion - $30.00

All fees are subject to change at any time. All license fees are non-refundable.

Disabled Veterans do not pay any fees for driver's license transactions if they have Disabled Veteran plates or if they have qualified for Disabled Veteran plates with Medical Affairs.

Safety First



Motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of death of children and young adults in America. About one in three Americans will be injured or killed in a motor vehicle crash.

One in three.

Chances are good that you will be in a motor vehicle crash sometime in your life. It does not matter how good a driver you are. You can never predict when a crash might happen.

Your driving behavior affects not only your safety, but also that of your passengers, other drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and everyone else on the road. Keep others safe by driving safely and avoiding reckless behaviors.

Proper maintenance of your vehicle and regular inspections are also important for safe driving.

This chapter explains motor vehicle safety laws. It also gives tips on how to avoid serious trouble.

Passenger Vehicle Safety

Passenger vehicles, including vans and pickup trucks, must have working safety equipment. Each passenger vehicle must have all of the following:

- A working, undamaged safety belt for the driver and all passengers
- Mirrors
- A horn
- A lock for the engine's ignition
- Windshield wipers
- An exhaust muffler
- A foot brake and a parking brake
- A working driver's side window that moves up and down
- Headlights and brake lights
- Directional signals

Each passenger vehicle must also have lights for driving in the dark. There must be two approved white headlights in the front, two approved red lights in the back, and directional signals. The vehicle must also have three red stop (brake) lights in the back and a small white light above the back license plate.

The Highway Assistance Patrol (HAP) provides help to stranded drivers. It is operated by the MassDOT-Highway Division and sponsored by MAPFRE | Commerce Insurance.

For more information, visit MassDOT.State.MA.US/Highway/TrafficTravelResources/EmergencyRoadsideAssistance.aspx

If the directional signals or brake lights on your vehicle stop working, you must have them fixed right away. Until they are fixed, you must use hand signals when turning or slowing *(see page 93 for hand-signal diagrams)***.**

Every vehicle must pass an annual safety and emissions inspection.

A passenger vehicle may have a spot light that can only be used to read signs or as an emergency light if the headlights are not working. A spot light can only shine two feet above the roadway 30 feet away from your vehicle.

Emergency lights (flashing, rotating, oscillating, or strobe lights) are not allowed on a vehicle unless you get a permit from the RMV.

Some equipment and changes to your vehicle are illegal.

Glass tinting is allowed on passenger vehicles, but there are restrictions. You can darken your side and rear windows up to 35 percent. It is illegal to tint your windshield.

Car Safety Kits

Having essential items in your vehicle will make your travel experience safer. It is recommended to carry the following items in your vehicle:

- Reflective Safety Vest
- Reflective Warning Triangles or LED Flares
- First Aid Kit
- Glass Breaker Tool
- White and red cloths to tie to your vehicle during a breakdown

Massachusetts experiences cold temperatures and icy conditions during winter. Drivers should equip their vehicles with winter tires, an ice scraper, jumper cables, and extra warm clothing.

To ensure you can quickly and easily access your safety kit during an emergency, it is crucial to store it in an accessible part of the vehicle from the inside. Store the safety kit within reach of the driver or passengers, such as in the glove compartment, under the passenger seat, or in a dedicated storage area inside the vehicle.

Safety/Seat Belt Law

In 2023, nearly 11,000 people who were not wearing a safety belt were killed in crashes in the United States. When worn correctly, safety belts lower the chance of death or serious injury in a crash by about 50 percent.



An air bag works better if you are wearing your safety belt.

Massachusetts law requires every person in a passenger motor vehicle (including vans and small trucks under 18,000 lbs.) to wear a safety belt or sit in a child passenger restraint.

- Any driver who is not wearing a safety belt can be fined $25. Any passenger 16 years old or older who is not wearing a safety belt can be fined $25.
- A driver can also be fined $25 for each passenger age 12, 13, 14, or 15 who is not wearing a safety belt.

You can only get a fine for the safety belt law when you are stopped for a traffic violation. The following people do not need to wear safety belts:

- Drivers and passengers of vehicles made before July 1966
- Drivers of taxis, liveries, tractors, buses, and trucks with gross weights of 18,000 pounds or more (However, drivers of some commercial motor vehicles do need to wear safety belts.)
- Passengers of emergency vehicles and drivers of police and fire vehicles
- An employee of the U.S. Postal Service who is driving a motor vehicle while working
- A person who physically cannot wear a safety belt because of a disability. A physician must certify that the person has this disability.

A crash can happen any time. The best way to protect yourself is to always wear your safety belt. Safety belts save lives for both drivers and passengers.

Child Passenger Restraints

Infants and small children must sit in federally approved child passenger restraints until they...

1. Are at least eight years old **or**
2. At least fifty-seven inches tall

Children at least eight years old or at least fifty-seven inches tall must wear safety belts. The safety belts must be used correctly. You can be fined $25 for breaking this law.

The child restraint must have a sticker that says it meets the necessary standards (U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 213 or the standards in 49 C.F.R. 571.213). The restraint must be permanently attached to a motor vehicle or attached by a safety belt or an attachment system.

Never put a back-facing child safety seat in the front passenger seat if your vehicle has an air bag for that seat.

The safest place for a child to sit is in the back seat. The back middle seat is best. Infant seats must face the back of the vehicle. To find a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician to help attach a child safety seat, call 1-877-392-5956 or go to Mass.Gov/Highwaysafety.

Use your child's height and weight to pick the right safety seat. Each seat is different. Check the manufacturer instructions for exact height and weight limits.

Guide to Child Safety Seats

Infant seat	up to 20 pounds
Toddler convertible seat	20–40 pounds
Booster seat	40–80 pounds



How Safety/Seat Belts Work

Safety belts stop you from being thrown around or out of your vehicle in a crash. It is best to wear both lap and shoulder belts.

In a crash, a safety belt can help in many ways.

- **Stop you from hitting the windshield, dashboard, steering wheel, other hard parts of the vehicle, or passengers in the vehicle.** Your vehicle will stop moving if it crashes head on. If you are not wearing a safety belt, your body will keep moving until it hits something hard, like the windshield. Your safety belt will stop you from hitting the windshield or other passengers.
- **Stop you from being thrown out of the vehicle.** Lap and shoulder belts keep you protected inside your vehicle. This makes your chance of surviving a crash five times better.
- **Help you stay seated and in control of the vehicle.** When you wear a safety belt, you can stay behind the wheel and avoid a worse crash. The safety belt will stop you from being pushed across the seat.



The *right* way to wear a safety belt.



The *wrong* way to wear a safety belt.

Hitting the windshield at 30 mph is like falling from the third story of a building and hitting the pavement.

A lap belt should fit low, tight, and flat over the hips. It should not be twisted. A shoulder belt should be worn across the shoulder and chest. A shoulder belt should never be worn under the arm or across the face or neck.

Myths About Safety/Seat Belts

Safety belts save lives and prevent injuries in a crash. Stories about the "dangers" or "hassles" of safety belts are simply not true.

"I'll be trapped inside the car if I'm wearing a safety belt in a crash."

Cars don't catch fire or sink in water very often. If it does happen, wearing a safety belt helps you not hit your head and lose consciousness. If you stay conscious, you can undo your safety belt and get out. Even if you're upside down, it takes less than a second to undo your belt.

"My car has air bags, so I don't need to wear a safety belt."

An air-bag is made to work with safety belts, not instead of them. You still need to wear a safety belt when you drive. Front air bags are only made for head-on crashes and do not protect you in crashes from the side or back.

"I'm only driving a short distance. I don't need to wear my safety belt."

Most motor vehicle crashes happen less than 25 miles from home. Eight out of ten crashes happen at speeds of 40 mph or less. Don't take chances. Always wear your safety belts.

"I'm only going to the store. It's too much trouble to put kids in child safety seats."

Motor vehicle crashes are the easiest cause of child death to prevent. Most kids killed in car crashes would have lived if they were properly put in child safety seats. Take the extra minute to put your children into their seats before driving.

Children and small pets are often killed or injured when they are crushed by adults not wearing safety belts during a crash.

Air-Bag Safety

When used with lap and shoulder safety belts, air bags are very good at saving adult lives. You should follow these procedures with air bags.

- *Children in back.* Infants in back-facing child safety seats should never be in the front seat of a vehicle with a passenger-side air bag. Children are always safest when riding in the back seat.
- *Child safety seats.* Infants and young children should always sit in child safety seats that are right for their age and size. For more information, see the *Child Passenger Restraint Law* section earlier in this chapter.
- *Air bags do not replace safety belts.* You should always wear both lap and shoulder belts. For more information, see the *Safety Belt Law* and *How Safety Belts Work* sections of this chapter.
- *Move the front seat back.* You should move the driver's seat and front passenger seat as far back from the dashboard as you can. This is safer and makes it easier to drive.

These tips will help you **and your children** survive a crash.

Inside the Vehicle

In your vehicle, nothing should get in the way of your ability to see, react, or drive.

Distracting Objects

You cannot have anything inside your vehicle that can prevent you from driving safely. Nothing inside your vehicle, on your dashboard, on your windshield, or hanging from your rear view mirror can block your view of the road in front of you or through your mirrors. Make sure that nothing can roll under your feet and get in the way of your pedals (the accelerator, clutch, and brake).

Cell Phones/Mobile Electronic Devices

For information on the use of mobile (cell) phones and other mobile electronic devices, see the *Hands-Free Mobile (Cell) Phone Use* section below.

Headphones

It is illegal to wear a radio headset, headphones, or any other wired or wireless device that restricts your attention to the environment while driving. If you are 18 or older, you can use one earplug for use with a cell phone.

Loud Noise

Avoid loud noise levels in your vehicle so you can hear emergency vehicle sirens.

Televisions

Any television installed in a vehicle must be behind the front seat and not visible to the driver. A driver cannot be distracted by a television screen, even when looking sideways out of the vehicle.

Truck Beds

Children under 12 years old are not allowed to ride in the beds of pickup trucks (there are very limited exceptions, and never at speeds more than five mph).

Distracted Driving Law/ Hands-Free Mobile (Cell) Phone Use

The use of hand-held mobile electronic devices (including cell phones) while driving is prohibited in Massachusetts (Chapter 90, Section 13B and Chapter 122 of the Acts of 2019). In 2023, distracted driving resulted in 3,275 deaths.

Drivers 18 and Older

Drivers 18 and older can **only** use mobile electronic devices in "hands-free" mode while driving. This means that devices cannot be held, cannot be touched except to activate "hands-free" mode, and must be installed or mounted to the windshield, dashboard, or center console and not interfere with driving.

Handheld device use is only allowed if the vehicle is stationary and is not located in a public travel lane. It is not allowed at red lights or stop signs. Do NOT stop on the side of a busy road or highway to use a mobile electronic device.

Mobile electronic devices **cannot** be used to write, send, or read an electronic message (including text messages, emails, instant messages, or accessing the Internet) while driving. GPS devices (including cell phones) can be used if the device is affixed, either temporarily or permanently, in the motor vehicle for the purpose of providing navigation assistance.

Drivers Under 18
Drivers under 18 cannot use any mobile electronic device for any reason while driving. The only exception is for reporting an emergency.

What is a Mobile Electronic Device?
The law defines a **"mobile electronic device"** as any hand-held or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing data communication between 2 or more persons, including, without limitation, a mobile telephone, a text messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, electronic equipment that is capable of playing a video game or digital video disk, equipment on which digital photographs are taken or transmitted or any combination thereof, or equipment that is capable of visually receiving a television broadcast; provided, however, that mobile electronic device shall not include any audio equipment or any equipment installed, or affixed, either temporarily or permanently, in a motor vehicle for the purpose of providing navigation or emergency assistance to the operator of such motor vehicle or video entertainment to the passengers in the rear seats of such motor vehicle.

Penalties for Violating the Law
The penalties for using a hand-held mobile electronic device while driving are the following:

- 1st offense - $100 fine
- 2nd offense - $250 fine, plus mandatory completion of a distracted driving educational program
- 3rd and subsequent offenses - $500 fine, plus insurance surcharge and mandatory completion of a distracted driving program

Negligent Operation and Injury from Mobile (Cell) Phone Use
It is a crime to injure a person or damage property because of negligent driving. If you crash because you were using a mobile electronic device, you will face criminal charges and lose your license.

Note: Federal regulations restrict the use of hand held mobile (cell) phones while operating a commercial motor vehicle.

Tips to Prevent Mobile (Cell) Phone Use While Driving
- Turn off app notifications.
- Put your phone on silent.
- Put your phone in the back seat.
- Pull over to a safe location (NOT the side of a busy road or highway) if you need to use your phone.

Driving Defensively

Even experienced drivers make mistakes. At some point, you will have to deal with equipment failures, bad weather, unskilled drivers, unpredictable pedestrians, and drivers who ignore traffic laws.

To prepare for unpredictable events, you should always **drive defensively**.

- Always keep good vision in front and around your vehicle.
- Stay alert and prepared for the unexpected.
- Keep your eyes on the road. Taking your eyes off the road even for a split second to look at a passenger or object inside your car can be very dangerous.
- Maintain space around vehicle in case you need to suddenly change lanes to avoid a crash. Be aware of who is beside and behind you, not just in front.
- Drive at the right speed and know when to slow down and stop.
- Always wear your safety belt.
- Do not drive if you have been drinking, are on medication, or are very tired.
- Keep your vehicle in good working order.
- Obey the rules of the road and give the right-of-way when appropriate.

Always look ahead of and around you, and check your mirrors often. Be aware of road conditions and possible hazards in front, to the sides, and behind you.

- Look at everything in front of you. Look for vehicles stopping and watch for people getting in or out of parked vehicles. Pay close attention to pedestrians or bicyclists sharing the road with you.
- Expect mistakes from other drivers.
- Watch for back-up lights of vehicles ahead of you.
- Pay close attention to crosswalks. Don't rely on traffic signals. Other drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians may ignore traffic signals.
- Always pay close attention near playgrounds, schoolyards, and shopping centers. Children, pedestrians, and bicyclists may be hidden from sight.
- Be aware that pedestrians, bicyclists, and other drivers may not hear you. This is especially important in crosswalks and parking lots. One out of every five individuals of driving age is Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
- Remember that right-of-way is something you give. A big part of driving defensively is giving the right-of-way to prevent unsafe traffic situations.

Your Health and Physical Condition

Have your eyesight checked every year or two. Fix any vision problems immediately. As you get older, your vision may get worse, or it may become harder to see at night.

You must always stay alert and in control of your vehicle. You need good vision and, if your hearing has become diminished, you need to be even more visually alert to anticipate changing driving conditions. You should never drive in the following cases:

- When you have been drinking alcohol
- When you have taken any prescription drug or over-the-counter medication that can cause drowsiness
- If you are under the influence of any drug
- When you are very tired
- When you are upset. Emotions like anger and depression can cause you to drive carelessly

On bright, sunny days, you should always wear sunglasses.

Checking Your Vehicle's Condition

Your passenger vehicle or motorcycle must be inspected for safety and emissions every year. Always follow the maintenance procedures recommended by your vehicle manufacturer. Every time you enter your vehicle or mount your motorcycle, make a quick visual check for low tire pressure or damage.

Brakes and Tires

Pay close attention to changes in your vehicle when braking. If you think you have a problem, have your brakes inspected immediately. If you feel the vehicle pull to one side when you brake, your brakes may need adjustment or repair.

Check your tires for proper inflation and wear. Rotate your tires as often as recommended by the vehicle or tire manufacturer. It is dangerous and illegal to drive a vehicle with extremely worn or damaged tires. Tires must have at least 2/32 inches of tread depth in the proper grooves and no fabric breaks or exposed cords.

The distance between the edge of a penny and the top of Lincoln's head is about 2/32 of an inch. A quick way to check your tire tread is to slide a penny into a tread groove. If you can see the top of Lincoln's head, your tires are worn out.

Steering

Your steering wheel should not feel loose. There should not be a delay

between when you turn the wheel and your tires respond. With power steering, you should check the fluid level regularly. If your vehicle makes a high-pitched noise when you turn, you should have your power steering inspected.

Lights and Glass
Check your headlights, brake lights, and turn signals regularly. Keep your lights clear of dirt, snow, and ice. Keep your windows and mirrors clean. Change your windshield wipers if they streak or fail to clear your windshield properly.

License Plates
You must keep your license plates clean and they cannot be blocked by anything. Your plate number must be visible from 60 feet at night. Registration stickers must only be placed in the upper right corner of the plate.

Safe Distances Around Your Car

Always keep enough space between your vehicle and others to give yourself room to stop safely or avoid hazards.

- Use the "three-second" rule to keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front of you. Pick an object in front of you, like a sign post or a tree. When the vehicle in front of you reaches that object, count out "one one-thousand, two one-thousand, three one-thousand". If you reach the object before you count three, you are too close. Slow down until you've put enough distance between you and the other vehicle.

The three-second rule is a minimum safe distance for good road conditions and moderate traffic. Count more for added safety and when traffic allows.

- Keep more space (at least four seconds) behind a motorcycle than you would for another vehicle.
- Keep more space (at least ten seconds) between your vehicle and heavy equipment (for example, dump trucks, tractors).
- Never cut in front of heavy equipment or tractor-trailers. These vehicles carry more weight and need much more space to stop safely.
- Never tailgate a vehicle in front of you. Tailgating is illegal and the main cause of rear-end crashes. The fine for tailgating can be as high as $100.
- If a tailgater is behind you, move to another lane or pull to the side of the road to let the tailgater pass.

Allow extra space for bad drivers and the following situations:

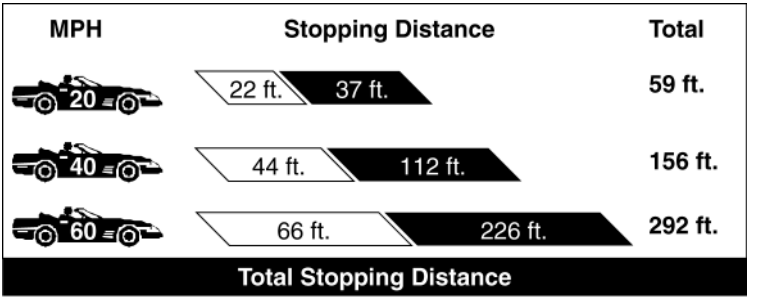
- Rain, snow, ice, or other poor weather or road conditions

- Blind driveways or obstructed-view driveways or roads
- Drivers backing out of parking spaces or driveways
- Children playing in yards or near the road

Braking and Stopping

Look far ahead so you have enough time to brake and stop safely. The time it takes you to react, think, and hit the brakes is called reaction time.

It takes about three-quarters of a second to react to a situation and step on the brake pedal. This time is also measured in feet traveled, or reaction distance.



Sample stopping distance statistics from *How to Drive*, A Text for Beginning Drivers by the American Automobile Association (Ninth Ed.) The white boxes are the reaction time distance and the black boxes are how far the vehicle travels after you hit the brakes.

At 50 mph, your vehicle will go another 55 feet in the three-quarters of a second it takes to react. Once you hit the brakes, you may go another 160 feet or more before you stop.

This is your average braking distance on dry, level, clear pavement.

Your total stopping distance is about 215 feet (55 feet + 160 feet). If road conditions are not clear and dry, your stopping distance will be more.

If your brakes and tires are working and the road is dry and level:

- At 60 mph, it takes about 292 feet (almost a whole football field) to react to a hazard, step on the brake, and safely stop.
- At just 30 mph, your total stopping distance will be about 104 feet.

These numbers are only for educational purposes, to show that motor vehicles need much more distance to stop safely than you may imagine. Actual stopping distances change with road, weather, and vehicle conditions.

You need more time to stop bigger, heavier vehicles, when you are going downhill, or are on wet, slippery, or uneven pavement. Make sure you give large trucks plenty of room when pulling in front of

them. Large trucks may require two times the stopping distance of passenger vehicles.

Follow these useful braking tips:

- Warn pedestrians, bicyclists, or other drivers of possible trouble. Brake early and gently when preparing to stop or turn.
- Do not let your foot rest on the brake pedal while driving. (This is called riding your brakes.)
- If your vehicle has antilock brakes, never pump the brakes.
- Your vehicle is more likely to leave the road at a curve. Always slow down near a curve or an area where you cannot see clearly ahead.

Using Your Horn, Headlights, and Emergency Signals

It is important to know how to use your vehicle's safety equipment.

Use your horn to:

- Warn pedestrians or other drivers of possible trouble
- Avoid crashes

Do not use your horn to:

- Show anger or complain about other drivers' mistakes
- Try to get a slower driver to move faster
- Try to get other vehicles moving in a traffic jam

You <u>must</u> use your headlights and taillights:

- From one-half hour after sunset until one-half hour before sunrise
- When you cannot clearly see people or vehicles 500 feet ahead due to insufficient light or weather conditions
- Whenever you use your windshield wipers (daytime running lights are not sufficient)
- In rain, snow, fog, or other weather that makes it hard to see
- Anytime you have trouble seeing other vehicles
- To alert another driver to turn on their headlights
- While driving through a tunnel

Use emergency lights and signals when your vehicle breaks down, so other drivers can see it. Move your vehicle as far to the side of the road as you can. For your own safety, stay off the road. Never change a flat tire in a traffic lane. Wait for help to arrive.

You can also use your emergency lights to warn drivers behind you about a traffic crash or hazard. Give other drivers as much warning as possible.

Advanced Driver Assistance Systems

Many cars and trucks now come with Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS). These can make driving safer, but only if used correctly. You must learn about your vehicle's systems before using them. Read the owner's manual to start learning. And remember that the driver is still the most important safety feature in your car.

Night Driving

Night driving is more dangerous than daytime driving. Vehicles, pedestrians, and obstacles may be harder to see. Always be extra careful at night. You must use your headlights from one-half hour after sunset until one-half hour before sunrise. You should do the following when driving at night:

- Do not drive when you are tired or drowsy.
- Drive more slowly at night, especially in an unfamiliar area. Keep a speed that will let you react and stop safely within the distance you can see ahead.
- Keep more space between your vehicle and other vehicles. Allow additional space when driving at night near trucks and heavy equipment.
- Put your inside rearview mirror in the "night" position. This will reduce the glare from headlights behind you. Keep inside lights off.
- Do not look straight at headlights. Look to the lower right side of your lane.
- Keep your windows and headlights clean.
- If another driver flashes headlights at you, your headlights may be off or your high beams may be on.

High Beam Headlights

High beam headlights normally let you see about 350 feet ahead. Low beam headlights normally let you see about 100 feet ahead.

- Only use high beams in dark areas where you cannot see the road surface ahead.
- You must lower your high beam headlights to low beam when you are within 500 feet of an oncoming vehicle or within 200 feet of a vehicle traveling ahead of you.
- If a driver is coming toward you with high beams, you may flick your headlights to remind the driver to change to low beams. If the driver does not change to low beams, stay to the right and do not turn on your high beams.

Drowsy Driving

Driving while tired or drowsy can be deadly. 633 people died in 2020 from drowsy driving related crashes (source: National Highway Traffic

Safety Administration). Drowsy driving crashes most often:

- Occur between midnight and 6 a.m., or in the late afternoon
- Involve a single driver (and no passengers) running off the road at a high rate of speed
- Occur on rural roads and highways

The ONLY true way to protect yourself from drowsy driving is to get enough sleep and to not drive when you feel tired. Drinking coffee and pulling over to a safe place for a nap can help temporarily, but only for a short time period.

When possible, avoid driving between midnight and 6 a.m. If you must drive at that time be alert for signs of drowsiness, such as crossing lines or hitting rumble strips. Do not drive after drinking alcohol, as alcohol can increase drowsiness. And always check medication labels (prescription and over the counter) to see if they can cause drowsiness.

Driving in Rain or Fog

Rain and wet roads make it harder to start, stop, and turn. Hard rain, fog, and mist can also make it more difficult to see. **The law requires you to use your headlights and taillights whenever you use your windshield wipers. Daytime running lights are not sufficient.**

Slow down as soon as the rain starts. Many roads are most slippery when rain first mixes with road dirt and oil and forms a greasy film. If a road is slippery, your tires can lose traction and your car can hydroplane.

Hydroplaning is caused by road conditions, water, and speed. It happens when your tires are riding on water and have no contact with the road. If your vehicle starts to hydroplane, you're driving too fast. Slowly step off the gas pedal. Never hit the brakes or turn suddenly. You may lose control and skid.

Following are some tips for driving in rain or fog:

- Make more space between your vehicle and others. You need more space to stop your vehicle. Be prepared to stop quickly and within the distance you can see ahead. A large truck may need twice as much distance to stop as a car or a motorcycle, especially when roads are wet or icy.
- Be careful of wet leaves on the road. They can be as slippery as ice.
- Keep your windshield wipers and window defoggers in good condition.
- In fog, use your low beam headlights to reduce glare.
- Always use your turn signals.
- If you cannot see the pavement or sign posts, slow down and look for road edge markings to guide you.

- Do not drive through puddles. Wet brakes do not work right. If you drive through a large puddle, apply your brakes lightly as soon as you can to dry them until you feel them working normally again.

The Highway Division has a 511 phone service. You can use this to get up-to-date information about traffic and weather conditions and construction projects. You can also report problems on the road. Service is available 24/7.

Dial 511 from your cell phone or 617-986-5511 (Metro-Boston), 508-499-5511 (Central Mass), or 413-754–5511 (Western Mass) from a landline.

For more information, visit MassDOT.State.MA.US/Highway/TrafficTravelResources/About511Massachusetts.aspx

Winter Driving

Driving in winter is difficult and dangerous for new and experienced drivers. Motor vehicles run very differently on ice and snow than on warm, dry pavement. You should practice driving in winter weather.

- Lower your speed. Drive carefully and accelerate slowly.
- Never lock your brakes on icy roads. You will lose steering control. If you skid, remember to **turn into the direction of the skid** (see *Driving Emergencies* in *Chapter Five*).
- Make more space between your vehicle and others. You need more space to stop safely on slippery surfaces. A large truck may need twice as much distance to stop as a car or a motorcycle, especially when roads are wet or icy.
- Be alert for emergency vehicles and yield to plows. Do not crowd plows.
- Bridges and highway overpasses freeze before the rest of the road and can be very slippery. This is because the ground does not insulate them.
- If it is snowing, start slowly. Test your brakes by tapping them gently to see how much traction your tires have.
- Keep your windshield wipers and defroster in good condition.
- Remove ALL ice and snow from your vehicle before driving. Clear all windows, windshield wipers, headlights, and brake lights. It is very important that you clear the roof, hood, and trunk so ice and snow does not blow into vehicles behind you. If you do not, you can be charged with negligent operation.
- Keep your gas tank at least half full to prevent the gas line from freezing.

- Keep your windshield washer filled with cleaning fluid that won't freeze.
- Keep a blanket, flashlight, and small shovel in your trunk.

If you have a truck and plow for compensation, you must have commercial plates.

Vulnerable Road Users Law

Massachusetts law defines 'vulnerable road users' as:

- Pedestrians
- Roadside workers
- Bicyclists
- People riding horses or horse drawn carriages
- People using:
  - Wheelchairs
  - Personal mobility devices
  - Motorized bicycles
  - Motorized scooters
  - Non-motorized scooters
  - Skateboards
  - Roller skates

When you pass a vulnerable road user, you must leave a safe passing distance of **at least four feet** between your vehicle and the road user. If it is safe, you may use all or part of the lane next to you and you may cross the center line if necessary. You must obey the speed limit while passing.



The sign to the right will be posted on roads that do not have designated bike lanes or separated paths.

Pedestrians

One in four motor vehicle deaths involve a pedestrian. Remember we are all pedestrians at times. To help keep everyone safe, take extra care to look for pedestrians, especially ones who may be distracted due to cell phones or headphones.

Getting distracted (even just for seconds), driving when you're tired, or drifting out of your lane can seriously injure or kill a pedestrian.

Pay close attention in busy areas with a lot of pedestrians. Be extra careful of:

- **Children** – Children are unpredictable and hard to see. Be careful near school zones, parks, bus stops, and playgrounds.
- **Joggers and Skaters** – Joggers and skaters do not always obey traffic signal and crosswalk rules.

- **Pedestrians, when you're backing up** – Be careful when backing up. Do not just use vehicle mirrors or sensors. Blind spots may hide people or objects behind the vehicle. Before getting into your vehicle, check behind for children or animals. You should turn your head and look out the window before you start to back up.
- **Visually impaired (blind) individuals** – Always stop for a blind pedestrian at a street crossing. Remain stopped until the person has safely crossed. Do not honk or wave the person on. Never pass another stopped vehicle. Blind pedestrians may use a white cane or a guide dog. The White Cane Law requires you to stop completely for a blind pedestrian crossing a street.
- **Deaf or Hard of Hearing individuals** – It is impossible to visually identify someone who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Do not assume that a pedestrian, bicyclist, or other driver can hear your car and will yield or move out of the way. It is always safer for you to yield, even if you have the right of way, than it is to create an unsafe condition.

  If you would like information on assistive listening and adaptive devices used by Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals, contact the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at Mass.Gov/MCDHH or call 617-740-1600.
- **Train and bus stops** – Pay close attention at and near mass transit stops, where pedestrian traffic may be heavier.
- **Senior centers** – Pay close attention in areas where there are more elderly pedestrians, such as around senior centers and senior residences. Seniors may have diminished eyesight and reduced hearing, mobility, and reaction times.

Remember that you must slow down and stop when necessary for a person walking in the street. Always look ahead for places where pedestrians may be hidden, such as around a curve, at the top of a hill, or between parked cars.

Bicycles and Mopeds



Bicyclists and moped riders have the same right to use public roadways as all other drivers (the only exceptions are limited-access or express state highways with posted signs saying bicycles and mopeds are not allowed). They must obey the same traffic control and right-of way laws. These riders can be hard to see in traffic and are not well protected against being hit by vehicles.

Drivers can seriously injure or kill bicyclists and moped riders simply by being distracted, drifting out their lane, or opening their door without looking.

When passing a bicycle or moped:

- Lower your speed. The wind caused by your vehicle can throw a rider off balance.

- Leave a lot of room between your vehicle and riders.
- If you don't have enough room to pass safely, wait for oncoming traffic to pass or for the lane to get wider.

Dim your headlights at night if a bicyclist is coming toward you. Be aware that a bicyclist or moped rider might need to swerve suddenly, just like any other driver. Always respect the rights of a bicyclist or moped rider to use the roadway, as you would respect the rights of another driver.

When parked on the side of a road, always check carefully for bicycles or mopeds before opening your vehicle door. See the *Danger of Open Doors to Bicyclists* section on page 116 for more information.

Motorcycles

Check Twice, Save A Life • Motorcycles Are Everywhere

Motorcycles are motor vehicles, just like cars and trucks. The number of motorcycles registered in Massachusetts keeps getting higher. The riding season usually goes from March through October, but some motorcyclists ride all year.

Studies have shown that drivers often overlook motorcycles and focus on larger vehicles. Be aware of motorcycles and share the road safely.

Motorcycles go as fast as cars and trucks. Riders face extra dangers caused by weather and road conditions. Motorcycles do not have the safety features of an automobile and the risk of injury in a crash is much higher.

About half of fatal motorcycle crashes involve a motorcycle being struck by another vehicle. Drivers should be especially alert for oncoming motorcycles when entering traffic or turning left across traffic (not just turns at intersections).

- **Changing lanes** – On the highway, pay extra attention when you change lanes or merge. Motorcycles can be hidden in blind spots because of their size. Always check your mirrors and blind spots for motorcycles. Signal early, and check twice before changing lanes.
- **Following Behind** – Leave extra space between your vehicle and a motorcycle in front of you. Use a four-second following distance (compared to a three-second for other motor vehicles).
- **Sharing lanes** – Motorcycles have the same right to use the full width of a lane. Even though a motorcycle may use a smaller part of the lane, you must never share a lane. Motorcyclists need to move within a lane for traffic maneuvers and to avoid road debris, potholes, or surface oil. **Never move into the same lane space as a motorcycle,**



It is illegal for a motorcycle operator to weave between lanes at any time.

even if the lane is wide and the motorcyclist is riding to one side. Crowding into a lane with a motorcycle is illegal and very dangerous.

- **Turning at Intersections** – Cars or trucks turning left in front of an oncoming motorcycle cause a lot of crashes. Pay extra attention to motorcycles at intersections. Motorcycles are smaller and can be hidden by other vehicles. It can be hard to judge their speed and position. Even if you have enough time to turn, an oncoming motorcyclist may not have time to safely change speed. Let the motorcycle safely pass through the intersection first.
- **Road and Weather Conditions** – Road conditions that are only small problems for cars and trucks can be big hazards for motorcycles. Gravel, potholes, and slippery surfaces can cause a motorcyclist to change speed and direction suddenly. Motorcycles need more distance to stop in bad weather. Always give a motorcycle extra space in case it needs to stop suddenly.

Follow these tips and share the road safely with motorcycles and other motor vehicles.

Motorcycle Safety

The RMV has a Motorcycle Manual. You must read it before you apply for a motorcycle license. The Motorcycle Manual has detailed information on motorcycle equipment, operation, riding gear, carrying passengers, and rules of the road. The Motorcycle Manual is available online at Mass.Gov/RMV.

Motorized Bicycle (Moped) Safety

A moped (also known as a motorized bicycle) is a pedal bicycle with a helper motor, or a non-pedal bicycle with a motor. Its maximum speed must be thirty (30) miles per hour (mph) or lower. Its cylinder capacity must be fifty (50) cubic centimeters or lower. It must have an automatic transmission.

You must have a valid driver's license (any class) or learner's permit to drive a moped. You must follow these rules when driving a moped:

- Do not drive faster than 25 mph.
- Do not ride on limited-access or express state highways with signs saying that bicycles are not allowed.
- Use the correct electronic and hand signals before stopping or turning.
- Do not ride on off-street recreational paths (you can use bicycle lanes along roads).
- Drivers and passengers must wear helmets that meet or exceed the US DOT standard.
- Obey all traffic laws and regulations.

- When operating with a learner's permit, do not carry any passengers.

You can be fined up to $100 for a violation of any of these rules.

Motorized Scooter Safety

A motorized scooter is any two or three-wheeled vehicle with handlebars and an electric or gas motor that can move the vehicle with or without human propulsion. Motorized scooters can either be designed for the driver to sit or stand.

The Registry of Motor Vehicles will not register motorized scooters.

You must have a valid driver's license (any class) or learner's permit to operate a motorized scooter. You can be issued tickets for violating motor vehicle laws.

You must follow these rules when driving a motorized scooter:

- Do not drive faster than 20 mph.
- Do not drive on limited-access or express state highways.
- Wear a helmet that meets or exceeds the US DOT standard.
- Always stay to the right side of the road, even when passing another vehicle.
- Use the correct electronic and hand signals before stopping or turning.
- Do not drive after sunset or before sunrise.
- Do not carry any passengers.
- Obey all traffic laws and regulations.

You can be fined up to $25 (1st Offense); $25-$50 (2nd Offense); $50-$100 (3rd + Offense).

All fees are subject to change at any time.

Limited Use Vehicle Safety

A limited use vehicle can have two or more wheels. It can go faster than 30 mph, but not more than 40 mph. A limited use vehicle can either be a motorcycle or a passenger vehicle; it depends on how many wheels it has.

You must have a valid driver's license or learner's permit to drive a limited use vehicle. If the limited use vehicle is a motorcycle, the license or permit must be Class M. If the limited use vehicle is a passenger vehicle, the license or permit must be Class D.

You cannot drive a limited use vehicle on a limited-access or express state highway or any road with a speed limit faster than 40 mph.

Low Speed Vehicle Safety

A Low Speed Vehicle (LSV) has four wheels and can only go between 20 and 25 mph. It must have a gross weight rating lower than 3,000 lbs.

You must have a valid Class D driver's license or learner's permit to drive a low speed vehicle.

You cannot drive a low speed vehicle on a limited access or express state highway or any road with a speed limit faster than 30 mph. Low speed vehicles may also not be allowed in areas with heavy traffic. You must obey all traffic laws and regulations. You can be fined for violations.

Bicycle Safety Laws

Bicycle safety laws have been updated in recent years to place more responsibility on bicyclists, motorists, and on renters of bicycles while giving police officers more training in bicycle safety and traffic enforcement. This should result in better awareness of safety concerns and enforcement of bicycle safety laws.

If a police officer sees a bicyclist commit a traffic violation, the officer can issue a citation the same way they would for a motorist. The bicyclist can be fined, but it will not affect their driving record. A bicyclist must give the officer their true name and address when asked and can be fined for not doing so. A bicyclist can also be arrested for refusing to give their name.

Companies that rent bicycles must offer helmets that meet all safety requirements for renters.

The law also allows motorists to be cited for a motor vehicle violation for certain behaviors around bicycles. This should encourage motorists to be more careful.

For a list of laws for bicyclists and laws for motorists in the presence of bicyclists, please see page 112.

Keeping Your License



Driving in Massachusetts is a privilege. It is not a right. You earn driving privileges by passing a learner's permit exam and a road test. These tests prove that you can operate a motor vehicle safely and within the law. Once you have earned your driver's license, you are responsible for your actions as a driver, as well as the safety of your passengers, pedestrians, and everybody else on the road around you.

The RMV tracks your history as a driver. This is called your **driving record**. It lists three types of events that can cause you to lose your driving privileges:

- Civil motor vehicle infractions
- Criminal violations
- Motor vehicle crashes where you are found to be more than 50 percent at fault

This chapter explains these three events. It also explains how the law works and how to avoid losing your driving privileges.

The RMV must sometimes suspend or revoke your driver's license. These situations are described in this chapter. A suspension or revocation means that your driving privileges are taken away. It can be for a specific amount of time or it can be indefinite. (See the *License Suspension or Revocation* section later in this chapter.)

You cannot renew an expired license if you have unpaid parking violations, unpaid excise taxes, outstanding court warrants, outstanding E-ZPass/Fast Lane violations, or Tobin Bridge violations. (See the *Reasons for License Nonrenewal* section later in this chapter.)

Motor Vehicle Violations and Penalties

When you break a motor vehicle law, you may receive a citation. A citation may require you to pay a fine, lose your driving privileges, appear in court, or go to jail. Major traffic law violations are criminal offenses. Examples are driving while intoxicated or leaving the scene of a crash. They carry strong penalties and could cause you to lose your license. You can also lose your license by getting several traffic violations. These include driving above the speed limit or failing to obey traffic signals.

Motor vehicle violations can be civil or criminal. The following sections explain the differences between the two types. For many violations, the penalties may be stronger if you have a Junior Operator's License, you are under 21, you are a repeat offender, or you are driving with a Commercial Driver's License (CDL).

Depending on the violation, you may get more than one penalty. These may include a fine, loss of license, and/or a prison sentence.

Civil Motor Vehicle Infractions

Civil violations, such as not obeying traffic signals or speeding, are noncriminal. They can usually be settled by paying fines. If you get a citation from a police officer for a civil motor vehicle infraction (CMVI), you must pay the required fine or request a hearing to dispute it. You have 20 days to do this. Every fine for a CMVI that comes from Chapter 89 or 90 of the Massachusetts General Laws will have an added $5 public safety surcharge.

If you request a hearing, you must pay a $25 filing fee to the RMV. You can either send your payment with the citation when you request a hearing, or you can pay online or by mail when you receive a letter from the RMV indicating that you owe the fee. If you are found NOT RESPONSIBLE by the court for ALL violations on the civil citation, the $25 filing fee will be refunded.

If you do not respond to a citation within 20 days, you will be found responsible and charged a large late fee. Failure to pay the citation and late fee will cause your license to be suspended. When you pay a fine, you accept responsibility for that violation. Your driving record will show responsibility if you pay the citation by mail, request a hearing and are ordered by a court to pay the fine, or fail to respond to the citation within 20 days.

The RMV records all moving violations in Massachusetts on your driving record. Moving violations can increase your motor vehicle insurance rate. They may also cause your license to be suspended.

Parking violations are not CMVIs. They are handled by the city or town that issued the citations or tickets. If you do not pay the violation, you will not be able to renew your driver's license or vehicle registration.

You can pay for moving violations using a credit card. Call the RMV Contact Center or visit the RMV website at Mass.Gov/RMV. Or you can mail the payment to:
RMV Citations - Processing Center, PO Box 55890, Boston, MA, 02205-5890

Speeding Violations

Your Speed - 73 mph
Speed Limit - 55 mph
18 mph over the limit
First 10 mph = $105
Next 8 mph (8 x 10) = $80
$185 total fine

The beginning of *Chapter Four* explains the speed-limit laws in Massachusetts. The lowest penalty for driving above the speed limit is a $100 fine, plus an additional $5 public safety surcharge which is added to all speeding violations. If you drive more than ten miles per hour (mph) over the speed limit, you must pay an extra $10 for each mph you were traveling above the first ten. For example, if you drive 73 mph on a highway with a posted speed limit of 55 mph, you would get a $185 dollar fine. By law, all fines for speeding violations include a $50 surcharge. The entire surcharge goes to the Head Injury Treatment Services Trust Fund. Speeding is often a factor in motor vehicle crashes that cause serious head injuries. The Legislature created this trust fund to treat people with head injuries.

Work Zones

If you are caught speeding in a posted work zone, the speeding fine is **doubled**.

Your license will be suspended for 30 days if you are found guilty for three speeding violations in a 12-month period. If you have a Junior Operator's License, a 1st offense will cause a 90-day license suspension. Further offenses will cause a one-year license suspension.

Criminal Violations

Criminal motor vehicle violations are serious offenses. If you commit a criminal motor vehicle violation, you may be arrested immediately, your vehicle may be towed, your license may be taken away, and you may be sent to jail until you go to court. If you are convicted of a criminal motor vehicle offense, the court will set any fine or prison term.

Criminal motor vehicle offenses include driving with a suspended license, operating under the influence (OUI), and leaving the scene of a crash. The *License Suspension or Revocation* section of this chapter has tables that list the penalties for many criminal motor vehicle offenses.

A police officer may arrest you and you may face criminal charges if you refuse to…

- Give your name and address
- Give the name and address of the person who owns the vehicle
- Show your driver's license
- Show a valid registration certificate for the vehicle
- Sign your name in front of the officer

Out-of-State Violations

Out-of-state motor vehicle violations impact your record just as if they occurred in Massachusetts.

- Do not ignore out-of-state violations. Failure to pay or appear in another jurisdiction for a violation will impact your license status and right to operate a motor vehicle in Massachusetts.
- Out-of-state violations result in some or all of the following penalties: immediate suspension or revocation of your driving privileges until your obligations are met; payment of reinstatement fees; increased insurance premiums; required driver retraining classes; and/or a mandatory suspension period.
- The RMV applies Massachusetts suspension penalties for out-of-state violations. In some cases, the Massachusetts penalty may be stricter than the penalty imposed by the other state.
- If your driving privileges are suspended, you must present proof to the RMV that you resolved your out-of-state obligations, and pay a reinstatement fee (minimum of $100) to Massachusetts before your Massachusetts license can be reinstated.

At-Fault Crashes

Your driving record is also affected if you are at fault in a motor vehicle crash. You are more than 50 percent at fault for a crash if your insurance company...

1. Finds you at fault according to one of the 19 Standards of Fault listed on page 60. One example is causing a crash while driving on the wrong side of the road. Another example is crashing into another vehicle from behind.

   and

2. Has paid more than $1000 for collision, limited collision, or damage to someone else's property or has paid more than $1000 for bodily injury (if there is no collision or damage to someone else's property over $1000 from the same incident).

All at-fault crashes you are charged with are listed on your driving record. At-fault crashes and motor vehicle violations count toward possible license suspension.

Surchargeable Events

Motor vehicle violations and at-fault crashes are called surchargeable events. Each surchargeable event counts toward a possible license suspension. Most out-of-state traffic convictions count as if they took place in Massachusetts.

If you are found guilty for three speeding violations within a 12-month period, your license will be suspended automatically for 30 days. The 12-month period starts when you either pay or are found guilty for the first citation.

A Junior Operator license (for drivers under age 18) will be suspended for 90 days for a first speeding citation and one year for any later citation. For a first drag racing citation, a Junior Operator license will be suspended for one year. A later drag racing citation will cause a three year suspension.

If you have three surchargeable events within a two-year period, your license may be suspended. The RMV will send you a letter telling you to complete a Driver Retraining course (see the next section). You must complete the retraining course within 90 days or your license will be suspended until you complete the course.

If you have seven surchargeable events within a three-year period, your license will be suspended automatically for 60 days.

Surchargeable events also affect your motor vehicle insurance. The Merit Rating Board runs the Safe Driver Insurance Plan (SDIP). Under SDIP, your insurance premium is determined by your driving record. If you are a safe driver, your rate may go down. Your rate will increase if you are convicted of moving violations, or if you are more than 50 percent at fault in a crash.

Driver Retraining Course

If you get three or more surchargeable events on your driving record within a two-year period, you *must* complete the Massachusetts Driver Retraining Course. If you do not, your license will be suspended. This course does not teach driving skills. It helps you learn to change your driving behavior.

Standards of Fault

- **Collision with a lawfully or an unlawfully parked vehicle**
- **Rear-end collision**
- **Out-of-lane collision**
- **Failure to signal**
- **Failure to proceed with due caution from a traffic control signal or sign**
- **Collision on wrong side of road**
- **Operating in the wrong direction**
- **Collision at an uncontrolled intersection**
- **Collision while in the process of backing up**
- **Collision while making a left turn or a U-turn across the travel path of a vehicle traveling in the same or opposite direction**
- **Leaving or exiting from a parked position, a parking lot, an alley, or a driveway**
- **Opened or opening vehicle door(s)**
- **Single-vehicle collision**
- **Failure to obey the rules and regulations for driving**
- **Unattended vehicle collision**
- **Collision while merging onto a highway or into a rotary**
- **Noncontact operator causing collision**
- **Failure to yield the right-of-way to emergency vehicles when required by law**
- **Collision at a "T" intersection (you entered from a side road)**

To enroll in a Driver Retraining course, call the National Safety Council at 1-800-215-1581.

After you are told by the RMV that you have three or more surchargeable events, you will be sent a driver retraining information packet. This packet has information about the course, the fees, and how to enroll. The eight-hour retraining program is held at many locations throughout the state. It is two four-hour sessions. However, one eight-hour Saturday session may be available in your area. Completing the Driver Retraining course does *not* remove offenses or surcharges from your driving record. It also does *not* replace any other requirements. For example, if you were convicted of drunk driving, you may also have to complete an alcohol treatment or education program.

Driving Records

An attested copy of a Massachusetts Public Driving Record is suitable for official purposes and is stamped to indicate it is an authentic RMV

document. An attested copy of a driving record can be requested online at Mass.Gov/RMV, in all RMV Service Centers, by mail, or at the Court Records Department at 136 Blackstone Street, Boston MA. The cost of an attested driving record is $20. You can pay this by check, money order, or cash in a service center, or by VISA, MasterCard, Discover, or American Express online. To order by mail, send a completed *Public Driving Record Request Form* and check or money order to the address below. If you do not need the driving record to be attested, you can order an unattested driving record for $8 (this option is only available online).

Driver Control/ Court Records, Registry of Motor Vehicles, P.O. Box 55896, Boston, MA 02205-5896 - If you order a driving record by mail or phone, it may take ten business days to get it.

Checks or money orders must be payable to MassDOT. Make sure your name, address, and driver's license number are printed on your check. If you live out of state, please indicate where you want your driving record mailed.

Sections of Chapter 64 of the Acts of 2016 limit the public release of certain drug offense information, as well as expired warrant and child support information, that previously displayed on Public Driving Records. For information on accessing an RMV document containing these offenses, call Court Records at 857-368-8195 or visit Court Records in-person at the Haymarket RMV Service Center, 136 Blackstone Street, Boston MA.

All fees are subject to change at any time.

License Suspension or Revocation

The Registry of Motor Vehicles can suspend or revoke your driver's license. This can be done by Massachusetts law or when you are seen as a threat to public safety. Some motor vehicle violations require your license to be suspended or revoked immediately. Your license can also be suspended or revoked if you commit a number of moving violations or if you are at fault in a number of crashes.

Reasons for License Suspension

The RMV must sometimes suspend or revoke a driver's license. The charts in this section show when a suspension is mandatory. The RMV can also choose to suspend or revoke a license in the following cases:

- Immediate threat — If the RMV believes that your driving is an immediate threat to public safety, it can suspend your learner's permit or driver's license immediately.
- Improper operation — If you have operated a motor vehicle improperly, the RMV can suspend your driving privileges.
- Fake ID — Even if you are not convicted, the RMV can suspend your driving privileges for six months (or one year after a conviction) for the following offenses:

- Transferring, altering, or defacing a license/ID
- Making, using, carrying, selling, or distributing a false license/ID
- Using somebody else's license/ID
- Furnishing false information to obtain a license/ID

Mandatory License Suspensions (18 Years and Older)

Situation	Explanation	Suspension Period	Fee to Reinstate
Three Speeding Violations	Three speeding violations/ responsible findings within any one-year period.	30 days	$100
Three Surchargeable Events	Any combination of moving violations and surchargeable crashes that total three surchargeable events within a two-year period.	Must complete Driver Retraining course within 90 days or license will be suspended indefinitely until course is completed	$100
Seven Surchargeable Events	Any combination of moving violations and surchargeable crashes that total seven surchargeable events within a three-year period.	60 days	$100
Habitual Traffic Offender	A total of three major moving violations or any combination of twelve major or minor moving violations within a five-year period.	Four years	$500
Out-of-State Suspension	License has been suspended or revoked in another state.	Until the out-of-state suspension is resolved	$100

Many of the offenses in the chart above may also require you to serve time in jail.

Additional suspension periods will apply to many of the offenses in the chart above when Junior Operators commit them and alcohol or drugs are involved. For more information, see the *Under 21 Alcohol Offenses* section later in this chapter.

Customers serving a mandatory suspension for certain drug trafficking offenses may seek a hardship license at any time during their suspension period.

Mandatory PERMIT Suspensions

Junior Operators Only (16 1/2 to 18 years)

Violation	Suspension Period	Reinstatement Requirements	Fee to Reinstate
Conviction for Driving Without a Licensed Driver (c. 90, §8B)	60 days— first offense 180 days— second offense One year— subsequent offenses	All offenses require you to retake the learner's permit exam. Second offense requires a Driver Attitudinal Retraining course.	$100
Conviction for Driving During the Night Restriction (c. 90, §10) (c. 90, §8B)	60 days— first offense 180 days— second offense One year— subsequent offenses	All offenses require you to retake the learner's permit exam. Second offense requires a Driver Attitudinal Retraining course.	$100
Conviction for Speeding (c. 90, §17) (c. 90, §17A) (c. 90, §18)	90 days— first offense One year— second or subsequent offense	All offenses require a new learner's permit exam.	$100
Conviction for Drag Racing (c. 90, §17B)	One year— first offense Three years— second or subsequent offense	All offenses require a new learner's permit exam and a Driver Attitudinal Retraining course. In addition, you may be required to take a State Courts Against Road Rage (SCARR) course.*	$500-first offense $1000-second or subsequent offense
Conviction for the Use of a Mobile Electronic Device (text or phone) (c. 90, §8M)	60 days— first offense 180 days— second offense One year— subsequent offenses	First offense requires a $100 fine, a new learner's permit exam, and a Driver Attitudinal Retraining Course. The fine is $250 for a second offense and $500 for a third offense.	$100
Conviction for Negligent Operation and Injury from Mobile Phone Use (c. 90, §24)	180 days—- first offense One year— second or subsequent offense	Second and subsequent offenses require a new learner's permit exam.	$500

Mandatory LICENSE Suspensions

Junior Operators Only (16 1/2 to 18 years)

Violation	Suspension Period	Reinstatement Requirements	Fee to Reinstate
Conviction for Violating the Passenger or Night Restriction (c. 90, §8) (c. 90, §10)	60 days— first offense 180 days— second offense One year— subsequent offenses	Second and subsequent offenses require a Driver Attitudinal Retraining course. Third and subsequent offenses require a new learner's permit exam and road test.	$100
Conviction for Speeding (c. 90, §17) (c. 90, §17A) (c. 90, §18)	90 days— first offense One year— second or subsequent offense	All offenses require a new learner's permit exam, a Driver Attitudinal Retraining course, and a new road test. In addition, you may be required to take a State Courts Against Road Rage (SCARR) course.*	$500
Conviction for Drag Racing (c. 90, §17B)	One year— first offense Three years— second or subsequent offense	All offenses require a new learner's permit exam, a Driver Attitudinal Retraining course, and a new road test. In addition, you may be required to take a State Courts Against Road Rage (SCARR) course.*	$500 - first offense
Conviction for Driving Negligently or Recklessly/ Operating to Endanger (c. 90, §24)	180 days— first offense One year— second or subsequent offense (within a three year period)	Second and subsequent offenses require a new learner's permit exam and a new road test.	$500
Conviction for the Use of a Mobile Electronic Device (text or phone) (c. 90, §8M)	60 days— first offense 180 days— second offense One year— subsequent offenses	First offense requires a $100 fine, a new learner's permit exam, a Driver Attitudinal Retraining Course, and a new road test. The fine is $250 for a second offense and $500 for a third offense.	$100
Conviction for Negligent Operation and Injury from Mobile Phone Use (c. 90, §24)	180 days— first offense One year— second or subsequent offense	Second and subsequent offenses require a new learner's permit exam and a new road test.	$500

Note: In addition to any other penalty required by law, Massachusetts General Laws chapter 90, section 24p requires that any Junior Operator who is convicted of Operating Under the Influence (OUI), Operating to Endanger, Leaving the Scene of a Crash, Drinking from an Open Alcohol Container, OUI with Serious Bodily Injury, Unauthorized Use of a Motor Vehicle, Reckless/ Negligent Operation, Loaning/ Allowing Another to Use Your License or Learner's Permit, or Motor Vehicle Homicide will face a 180 day suspension (in addition to any other suspension required by law) for a first offense, or a one year suspension for any subsequent offense. This additional suspension only applies to Junior Operators, and only in cases in which they did not already receive an additional suspension for failing or refusing a breath test.

In addition to the penalties listed the previous charts, your parent or guardian will be notified of the suspension.

For more information on, or to register for, a Driver Attitudinal Retraining course or a State Courts Against Road Rage (SCARR) course, visit Mass.Gov/RMV and click on "Teens and Parents."

***A Massachusetts JOL License or Permit holder that commits certain categories of motor vehicle violations is required under law to complete the SCARR program. Drivers may also be mandated to complete SCARR as assigned by a specific court. A Junior Operator will only be required to take the SCARR course one time. Visit Mass.Gov/RMV for more information.**

Other Reasons for License Suspensions

Since a driver's license is a privilege and not a right, the RMV is also required by law to suspend a driver's license for some reasons not related to driving. For example, your license will be suspended if you:

- Have failed to pay required child support
- Have failed to register as a sex offender
- Have been convicted of certain drug trafficking offenses
- Have failed to pay Massachusetts income tax
- Have made a bad payment to the RMV (for example, you paid with a check that was later rejected or you paid with a credit card and later canceled the payment with the bank)

If your license was suspended for a bad payment, you must pay the original fee, a license reinstatement fee, and a $15 fee to clear your bad payment. You can make a reservation to pay at any RMV Full Service Center. You must either use cash or a certified bank check payable to MassDOT.

Criminal Offenses and Suspensions		
Criminal Conviction	Suspension Period	Fee to Reinstate
Operating a motor vehicle with a suspended or revoked license	60 days–One year	$500
Operating a motor vehicle without the owner's authority / larceny of a motor vehicle	One–Three years	$500
Leaving the scene of a crash when a person is injured	One–Two years	$500
Leaving the scene of a crash involving property damage	60 days–One year	$500
Operating to endanger	60 days–One year	$500
Motor vehicle homicide	15 years–Lifetime	$500
Vehicular manslaughter	15 years–Lifetime	$500
Operating under the influence of alcohol or drugs	One year (first) Two years (second) Eight years (third) Ten years (fourth) Lifetime (fifth)	$500 (first) $700 (second) $1200 (third) $1200 (fourth) N/A
Any drug trafficking related conviction (except a Class D substance) (Operation of a vehicle is not required)	One–Five years	$100
Drag racing (by drivers over the age of 18)	30 days-180 days	$500 - $1,000
Negligent Operation and Injury from Mobile Phone Use	60 days–One year	$500

If you have questions about...

- **Child support, contact the Department of Revenue's Child Support Services Division at 1-800-332-2733.**
- **Registering as a sex offender, contact the Sex Offender Registry Board at 978-740-6503.**

Out-of-State Suspensions

Out-of-state suspensions or revocations affect your Massachusetts license. Your license **will be suspended** in Massachusetts until any out-of-state suspension or revocation is cleared. When your license is reinstated in the other state, you must bring either a reinstatement letter or a current driving record from that state to any RMV Full Service Center. You may also need to give additional information. Your reinstatement letter or driving record cannot be over 30 days old.

Each U.S. state must tell the Massachusetts RMV about any traffic offenses you commit there. **These offenses will be treated as if they happened in Massachusetts if they are a "like" offense.**

To determine a "like" offense, the RMV will look at what the other state's law prohibits. It does not matter if the other state chose to assess a higher or lower penalty, or treat the offense as a civil or criminal infraction.

The RMV must apply Massachusetts suspension rules to out-of-state violations, even if the offense did not cause a suspension in the other state.

When Your License Is Suspended or Revoked. . .

If the RMV suspends or revokes your driver's license, you *must* stop driving immediately. You have lost your driving privileges. It is illegal for you to operate any motor vehicle.

Driving Without a License

It is illegal to drive in Massachusetts without a valid driver's license or permit.

Driving With a Suspended License

If your license or permit has been suspended or revoked for any reason, it is *not* valid. You are *not* allowed to drive in Massachusetts or anywhere else. **Driving with a suspended or revoked license is a criminal motor vehicle violation. You may face a large fine and/or jail sentence, as well as additional penalties.**

License Reinstatement

To reinstate your driver's license or right to operate a motor vehicle, you may need a hearing. You have the right to a hearing with a Hearings Officer. Visit Mass.Gov/RMV for hearing information and to schedule a

Penalties for Operating a Motor Vehicle Under the Influence of Alcohol or Drugs

Conviction	Fine	Prison Term	License Suspension
First Offense	$500–$5,000	Maximum 2 1/2 years	One Year
For your first offense, the court may allow you to complete an alcohol education course to reduce your license suspension period.			Over 21, 45–90 days, Under 21, 210 days
Second Offense	$600–$10,000	Minimum 30 days Maximum 2 1/2 years	Two years
Third Offense (Felony)	$1,000–$15,000	Minimum 150 days Maximum Five years	Eight years
Fourth Offense (Felony)	$1,500–$25,000	Minimum One year Maximum Five years	Ten years
Fifth Offense (Felony)	$2,000–$50,000	Minimum Two years Maximum Five years	Lifetime

hearing. The Hearings Officer will then call you and conduct the hearing by phone.

During your hearing, the Hearings Officer will review your case. This will include your driving record and all laws and regulations that apply. Most suspensions are mandatory, and the hearing is only about whether the law is being applied correctly.

Once you have been found guilty or responsible, the facts of the case are not important. The Hearings Officer will not be able to prevent a valid suspension. The Hearings Officer may take up to ten business days before making a decision.

You must pay a fee to reinstate a suspended or revoked license. Most fees are $100. Fees for suspensions caused by serious offenses may be as high as $1,200.

For license suspensions of two years or more, you must also pass a learner's permit exam and road test to reinstate your license. You must provide identification documents to take a learner's permit exam and road test (see Mass.Gov/ID).

All fees are subject to change at any time.

License Suspension Periods for Failed Chemical Tests

All drivers will fail a chemical test if they have a Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) of 0.08 or greater. Drivers under 21 have the same standard for criminal purposes, but will face administrative sanctions for tests with a BAC as low as 0.02.

AGE	LICENSE SUSPENSION
Drivers over age 21	License is suspended for 30 days or until the conclusion of the court case, whichever is shorter. The suspension will end if the case is concluded either before or during the 30-day period. If the court finds you guilty, you will then face whatever sanctions ordered by the court.
Drivers age 18 to 21	License is suspended for 30 days, plus an additional 180 days, pursuant to MGL c.90, s. 24P. If this is your first operating under the influence case, the 180-day suspension can be waived upon entry into a Department of Public Health (DPH) approved alcohol education program.
Drivers under age 18	License is suspended for 30 days, plus an additional one year, pursuant to MGL c.90, s. 24P. If this is your first operating under the influence case, the one-year suspension can be reduced to 180 days upon entry into a Department of Public Health (DPH) approved alcohol education program.

Note: The additional 180-day or one-year suspension for drivers under age 21 is designed to get youths charged with operating under the influence, or with having a BAC of 0.02 or higher, to undergo alcohol education. **It does not matter what happens with your court case. Even if you win the case, it will not change the requirement for you to take the alcohol education course.**

License Suspension Periods for Refusing a Chemical Test

Note: For this table, a prior operating under the influence (OUI) offense refers to a court conviction for OUI or a court-ordered assignment to an alcohol education program. Chemical test refusals do not count as prior OUI offenses.

AGE	LICENSE SUSPENSION	
Drivers over age 21	No Prior OUI Offenses	180 days
	One Prior OUI Offense	Three years
	Two Prior OUI Offenses	Five years
	Three or More Prior OUI Offenses	Lifetime
Drivers age 18 to 21	No Prior OUI Offenses	Three years + 180 days
	One Prior OUI Offense	Three years + 180 days
	Two Prior OUI Offenses	Five years + 180 days
	Three or More Prior OUI Offenses	Lifetime

Note: The additional 180-day suspension for drivers under age 21 is designed to get youths charged with OUI who refuse a chemical test to undergo alcohol education. It does not matter what happens with your court case. **Even if you win the case, it will not change the requirement for you to take an alcohol education course.** If this is your first OUI case, the 180-day suspension can be waived upon entry into a Department of Public Health (DPH) approved alcohol education program.

Drivers under age 18	No Prior OUI Offenses	Three years + One year
	One Prior OUI Offense	Three years + One year
	Two Prior OUI Offenses	Five years + One year
	Three or More Prior OUI Offenses	Lifetime

Note: The additional one-year suspension for drivers under age 18 is designed to get youths charged with OUI who refuse a chemical test to undergo alcohol education. It does not matter what happens with your court case. **Even if you win the case, it will not change the requirement for you to take an alcohol education course.** If this is your first OUI case, the one-year suspension can be reduced to 180 days upon entry into a Department of Public Health (DPH) approved alcohol education program.

Alcohol, Drugs, and Driving

The facts are simple. You cannot drive safely after drinking alcohol or taking other drugs. Alcohol is a drug. It is a depressant that affects your vision, reaction time, coordination, and judgment. Even small amounts of alcohol or other drugs can lower the mental and physical abilities you need to drive safely. This includes some over-the-counter medicines. You do not have to be drunk or completely intoxicated to be a dangerous driver.

Safety must always be your first responsibility. If you take any substance that affects your awareness and your reflexes, you are no longer safe to drive.

Each year in the United States, alcohol causes about 30% of all highway deaths. This does not include the thousands of drivers, passengers, and pedestrians who are seriously hurt or permanently disabled. It does not include the millions of dollars of damage. It does not include the tragedies that friends and families must face. All of this is caused by drivers operating under the influence (OUI) of alcohol or drugs.

Because driving under the influence is so dangerous, Massachusetts has very strong penalties for OUI violations. The chart on page 68 shows the penalties for each OUI conviction.

Alcohol

Whether it's beer, wine, or hard liquor, alcohol is a depressant. **It slows your reflexes, increases the time you need to react, and distorts your vision and judgment.** Alcohol also often makes you *feel* more confident. This can cause you to take chances while driving that you normally wouldn't take. Alcohol use also makes you less likely to remember to use your safety belt, more likely to speed, and less able to stay in your lane. This is a dangerous combination that often leads to serious motor vehicle crashes and tragic deaths. Alchohol use makes the risk of a crash five times more likely. Alcohol use combined with marijuana use makes the risk of a crash twelve times more likely.

In addition to the fines listed in the previous charts, you will have to pay any RMV reinstatement fees before you can get your license back.

Even one alcoholic drink in an hour can affect your driving. It can be much worse if you are tired, emotionally upset, or haven't eaten. No one is immune to alcohol. After drinking, your ability to drive safely is impaired. It does not matter how much you try to be careful or concentrate. There is still a drug inside your body affecting you physically and mentally.

If you have used, or plan on using alcohol, make sure you have a safe option to get home. Appoint a designated driver, take a taxi, use a rideshare app like Uber or Lyft, or call a friend or family member for a ride.

Blood Alcohol Content

When you drink alcohol, your body works hard to remove it from your system. You *do not* digest alcohol as you do food. Alcohol is processed by your liver and kidneys. This takes time. There is no quick way to sober up or to get the alcohol out of your body. Drinking black coffee, taking a cold shower, exercising, or eating might make you feel more alert after drinking alcohol. However, none of these actions affect how quickly alcohol leaves your body.

Ideally, if you have *any* alcoholic beverage, you should *not* drive. Knowing what is "too much" alcohol can be difficult. The amount of unprocessed alcohol in your body is measured as **blood alcohol content (BAC)**. This can be measured by a blood or a breath test. Your BAC depends on several factors:

- Your body weight
- How much alcohol you had to drink
- The amount of food you ate before drinking
- The length of time you have been drinking alcohol
- The speed your body processes alcohol (everyone processes alcohol differently)

The *kind* of beverage you drink does not matter. What is important is the amount of alcohol you drink over a period of time. **Each of the following drinks contain about the same amount of alcohol** (about 1/2 ounce) (source: National Institutes of Health):

- 12 ounce beer
- Five ounce glass of wine
- One and a half ounce serving of 80-proof liquor (even if mixed with a soft drink)

Any one of these drinks can raise an average person's BAC by 0.02. If you have more than one drink in an hour, your BAC will rise. Only time will rid you of the effects of alcohol.

Alcohol Tests

Massachusetts has an Implied Consent Law. Every licensed driver in the state must agree to consent to a breathalyzer or blood test in certain cases. If a police officer believes you are operating under the influence of alcohol, he/she has the right to ask you to...

- Perform a field sobriety test
- Submit to a breathalyzer or blood test to calculate your BAC, if you have been arrested

You are operating above the legal limit if you have a BAC of 0.08 or higher. Massachusetts has a "zero-tolerance" law for drivers under 21. Any driver under 21 will face penalties for having a BAC of 0.02 or higher.

If your BAC is above the legal limit OR if you refuse a breathalyzer or blood test, the police officer must take away your license. You will be given a notice of suspension, which is effective immediately. See the charts on pages 69 and 70 for the suspension periods.

Under-21 Alcohol Offenses

Drivers under age 21 are twice as likely as other drivers to be involved in alcohol-related crashes. This is one reason why laws are stronger for under-21 drivers.

Massachusetts has a "zero-tolerance" law. If you are under 21 and are caught with a BAC as low as 0.02 while driving, you will lose your license.

Ignition Interlock Devices

If you had **two or more operating under the influence offenses** and are eligible for a hardship license or for license reinstatement, you must have an Ignition Interlock Device. It must be attached to your motor vehicle at your expense.

If you get a hardship license, you must use the device the **entire time you have the hardship license**. You must keep using the device **for two more years after your license has been reinstated**.

The RMV strongly recommends that you arrive prior to 4:00 p.m. for an Ignition Interlock Device hearing.

Ignition Interlock Device Road Tests

If you are required to use an Ignition Interlock Device and need to schedule a road test, you can schedule it online at Mass.Gov/RMV if you can provide a vehicle that has the device installed, has a center console brake, and has a seat for the sponsor.

If you have a vehicle with an Ignition Interlock Device installed, but it does not have a center console brake, or it does not have a seat for the sponsor, you cannot schedule a road test online. You must call the RMV Contact Center and request a supervisor call you back to schedule the road test.

Buying, Possessing, or Transporting Alcohol

If you are under 21, it is illegal to...

- Buy alcohol or have someone buy it for you
- Possess, carry, or transport alcohol unless accompanied by a parent or guardian

Your license will be suspended for 90 days to one year for breaking either of these laws. There are also fines and other penalties. **If you are under 21 and you buy, or try to buy, alcohol, your license will be suspended for 180 days.**

Open Container Law

You may *not* drink alcohol while driving. You may *not* have an open alcoholic drink inside your vehicle, even if someone else is holding it. If you are convicted of this offense, you will be fined $100 to $500. If you are under 21, you will be arrested, fined, and your license will be suspended.

False or Altered Licenses/Identification Cards

It is illegal to use a false license or ID, to alter a license or ID, or to use another person's license or ID. It is also illegal to use false information to obtain a license or ID. In most cases,these are felonies with serious penalties. You can face penalties even if you do not attempt to purchase alcohol. *M.G.L.c.90,§22(e) allows the RMV to suspend your license or right to operate in Massachusetts for up to six months.* ***A conviction is not required****. If you are convicted, your license will be suspended for one year.*

Please be aware that purchasing false licenses or IDs through the Internet is dangerous and often results in identity theft.

Illegal Drugs, Medicine, and Other Controlled Substances

Laws for operating under the influence of alcohol also apply to drugs. Almost any drug can affect your driving skills. Illegal drugs, prescription medicines, and over-the-counter medicines can all make it dangerous to drive.

Marijuana

Smoking or eating marijuana makes it more difficult to respond to sights and sounds. This makes you dangerous as a driver. It lowers your ability to handle a quick series of tasks. The most serious problem is facing an unexpected event, such as a car coming from a side street or a child running out from between parked cars. These problems get worse after dark, because marijuana also causes a bad loss of night vision.

Massachusetts law has decriminalized certain aspects of possession and/or use of marijuana. However, operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of marijuana is still illegal!

It is very important for all drivers of any age to note that operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of marijuana remains a criminal offense.

The chart "Penalties for Operating a Motor Vehicle Under the Influence of Alcohol or Drugs" in this chapter STILL APPLIES TO MARIJUANA and should be reviewed carefully.

Other Drugs

Many other drugs and controlled substances can decrease your ability to drive:

- Illegal hard drugs, like lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), heroin, and opium, make you feel unaware of where you are. You also feel like you don't care.
- Prescription sedatives and tranquilizers make you drowsy. This makes you a dangerous driver.
- Most medicines taken for colds, hay fever, or headaches can make you drowsy. Pain killers and medicines with codeine can be very dangerous.

You can be considered OUI with prescription drugs. It is illegal to operate a motor vehicle while impaired by *any* substance.

- Stimulants like pep pills, speed, cocaine, and diet pills make you feel more awake and aware for a short time. However, this is always followed by fatigue, nervousness, dizziness, and a lack of concentration. They can also affect your vision.
- Inhaling substances like solvents or glue vapors is a serious health risk. It can leave you unable to operate a motor vehicle properly.

Make sure you read labels carefully and know the side effects of prescription or over-the-counter medicines. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you're not sure.

Combining alcohol with other drugs dramatically increases the negative effects. Do not mix alcohol, drugs, and driving. It's a fatal mistake.

Reasons for License Nonrenewal

The RMV will refuse to renew your license if you have...

- Unpaid fines for parking violations
- Citations for abandoned vehicles

- Unpaid excise tax due to your local community
- Outstanding court warrants
- Unpaid Massachusetts, Maine, or New Hampshire E-ZPass/Fast Lane toll violations
- Unpaid Tobin Bridge violations

Before renewing, you must present official **release forms.** They must show that all fines and taxes have been paid to local communities or that outstanding warrants have been satisfied. For an outstanding court warrant, a recall notice from the court is required. No other documents will be accepted by the RMV.

License Suspension

You cannot renew your license if it is suspended or revoked. See the *License Suspension or Revocation* section of this chapter for more information.

Rules of the Road



Travel on public roadways is controlled by signs, signals, pavement markings, and driving laws. No matter what vehicle you drive or what road you drive on, you *must* obey these "rules of the road."

You must learn how to drive properly on:

- Streets, roads, alleys, and avenues
- Traffic circles (rotaries)
- Highways, expressways, and freeways

You must also learn how to drive safely at:

- Special crossings
- Intersections
- Traffic hazards

Dangers of Speeding

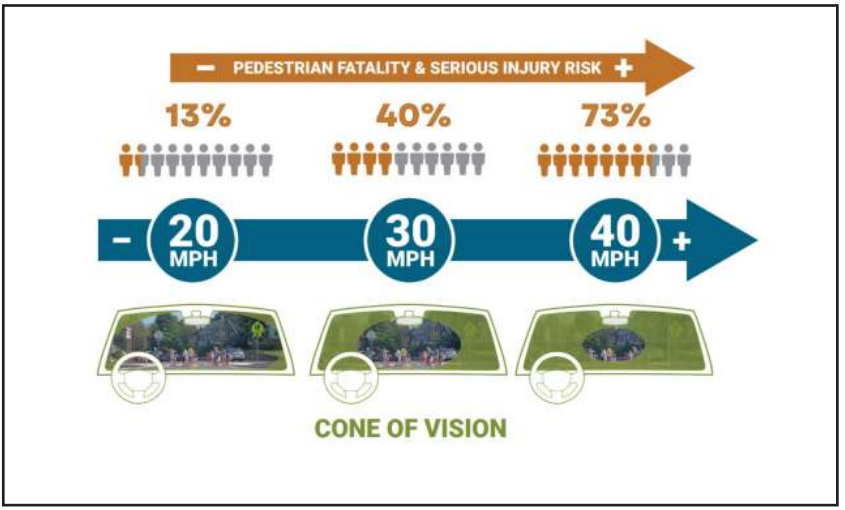
Speed matters in a crash. About one-third of all motor vehicle fatalities involve speeding. As speed increases, so does the severity of crashes and fatalities. Drivers travelling fast do not see well, cannot stop quickly, and have a greater chance of losing control of the vehicle. Your vehicle's safety equipment is also less effective at high speeds. See the *Braking and Stopping* section of Chapter Two for more information on how your reaction time is affected by the speed you are traveling.

Even before you can begin braking, your reaction time will use up valuable ground. The higher the speed, the more ground you will cover, and the longer it will take to stop your vehicle. These are critical moments when you may be able to avoid a crash.

The leading threat to the safety of pedestrians is the speed of vehicles. At a speed of 20 mph, 13% of pedestrians are seriously injured or killed in a crash. At 30 mph, that increases to 40% and at 40 mph it increases to 73%.

Speeding is a serious threat to public health and safety. It endangers not only your life and safety, but that of passengers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and all the people on the road around you. It is your responsibility as a driver to ensure safe speeds are maintained for the protection of everyone.

Speeding also costs you money. You use more fuel at higher speeds. You may also be liable for financial penalties and increases in your insurance.



Speed Limits

Driving too fast (speeding) is a main cause of motor vehicle crashes. To protect safety, speed laws in Massachusetts are strongly enforced. If you speed, there are severe penalties (see *Chapter Three*).

1. You must never travel so fast that it is not safe. That is the fundamental speed law. Even if the speed limit is higher, your speed must be based on the following.
   - **Traffic conditions** – the number of vehicles on the road and their speed
   - **Road conditions** – is the road surface rough or smooth; how much water, ice, or snow is on the road surface; and how wide is the roadway
   - **Weather conditions and visibility** – situations that make it hard to see, including rain, snow, ice, dust, and wind
   - **Pedestrians or bicyclists** - people who are traveling along or across the road are unprotected and more likely to be killed or injured in high speed crashes

   You must lower your speed if there are poor driving conditions or hazards. It does not matter if the posted speed limit is higher.

2. Never drive faster than the **posted speed limit**. Sample speed limit signs appear on the next page. All speed limits are based on ideal driving conditions. If conditions are hazardous, you must drive slower.

   Most roadways in the state have posted speed limits. Speed limits change as you drive on different kinds of roads or enter and exit highways. Limited-access highways, like interstate routes, have speed limits from 50 to 65 mph. Smaller highways have speed limits of 55 mph or lower.

   Some roadways may have minimum speeds. There is a minimum speed of 40 mph on the Massachusetts Turnpike. There is a minimum speed of 20 mph in the Boston Harbor tunnels (Callahan, Sumner, and Ted Williams). Even without a minimum speed, a police officer may order a driver to the side of a state highway if they are slowing traffic.

3. Unless posted otherwise, **your speed would *not* be reasonable and proper if you drive** over**...**
   - 20 mph in a school zone
   - 30 mph in a thickly settled or business district (unless there are signs showing a 25 mph limit)
   - 40 mph outside a thickly settled or business district
   - 50 mph on a highway outside a thickly settled or business district









Reduced Speed Ahead











If you drive 40 mph in a heavy rainstorm on a highway with a speed limit of 50 mph, you can get a ticket for driving too fast.

A "thickly settled district" is an area where buildings are fewer than 200 feet apart for a distance of 1/4 mile or more.

Some communities have a thickly settled speed limit of 25 mph unless posted otherwise (per M.G.L. c90, Section 17c). Signs are posted at all entrances to these cities and towns.

School Zones

The speed limit on roads near schools is 20 mph. This can be posted in various ways. Speed limit signs may have flashing yellow lights or be posted for certain hours of the day. Look closely for signs saying you are approaching or entering a school zone.

Drive carefully when entering a school zone. Be aware of children crossing the street or riding bicycles. Look out for school safety patrols or crossing guards.

Traffic Signals

Traffic signals are lights that control movement of vehicles and pedestrians, usually at intersections. You must know what each light means and obey its signals at all times.



Motor Vehicle Signals

Traffic signals are usually three round lights: red, yellow, and green circles, from top to bottom. There are also other types of signals, such as single flashing lights, colored arrows, and signals with 4 or 5 sections.



Steady Red Circle

A steady red circle means "stop." Do not go until the light turns green. You can make a right turn on a red light *only* after you come to a complete stop and yield to pedestrians or other vehicles in your path. You may *not* turn on red if a **NO TURN ON RED** sign is posted.

You can turn left on a red light when driving on a one-way street and turning left onto another one-way street. Stop and yield to pedestrians and other vehicles before turning.



Steady Red Arrow

A steady red arrow means the same as a steady red, circular signal (see the preceding *Steady Red* section). However, it only applies to vehicles going in the direction of the arrow. The same rules for "turning on red" apply in Massachusetts. However, when driving out-of-state, this may not be true because different states have different laws.



Flashing Red Circle

A flashing red circle means the same as a **STOP** sign. Come to a complete stop. Obey the right-of-way laws and proceed when it is safe. If there is a white stop line or crosswalk line, you must stop **before** the line. If there are no lines, you must stop as close to the intersection as needed to see traffic in both directions. Do not enter the intersection until after coming to a complete stop.



Steady Yellow Circle

A steady yellow circle means the traffic signal is changing from green to red. You *must* stop if it is safe. If you are already stopped at an intersection or a stop line, you may *not* proceed.



Flashing Yellow Circle

A flashing yellow circle is a warning. Proceed with caution, and stay alert. Look both ways when crossing an intersection.



Flashing Yellow Arrow

A flashing yellow arrow allows you to turn left or right in the direction of the arrow when oncoming traffic has a green light but there is a break in traffic. You must carefully determine that there is an adequate gap in the oncoming traffic and ensure that there are no pedestrians in your path before making your turn.



Steady Green Circle

A steady green circle means "go." But first, you must yield to other vehicles, bicycles, or pedestrians in the road. If you are crossing an intersection, make sure you have enough room to make it completely through. Never block an intersection. You may make a turn as long as you have enough space to complete the turn and not create

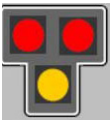
a hazard. If you are turning left on a steady green light, you must yield to oncoming traffic. Look out for drivers who do not obey traffic signals or race through intersections.



Green Arrow
A green arrow means you can make a "protected" turn in the direction of the arrow. When a green arrow displays for your turn, pedestrians and oncoming vehicles should be stopped for red lights. Look for signs saying the lane is only for turns in the direction of the arrow.



Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon
Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons are activated by pedestrians manually by a push button or by a pedestrian detection system. They are often located in intersections without traffic signals or at mid-block crosswalks. When activated, amber lights flash in an irregular pattern. You must stop for pedestrians when the beacon is flashing.



Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon
A Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (PHB) allows pedestrians to safely cross a roadway. A PHB only operates when activated by a pedestrian. When all lights are dark, you can proceed with caution. When the bottom yellow light is flashing, you must slow down. When the bottom yellow light is solid, you must prepare to stop. When the top two red lights are solid, you must stop for pedestrians. When the top two red lights are flashing, you must stop and proceed with caution if clear.



Bicycle Signals
Bicycle signals are lights specifically meant for bicyclists. They display as steady red, yellow, and green bicycle symbols. When the signal is green, bicyclists can go through busy intersections while motor vehicles are stopped, protecting them from turning vehicles.

Traffic Signals Not Working
If traffic signals are not working, they will simply flash either red or yellow lights. When this happens, follow the rules for flashing lights. If signals are blacked out and not functioning, be cautious and proceed as though there is a stop sign in all directions. Go when it is safe.

Pedestrian Signals
Special lighted signals are often used at crosswalks to tell pedestrians when to cross a roadway. Pedestrians must obey white and orange **DON'T WALK** and **WALK** signals. Some crosswalk signals include a numeric countdown timer. Pedestrians who are already in the crosswalk when the countdown reaches zero have the right-of-way.



Laws for Drivers

- You must yield to pedestrians entering or using a crosswalk in your travel path.
- Never let your vehicle block a crosswalk.
- You must yield to pedestrians if your traffic signal is red or if it is red and yellow.
- Never pass a vehicle that is stopped or slowing for a pedestrian.
- You must yield to pedestrians when turning into a driveway or parking lot.

Laws for Pedestrians

- Use a crosswalk if one is available.
- At crosswalks with pedestrian signals, push the button on the pole and wait for a **WALK** signal. Intersections without buttons automatically give **WALK** signals.
- When the WALK signal is shown, you can begin to cross. When DON'T WALK is shown, you should not begin to cross; if you are already in the crosswalk, you should finish crossing.
- Before you cross a roadway, stop at the curb and look left and right for traffic. *Be alert*. Look out especially for cars turning onto the road you are crossing.

Traffic Signs

Traffic signs control traffic, warn you of hazards, help you get where you are going, and tell you about roadway services. The shapes and colors of traffic signs are important. Sign colors mean the following:

RED—stop or prohibition
GREEN—direction, shows where you can go
YELLOW—general warning
BLACK/WHITE—regulation
BLUE—motorist service (e.g., gas, food, hotels), evacuation route
BROWN—recreational, historic, or scenic site
ORANGE—construction or maintenance warning
FLUORESCENT YELLOW-GREEN—school zone, bicycle, pedestrian, and curve warning
FLUORESCENT PINK—incident management signs
PURPLE—electronic toll collection signs

Regulatory





Yield




No right turn


No left turn


No U-turn






No trucks


No pedestrians


No bicycles



No parking allowed between posted hours



Traffic moves only in direction of arrow



You may not overtake another vehicle



You may *not* turn right after stopping at a red light



All traffic must go left


Keep to the right of the upcoming median or lane divider

Warning



School zone


School zone


Lane merging from right, watch for other traffic


Divided highway begins


Winding road, multiple curves ahead


Road turns right


Road curves right


School crossing


School crossing


Playground


Divided highway ends


Crossroad ahead



Area off paved road is soft dirt - hazardous


Pedestrian crossing


Stop ahead


Two-way traffic


Road entering from the right



You may not cross the yellow line


Pedestrian crossing


Traffic signal ahead


Right Lane Ends - Road Narrows


Road slippery when wet


Road ends at junction

Maximum height

Pedestrian crossing ahead

Circular intersection ahead

Traffic may flow on both sides of sign

Deer crossing

Railroad crossing ahead

Added lane

Guides and Directions



Interstate highway route marker


Information


Gas


Telephone


Food


Hospital


Lodging


Access for those with disabilities



Bike route signs



Massachusetts state highway route marker




Picnic area



Bay State Greenway



Motorist services



Junction with a numbered route ahead



Destination directions





Electronic tolling only



Destination distances, in miles



Notice of highway exits, in miles



Point of interest





Highway mile markers



Parking facilities

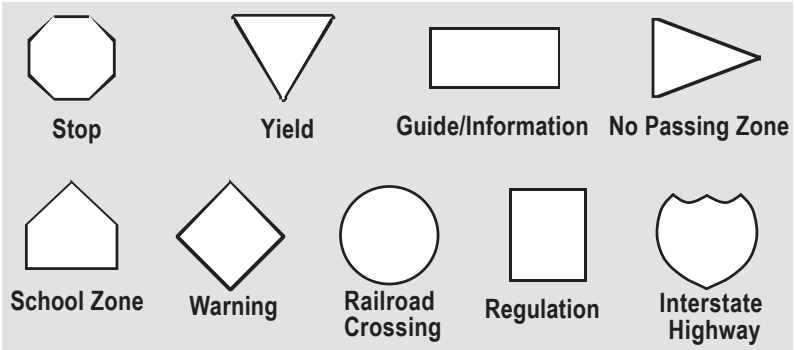


Freeway interchange sign



Highway rest area

Know signs by their appearances so you can recognize them at a distance.



Stop and Yield Signs

A STOP sign always means “come to a complete halt” and applies to each vehicle that comes to the sign. When approaching a stop sign, you must stop before any crosswalk or stop line painted on the pavement. Come to a complete stop, yield to pedestrians or other vehicles, and go carefully. Just slowing down is not enough. If a 4-WAY or ALL WAY sign is added to a STOP sign at an intersection, all traffic coming to the intersection must stop. The first vehicle in the intersection or four-way stop has the right of way.

When you see a YIELD sign, slow down and be prepared to stop. Let vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians go before you proceed. You must come to a complete stop if traffic conditions require it.

Regulatory Signs

Regulatory signs have a red or white background and inform drivers of traffic laws or regulations. Some, such as SPEED LIMIT signs, may only include words. Others, such as NO U-TURN signs, use only images. Some are a combination of words and images. Signs that use a red circle with a diagonal slash mean that something is prohibited.

Warning Signs

Yellow and fluorescent yellow-green warning signs warn you of hazards or changes in conditions ahead. The road layout may be changing, you may be coming to a school zone, or there may be a special situation ahead. Slow down and obey the sign.

Guide Signs

In the “guide signs” category are route markers, distance and destination signs, and informational signs. Green signs give highway directions and guide you through highway interchanges. Blue signs list motorist services, like gas, food, and lodging. Brown signs direct you to public recreational areas, state and national parks, points of interest, and scenic sites.

In Massachusetts, numbered state highway routes are posted on white, rectangular signs with black letters and borders. Interstate highway signs are blue, red, and white shields.



Railroad Crossings

There is usually a round warning sign before a railroad crossing. When you see this sign, slow down and prepare to stop. If you see or hear a train coming, do *not* speed up and try to beat the train to the crossing.

The point at which train tracks cross a road is marked with a white crossbuck sign. If more than one track crosses a road, the number of tracks is posted below the crossbuck.



A railroad crossing may also have red flashing lights, a bell, and

a red-and-white striped gate that lowers across the roadway when a train is passing. If the lights begin to flash, you must stop at least 15 feet before the light post or gate. You must then remain stopped until the gate raises and the lights stop flashing. Failure to stop is a violation that has a heavy fine. Even if you do not see a train coming, *never* drive around a lowered gate or ignore the flashing lights.

Roadway Construction/ Maintenance (Work Zones)

Any roadway in Massachusetts may be under construction or require maintenance at any given time. These sections of roadway are designated and protected by warning signs and traffic control devices. They help guide you safely through a work zone and past any hazards. There are several rules or practices you should be aware of to protect yourself and roadway workers.

When approaching a work zone, reduce your speed. Be aware of the traffic around you and any obstructions or hazards that can be seen on or near the roadway. If a police officer or civil flagger is present, follow and obey their directions. You must always obey directions of a traffic officer, even when they overrule signs, signals, or pavement markings. DO NOT be distracted by what is happening within a work zone.

The start of a work zone is indicated with a warning sign or electronic message sign. This sign usually refers to roadwork/utility work beginning at a certain distance down the road.







Civil Flaggers are typically used on low-speed, low-volume roadways to control traffic movement around the work area and to support other road users navigate the area.



Flagger Ahead Sign (500 feet)



Work zone flag person

Upcoming warning signs inform you of where work is taking place and how you should maneuver through the work area. Read and follow the messages on these signs.



This sign shows which lane is closed



This sign means the right lane is closed and traffic should move to the left



This sign means the lanes are shifting to the right

Certain devices (such as drums, cones, and tubular markers) are used to direct traffic away from a work area where the shoulder or travel lane is closed. They are usually lined up in an angular fashion to shift traffic from the beginning of a travel lane to the left or right. You should carefully merge into the adjacent travel lane when you see these devices in the roadway. When a lane is closed to traffic, a barricade is often used to block off access to that area.



Drum



Cones



Tubular Marker



Barricade

In some cases, road work requires full closure of travel lanes in one direction, or an entire road closure. In these cases, detour signs are posted. They provide direction on bypassing the work zone and then getting back on the original road.



Detour sign used along the detour



Detour sign used at the start of the detour

On multiple lane roadways, portable arrow boards are used to provide notification that the shoulder or lane is closed and which lane is open for travel. These devices are located before the work area within the closed lane to give you notice to merge your vehicle when it is safe.



Right lane closure - merge left



Middle lane closure - merge right or left

There are many more types of traffic control devices you may encounter. Be aware, be cautious, be observant, and use common sense when driving through work zones. There are men and women working to improve roads for public use and these work zone signs and devices are there to guide motorists and protect these workers.

When approaching a work zone, the FIRST thing you must do is SLOW DOWN and look for guidance on how to safely travel through the area.

The Highway Division has a 511 phone service. You can use this to get up-to-date information about traffic and weather conditions and construction projects. You can also report problems on the road. Service is available 24/7.

Dial 511 from your cell phone or 617-986-5511 (Metro-Boston), 508-499-5511 (Central Mass), or 413-754–5511 (Western Mass) from a landline.

For more information, visit Mass.Gov/Traffic-Information

Pavement Markings

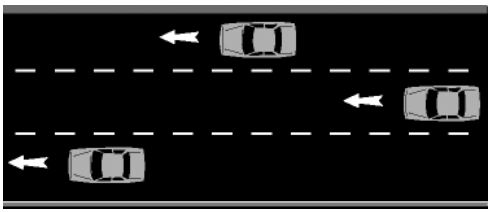
Lines, symbols, and words are often painted on a roadway to help direct drivers and control traffic. You must know what the different lines and colors mean and obey them.

White and yellow lines are used on pavement edges and between lanes to keep vehicles in line. The lines may be solid or broken (long dashes), single or double. A solid white or solid yellow line that turns into a dotted line (short dashes) is a continuation of the line through an intersection or highway interchange.

Unless you're turning, exiting a highway, or changing lanes, always stay between lane lines.

White Lane Lines

White lane lines separate lanes of traffic moving in the **same** direction. Single white lines may also mark the right edge of the pavement.



Broken white lines separate lanes in the same direction.

Broken White Line

Broken white lines separate lanes of traffic traveling in the same direction. Once you have signaled, and it is safe to do so, you may cross this line when changing lanes.

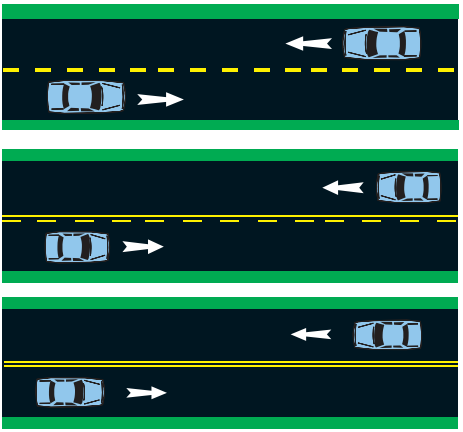
Solid White Line

A solid white line marks the right edge of the roadway or separates lanes of traffic traveling in the same direction, including bicycle lanes. You can go in the same direction on both sides of this line (except the shoulder), but you should not cross it unless you need to avoid danger.

Double Solid White Line

A double solid white line separates two lanes of traffic going in the same direction. Crossing a double solid white line is not allowed.

Yellow Lane Lines



Do *not* cross a double yellow line unless turning left.

Yellow lane lines separate lanes of traffic moving in **opposite** directions. Single yellow lines may also mark the left edge of the pavement on divided highways and one-way streets.

Broken Yellow Line

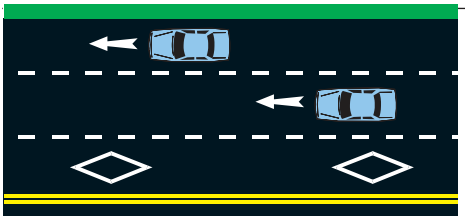
A broken yellow line separates lanes of traffic moving in opposite directions. Stay to the right of the line, unless you are passing a vehicle in front of you. When passing, you may cross this line temporarily when it is safe to do so.

Double Yellow Lines: One Solid, One Broken

One solid yellow line and one broken yellow line separate opposite lanes of traffic. If the *solid* yellow line is closer to you, you *cannot* cross the lines. If the *broken* line is closer to you, you can *only* cross the line to pass another vehicle when it is safe to do so.

Double Yellow Lines: Both Solid

Two solid yellow lines prohibit vehicles from crossing them to pass another vehicle. You may not cross these lines unless turning left when it is safe to do so.



In the above three-lane diagram, the far left travel lane is reserved for high-occupancy vehicles (HOVs), like those used in carpools, or for buses.

Words and Symbols

Words or symbols may be painted on roadway surfaces to help guide, warn, or regulate drivers. Words or symbols are often used with traffic signs, signals, and other pavement markings. White arrows show lane directions or restrictions.

A white diamond symbol means there is a special lane restriction, like “high occupancy vehicle (HOV) only” or “bus only.”

Shared Lane Markings (Sharrows)



Shared Lane Markings (also known as Sharrows) help bicyclists position themselves in the right location and in the right direction in a lane that is shared with motor vehicles. By following these markings, bicyclists can avoid being hit by the open door of a parked vehicle or getting squeezed next to a motor vehicle in a narrow lane. When you see a Shared Lane Marking, you must look out for the presence of bicyclists and make sure that you leave them enough space when passing. Shared Lane Markings are not the same as the bicycle symbols that are used to mark bicycle lanes.

Bicycle Lanes



Bicycle lanes are portions of the roadway that are intended for use by bicyclists and are typically marked by solid white lines, along with pavement markings and signs. They are five feet wide. Motor vehicles may only drive in these lanes when turning on or off the road. Before crossing a bicycle lane, you must look carefully for bicyclists, and you must cross with care.

Advisory Bicycle Lanes

Advisory bicycle lanes are becoming common on streets that are too narrow for a full bicycle lane, but still have a lot of bicycle traffic. They are dashed on one or both sides to indicate that motor vehicles may use the lane space when necessary, but they must always yield to bicyclists first.

Green Pavement

Green pavement is used in areas where there could be road sharing conflicts between motor vehicles and bicycles. You should pay close attention and look for bicyclists before crossing green pavement. At a red light, you should not stop on green pavement. See the *Laws for Bicyclists and Motorists in the Presence of Bicyclists* section later in this chapter for more information on green pavement.

Bus Lanes

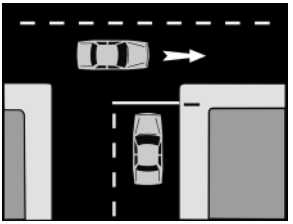
Red pavement is used for travel lanes or station stops used by public transit systems. This includes buses, streetcars, trolleys, light-rail trains, and rapid transit fleets.

Stop Lines, Yield Lines, and Crosswalks

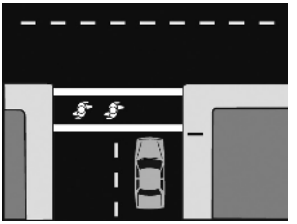
An intersection or pedestrian crossing with a stop sign or traffic signal may have a solid white **STOP** line painted across it. An intersection with a yield sign may have a **YIELD** line painted across it. A **YIELD** line looks like a series of triangles painted next to each other.

A crosswalk is a pair of white lines, or other distinguished pavement markings or materials, painted across a lane to guide pedestrians from one side of the road to the other. A painted crosswalk also warns drivers that pedestrians may be crossing the road. Crosswalks may have diagonal or vertical lines painted between the two main lines. Crosswalks are often located at intersections, but can also be found in other areas, such as bus stops, schools, trail crossings, commercial districts, and areas with a lot of pedestrians.

You must stop *behind* the stop lines, yield lines, and crosswalk lines if required by a stop/yield sign, traffic signal, or pedestrian in the crosswalk.



Stop line



Crosswalk



Yield line

Channelizing Islands

A channelizing island is a traffic island or pavement marking that guides traffic along certain paths and prevents operation on areas of the roadway. You cannot drive over or park a motor vehicle upon any channelizing island, unless directed to do so by a police officer.

Crossing Guards

In recent years, several crossing guards in Massachusetts have been killed or injured while on duty when struck by vehicles. As a driver, you should look for warning signs that crossing guards and children may be in the road and be prepared to stop. Crossing guards depend on drivers to be aware and obey their signals. Use caution when you see the following:

- Crosswalks/ Pedestrian Crossing Signs - These will be white crosswalks painted on the street, or pedestrian crossing signs placed in the middle or the side of the road.
- Reflective Vests - Crossing guards wear brightly colored and highly reflective clothing so they will be highly visible.
- Stop Paddles - These are hand-held stop signs that crossing guards hold up while walking out into the street to warn drivers of children crossing.

Lanes, Intersections, and Turns

This section explains the rules of driving that apply to any roadway or intersection. In addition to standard travel lanes, there are...

- Special lanes for turning
- Restricted lanes for buses, car pools, and bicycles
- Breakdown lanes on the right-hand shoulder of highways and expressways

Signaling

When you are driving on a roadway, you are expected to drive straight ahead, unless you show otherwise. This is why you must use signals whenever you stop or make *any* move in traffic. Your signals alert pedestrians and motorists of what you are doing and give them time to react.

Regardless of the kind of vehicle you are driving, you *must* use signals. If the electronic signals on your vehicle are not working, you must use the three hand signals shown. Signals should be made through the driver's side window. You must know these signals to pass the road test.



Left turn



Right turn



Slow or stop

You must signal in certain situations:

- Changing lanes
- Turning at an intersection or into a driveway
- Pulling away from a curb
- Pulling over to the side of the road
- Entering or exiting an expressway or a freeway

Once you have completed your move, you must turn your signal off. Any time you want to turn, merge, join traffic from a stopped position, or change lanes, you must...

1. Check your mirrors for traffic behind you and check your blind spot on the side you are moving or turning toward.
2. Signal your intent to move.
3. Make your move.

Bicyclists may use either arm to signal.

Using Lanes

Always use traffic lanes as they are defined by pavement markings and road signs. Many intersections have special lanes marked for turns. Follow the rules of the road, using the proper lanes for turning and driving straight ahead.

On roadways with two or more lanes in your travel direction, use the right lane for driving unless...

- You are passing another vehicle.
- You are making a left turn.
- The right lane is blocked.

Here are a few more general rules for using lanes properly:

- Never change lanes in the middle of an intersection. It is illegal and dangerous.
- As a general rule, do *not* use a highway breakdown lane for travel or passing. On some highways, however, you may use the breakdown lane for travel during specific times.
- If you come to a curve in the road and cannot see ahead, keep to the right and slow down.

The use of breakdown lanes as travel lanes is *very* restricted, and hours of use are posted clearly.

Special rules for motorcycles:

- Do not ride along pavement lines, between lanes of traffic.
- Ride no more than two abreast (side-by-side).
- Unless your motorcycle can safely drive at minimum posted speeds, do not travel on highways or expressways.

Restricted Lanes

You must not drive in lanes posted as restricted, except when preparing for a turn. Look for signs like the ones to the right.





Highway Driving

A divided highway has separate roadways for traffic in opposite directions. There are often multiple lanes on each side. Highway speed limits are usually between 45 to 65 mph.

Some highways cross other roads and are controlled by traffic signals. Others are “controlled access,” which means they have no signals or intersections. You enter and exit these highways using ramps. These highways are called “expressways” or “freeways,” and you enter or exit these highways at “interchanges.” In Massachusetts, interstate Routes 90 and 495 and State Highway 128 are examples of expressways.

Highway driving can make any new driver nervous. Following are some useful tips for driving on highways:

Entering and Exiting the Highway

- Make sure you are in the proper lane well in advance so you can safely enter or exit the highway.

- Yield the right-of-way to drivers already on the highway.
- When you enter a highway, increase your speed to match vehicles already on the road.
- **If you miss your exit, do *not* stop. *Never* back up on the highway.** Get off the highway at the **next** exit and look for signs showing you how to rejoin the road in the other direction.
- Be sure to signal your exit at least 500 feet before you reach the exit ramp.
- At busy times, exit ramps can get backed up. Be especially alert for slowing or stopped traffic around ramps.
- As you leave the highway and drive along the exit ramp, slow to the posted exit ramp speed limit.

Driving on the Highway

- Make sure your vehicle operates well and can drive at highway speeds.
- Stay to the right and only use the left lane for passing. On an expressway with three or more lanes in your direction, use the far right lane for slower driving, the middle lane for faster driving, and the far left lane for passing.
- Drive in the middle of your lane, staying between the lines.
- Use your rearview mirror, check your blind spots, and use your directional signals when changing lanes. Remember these three steps: **(1) look, (2) signal, (3) move**.
- Do not drive in another driver's blind spot. If you are in another driver's blind spot, safely drive through the blind spot as quickly as you can.
- It is easy for a car or motorcycle to be hidden in a large vehicle's blind spots. Do **not** follow closely behind a truck or bus. When driving near a large vehicle, be aware of the blind spots on the right, left, front and behind. Do not drive into the space immediately surrounding a large vehicle.
- Look out for vehicles entering the highway and any vehicles or pedestrians in the breakdown lane.
- Do not weave in and out of traffic.
- Be aware of road construction signs, work crews, and signs that require you to reduce speed or change lanes.
- Avoid "highway hypnosis." If you've been driving for a long time and feel tired, you should get off the highway at the next exit, rest stop, or service area.



The accompanying diagram shows the "blind spots" around your vehicle, in which you cannot see with your vehicle's mirrors.

Take extra care when exiting a highway that uses breakdown lanes as travel lanes. Look to your right and check your right-hand blind spot before exiting.

- If you plan to drive far, stop and stretch every two hours or every 100 miles.
- If your vehicle breaks down, move it to the breakdown lane or shoulder and as far from the travel lane as you can. Stay in your vehicle. Do not stand near the travel lane or in the breakdown lane. Many people have been killed when standing near or working on a vehicle.

The Highway Division has a 511 phone service. You can use this to get up-to-date information about traffic and weather conditions and construction projects. You can also report problems on the road. Service is available 24/7.

Dial 511 from your cell phone or 617-986-5511 (Metro-Boston), 508-499-5511 (Central Mass), or 413-754–5511 (Western Mass) from a landline.

For more information, visit Mass.Gov/Traffic-Information

Intersections

Intersections are where two or more roadways meet. Traffic flow at intersections is often controlled by signals, signs, and/or pavement markings. The next two sections in this chapter, *Turns* and *Right-of-Way Rules*, describe the rules and procedures you must follow at intersections.

Some roads have multiple turning lanes. While on these roads, you should follow the applicable road signs or markings.

Intersections are very important to the flow and safety of traffic. **It is illegal to block an intersection with your vehicle.** When driving through an intersection, you must obey all signs or traffic signals. **You may *only* enter an intersection or drive across a crosswalk if there is enough room for you to drive through safely. Blocking the paths of other vehicles or pedestrians in an intersection or a crosswalk is dangerous. This causes traffic jams and violates traffic law.**

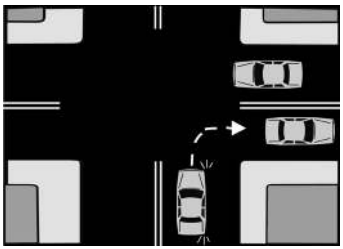
When driving through an intersection, be especially alert for bicyclists. Give them plenty of space and always double check for approaching bicyclists before proceeding through. If you're turning, you must yield to bicyclists going straight through an intersection. Never cut in front of a bicyclist.

Turns

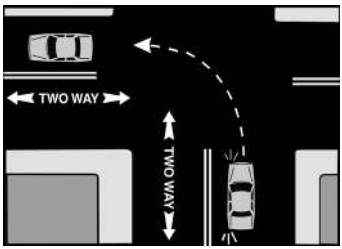
Many motor vehicle crashes are caused by improper turns. Take the following steps to turn safely.

1. Plan for the turn. Do not turn suddenly.
2. Signal your turn at least 100 feet before making the turn. On a highway, signal at least 500 feet before a turn. It is best to signal before you apply your brakes, so you make your intentions known to other drivers.
3. Reduce your speed.
4. Check your mirrors for traffic behind you and check the blind spot on your turning side.
5. Give the right-of-way when appropriate (see the *Right-of-Way Rules* section).
6. Complete the turn carefully, making sure you turn into the proper lane.

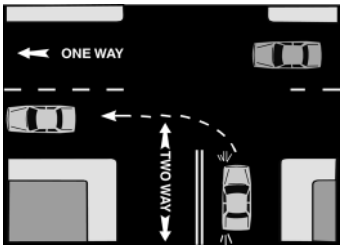
The road diagrams below show proper turns. It is very important that you turn from and turn into the proper lane. Look for yellow or white pavement lines marking the road you are turning into. If you need to change lanes, do so *after* you turn.



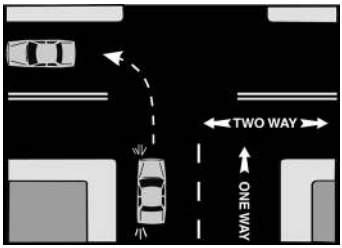
Right turn



Left turn from a two-way road to a two-way road



Left turn from a two-way road to a one-way road



Left turn from a one-way road to a two-way road

Here are a few rules:

- Turn from the lane closest to the lane you want to enter. For a right turn, turn from the far right lane. For a left turn, turn from the lane closest to the center lane.
- Do not swing your vehicle out of your lane when making a turn or swing wide through the intersection. Keep your vehicle centered in the middle of the lanes you are leaving and entering.
- Once you have started a turn through an intersection, you must follow through. Do not stop in mid-turn and change direction. If you decide you do not want to make the turn, simply drive to the next intersection and work your way back.

Turns on Red

You must come to a complete stop at a red traffic light. You may then turn *right* unless a **NO TURN ON RED** sign is posted. You must first give the right-of-way to pedestrians and other vehicles. You may turn *left* on red *only* if you are turning from a one-way street onto another one-way street. The same rules that apply to right turns apply to left turns.

U-Turns

A U-turn is a tight left turn that puts you in the opposite direction. You can make a U-turn if your path is clear and it is safe to do so. You cannot make a U-turn if a NO U-TURN sign is posted.



- You may only make a U-turn from the lane closest to the center line.
- Make sure you have enough room to complete the turn. Do not create a hazard for oncoming vehicles.
- Do not make a U-turn at the crest of a hill, near a curve, or anyplace where you or other drivers cannot see 500 feet away.

Left Turns from Center Lanes

On some two-way roads, a center lane may be marked as a common left-turn lane to be used by vehicles in both directions. You may *not* travel in a center turning lane.





Three-Point Turns

When there is not enough room for a U-turn, you may consider a three-point turn. This will put you in the opposite direction. This turn should only be used when all of the following conditions are met:

- The street is narrow
- There is good visibility
- There are no public driveways to turn into
- The traffic is light
- The turn is legal
- There is no other option

Following are the steps of a three-point turn.

1. Position yourself as close as possible to the right edge of the curb. Signal a left turn. Check for traffic and pedestrians in both directions (including your blind spot). Wait until you have a 20-30 second gap to complete the turn.
2. Move slowly and turn the steering wheel quickly to the left. This will bring the vehicle perpendicular to the street about two feet from the curb. Come to a stop.
3. Turn your steering wheel fully to the right. Check for traffic in both directions (including your blind spot). Shift into reverse and start backing up, while looking over your right shoulder.
4. Back up to the opposite curb, stopping just before the curb.
5. Check again for traffic in both directions (including your blind spot). Signal a left. Shift into drive (or for manual cars, first gear) and accelerate to the proper speed.

Backing Up

Use the following steps when backing up:

1. Position yourself as close as possible to the right edge of the curb.
2. Check for traffic in both directions (including your blind spot).
3. Shift into reverse and start backing up, while looking over your right shoulder. Ensure a safe and smooth speed while maintaning your lane.

Right-of-Way Rules

"Right-of-way rules" help drivers handle traffic situations not controlled by signs or signals. These rules are based on safety and courtesy. They do not give you any "rights." Remember, the right-of-way is something you give, not take. If another driver does not follow these rules, you should always give the right-of-way.

This section describes many right-of-way rules. Other rules, like giving the right-of-way to emergency vehicles, are covered later in this chapter.

Pedestrians

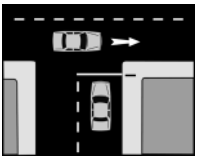
You must always yield to pedestrians who are in a roadway. Also note these rules concerning pedestrians:



- If you are stopped at a traffic light that turns green, you must yield to pedestrians already in the crosswalk.

- When turning, look for pedestrians. Pedestrians have the right-of-way if using a sidewalk or crossing a driveway or an alley.
- Always yield to visually impaired (blind) people crossing a street. You must remain stopped until the person has safely crossed. Do not honk or wave the person on. Never pass another vehicle which is stopped. Blind pedestrians may use a white cane or a guide dog. The White Cane Law states that a driver must come to a complete stop when a blind pedestrian is crossing a street.
- On a multiple lane roadway, never pass another vehicle stopped at a crosswalk without checking for pedestrians first.

Intersections Not Controlled by Signs or Signals



You must give the right-of-way at throughways.

Slow down at an uncontrolled intersection. Look left and right for oncoming traffic and proceed if the way is clear. However:

- You *must* yield the right-of-way to any vehicle that has entered the intersection from your *right* or is coming from your right.
- Look for traffic coming from the left. Even though you may have the legal right-of-way, make sure that the other driver is yielding before you proceed.

Four-Way Stop



At an intersection with stop signs in all directions, you must yield the right-of-way to...

- Another vehicle that has **already** come to a full stop
- A vehicle directly to your *right* that has stopped at the **same time** as you

Four-way stop intersections can cause confusion. Try to make eye contact with the drivers of other vehicles to judge their intentions and avoid crashes.

At a four-way stop, vehicles must go in the order they stopped. The first to stop is the next to go. If in doubt, give the right-of-way to the driver on your right.

Turning Left

When making *any* left turn, you must first yield the right-of-way to any...

- Oncoming vehicle
- Vehicle already in the intersection
- Pedestrians or bicyclists crossing your intended path of travel

Private Roads, Driveways, and Unpaved Roads

When entering a paved thoroughfare from a private road, a driveway, or an unpaved road, you must stop. You must then give the right-of-way to pedestrians, bicyclists, or vehicles on the road you are entering.

Throughways

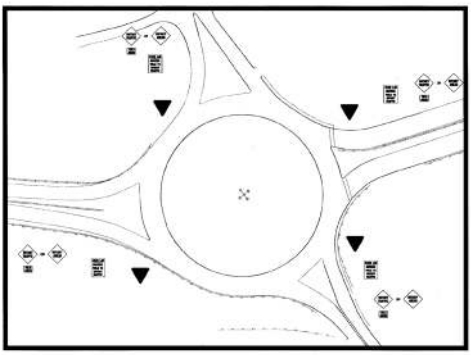
On a designated throughway, you must yield the right-of-way to traffic on the throughway before you turn.

Intersection of Single or Two-Lane Road and Multiple-Lane Road

If you are on a single or two-lane road and come to an intersection with a divided highway or a roadway with three or more lanes, you must yield the right-of-way.

Rotaries

Rotaries are much more common in Massachusetts than in other parts of the country. A rotary is an intersection of roads coming together from several directions. It allows you to continue through without stopping at a STOP sign or a traffic signal. There are yield signs at the entrance to a rotary. There is a physical barrier (the Central Island) in the center that forces traffic to travel around it. Big rotaries are designed to handle traffic traveling at up to 40 miles per hour.



Traffic in a rotary travels counter- clockwise.

Rotary Traffic Rules

Traffic travels counter-clockwise in a rotary. Always yield the right-of-way to vehicles already in the rotary (unless told differently by signs or police officers) and to pedestrians. Use your turn signals in the same way as any other intersection. Travel through the rotary and, when you are ready to exit, use your right turn signal.

Choosing a Lane

If the rotary has a single lane, you must enter from the right lane of the road you are coming from. You must exit onto the right lane of the road you intend to travel on.

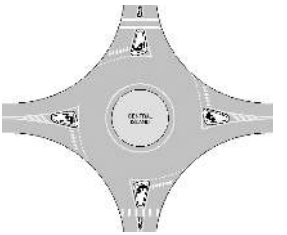
If the rotary has multiple lanes, look for signs to help you choose the proper lane. If there are no signs, you should do the following:

- For a quarter-turn, or to continue straight ahead, enter the rotary from the right lane. Stay in that lane, and exit onto the right lane.
- For a three-quarter-turn, or a U-turn, enter the rotary from the left lane. Travel through the middle or inner lane. Exit onto the right lane. If coming from a road with a single lane, you should stay in the right lane for the entire turn.

In a multiple-lane rotary, there may be traffic on both sides of your vehicle. Do not attempt to move out of your lane until it is safe to do so. If

you miss your exit, don't get upset. Check the traffic around you. If it is safe to do so, go around again and position your vehicle to properly and safely exit the rotary. **Do not stop in the rotary.**

Roundabouts



Roundabouts are similar to rotaries. They are generally much smaller than rotaries and have a smaller central barrier. Most roundabouts have yield lines on the pavement and crosswalks for pedestrians. Roundabouts are used on busy streets and their small size requires vehicles to reduce speed to 25 miles per hour or less. Roundabouts reduce the need to change lanes. Look for signs as you get near a roundabout to determine which lane you should be in. When entering a roundabout and choosing a lane, you should follow the same rules as for a rotary. Slow speeds in roundabouts make them safe for bicyclists.

Courtesy Crashes

Sometimes, drivers trying to be nice can cause confusion resulting in "courtesy crashes".

Waving people in through stopped traffic, or driving through traffic when someone waves you in, creates a dangerous situation and can easily result in a crash. Making the turn should depend on traffic and visibility. If you can see that there is no oncoming traffic, or that all oncoming traffic is stopped, you can safely make the turn. Keep in mind that oncoming traffic has the right-of-way, regardless of whether someone is waving at you.

Rules for Passing

In general, the law requires you to drive on the right side of the road. When passing is allowed, you should pass on the left. Passing on the right is allowed only in certain situations.

You should pass a pedestrian, bicyclist, or motor vehicle *only* when it is necessary and safe to do so. **You may *not* exceed the speed limit when passing.** If you have any doubt, do not pass.

Never use a breakdown lane, the shoulder of a road, or a sidewalk for passing another vehicle.

It is easy for a car or a motorcycle to be hidden in a large vehicle's blind spots. Therefore, do not follow closely behind a truck or a bus. When driving near a large vehicle, be aware of the driver's blind spots on the right, left, front, and behind.

Passing on the Left

PASS WITH CARE

On a multiple-lane roadway with several lanes in one direction, you must use the middle and left lanes for passing. A broken yellow line on a two-way road allows you to cross over into the oncoming lane temporarily to pass a vehicle, **if it is safe to do so**.



If you are operating a motorcycle, you may only pass single file.

The following steps go with the diagram to the right:

1. Keep a safe distance between you and the vehicle you want to pass. Check the passing lane to make sure it is clear. If you are crossing a broken yellow line to pass, you must be able to see clearly **at least 400 feet** in front of you. Check your mirror and your blind spot.
2. Signal left and gradually move into the passing lane.
3. Maintain your speed until safely past the other vehicle, then signal right.
4. Make sure there is enough distance between you and the other vehicle before moving back into the right lane. Wait at least until you can see the vehicle's headlights in your mirror.
5. You must return to the right lane before any oncoming vehicle comes within 200 feet of you. Turn off your signal once you have returned to the right lane.

Passing on the Right

Passing on the right is only allowed in certain circumstances. It can only be done when the road is clear and is wide enough for two or more lines of motor vehicles. You can pass on the right in the following circumstances:

- The vehicle you are passing is making, or is about to make, a left turn.
- You are driving on a one-way street.
- You are driving on a road where traffic moves in one direction (such as a multiple lane highway).

Being Passed

If you are being passed by another vehicle, you must slow down and stay to the right. Allow the other driver to pass safely. Do *not* speed up.

The "move-over law" (Chapter 418 of the Acts of 2008) requires that if you are approaching a stationary emergency vehicle and it is displaying its flashing lights, you must proceed with caution and reduce your speed to that of a reasonable and safe speed for the road conditions. If you are on a highway with at least four lanes (at least two of which allow travel in the same direction you are heading), yield the right-of-way by safely "moving over" to a lane that is not next to the lane the emergency, highway, or recovery vehicle is occupying.

In other words, leave an open lane between your vehicle and the stopped emergency vehicle. Depending on where the emergency vehicle is parked, you may need to move to the right or to the left. If "moving-over" is not possible, you must still proceed with caution and reduce your speed to that of a reasonable and safe speed for the road conditions.

Passing Stopped Vehicles

Do not pass vehicles that are stopped or are turning (both at intersections and at non-intersections). They may be stopped for another vehicle, a person, or an animal that you cannot see.

Road Respect/Sharing the Road

Roadways are intended for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Courtesy is expected by all who use the road. Motorists must be especially careful because more vulnerable users can be seriously injured or killed. We ask that you show respect to people you share the roadway with. Do not let your anger get the best of you.

How Can You Identify Aggressive Drivers?

Aggressive Drivers often do the following:

- Cut people off
- Exceed the speed limit
- Switch lanes without signaling
- Tailgate
- Run red lights
- Prevent other motorists from passing them

What Can You Do When confronted by an Aggressive Driver?

- Attempt to get out of their way.
- Do not challenge that person.
- Avoid eye contact.
- Ignore rude gestures.
- Wear your safety belt. It will keep you in control of your vehicle and protect you in a crash.

Do not become an Aggressive Driver!

Control your anger and do not let the situation get worse. Do not question how aggressive the other driver may be. If you have a cell phone, call the State Policeat 911 to report an emergency situation.

State Police patrol highways in unmarked vehicles. They look for aggressive drivers who put everyone in danger. If you are arrested for aggressive driving, the RMV may review your case. The RMV can suspend your license and registration before a court date if you are a threat to public safety.

Be a safe driver, be courteous, and always treat other drivers as you would like to be treated. As the driver of a passenger car, van, small truck, or motorcycle, you must constantly share the roadway with other people and other vehicles.

School Buses

Yellow school buses have flashing red lights and stop signs that fold out from the driver's side. School pupil transport vehicles, like vans, station wagons, or family sedans, have flashing red lights and SCHOOL BUS signs on top. Drivers use these warning signals when letting pupils on and off.



Obey school bus signals from either side of the road.

If a school bus or a school pupil transport vehicle has its lights flashing and a stop sign extended, you must stop. It is the law. It does not matter which side of the road you are traveling on. Remain stopped until the lights stop flashing or the stop sign folds back.

A first violation of this law can cause a license suspension and a $250 fine.

Even after the warning signals have stopped, you should proceed slowly and continue to look for children.

The only exception to this law is if a school bus has stopped on the other side of a divided highway with a barrier between travel directions. In this case, you do not have to stop.

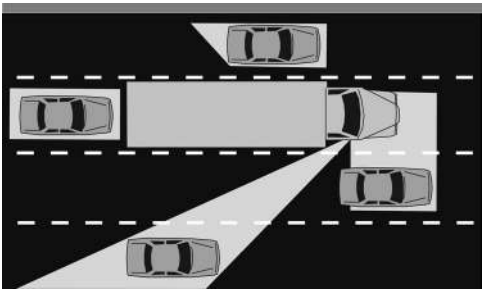
Trucks and Other Large Vehicles

One of the worst "sharing-the-road" problems is between large vehicles, like trucks and buses, and smaller ones, like cars and motorcycles.

Following are some rules for driving safely among trucks, tractor-trailers, and buses:

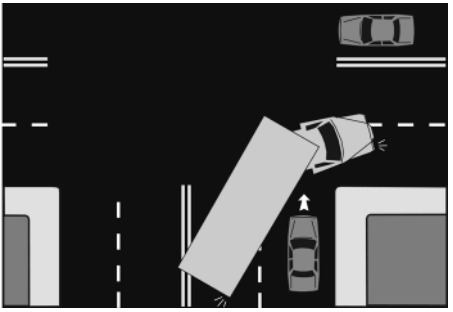
- **Blind Spots** — It is easy for a car or a motorcycle to be hidden in a large vehicle's blind spots. Therefore, do **not** follow closely behind a truck or a bus. When driving near a large vehicle, be aware of the

driver's blind spots on the right, left, front, and behind.



This diagram shows the various blind spots for a tractor-trailer

- **Tailgating** — If you cannot see a truck's rearview mirrors, you are tailgating. Tailgating is dangerous. By following too closely, you are losing the safety cushion you need if the vehicle in front of you stops short.
- **Cutting in Front** — Drivers of large vehicles try to keep a safety cushion of space around them. A large truck may need twice as much distance to stop as an automobile or a motorcycle, especially when roads are wet or icy. Do not drive into the space immediately surrounding a large vehicle. Do not pull in front of a large vehicle and slow down or stop suddenly. The driver will have too little room to stop and will crash into you or may risk "jackknifing" by trying to stop suddenly at highway speeds.



If you are thinking about passing, remember that a tractor may be pulling more than one trailer.

Studies by the National Safety Council and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety show that a fully loaded tractor trailer may take twice as far to stop as a passenger vehicle.

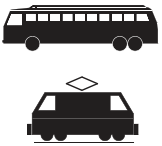
- **Driving Too Slowly** — On a multiple-lane highway, trucks and buses can only drive in the two right-hand lanes. They use the far right lane for normal travel and the second lane for passing. If you travel in the second lane, stay with the flow of traffic and do not drive below the minimum speed limit.

  Driving too slowly in this lane can create a bottleneck of large vehicles. This can increase highway traffic hazards. If the driver of a truck or bus wants to pass you, move over when it is safe to do so and let the vehicle pass.
- **Passing on the Left** — It takes longer to pass a tractor-trailer or a bus than another car or a motorcycle. Be aware that large vehicles travel slower uphill and faster downhill.
- **Passing on the Right** — Do not pass a truck or bus on the right unless it is absolutely necessary. **Large vehicles make wide turns, and sometimes they must move to the left before making a wide**

turn to the right. If you are next to a truck or bus, you are probably in a blind spot. Watch for possible right-hand turns and stay safely behind until you know what the driver is doing.

- **Truck or Bus Approaching** — If a large vehicle is coming toward you on an undivided road, stay to the right. You will avoid being sideswiped or shaken by air turbulence. At intersections, take extra care in judging the speed of the oncoming vehicle. Trucks and buses cannot slow down easily if you cut in front of them to turn.

Buses and Trolleys



Be very careful near public transport buses and trolleys. Buses stop often. Be courteous and allow signaling buses to pull away from bus stops. Be cautious of pedestrians entering or exiting buses or trolleys.

State law is very specific about driving near trolleys and their tracks:

- You must *not* drive closer than eight feet of a trolley passenger step when the trolley is letting passengers on or off.
- Look for oncoming trolleys before crossing any tracks. Do *not* turn in front of a trolley if one is approaching.
- Keep a safe distance between your vehicle and a trolley if the trolley is sharing the roadway.

Remember, a trolley's path is limited to the tracks. A trolley driver cannot swerve to avoid **you**.

Slow-Moving Vehicles

Most farm vehicles, construction rigs, and other slow-moving vehicles have orange warning signs attached to the back. If you approach one, reduce your speed and use caution. Treat them similar to bicyclists and pedestrians. Leave plenty of space around the vehicle if you plan to pass.

Funeral Processions

A funeral procession is two or more vehicles, including a lead or escort vehicle, traveling during daylight hours with the body or cremated remains of a deceased person. The rules for operating in and around a funeral procession are set by M.G.L. Ch. 85, Section 14A.

Funeral processions have the right-of-way at intersections, with the EXCEPTION that they must yield to emergency vehicles with flashing lights or sirens or when directed by law enforcement. If the lead vehicle in a funeral procession (which may be a hearse or a police vehicle) legally drives through an intersection, all vehicles in the procession may also drive through the intersection, even if a traffic light changes or there is a stop sign.

If driving as part of a funeral procession, you must:

- Drive carefully at all times. You may follow the vehicle ahead as closely as is safe.

- Watch out for pedestrians or other vehicles when entering an intersection. As long as it is safe to do so, you may follow the lead vehicle through an intersection, regardless of a traffic light or stop sign.
- Not drive faster than 55 MPH on a highway with a speed limit of 55 MPH or higher. You must also not go more than 5 MPH slower than the speed limit on any other public way.
- Have your headlights and taillights turned on.
- Have your hazard lights on, if you are the first or last vehicle in the procession.

If your vehicle is not part of the funeral procession:

- You may not drive between procession vehicles unless directed by law enforcement or you are operating an emergency vehicle with siren and flashing lights turned on.
- You may not join the procession.
- You may not pass a procession on a multiple lane highway on the procession's right, unless the procession is in the far left lane.
- You may not cross an intersection, even if you have a green light while a funeral procession is passing through a red light, unless you can do so without crossing the path of the procession.

A vehicle owned by a funeral home or a funeral home director may display a flashing purple light (but no other color) when operated by the owner or an employee or contractor of the funeral home during a funeral procession.

Road Workers and Repair Crews

Nationally in 2023, 898 people were killed in crashes that happened in work zones.



Although road construction and maintenance sites are often well posted with warning signs, you must take extra care to ensure the safety of anyone working on a roadway. Orange warning signs and work equipment usually mean that people are on foot nearby. Follow road work signs carefully, and stay alert. Look for sudden changes in road direction or condition. Be prepared to stop. **If you are cited for speeding in a "work area", the fine will be doubled.**

Animals and Horse-Drawn Vehicles



Always give the right-of-way to an animal that someone is leading, riding, or driving. Animals are easily scared by motor vehicles. When you get near an animal or horse-drawn vehicle, be careful and do the following.

- Slow down.
- Stop if the animal or vehicle is coming toward you or is crossing your

path. Allow the animal to pass.

- If the animal or vehicle is traveling in the same direction as you, allow plenty of room for passing safely. Drive at a reasonable speed.
- Do not honk your horn or make a loud noise.
- If the animal you are passing looks scared, you must pull your vehicle to the side and stop.
- Proceed only when it is safe.
- You must stop if a rider or driver signals you to do so.

The law applies to horses, cows, and any other draft animals.

In rural areas, take extra care when passing hay rides. These are usually animal drawn and full of passengers.

Parking

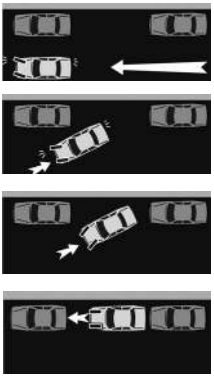
Stopping and parking your motor vehicle is regulated. It is important to ensure safety and a smooth traffic flow. You should practice parking maneuvers and know the parking laws.

Here are some general rules about stopping and parking:

- You must not create a traffic hazard while parking or while your vehicle is stopped.
- You must always make sure that you leave at least a 12-foot wide, clear roadway for traffic to pass.
- When you leave your vehicle by itself, state law requires you to stop the motor, set the parking brake, make sure the ignition is locked, remove your key, and lock the door.
- When you pull away from the curb, you must wait for vehicles in the travel lane to pass. You must then signal that you are pulling out and move slowly into traffic.
- If you park in a business or residential district, your vehicle must be no more than 12 inches from the curb. The only exception is if angled parking is allowed.

Parallel Parking

1. Choose a space that is long enough for your vehicle. Make sure parking is legal.
2. Pull up alongside the vehicle in front of the space. Leave about two or three feet between your vehicle and the parked one. Position your vehicle so that your rear bumper or front seats line up with the rear bumper or front seats of the other vehicle.
3. Look behind you *both* ways to check for pedestrians and other traffic.
4. Slowly back up and turn the steering wheel all the way toward the curb. Rest your foot lightly on the



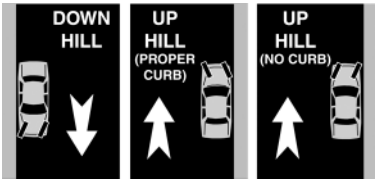
The steps in parallel parking

brake. Look directly out your rear window. Do *not* use your mirrors.

5. When your front passes the parked vehicle's rear bumper, turn your steering wheel the opposite way and continue backing up.
6. When you are back far enough, straighten your wheels and pull forward. Make sure you keep enough space in front of and behind you so that other vehicles can get out.
7. Shift into park.

Parking on Hills

Always set your parking brake and leave your vehicle in gear when parking on a hill if you have a manual transmission. If you have an automatic transmission, set your parking brake and shift into park. You must turn your front wheels in the proper direction to stop it from rolling downhill if the brake fails.



- **No Curb** — Turn your wheels *inward*, toward the edge of the road.
- **Uphill Against a Curb** — Turn your wheels *outward*, toward the travel lane.
- **Downhill Against a Curb** — Turn your wheels *inward*, toward the curb.

Parking Regulations

Parking regulations are generally determined by state law and enforced by local cities and towns. When these regulations are adopted by municipalities, they are often, but not always, similar to the state regulations. Parking spaces are often marked by white road lines. You must park your vehicle between these lines. You may not take part of two spaces. In Massachusetts, you may *not* park your vehicle in certain places:

- In a zone posted with a NO PARKING, NO STANDING, or NO STOPPING sign
- In a bicycle lane
- In a bus stop (the penalty for parking in a posted bus stop is $100)
- In a taxi stand
- In a zone and at a time posted for street cleaning
- In a posted loading zone
- Within 20 feet of an intersection
- In a crosswalk, in front of a driveway, or in front of a handicap-access ramp
- In a zone posted for HP-DV parking only (unless you have disabled person plates or placards, or disabled veteran plates). The fine for a first offense is $300. The fine for wrongful use of a disabled person or

veteran plate or placard is a minimum of $500.

- In a striped crosshatch area next to an HP-DV space, even if you have disability plates or a placard
- Within ten feet of a fire hydrant or fire lane
- On a sidewalk, curb, center traffic island, or median
- During a weather or roadway emergency
- Facing the wrong way against traffic
- On a state or an interstate highway, unless authorized
- On the Massachusetts Turnpike (fines range from $15 - $100)
- On a roadway in a rural area or outside a thickly settled district
- In a traffic lane next to a row of parked vehicles (“double parked”)
- To make nonemergency repairs to your vehicle

You may get a citation with a fine for violating a parking regulation. The fines for most of the violations listed above are set by city or town ordinance and will vary depending on the city or town. Unpaid parking tickets can stop you from renewing your license or vehicle registration.















Parking Meters

Many public parking spaces are operated by coin-fed meters. Rules and time limits usually apply during posted days and hours.

If you park longer than allowed or fail to pay the meter fee, you may be issued a parking citation.

Parking Permits

Many cities and towns give special parking permits to residents. Certain streets have **RESIDENT PERMIT PARKING ONLY** signs. If you do not have a permit or a special visitor’s placard, you may not park there. Contact your local city or town to find out how to get a permit.

Miscellaneous Rules of the Road

Listed below are laws that have not yet been covered. **It is illegal to**...

- Drive on a bet or wager
- Drag race
- Throw anything out of your window while driving
- Throw garbage or glass onto a roadway or onto public or private land

- Throw lighted cigarettes or anything that can cause a fire near a forest or open field
- Bypass or cut out a motor vehicle's muffler system

You must return used motor oil, transmission fluid, and other hazardous materials to the place you bought them. The garage or store that sold it to you is responsible for disposing of it.

Rules for Pedestrians

Pedestrians must remember the following rules:

- State law requires you to use a crosswalk when one is available. If an intersection has a traffic signal, press the button and wait for the **WALK** signal. Intersections with no push buttons automatically give **WALK** signals. Be patient!
- Do not cross if the signal says **DON'T WALK**.
- Before you cross a roadway, stop at the curb, look left, look right, and look left again for traffic. Do this even on a one-way street. Be alert while crossing. Be especially alert at intersections that allow motor vehicles to turn right on red.
- If you must enter the street from between parked cars, stop and look before crossing.
- You must use a sidewalk when one is available. When no sidewalk is available, you should walk on the shoulder **facing** traffic.
- Never walk along or across expressways, interstate highways, or turnpikes.
- Wear clothing with bright colors or reflective strips, especially at night.











Laws for Bicyclists and Motorists in the Presence of Bicyclists (as amended by Chapter 525 of the Acts of 2008)

Bicyclists have the right to use all public ways in this state except limited access or express state highways where signs specifically prohibiting bicycles have been posted. When riding on public ways, bicyclists must obey the same basic traffic laws and regulations that apply to motor vehicle operators. The rules for bicycles (including amendments) are listed here.

As a bicyclist: (from Chap. 85, Section 11B)

- You can use the **full lane** anywhere, anytime, and on any street (except limited access or express state highways where signs specifically prohibiting bicycles have been posted), even if there is a bike lane.

- You must bike in the same direction as traffic unless otherwise indicated by signs or markings.
- You must stop at red lights and stop signs.
- You can keep to the right when passing a motor vehicle moving in the travel lane.
- You must signal your intent by either hand to stop or turn. However, the signal does not have to be continuous or be made at all if both hands are needed for the bicycle's safe operation.
- You can ride on sidewalks outside of business districts for safety unless banned locally.
- If on a sidewalk or shared use path, you must yield to pedestrians and give an audible signal before overtaking or passing (no sirens or whistles).
- No more than two bicycles can be operated side-by-side. On a roadway with more than one lane in the direction of travel, bicyclists riding side-by-side must stay in one lane and not unnecessarily restrict a passing vehicle's ability to overtake you.
- You must maintain a safe distance from other bicyclists, especially when approaching intersections.
- You must slow down when approaching crosswalks, especially during heavy traffic.
- You must ride on or astride a permanent seat affixed to the bicycle. A passenger must also ride on a permanent seat attached to the bicycle or to a trailer towed by the bicycle.
- You cannot transport a person who is between one and four years old or who weighs 40 lbs. or less except in a "baby seat" attached to the bicycle. The person must be in a harness, be seated in an upright position, and their hands and feet must be protected from hitting the wheel spokes. A person can ride on or astride a seat on a tandem bicycle if the person can reach the pedals and handlebars. You cannot transport a child under the age of one year on a bicycle.
- A bicycle helmet approved by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission must be worn by a bicycle operator or passenger under 16 years old. It must be secured to the person's head when the bicycle is operated on a public way or bicycle path, unless the passenger is secured in an enclosed trailer which protects their head.
- You must give an audible warning (other than a siren or whistle) when necessary to ensure safe operation.
- You can park your bicycle on a way or a sidewalk, but only if it does not obstruct vehicle or pedestrian traffic.
- You cannot let the bicycle be pulled by another vehicle and can only tow a bicycle trailer.
- You cannot carry any objects that would interfere with the safe operation of the bicycle and must keep one hand on the handlebars at all times.

- You must have a proper working brake system to stop from 15 MPH within 30 feet.
- From a half hour after sunset to a half hour before sunrise, you must have a white lamp in front visible from up to 500 feet and a rear facing red light or reflector visible up to 600 feet.
- From a half hour after sunset to a half hour before sunrise, you must have a reflector on each pedal or your ankles, or reflective material on yourself or on the bicycle. The reflectors must be visible up to 600 feet from all sides.
- Your handlebars cannot be set at a height above your shoulders while gripping them and you cannot extend the fork from its original manufacturer's design.
- You must report any crash involving personal injury and any crash involving property damage in excess of $100 to the police in the municipality where it occurred.

In addition to the laws listed above, bicyclists should also do the following:

- Ride in a straight line so drivers and pedestrians know where to expect you.
- Ride at appropriate speeds on shared paths and streets. If riding on a sidewalk where it is legal, you must ride at a walking speed and yield to pedestrians.
- Put your phone away when biking. Do not text and bike.
- Yield to pedestrians. Be alert and prepared to stop for them.
- Slow down as you approach crosswalks.
- Ride outside of the "door zone" (at least three feet from parked cars) and watch for opening car doors.
- Give other bicyclists room. Pass other bicyclists on the left, not the right. Don't cut in front of other bicyclists who are stopped at an intersection.
- At intersections, assume drivers cannot see you. Slow down and try to make eye contact with the driver. Anticipate when drivers may turn. Don't try to race by a driver at an intersection. Maintain a safe speed.
- Give buses, trucks, and other large vehicles room and avoid riding next to them or passing them. They make wide turns, take time to come to a full stop, and have large blind spots. Be especially careful in the rear blind spot and don't assume the driver can see you. Never pass a moving tractor trailer on the right.
- Don't pass buses on the right. You might hit someone exiting the bus or get squeezed into the curb. If passing a bus on the left, pay attention and expect it to re-enter the lane.
- Do not wear headphones or earbuds in both ears while biking.

Wearing a proper bicycle helmet significantly reduces the risk of bicycle-related deaths and disabling injuries.

As a motorist in the presence of bicycles:

- **Do Not Cut-Off After Passing:** When passing a bicycle traveling in the same direction that is on your right, you must not return to the right until you have safely passed the overtaken bicycle. (Chap. 89, Sec. 2)
- **Do Not Make an Abrupt Turn After Passing:** When passing a bicycle near an intersection or driveway where you want to turn right, you cannot turn unless you are at a safe distance from the bicyclist and you can make the turn at a reasonable and proper speed. (Chap. 90, Sec 14)
- **Do Not Squeeze Bicycles in a Narrow Lane:** If a lane is too narrow to pass a bicycle at a safe distance, be **PATIENT** until you can safely use an adjacent lane or **WAIT** until it is safe to pass in the lane you share. (Chap. 89, Sec. 2) You must stay at least four feet away when passing.
- **Do Not Fail to Yield When Turning Left:** When turning left at an intersection or into an alley, private road, or driveway, you must yield the right of way to a vehicle approaching from the opposite direction, including a bicycle, if it is in the intersection or close enough to be an immediate hazard. (Chap. 90, Sec 14)
- **Watch for Bicycles on Your Right:** Bicycles can legally ride to the right of motor vehicle traffic. The law says it is not a defense for a motorist causing a crash with a bicycle that the bicycle was to the right of other traffic. (Chap. 85, Sec 11B)
- **Do Not Open a Door Without First Looking:** Drivers and passengers can be fined up to $100 for opening a vehicle door into an oncoming bicycle. (Chap. 90, Sec 14) Before opening your door, you should always check behind you to make sure that no bicyclists are approaching.
- **Be aware that bicyclists can ride two bicycles side-by-side.** However, on a road with more than one lane in the direction of travel, they must stay in one lane. (Chap. 85, Sec. 11B)
- **Be aware that bicyclists Do Not Always Have to Signal Turns!** Bicyclists must signal their intent by either hand to stop or turn. However, the signal does not have to be continuous or be made at all if both hands are needed for the bicycle's safe operation. (Chap. 85, Sec. 11B)



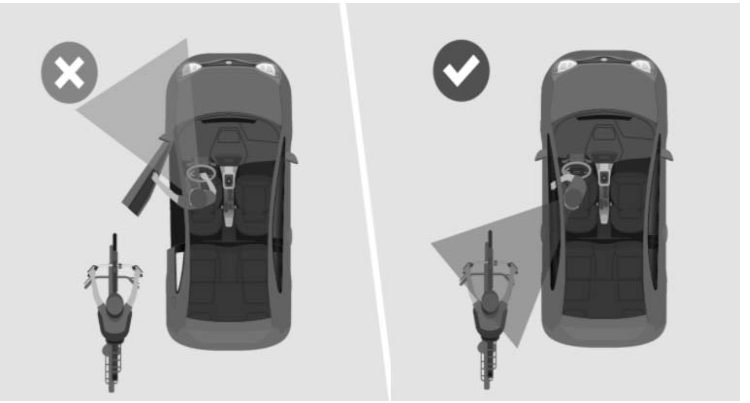
The Danger of Open Doors to Bicyclists

Open vehicle doors pose a very serious threat to bicyclists. When opening a vehicle door, drivers and passengers should do the following:

1. Check your rear-view mirror.
2. Check your side-view mirror.
3. Open the door with your far hand (the hand farther from the door).

This is called the "Dutch Reach" method because it originated in the Netherlands. It forces your body to turn, which will better allow you to see approaching bicyclists. It also prevents the vehicle door from being opened too fast. This not only protects bicyclists, but can also prevent your door from being damaged or torn off by an approaching motor vehicle.

Bicyclists should ride at least three feet from parked cars to avoid doors, both on streets with and without bike lanes. This will keep bicyclists outside of the "door zone" and protect them from getting hit by opening vehicle doors.



The "Dutch Reach" method for opening vehicle doors.

Bicycle Boxes

Bicycle boxes are pavement markings that are installed at intersections to allow bicyclists a safe way to turn when approaching a red light. Bicycle boxes are green and have an image of a bicyclist. At intersections, they are painted on the pavement before the crosswalk and they cover the entire travel lane.

Drivers must stop behind the bicycle box (even when it's empty) and wait for a green light.

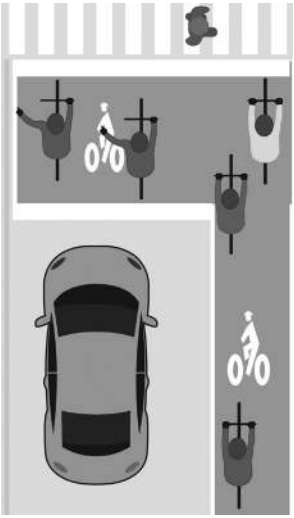
Bicyclists who are turning left should stop in the bicycle box, move to the left side of the box, signal the turn, and wait for the green light. Bicyclists

traveling straight or turning right should stay to the right in the bicycle box, in a staggered formation, and wait for the green light.

Bicycle boxes can also be used by bicyclists to make a two-stage left turn. A two-stage left turn allows bicyclists to make a left turn in two separate steps, rather than crossing multiple lanes of traffic:

Step 1: Cross straight through the intersection on the green light and stop in the bicycle box for the road you are turning onto.

Step 2: Wait for the green light and go straight through the intersection.



Example of a bicycle box

Separated Bicycle Lanes

Separated bicycle lanes, also know as cycle tracks and protected bike lanes, physically separate bicycle traffic from vehicular traffic. Where bicycle lanes cross an intersection, they are often indicated by green pavement with an image of a bicyclist. Bicycle lanes are not intended for pedestrians, who must stay on the sidewalk.

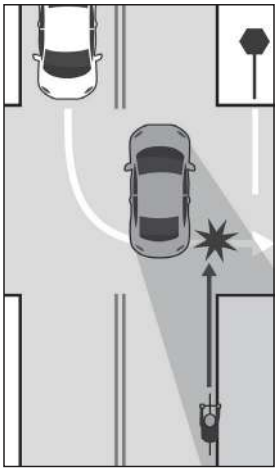
At intersections, drivers must stop at the stop line to allow pedestrians and bicyclists to cross safely. When turning right, drivers must yield to pedestrians and bicylists who are crossing.

Drivers must always check for oncoming bicyclists when turning across a bike lane. This may require looking to the side and behind the vehicle.

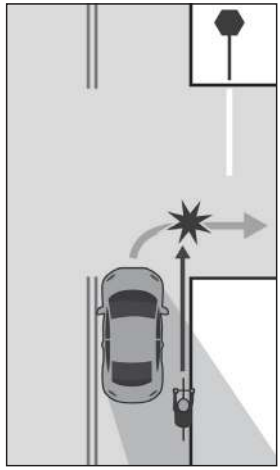
Bicyclists must ride in the proper direction on bicycle lanes. At intersections, bicyclists should ride in the lane through the intersection, while watching for turning vehicles. Bicyclists must yield to crossing pedestrians.

Common Bicycle Crash Scenarios

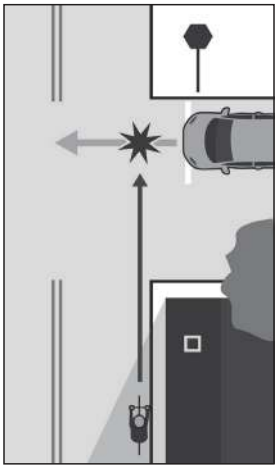
The images on the next page show common crash scenarios between motor vehicles and bicyclists. The motor vehicle is at fault in all of these crashes and drivers must always be alert for bicycles that may be hidden by other vehicles or buildings. Drivers must also be careful to not underestimate a bicyclist's speed or the amount of space needed to pass. In all of these scenarios, bicyclists can increase their visibility and reduce the risk of a crash by riding farther left in the lane.



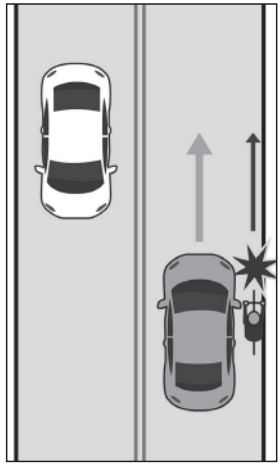
Left Cross



Right Hook



Drive Out



Sideswipe

Special Driving Situations



Only practice and experience can make you a good driver. About 40 percent of highway crashes involve drivers under 25 years old (RMV Crash Data Department). Most of these crashes are caused by driver inexperience. To be a good driver, you must follow these rules.

- Give driving your full attention. Don't be distracted while driving. Talking to passengers, adjusting a car stereo, or eating can all be dangerous.
- Drive defensively, and keep your eyes on the road ahead. By staying alert, you will see hazards and have time to avoid them.
- Learn to drive in different situations. Practice highway driving, night driving, and handling a motor vehicle in different weather conditions.
- Know how to handle emergency situations, such as skidding or tire blowout.
- Know, understand, and obey the rules of the road.

This chapter explains defensive driving and how to handle special driving situations. It also tells you what to do if there is a crash, even if you are only a witness.

Moving Emergency Vehicle

- Always yield the right-of-way to fire engines, ambulances, police cars, and other emergency vehicles that are using a siren and/or emergency flashing lights.
- If an emergency vehicle is coming from any direction, you must pull as close as possible to the right side of the road. Stop until the vehicle has passed. Slowly rolling is not acceptable.
- Check your mirrors and find a safe place to pull over to the right. You should not pull your vehicle to the left or slam on your brakes. Do not stop suddenly. Use your right turn signal.
- NEVER stop in the middle of an intersection. Drive through the intersection and pull over as soon as it is safe.
- After the emergency vehicle has passed, use your left turn signal and make sure the lane is clear. Be sure there are no other emergency vehicles approaching. Then you can merge back into traffic.
- It is illegal to follow closer than 300 feet behind an emergency vehicle responding to an alarm.

Stationary Emergency and Maintenance Vehicles

- You must slow down and stay alert when you see an "emergency response vehicle" stopped ahead of you with its emergency lights flashing. This includes fire trucks, police cars, ambulances, and "disaster vehicles" (usually in support of other emergency vehicles and services). This also includes highway maintenance vehicles or recovery vehicles (tow truck, ramp truck, etc.) with flashing emergency lights. You must be careful for the safety of yourself and others.
- The "**move-over law**" (Chapter 418 of the Acts of 2008) requires you to be cautious and reduce your speed to a speed that is reasonable and safe for the road conditions when you approach a stationary emergency vehicle with flashing lights. On a highway with at least four lanes (at least two in the same direction you are heading), yield the right-of way by safely "moving over" to a lane that is not next to the lane the emergency vehicle is in. In other words, leave an open lane between your vehicle and the stopped emergency vehicle. Depending on where the emergency vehicle is parked, you may need to move to the right or to the left. If "moving-over" is not possible, you must still be cautious and reduce your speed to a reasonable and safe speed.
- Always be ready to stop if necessary when passing an emergency vehicle.
- At night, be sure to dim your high beams.
- If you need help, pull in front of the police cruiser and ask for help. Never stop behind a police cruiser. (*Do not approach a police officer*

who is dealing with a stopped motorist. Stand next to your vehicle on the shoulder until the police officer is finished.)

- It is illegal to drive by or park within 800 feet of a fire. Do not drive over an unprotected fire hose unless directed to by a firefighter or public safety official.

General Guidelines if You Are Stopped by a Police Officer

State law requires you to pull over to the side of the road and stop when signaled by a police officer. You must pull over whether the officer is in a police car or on foot. Being pulled over may cause anxiety for both you and the police officer. You may be anxious about getting a ticket or not know why you are being stopped. Police officers rarely know what to expect from a driver or passengers. Because of this, they may be anxious about their own personal safety.

Your actions during a traffic stop may determine the police officer's reaction. Arguing, disregarding the officer's instructions or requests, suggesting that the officer could be more productive by stopping other drivers, or suddenly reaching under the seat or into unseen areas of the passenger compartment are not appropriate. These actions may increase the officer's own anxiety.

Traffic law enforcement is one of a police officer's most important duties. They help to ensure the orderly flow of traffic and to prevent deaths and injuries on our public roads. There is an obvious need for constant enforcement. More persons are killed and injured in motor vehicle crashes across the U.S. each year than in all other forms of violence combined. In 2022 (the last year for which figures are available), 42,514 persons (drivers, passengers, pedestrians, and bicyclists) were killed and over 2,382,000 were injured in the U.S. in crashes (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration-NHTSA). In 2022, Massachusetts had 413 deaths and 30,611 injuries from crashes (RMV Crash Data Department).

Police officers have reason to be worried about their safety during traffic enforcement. Each year in the United States, a number of police officers are killed and thousands more are assaulted. During 2021 alone, 5 police officers were killed and 4,687 others were assaulted during traffic pursuits and stops (Federal Bureau of Investigation-Uniform Crime Reports).

To help reduce the levels of anxiety, you should do the following during a traffic stop.

- Don't ignore the officer's signal or pretend you didn't see it.
- Put on your turn signal and check your mirrors. Carefully and slowly move your vehicle completely to the right side of the road. Do NOT pull over to the left. If the officer drives by and doesn't stop, return to the travel lane when it is safe.

- Do not stop your vehicle in an intersection, in front of a driveway, or in a travel lane. If the officer directs you to pull over in a certain place, pull over where directed.
- Put the car in park (if an automatic transmission) or in neutral with the parking brake on (if a standard transmission). Turn off the engine and radio.
- Stay in the vehicle (both you and your passengers). Only get out if instructed by the officer. If asked to get out of the vehicle, stay safely away from traffic and keep hands in plain view.
- If it is dark, leave your headlights on and put the interior overhead light on.
- Roll down your window as the officer walks toward you.
- The officer will usually explain why you were stopped. If not in uniform, the officer will show you their credentials or you may ask to see them.
- Wait until the officer asks for your license and registration before you (or a passenger) reach into the glove compartment. Do not suddenly reach into clothing while the officer approaches or is present. While you know you are only reaching for the appropriate documents, your movements may be reasonably seen by the officer as an attempt to reach for a weapon or to hide something. The officer may feel threatened and may react in a manner that you do not expect. Hand the documents to the officer when requested and do not present the documents in a wallet or holder. Chapter 90, Section 11 of the General Laws requires you to have your license and registration handy when operating a vehicle. There is a $35 fine for a first offense for the failure to produce either document. If you do not have your license and registration, the officer can ask for your name and address and, if you do not own the vehicle, the name and address of the owner. If you fail to comply, or provide a false name or address, you can be fined $100 (Chapter 90, Section 25). You can also be arrested and face criminal charges if you refuse.
- Outside of Massachusetts, an officer may also request "proof of insurance" (based on that jurisdiction's laws). Your registration identifies your insurance carrier and explains that an insurance card is not issued under Massachusetts law.
- **Keep your hands in plain sight and tell your passengers to do the same.**
- Give your full attention to the officer and do not use a cell phone during the stop.
- Do not make any sudden movements or gestures that could seem threatening. Examples of this could be reaching under the seats or into unlit areas of the vehicle. Make sure your passengers do not do this either.
- Stay in your vehicle when the officer goes back to the police car. If

you have a question, wait until the officer returns. If you find something the officer requested, hold it out the window and wait for the officer to return.

- Answer appropriately if the officer asks if there are any weapons in the vehicle.
- Be polite when the officer returns your license and registration. If the officer gives you a ticket, do not argue. Once a citation is issued, the officer is required to file it and cannot take it back. You have the right to challenge the citation in court. If you have questions about the citation, you can ask the officer to clarify. Massachusetts **does not** require you to sign a citation, but some other jurisdictions do. Read a citation before signing. Your signature should only confirm receipt of the citation, not proof of a violation.
- When the officer tells you that you can go, put on your turn signal, check your mirrors, and return to the travel lane. If you are on a highway, accelerate to a safe speed in the breakdown lane before merging into traffic.

Remember that a police officer never knows what to expect when stopping a driver. Don't let your emotions or sudden unexplained movements (or those of your passengers) cause more anxiety. The officer may be more likely to listen to you and less likely to feel threatened if you follow these guidelines.

IMPORTANT: If you believe that you were stopped by a police officer because of your race or your gender, or if you believe the officer's conduct during the stop was otherwise inappropriate, you may report this by contacting the police department or law enforcement agency of the officer who stopped you.

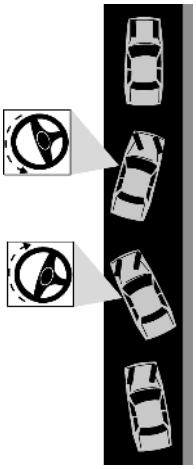
Driving Emergencies

In any emergency situation, it is very important to think clearly and don't panic. You often have only a short time to react. Read this section to learn what to do when an emergency occurs. It could save a life.

Skidding

You should handle a skid the same for front and rear-wheel drive vehicles:

- Slowly remove your foot from the gas pedal and shift into neutral.
- Don't hit the brakes. You will make the skid worse.
- Turn your steering wheel **in the direction of the skid**. If your rear tires are skidding to the left, turn your steering wheel left. If they are sliding right, steer right.



If your vehicle skids, always turn your steering wheel in the direction of the skid.

- You may need to steer left and right a few times until you get your car completely under control.

Running Off the Pavement

If you drive off the pavement and onto the shoulder of the road:

- Hold the steering wheel tightly and slowly remove your foot from the gas pedal.
- Gently apply the brake to reduce your speed.
- Check for traffic behind you, then steer gently back onto the road.

Flat Tire, Blowout, or Wheel Loss

If you get a flat tire, your tire blows out, or you lose a wheel:

- Grip the steering wheel tightly and slowly remove your foot from the gas pedal.
- Gently apply the brakes.
- If you begin to skid, turn the steering wheel **in the direction of the skid**.
- Gently straighten the car. Don't use the brake until you have the vehicle under control.
- Pull your car off the road as soon as it is safe.

Brake Failure

If your vehicle has antilock brakes and the brakes fail to respond when you are fully pressing the brake pedal, you should do the following:

- Downshift to a lower gear, and work your way down to the lowest gear, if necessary.
- Apply the parking brake gently. Hold the brake release in case your vehicle starts to skid.
- If you cannot slow your vehicle, sound your horn and flash your lights to warn drivers or pedestrians around you.

If your vehicle does not have antilock brakes, you should pump the brake pedal several times rapidly to build up brake fluid pressure. **Do not pump antilock brakes**. If this does not work, you should then follow the steps listed above.

You can determine what type of brakes you have by checking the indicator on your dashboard or checking your vehicle's user manual.

Stuck Gas Pedal

If your gas pedal sticks:

- Put your car in neutral and press the brake pedal to slow down.
- Try to free the gas pedal with your foot.
- If the gas pedal doesn't release, reapply the brakes.
- Keep your eyes on the road.
- When safe, pull your vehicle to the side of the road and bring it to a stop.

Vehicle Approaching Head On

If a vehicle is driving toward you head on in your lane:

- Slow down and pull to the right.
- Sound your horn to alert the other driver.

Headlight Failure

If your headlights suddenly go out:

- Turn on your parking lights, emergency flashers, or turn signal.
- Try the headlight switch a few times.
- Pull off the road as quickly as possible and leave your emergency flashers on.

Stalling on Railroad Tracks

If your vehicle stalls on railroad tracks and a train is coming:

- Get everyone out of the vehicle IMMEDIATELY and move as far from the tracks as you can.
- To avoid being hit by wreckage, run in a 45 degree angle away from the tracks in the direction that the train is coming, then immediately call 911.

If your vehicle stalls on railroad tracks and a train is NOT coming:

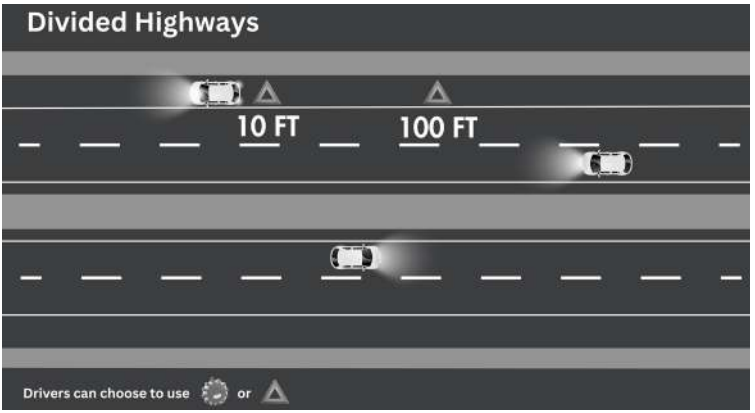
- Roll down your window or open your door and listen for a train.
- Try to start your engine.
- If your vehicle won't start, shift to neutral and try to push the vehicle off the tracks.
- If you cannot move your vehicle from the tracks, call the toll free Emergency Notification System (ENS) number that is located in the middle of the crossbuck or on the metal box near the grade crossing. Give the railroad dispatcher the DOT grade crossing locator number that is also on the sign. Be sure to specify that a vehicle is on the tracks and follow the dispatcher's instructions.

You should also call the ENS number if you see anything suspicious (such as tampering with rail switches) along a railroad.

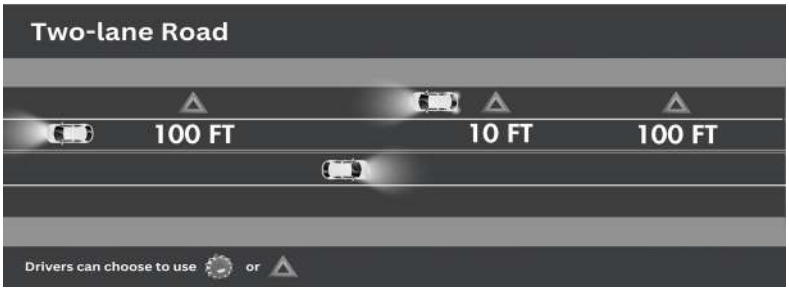
Breakdowns

- **Move your vehicle to the side of the road and stop the vehicle.**
    - Never park on a hill or a curve where others cannot see you. If you cannot get your vehicle off the pavement, get all passengers out of the vehicle and off the road.
    - On a highway with a breakdown lane or shoulder, move your vehicle as far from the travel lane as you can. Stay in your vehicle. To avoid serious injury, do not stand near the travel lane or in the breakdown lane.

- **Once your vehicle is parked and you are still inside the vehicle:**
  - Turn on your emergency warning (hazard) lights. At night, also turn on your vehicle's interior lights.
  - Locate your safety vest and warning triangles or LED flares (if you have them).
  - Put your safety vest on while still inside the vehicle.
- **Setting Up Safety Equipment:**
  - Assess if it is safe to exit the vehicle. Consider exiting on the side of the vehicle away from moving traffic.
  - Tie a white cloth to your antenna or door handle (use a red cloth when it's snowing).
  - Raise your vehicle's hood.
  - If you stop on a divided highway, place your warning triangles or LED flares:
    - 10 feet behind your vehicle
    - 100 feet behind your vehicle



  - If you stop on a two-lane road carrying traffic in both directions or on an undivided highway, place your warning triangles or LED flares:
    - 10 feet behind your vehicle
    - 100 feet behind your vehicle
    - 100 feet in front of your vehicle



The Highway Assistance Patrol (HAP) provides help to stranded drivers. It is operated by the MassDOT-Highway Division and sponsored by MAPFRE | Commerce Insurance.

For more information, visit MassDOT.State.MA.US/Highway/TrafficTravelResources/EmergencyRoadsideAssistance.aspx

Car Catches Fire

If you see smoke coming from under your vehicle's hood:

- Pull off the road, turn off the ignition, and move away from the vehicle.
- Call the fire department or emergency services.
- Do not try to fight the fire unless you have an extinguisher.

Vehicle Drives into Water

If your car drives into water:

- Unfasten your safety belt and escape through a window.
- If you have power windows, open them quickly before the water causes them to stop working.
- Do not open a door. This would cause water to rush in and your vehicle could flip over.

If your vehicle sinks before you can get out, climb into the rear seat. An air pocket may form there. When the vehicle settles, take a deep breath and escape through a window.

Driving Through Tunnels

Public Safety is a priority at MassDOT. Please follow these important safety tips when traveling through our tunnels.

If You are in a Crash or a Disabled Vehicle in a Tunnel:

Most major tunnels within Massachusetts are monitored by the Highway Operations Center. State Police and MassDOT personnel are located throughout the tunnel system to respond to incidents as soon as possible.

- Pull to the side of the road, if you can.
- Activate your hazard flashing lights.
- Call 911 and follow instructions.
- Stay in your vehicle if it is safe to do so.
- Wait for emergency personnel for help.

When Entering A Tunnel:

- Stay alert!
- Turn on your headlights.
- Obey all signs and signals.
- Listen to the radio for traffic updates.
- Do not enter if you notice smoke near the entrance or if your car is smoking or burning.
- Maintain a safe driving distance.
- Hazardous Materials are prohibited, including propane.

In Heavy Traffic:

- Listen to the radio for updates.
- Keep a safe distance from other vehicles, even if traffic is moving slowly.
- Note the location of emergency exits.
- Follow the instructions of MassDOT officials, State Police, and message signs.

If There's A Fire:

- Stop, turn off the engine, and exit your vehicle.
- To help emergency personnel, leave your keys in the vehicle.
- For your safety, leave your stuff in the vehicle.
- Call 911.
- Follow the instructions of Fire Department, State Police, MassDOT officials, and message signs.
- Exit at the nearest tunnel entrance, unless directed otherwise.
- Help others, if you can.

Please remember: Fire and smoke can kill. Save your life, not your car.

Traffic Crashes

In 2022, there were 134,472 motor vehicle crashes in Massachusetts. You can lower your chances of a crash by obeying the rules of the road, following the instructions in this manual, and learning to drive defensively. If you are involved in or witness any crash, state law requires you to do as follows.

If You Are Involved in a Crash

When you're involved in a crash, even a small one, you must stop your vehicle. **Never leave the scene of a crash.** It's against the law. You could be charged with a "hit and run" violation.

Property Damage Only

1. Move your vehicle off the road, if possible. If there are no injuries, the Driver Removal Law requires that vehicles be moved out of travel lanes to a safe location.
2. Exchange name, address, driver's license number, vehicle registration, and insurance information with all drivers or property owners who are involved. You must show your driver's license and registration, if asked to.
3. If you damaged a parked vehicle or other property, **you must try to locate the owner to report the crash or notify the local police.**
4. Within five days of the crash, you must file a crash report with both the RMV and the local police department. You must report *any* crash with $1,000 or more of property damage.
5. If you've injured a cat, dog, or any other animal, **notify the local police and, if possible, the animal's owner.**

If you have a cellular phone, you can contact the state police to report any emergency by calling 911.

Crashes Involving Injuries

1. Check to see if anyone is injured.
2. Call the police and request an ambulance or EMTs, if necessary.
3. If possible, move your vehicle off the road.
4. Exchange name, address, driver's license number, vehicle registration, and insurance information with anyone who is injured and with any other drivers involved. You must show your driver's license and registration, if asked to.
5. Within five days of the crash, you must file a crash report with both the RMV and the local police department. You must report *any* crash that caused injury or death or that caused $1,000 or more of property damage.
6. Notify your insurance company.

Emergency First Aid Tips

- Don't move an injured person unless absolutely necessary. If you must move someone because of a life-threatening situation, fully support the person's head and spine.
- Check to see if the person is breathing. If the person is not breathing

and you are certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), begin performing CPR immediately.

- If the person is bleeding, put pressure directly on the wound. Maintain pressure until help arrives.
- Cover the injured person with a blanket or coat to provide warmth and prevent shock.

Hit and Run Crashes (Leaving the Scene of a Crash Without Identifying Yourself)

In 2022, there were 13,829 "hit & run" crashes in Massachusetts in which drivers left the scene without stopping and identifying themselves.

Leaving the scene of a crash can result in serious consequences, both for the driver (once caught), and for any victims left behind at the scene.

When you're involved in a crash, even a small one, you must stop your vehicle. **Never leave the scene of a crash involving a death, personal injuries, and/or property damage without stopping and identifying yourself. You must stay on the scene, properly identify yourself, give aid if possible, and call for emergency assistance if needed.**

If you leave the scene after a crash without properly identifying yourself, you could be criminally charged with a "leaving the scene" violation and face the following maximum penalties.

- Up to $200 or up to two years imprisonment, or both, for leaving the scene after a crash causing damage to another vehicle or other property (M.G.L. c.90, Section 24 (2) (a))
- Up to $1000 and imprisonment of up to two years for leaving the scene after a crash causing personal injury to any person (not resulting in death) (Section 2 (a ½) (1))
- Up to $5000 and imprisonment of up to 2 ½ years in jail or up to 10 years in state prison for leaving the scene after a crash causing personal injury to any person that resulted in death (Section 2 (a ½) (2))

If you hit and injure or kill a cat or dog and do not notify the animal's owner or the local police, you can be fined under M.G.L. Chapter 272, Section 80H.

Any criminal conviction may result in probation costs and you may be subject to up to six years of insurance surcharges. Your driver's license may also be suspended. See the license suspension periods and reinstatement fees in the "*Criminal Offenses and Suspensions Chart*" in Chapter Three of this Manual.

If You Witness a Crash

If you drive by a crash and there are police and emergency vehicles there, use good judgment. Reduce your speed and drive carefully. Look out for people and equipment in the road. Do not stop or slow down to "sightsee." This is dangerous and will cause a traffic problem.

If you see a crash and there are no police or emergency vehicles:

1. Park your car off the road. Turn on your emergency flashers to warn other drivers.
2. Check to see if anyone is injured.
3. If you have a cellular phone, call the police. If you don't have a cellular phone, tell the next person who stops with a phone to call the police, or try to flag down a passing vehicle and ask the driver to get help.
4. If anyone has flares, emergency triangles, or reflectors, put them 200 feet or more in front of and behind the crash to warn other drivers.
5. Follow the emergency first aid tips listed on page 129.
6. If possible, move all vehicles involved in the crash to the side of the road.
7. Turn off the ignition of all vehicles involved in the crash.

Do not go near any electrical wires that have fallen because of a crash. If electrical wires have landed on a vehicle, tell the people inside to remain inside until emergency personnel arrive. Do not touch the vehicle.

Reporting a Crash

You must report any motor vehicle crash you are in that causes someone to be killed or hurt, or that causes $1,000 or more in property damage. You must file a written report with the RMV within five days of the crash. If you are required to file a crash report, but you do not, you can be fined and your license can be suspended or revoked.

Just reporting a crash to your insurance company is not enough. You must follow all the instructions in this section.

You can get a Motor Vehicle Crash Operator Report at your local police station, an RMV Service Center, or by calling the RMV's Contact Center. You can also download the report from our website at Mass.Gov/RMV.

Where to send completed reports:

1. Mail or deliver one copy to the local police department in the city or town where the crash happened.
2. Mail one copy to your Insurance Company.
3. Mail one copy to the RMV at the address below.

Crash Records, Registry of Motor Vehicles,
P.O. Box 55889, Boston, MA 02205-5889

You should keep a copy of the report for your own files.

You can request a copy of a crash report completed by law enforcement online at Mass.Gov/RMV for $20.

Drive Smart and Save - "Green Driving" Tips

There are a lot of ways you can save money on gas and reduce your carbon footprint, and you can do it with any vehicle! These simple tips (from commute.com/commuter-options/drive-smart-and-save) will save you money.

- **Drive Less** - Try taking public transportation, walking or biking, or carpooling. Short trips in particular are great for walking or biking – you'll get exercise, save fuel, reduce wear and tear on your engine, and you can enjoy the scenery. And, if you have a lot of errands to make, try "chaining" your trips together to save time and gas – when you do make multiple stops, go to your farthest destination first to warm up your engine more quickly for better fuel economy.
- **Set it at 60** - Fuel consumption increases about five percent for every five miles per hour driven above 60 mph. It's like paying an additional 30 cents per gallon! Set the cruise control at 60 and start adding up the savings.
- **Go Easy on the Pedals** - Rapid starts and hard stops can increase fuel use by 40 percent, but reduce travel time by only four percent. Accelerate gradually. Maintain a constant speed. Coast when you can. And don't forget to pick up your E-ZPass transponder to avoid traffic at the tolls- this can save lots of time, as well as fuel.
- **Turn it Off** - Idling gets you zero miles per gallon. So when you're stopped, switch off the engine. It saves you fuel, and it's the law – Massachusetts state law prohibits idling for more than five minutes. If you really need to idle, shift to neutral, so the engine is not working against your brake and consuming more fuel.
- **Click the Cap** - Loose, damaged, or missing fuel tank caps cause 147 million gallons of fuel to evaporate each year. Make sure the cap is tight and you can save about $120 per year.
- **Check the Pressure** - Billions of gallons of fuel are wasted by driving on underinflated tires. Proper tire pressure is safer, extends tire life, and can provide up to 3% benefit per tankful of fuel.