

Frequently Asked Questions

Instruction Permit

How old do I need to be to get an Instruction Permit?

You need to be at least 15 years old and enrolled in a driver training course. If you're not planning to take a course, you must be at least 15 ½ years old and pass the [knowledge test](#).

I'm 15 years old and just enrolled in driver's ed. How soon can I pre-apply for my instruction permit?

You can visit an office or complete your [online](#) application for a permit **10 days or less before the course starts**. This will allow your school to inform DOL that you're enrolled. This includes weekends and holidays. Give your WDL number to your driving school.

The driving school is asking for my WDL number. What is that?

Washington permits, ID cards, and licenses use a number that starts with WDL. This number is unique to you. You may already have a WDL number if you have a valid or expired WA ID card, already filled out an application on our website, or you've gotten a ticket in the past. If you don't have a WDL yet, we'll assign one to you when you [pre-apply](#).

Do I have to pass a knowledge exam before I can get an instruction permit?

If you are enrolled in a driver training school program, the school will submit a waiver to DOL that delays the knowledge test for the instruction permit. If you are not enrolled in driver's ed you will need to pass the knowledge test before you can get an instruction permit. You can also choose to take the knowledge test, even if you are enrolled in driver's ed.

Do I have to go to a licensing office to get my first instruction permit, or can I do it online?

You can apply for a non-photo instruction permit online without visiting a licensing office. If you want your permit to include a photo, you must apply for your permit at the licensing office. Learn more about applying for a first-time [instruction permit](#).

How long does the permit valid for?

The permit is valid for 1 year. You can renew it twice for a [fee](#).

How do I get a photo instruction permit?

You need to [prove your identity](#) in person. If you have a valid WA ID card, you don't need to do this again. We'll need to take your picture in one of our offices, or we can use a recent photo of you if we have one on file.

I have a Washington State ID card. Can I get a photo instruction permit?

No. You can keep your WA ID card and get a non-photo instruction permit, or you can surrender your ID card and get a photo instruction permit.

Do I have to be in driver's ed to get an instruction permit?

No. If you want to learn on your own, you must be at least 15 ½ years old and pass the [knowledge test](#).

Can I drive by myself with an instruction permit?

No. If you want to practice driving on public roads, you must have a licensed driver in the front passenger seat. They must have at least 5 years of experience driving with a valid license.



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Can I use my instruction permit to drive in another state?

Your Washington permit might not be valid for driving in another state. Contact the state where you'll be traveling to find out if they'll honor your Washington permit.

Can I renew my instruction permit online?

You can renew a photo instruction permit using the [License eXpress](#) or the [no-login option](#). If it's a non-photo instruction permit, then you can only renew through [License eXpress](#). Learn more about [renewing your permit online](#).

How many times can I renew my instruction permit?

You can renew twice for a [fee](#).

Do I have to get an instruction permit first before I can get a driver license?

Yes, if you are under the age of 18. Otherwise, if you are 18 or older, you can get your first driver license by passing the knowledge and drive test without taking a driver training course or getting an instruction permit. Keep in mind that if you want to practice on public roads before you take your drive test, you must get a permit and be accompanied by a licensed driver with at least 5 years of experience.

Can I get my first-time driver license online if I have an instruction permit with a photo and I've passed my traffic safety education course and both the knowledge and skills tests?

Yes, if you've passed everything and your permit has a photo, you may be eligible to get your [first-time license online](#).

Can I get my first-time driver license online if I have a permit card without photo or do I need to make an appointment?

Since the instruction permit doesn't have a photo, you'll need to schedule an appointment to get your first-time license. When you visit our office, you'll need to bring with you proof-of-identity documents. Visit our web page to find out what documents we accept: <https://www.dol.wa.gov/driverslicense/idproof.html>.

