

Everyone remembers when they got their driver's license for the first time after turning 16. When most of us received that license, it was a class C and didn't come with a lot of restrictions on what we could and could not do with that vehicle. It mainly came down to our parents' rules. Things have changed over the years and laws have been put in place mostly to protect young drivers from themselves. I receive a good many questions from people about the restrictions placed on young drivers so I thought that I would try and explain some of the rules in hopes of it making sense and giving teens and their parents a better understanding of how it all works. Here are a few highlights that I feel the general public want and need to know.

For a class CP license (Instructional Permit), you must be at least 15 years of age and pass a written examination. This permit is valid for two years. While that person is driving, they must be accompanied by a person at least 21 years of age who has a valid class C license, who is fit and capable of exercising control over the vehicle, and who is occupying the seat next to them.

For a class D license (Intermediate License), you must be at least 16 years of age, have held a valid instructional permit for one year and one day, and passed a comprehensive road test. Also, in the previous 12 months, the driver could not have been convicted of DUI, hit and run, leaving the scene of an accident, racing on the highways or streets, reckless driving, or convicted of any offense for which four or more points are placed on their license. During the first six months after receiving the class D license, passengers can only be the driver's immediate family. During the second six months, there cannot be more than one passenger who is not in the driver's immediate family under 21 years of age. Other restrictions on a class D driver's license include the following: you cannot drive between the hours of 12:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. (no exceptions-this applies to all class D drivers regardless of age), you cannot have more than three people under 21 years of age who are not members of the driver's immediate family in the vehicle (this applies after the first year-see previous sentence). It is completely legal for a 16 year old to drive their siblings to school, ball practice, etc... After the first six months, they may also have a friend(s) with them. Just remember that it can be only one non-immediate family member during the second six months and then no more than three thereafter. When the driver turns 18, they will then qualify for a class C license which is what you and I have as adult drivers.

Joshua's law, which was put into effect in 2007, was named for Joshua Brown who was killed in an accident. This law places certain requirements on obtaining a class D license. To receive a class D license at age 16, applicants must have completed a driver's education course approved by the Department of Driver Services. They must also have at least 40 hours of supervised driving practice, including at least 6 hours at night. A parent or guardian must have sworn verification that these requirements have been met. Any Georgia resident who has not completed an approved driver's education course cannot get a class D license until age 17 and the driving practice and verification still apply.

I hope that this information will help parents and teens that are new to the laws of obtaining a driver's license under Georgia's graduated licensing system. This can be very confusing so please do not hesitate calling me if you need clarification or have questions (706-795-6202). You can also visit the state's website for teen drivers at www.gateendrivereducation.com.

