

**Driver Education  
Standards of Learning  
for Virginia Public Schools**

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**Commonwealth of Virginia  
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# **Driver Education Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools**

## **Introduction**

The revised Driver Education Standards of Learning provide the framework for the *Curriculum Guide for Driver Education in Virginia*. As prescribed by §22.1-205 of the *Code of Virginia*, this curriculum guide serves as the Board of Education's approved driver education and traffic safety program of instruction for public and private school programs. Commercial driver training schools are approved and licensed by the Department of Motor Vehicles as prescribed by VR 485-60-9201, and they follow the same course content as public and private school driver education programs.

The classroom and in-car driver education standards focus on safe driving attitudes; time, space, and distance-perception skill development; and the recognition of and appropriate response to hazards in the ever-changing driving environment. Emphasis is placed on linking visual search skills, space management, and maintenance of balanced vehicle control to risk-reducing driving strategies. Significant attention is given to risk awareness, driver alertness, driver distractions, the social and economic consequences of driving, occupant protection, positive interactions with other roadway users, and the physical and psychological conditions that affect driver performance. Students apply basic driving skills in low-to-moderate traffic environments and progress to demonstration of skill proficiency in more complex traffic situations. When possible, teachers are also encouraged to use simulation and other technologies that will enhance student learning.

Successful completion of a state-approved driver education program does not, alone, make a teenager a responsible, experienced driver. Traffic safety education involves family, community, industry, government, and personal factors such as motivation, maturity, and perceptive abilities. These factors play major roles in the development and safety of young drivers. Evidence shows that often it is not poor driving skills that cause accidents among this age group, but inexperience and/or poor attitude. The family, not the school, is in the best position to have a sustained effect on minimizing the risks faced by inexperienced drivers and encouraging responsible behaviors. Throughout the course, emphasis is placed on extensive supervised practice with a licensed parent or guardian to develop precision in the use of skills, processes, and responsibilities.

## **Goals**

The purpose of driver education is to provide students with a detailed understanding of the fundamentals of driving and foster responsible attitudes and behaviors. As a result of quality traffic safety instruction, students will be able to

- demonstrate a working knowledge of the rules and procedures of operating a motor vehicle;
- identify and analyze the physical and psychological conditions that affect driver performance;
- apply knowledge, processes, and skills to become safe, competent users of the highway transportation system;
- display responsible driving behaviors when alone and with peers.

## Standards

- DE.1 The student will demonstrate an understanding of Virginia traffic laws, licensing procedures, and other responsibilities associated with the driving privilege. Key concepts include
- licensing requirements and types of licenses;
  - the motor vehicle section of the *Code of Virginia*;
  - the organ and tissue donation designation process.
- DE.2 The student will demonstrate an understanding of basic vehicle operating procedures. Key concepts/skills include
- pre-driving procedures;
  - starting procedures (automatic and manual transmissions);
  - vehicle information, warning, and control devices;
  - vehicle securing procedures.
- DE.3 The student will recognize the effects of momentum, gravity, and inertia on vehicle control and balance, and the relationship between kinetic energy and force of impact. Key concepts/skills include
- seating and hand position;
  - steering, braking, and acceleration;
  - compensating for shifts in vehicle load (from side to side, front to rear, and rear to front) that affect vehicle performance;
  - types of collisions — head-on, near-frontal, broadside, rear-end, rollover, sideswipe.
- DE.4 The student will demonstrate the ability to manage visibility, time, and space to avoid conflicts and reduce driving risks. Key concepts/skills include
- synthesizing information visually from the driving environment, using a space-management process;
  - applying following-interval concepts;
  - selecting gap and judging distance;
  - estimating passing-time and space needs.
- DE.5 The student will demonstrate appropriate adjustments when approaching controlled and uncontrolled intersections, curves, railroad crossings, and hills with line-of-sight or path-of-travel limitations. Key concepts/skills include
- roadway signs, signals, and markings;
  - right-of-way rules;
  - slope/grade of terrain;
  - vehicle position.
- DE.6 The student will identify the characteristics of an expressway and apply risk-reducing expressway driving strategies. Key concepts/skills include
- entering, merging, integrating into, and exiting from traffic flow;
  - managing interchanges;
  - selecting vehicle position and changing lanes.
- DE.7 The student will demonstrate the ability to communicate presence and intentions with other highway transportation users. Key concepts/skills include
- vehicle position and driver action;
  - vehicle communication devices.

- DE.8 The student will analyze and describe the physiological and psychological effects of alcohol and other drugs and their impact on a driver's awareness of risks and involvement in collisions. Key concepts include
- prescribed and over-the-counter medications;
  - illegal or illicit drugs;
  - effects of alcohol and other drugs on vision and space management;
  - synergistic effects of drugs;
  - alcohol elimination factors.
- DE.9 The student will identify and analyze the legal, health, and economic consequences associated with alcohol and other drug use and driving. Key concepts/skills include
- positive and negative peer pressure;
  - refusal skills;
  - Implied Consent, Zero Tolerance, and Use and Lose laws;
  - Administrative License Revocation, loss of license, ignition interlock, and other licensing restrictions;
  - court costs, insurance requirements, Virginia Alcohol Safety Action Program referral, and other costs.
- DE.10 The student will recognize the consequences of aggressive driving and other emotions that influence driving behaviors. Key concepts include
- stress and anxiety;
  - anger management;
  - the relationship between aggressive driving and road rage.
- DE.11 The student will analyze the effects of fatigue and other physical conditions on driver performance. Key concepts include
- short- and long-term physical and mental disabilities;
  - chronic health conditions;
  - circadian rhythms;
  - sleep deprivation.
- DE.12 The student will identify distractions that contribute to driver error. Key concepts include
- passengers and pets;
  - vehicle accessories;
  - cell phones and other portable technology devices.
- DE.13 The student will identify changes in the environment that affect visibility and traction and demonstrate an understanding of appropriate driver reaction to these risks. Key concepts/skills include
- driving at night;
  - smoke- and weather-related conditions;
  - road conditions and construction;
  - vehicle stability and traction control systems.
- DE.14 The student will demonstrate an understanding of the proper use of vehicle occupant protection features and analyze how they reduce injury severity and increase collision survival. Key concepts/skills include
- active restraint systems;
  - passive restraint systems;
  - child restraint systems;
  - highway safety design.

- DE.15 The student will identify and evaluate emergency response strategies to reduce the severity of or avoid a collision in high-risk driving situations. Key concepts/skills include
- evasive maneuvers, using brake and steering combinations;
  - off-road recovery;
  - front and rear traction control.
- DE.16 The student will identify and describe the performance characteristics of other road users and apply problem-solving skills to minimize risks when sharing the roadway with
- pedestrians and animals;
  - pedalcycles and motorcycles;
  - tractor-trailers, trucks, and construction vehicles;
  - sport utility vehicles, recreation vehicles, and trailers;
  - emergency vehicles;
  - funeral processions;
  - passenger and school buses;
  - farm machinery and horse drawn vehicles.
- DE.17 The student will compare vehicle-braking systems and explain proper braking techniques for various weather and roadway conditions. Key concepts/skills include
- small and large vehicle conventional brake systems;
  - two- and four-wheel anti-lock brake systems (ABS).
- DE.18 The student will analyze how preventive maintenance reduces the possibility of vehicle failures and recognize the warning signs that indicate the need for maintenance, repair, or replacement. Key concepts/skills include
- vehicle warning devices;
  - lights and signals;
  - steering and suspension systems;
  - tires and braking systems;
  - fuel and ignition electronics.
- DE.19 The student will identify and describe the legal aspects of and calculate the financial responsibilities associated with purchasing, operating, maintaining, and insuring a motor vehicle. Key concepts include
- Financial Responsibility Law;
  - required and optional insurance coverage;
  - title and vehicle registration;
  - vehicle inspection;
  - crash involvement.
- DE.20 The student will demonstrate competency in map-reading and trip-planning skills. Key concepts/skills include
- destination driving;
  - trip-planning technologies.
- DE.21 The student will research and evaluate personal transportation needs and their impact on the environment, and demonstrate skills necessary to be an informed consumer. Key concepts/skills include
- printed and Internet resources;
  - community resources;
  - vehicle pollution, fluid recycling, energy conservation, and conservation of natural resources.