Getting Your Driver's License in Idaho



A Youth Guide for Disabled and Neurodivergent Drivers

October 2026

Table of Contents

Starting Your Driving Journey 4

What This Guide Is 4

Before You Begin 5

First: You Do Not Need to Have Everything Figured Out 5

Driving Is More Than Passing a Test 6

What If I Have More Than One Disability 6

The Basic Steps 6

If You Are Under 17 in Idaho 7

What Is a Driver Training Permit 7

If Tests Stress You Out 8

What Are Accommodations? 8

You Have Rights 8

Self-Advocacy Tips 9

What If My Parent or Guardian and I Disagree? 9

If You Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing 10

If You Use a Wheelchair or Mobility Device 10

If You Are Neurodivergent 11

Emotional Regulation While Driving 11

Driving Assessments 12

What Does an Occupational Therapist Do? 12

Practice Matters More Than Perfection 13
Driving Can Be Expensive 13
Rural Idaho Challenges 14
Transportation Is Bigger Than Driving 14
Social Pressure Is Real 15
There is More Than One Way to Prepare 15
Resources in Idaho 16
Quick Start Checklist 16
Final Thoughts 17

Starting Your Driving Journey

A lot of teens feel nervous about driving.

If you have a disability, are neurodivergent, use a wheelchair, are Deaf or hard of hearing, or learn differently, the process can sometimes feel even more stressful or confusing.

That does NOT mean you cannot become a driver.

People with disabilities drive every day. Some use adaptive equipment. Some need accommodations. Some need extra practice. Some decide driving is not the right choice for them right now.

All of those choices are okay.

There is no "correct" timeline for learning to drive.

Some people get their learners permit at 14 ½.
Some people get licensed as early as 15, with restrictions.
Some at 18.
Some later.
Some never drive.

Driving is one path to independence — not the only one.

What This Guide Is

This guide is written for teens and young adults with disabilities in Idaho.

It explains:

- How getting a license works
- What accommodations are
- How to ask for help
- What to expect during testing
- Adaptive equipment and disability supports
- Tips for practice and confidence
- Resources in Idaho

This guide talks directly to YOU.

Your parent, guardian, teacher, therapist, or support person may also help you use it.

The longer and more detailed **Getting a Driver's License in Idaho: A Guide for People with Disabilities** document has more detailed information for parents, caregivers, and professionals.

Before You Begin

This Youth Guide is designed to provide an overview of driving, disability, accommodations, and resources for young people in Idaho. It is not intended to be a complete guide to Idaho driver's licensing requirements, driver education, adaptive driving equipment, or disability-related services.

Licensing rules, testing procedures, and accommodation options can change over time. For more detailed information about the steps to getting a license, permit requirements, driver training, driver rehabilitation, adaptive equipment, accommodations, and Idaho-specific resources, please refer to the **Idaho Disability Driver Guide**.

Think of this guide as a starting point. It is designed to help you understand your options, build confidence, and connect with the information and support you need to reach your driving and transportation goals.

First: You Do Not Need to Have Everything Figured Out

A lot of people think:

- "I'm too nervous."
- "I'm not ready."
- "I learn slower than everyone else."
- "Nobody like me drives."
- "I don't know where to start."
- "I'm behind everyone else."

That is very common.

Driving is a skill. Skills take practice.

Some people learn quickly.
Some need more time.
Some need adaptive equipment.
Some need extra support.
Some take breaks and come back later.

That is normal.

Driving Is More Than Passing a Test

Driving is not just about passing the written test or road test.

Driving also involves:

- Paying attention to your surroundings
- Making decisions quickly
- Staying calm under stress
- Managing distractions
- Following traffic rules
- Practicing regularly
- Learning from experience

Nobody starts out as a perfect driver.

Safe driving skills develop over time. It is important that you get assessed, and that you are ready physically and emotionally to drive.

What If I Have More Than One Disability?

Many people do.

You might:

- Be neurodivergent AND use a wheelchair
- Be Deaf AND have ADHD
- Have a TBI AND anxiety
- Use adaptive equipment AND need extra processing time

That is okay.

You may need supports from more than one area. You do not need to fit into only one "category."

The Basic Steps

Most people in Idaho follow these steps:

1. Get a “driver training permit”
2. Practice driving
3. Take a road test
4. Get a driver’s license

You can ask for help at every step.

If You Are Under 17 in Idaho

If you are under 17, Idaho has extra steps and rules for getting a driver’s license. These rules apply to disabled and non-disabled drivers alike.

Most people under 17 will need to:

- Complete an approved driver education program
- Get a learner’s permit
- Practice driving with a licensed adult
- Complete supervised driving hours
- Wait a required amount of time before taking the road test

A parent or guardian usually must be involved in the process.

Idaho also has rules for new drivers under 17 related to passengers, nighttime driving, and supervised practice. Because rules can change, it is a good idea to check the current Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) requirements or ask for help understanding them.

These extra steps can feel stressful, especially if you also need accommodations, adaptive equipment, or extra support. That does not mean you are failing or falling behind. The goal is to help you build experience, confidence, and safety over time.

What Is a Driver Training Permit?

A driver training permit lets you practice driving.

You are NOT allowed to drive alone with a permit.

A licensed adult must be in the front seat with you while you practice.

To get a permit, most people:

- Complete a vision screening
- Bring identification documents

- Pay a fee

If you are under 17, a parent or guardian must be involved.

If Tests Stress You Out

You are not the only one.

A lot of disabled and neurodivergent people experience:

- Test anxiety
- Sensory overload
- Trouble processing instructions quickly
- Difficulty focusing under pressure
- Feeling overwhelmed in busy DMV offices

That does not automatically mean you are unsafe.

You may be able to ask for accommodations.

What Are Accommodations?

Accommodations are changes that help make testing accessible.

Examples include:

- Extra time
- Written instructions
- ASL interpreters
- Step-by-step directions
- Visual instructions
- Breaks during testing (when allowed)

An accommodation does NOT mean the rules are easier.

It means you get a fair chance to show your skills.

You Have Rights

You have the right to:

- Ask questions
- Request accommodations
- Be treated respectfully
- Use adaptive equipment
- Advocate for yourself
- Bring support people when allowed

If someone does not understand your disability or says no to an accommodation:

- Stay calm
- Ask questions
- Ask for a supervisor
- Ask for information in writing
- Reach out for help

You do not have to figure everything out by yourself.

Self-Advocacy Tips

Sometimes it can be hard to explain what you need during testing or practice.

You can say things like:

- “Can you repeat that another way?”
- “I understand better with written instructions.”
- “I need a minute to think.”
- “Step-by-step directions help me.”
- “I use adaptive equipment.”
- “Can you slow down a little?”
- “I’m feeling overwhelmed and need a short break.”

Self-advocacy is a skill. It gets easier with practice.

What If My Parent or Guardian and I Disagree?

Sometimes teens and parents disagree about driving readiness.

That can feel frustrating for everyone involved.

Parents may worry about safety.
Teens may feel ready for more independence.

A driving assessment, occupational therapist, driver rehabilitation specialist, or trusted professional may help everyone make decisions together using real information instead of fear, pressure, or assumptions.

If You Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

You can ask for:

- An ASL interpreter
- Written instructions
- Visual directions during the road test
- Extra communication support

The examiner is testing your driving, not your hearing.

Many Deaf and hard of hearing people drive safely every day.

If You Use a Wheelchair or Mobility Device

Many wheelchair users drive safely.

Some drivers use:

- Hand controls
- Steering knobs
- Left-foot gas pedals
- Ramps or lifts
- Wheelchair securement systems

Not everybody needs the same equipment.

Right now, Idaho has limited adaptive driver training options. Some drivers may need to:

- Transfer into a driver seat
- Use their own modified vehicle
- Travel for specialized training
- Work with out-of-state programs

That is a system barrier — not a personal failure.

If You Are Neurodivergent

Being neurodivergent does NOT mean you cannot drive safely.

Some neurodivergent people are extremely careful and rule-focused drivers.

You may benefit from:

- Repetition
- Practicing the same routes
- Visual learning
- Short practice sessions
- Written instructions
- Extra processing time
- Calm practice environments

Many neurodivergent drivers become safer and more confident with experience.

Emotional Regulation While Driving

Driving can feel emotionally intense sometimes.

You may experience:

- Anxiety
- Sensory overload
- Frustration
- Panic
- Fatigue
- Trouble focusing when overwhelmed

Learning how your body and brain respond to stress is part of becoming a safe driver.

Helpful strategies may include:

- Taking breaks
- Pulling over safely when overwhelmed
- Practicing in quiet areas first
- Avoiding difficult conditions early on
- Driving shorter distances at first
- Using calming routines before driving

Everyone has strengths and limits. Learning yours is part of the process.

Driving Assessments

Driving rehabilitation assessments can help identify strengths, challenges, and recommendations for training, adaptive equipment, or accommodations. The goal is to improve safety and independence.

Sometimes people complete a driving assessment with an occupational therapist or driver rehabilitation specialist. These assessment focus on identifying supports, determining driver readiness, and developing a plan for safe driving.

This is not just a “pass/fail” situation.

Assessments can help answer questions like:

- Am I ready?
- What support would help?
- Would adaptive equipment help me?
- What skills should I practice?

Some people choose assessments voluntarily.
Some are referred by doctors, therapists, schools, or family members.

The goal is safety and support — not punishment.

What Does an Occupational Therapist Do?

Occupational therapists (OTs) who specialize in driver rehabilitation evaluate the physical, visual, cognitive, and behavioral skills needed for driving. They help identify strategies, adaptive equipment, vehicle modifications, and individualized recommendations to support safe community mobility. They can help people understand their strengths, identify supports that may be helpful, and explore options for becoming a driver.

An OT may help with:

- Driving readiness
- Reaction time
- Attention and processing skills
- Adaptive driving equipment
- Physical positioning and vehicle access
- Learning strategies

- Community transportation skills

It is important to understand the difference between **driver training** and **driver rehabilitation**.

Driver training teaches someone how to drive. This may include learning traffic laws, practicing behind the wheel, improving driving skills, and preparing for the driver's license test.

Driver rehabilitation is typically provided by an occupational therapist with specialized training. Driver rehabilitation focuses on evaluating how a disability, injury, medical condition, or learning difference may affect driving. It may include recommendations for adaptive equipment, vehicle modifications, accommodations, additional training, or other supports that can help a person drive safely and independently.

Not everyone needs driver rehabilitation. Some people can learn through traditional driver education and training programs. Others may benefit from both driver training and driver rehabilitation services.

An OT is not there to "judge" you or decide your future for you. Their goal is to help you understand your strengths, support needs, and options so you can make informed decisions about driving and transportation.

Practice Matters More Than Perfection

Nobody becomes a good driver overnight.

The goal is:

- Learning safely
- Building confidence
- Making informed decisions
- Practicing consistently
- Understanding your strengths and support needs

Mistakes are part of learning.

Driving Can Be Expensive

Driving can also cost more than many teens expect.

Costs may include:

- Driver education
- Gas
- Insurance
- Vehicle repairs
- Adaptive equipment
- Vehicle modifications
- Driving evaluations
- Specialized training

Some families may need time to plan financially.

That is common and not something to feel ashamed about.

Rural Idaho Challenges

Some people in rural Idaho may have fewer local resources available.

You may need to:

- Travel longer distances
- Wait longer for appointments
- Practice without nearby specialists
- Work with providers in another city or state

That can be frustrating.

You still deserve access to information, support, and transportation options. Some driver rehabilitation providers offer mobile, community-based services, allowing individuals to complete evaluations and training in their own communities, reducing the need for long-distance travel whenever possible.

Transportation Is Bigger Than Driving

Driving is only one part of transportation and independence.

Other options may include:

- Public transportation
- Paratransit
- Rides from friends or family
- Ride share programs

- Community transportation
- Travel training
- Biking or wheeling
- Walking
- Transportation support programs

Some people drive sometimes and use other transportation at other times.

Independence can look different for different people.

Social Pressure Is Real

Sometimes people feel pressure to drive because:

- Friends are driving
- Siblings already have licenses
- People expect it
- Driving is connected to independence

That pressure can feel intense.

It is okay to learn at your own pace.

Your value is not based on whether you drive or how quickly you get licensed.

There Is More Than One Way to Prepare

Learning to drive does not have to start with getting behind the wheel. Many people build knowledge, confidence, and skills before they ever start practicing on the road.

Some people prefer to:

- Study the Idaho Driver's Manual at their own pace
- Work through practice tests and study guides
- Learn with a parent, family member, teacher, or trusted adult
- Join a study group with other young people who are learning to drive
- Meet with peers who have disabilities and have already gone through the licensing process
- Watch videos or use visual learning tools to better understand driving rules and situations

- Practice communication, self-advocacy, and accommodation requests before taking tests

Everyone learns differently. Some people need extra time, repetition, or support, and that is okay. Taking smaller steps now can make the driving process feel less overwhelming later.

Remember: preparing for driving is still progress. Learning the rules of the road, studying for the written test, asking questions, and building confidence are all important parts of becoming a driver.

Resources in Idaho

You do not have to do this alone.

Helpful resources may include:

- Adaptive Driving Idaho
- Ada Therapy Services
- DAC NW
- Idaho Assistive Technology Program
- Idaho Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Kootenai Health Driver Rehabilitation Program
- LIFE, A Center for Independent Living
- LINC
- Rocky Road Driving School
- St. Luke's Driving Rehabilitation Program

A trusted adult, teacher, counselor, therapist, or disability organization may also help you explore your options.

Quick Start Checklist

My Driving Plan

☐ Learn Idaho permit rules
☐ Study for the written test
☐ Ask for accommodations if needed
☐ Practice consistently
☐ Explore adaptive equipment if needed

☐ Learn calming strategies
☐ Build confidence slowly
☐ Ask questions
☐ Get support when needed
☐ Remember that learning takes time

Final Thoughts

You deserve accurate information, respect, and the chance to explore what independence looks like for you.

Some people will drive independently.
Some will use adaptive equipment.
Some will use public transportation or rides.
Some will decide driving is not right for them right now.

All of those paths are valid.

The goal is not to become “normal.”

The goal is to build a life that works for YOU.