Getting a Driver's License in Idaho: A Guide for People with Disabilities



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Section 1: Getting Started

Purpose of This Guide

This guide explains how people with disabilities can get a learner's permit, practice driving, and get a driver's license in Idaho. It explains each step clearly.

This guide is for:

- Adults and youth with disabilities
- Families and caregivers
- Anyone helping someone learn to drive

This guide focuses especially on:

- Deaf and hard of hearing drivers
- Drivers who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices
- Neurodivergent drivers
- Drivers with multiple types of disabilities

Some people have a disability that makes driving unsafe or not possible. Not driving is okay. It is not a failure. Many people live full, independent lives without driving.

There are other ways to get around, such as buses, paratransit, ride programs, and help from the community. Centers for Independent Living (CILs) can help people learn about and use these transportation options.

The driver licensing system can feel confusing or stressful. If it feels hard, that is not your fault. Many people need help with this process.

A Note for Youth and Young Adult Drivers

If you are under 18, there is a companion Youth Guide available that complements this guide. The Youth Guide uses plain language and is written directly for teens and young adults, with tips on building confidence, understanding accommodations, preparing for driver education, and navigating the licensing process as a young person with a disability.

This guide contains the most detailed information about Idaho licensing requirements, driver training, adaptive equipment, accommodations, and resources. Many youth and families find it helpful to use both guides together.

Disability and Driving

People think about disability in different ways, and those ideas can affect how decisions are made about driving. One common approach focuses mostly on a person's diagnosis or limitations. This is called the **medical model**. In driving, this can lead to people making assumptions about what someone cannot do, without fully looking at their abilities, goals, or the supports that might help them succeed.

The **independent living approach** looks at disability differently. It recognizes that barriers in the world around us — not just a person's disability — can limit independence. It also believes people with disabilities should be part of decisions about their own lives. When it comes to driving, this means focusing on what a person can do and exploring tools and supports that may help, like driver training, adaptive equipment, accessible vehicles, or other accommodations. The goal is to help people with disabilities have the same opportunities for freedom, mobility, and independence as everyone else, while still making safety important.

Dignity of risk is an important part of this approach. It means that all people have the right to make choices, even when those choices involve some risk. Driving, like many parts of life, involves risk for everyone. People learn by practicing, gaining experience, and sometimes making mistakes. For people with disabilities, dignity of risk means having the opportunity to try, learn, and make informed decisions, rather than being excluded from opportunities because of assumptions.

Safety still matters. Driving requires honest evaluation of skills, proper training, and the right supports. Sometimes, the safest choice may be not to drive or to stop driving. That decision should include the person, be based on real information, and respect their independence. The goal is not just safety alone, but safe independence with choice, respect, and dignity.

Getting Assessed

Driver education teaches new drivers the rules of the road and basic driving skills. While driver rehabilitation is designed for people whose medical condition, disability, or injury may affect driving. It may include a comprehensive driving evaluation, recommendations for adaptive equipment, and specialized behind-the-wheel assessment of training.

A driving assessment helps you understand if you are ready to drive and what support you may need. It is not just a pass or fail test. It is a way to look at your skills, safety, and whether additional support, training, or adaptive equipment may help.

Assessments are often done by a trained professional, like an occupational therapist. They may look at your vision, reaction time, thinking skills, attention, decision making, and how

your body moves. Some assessments also include a short drive to see how you do on the road.

A driving assessment can help answer questions like:

- Am I ready to drive?
- Do I need more practice or training?
- Would adaptive equipment help me?
- Are there safety concerns I should better understand?

Some people are required to complete a driving assessment because of a medical condition, injury, disability, or concerns raised by a doctor, family member, school, therapist, or the DMV. Other people choose to complete an assessment because they want guidance, are returning to driving after an illness or injury, are learning to use adaptive equipment, or are unsure whether driving is safe or appropriate right now.

A driving assessment may be especially helpful if you:

- Have experienced a traumatic brain injury (TBI), stroke, or other neurological change
- Have concerns about attention, memory, processing speed, or reaction time
- Are learning to use adaptive driving equipment
- Feel nervous or overwhelmed while driving
- Have experienced crashes, near misses, or difficulty following traffic rules
- Have a disability or medical condition that may affect driving safety

Sometimes the results show that more practice or support is needed. Sometimes they show that driving is not safe right now. The goal is to help you make informed decisions and stay safe.

You should be part of the process. Your goals, preferences, and choices matter. A driving assessment is one tool to help you decide what is right for you.

Driving Simulators

Driving simulators are tools that let you practice driving in a virtual environment. They may help reduce anxiety, build confidence and introduce driving concepts before on-road practice.

Simulators may be helpful for:

- Learning basic driving steps
- Practicing in a low-stress setting

- Building confidence before getting on the road

However, simulators have limits. They do not fully match real driving. They cannot show how you will respond in real traffic, weather, or unexpected situations.

Simulators are not recommended as a formal driving assessment. Results from a simulator may not be accurate. A simulator might show someone is not ready when they can drive safely or suggest someone is ready when they are not.

The best way to learn driving is through real, in-vehicle practice. Simulators can be a helpful starting tool, but they should not replace real driving experience or a professional driving assessment.

This version simplifies the age brackets, reduces repetition, and makes the process easier to follow while staying accurate to Idaho's licensing system.

Section 2: How Getting a Driver's License Works in Idaho

This section explains the basic steps for getting a driver's license in Idaho. The process is different depending on your age.

2.1 Understanding the Different Age Groups

Adults (17 and Older)

Drivers who are 17 and older are not required to complete driver's education or hold a supervised instruction permit for a certain amount of time. Adults may choose to get a Class D Instruction Permit to practice driving, but it is optional. The written knowledge test must be passed before a Class D Instruction Permit can be issued. Adults under 18 must have a Liability Signer.

In most cases, adults:

- Take the written knowledge test
- Pass a vision screening
- Take and pass the road/skills test
- Receive their driver's license

Teens Under 17 (14½–16)

Drivers under 17 must complete Idaho's graduated licensing requirements before getting a driver's license. This includes:

- Being at least 14½ years old to get a permit
- Completing an approved driver's education course
    - 30 hours of classroom instruction
    - 6 hours of behind-the-wheel instruction
    - 6 hours of observation/in-car time
- Holding a Supervised Instruction Permit (SIP) for at least 6 months
- Completing at least 50 hours of supervised driving practice, including 10 hours at night
- Driving with a licensed adult age 21 or older in the front passenger seat while practicing
- Avoiding traffic violations during the permit period
- Passing the written knowledge test, vision screening, and road/skills test

There are also restrictions for younger drivers:

- Drivers under 16 generally may only drive during daylight hours unless accompanied by a licensed adult.
- During the first 6 months after receiving a license, drivers under 17 are generally limited to one passenger under age 17 unless the passengers are family members.

You can ask questions or request accommodations at any step of the licensing process.

2.2 Driver Training Permits and Supervised Instruction Permits (SIP)

In Idaho, the terms "driver training permit" and "Supervised Instruction Permit (SIP)" are often used interchangeably because they are closely connected parts of the same process.

- A driver training permit allows a young driver to enroll in driver's education.
- A Supervised Instruction Permit (SIP) refers to the supervised practice driving period before a young driver receives a license.

For most drivers under 17, the permit serves both purposes.

A permit does NOT allow you to drive by yourself. While practicing, you must always have a qualified supervising driver in the front passenger seat.

2.3 Applying for a Permit

To apply for a permit, you will usually need:

- Proof of identity and age, such as a birth certificate or passport
- Proof of Idaho residency
- Proof of lawful presence in the United States
- Payment for the permit fee

If you are under 18, a parent or guardian will generally need to be involved in the process.

Most people must:

- Pass a written knowledge test
- Complete a vision screening

The written test covers:

- Road signs
- Traffic laws
- Safe driving rules

If you wear glasses or contact lenses, you may be required to wear them while driving.

If you do not pass the written test the first time, you may take it again. Ask your local Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) office about current retesting rules and waiting periods.

2.4 Practicing Driving

Practice driving is an important part of becoming a safe and confident driver.

If you have a permit, you must practice with a qualified supervising driver in the front passenger seat. This may be:

- A parent or guardian
- A driving instructor
- Another approved licensed adult

If you use adaptive driving equipment, it is important to practice using the same equipment you will use during your road test. This may include:

- Hand controls
- Steering aids or spinner knobs

- Left-foot accelerators
- Seating or transfer equipment

Many people find it helpful to begin practicing in low-traffic areas before moving to more complex driving situations.

2.5 The Road Test

The road test is the final step before receiving your driver's license.

In Idaho, road tests are given by certified examiners who work independently from the DMV. You must schedule your test directly with a certified examiner.

You must provide your own vehicle for the test. The vehicle must:

- Be properly registered and insured
- Be in safe working condition
- Have working brakes, lights, turn signals, and tires

If the vehicle is unsafe or not properly registered, the examiner may refuse to give the test.

If you use adaptive equipment, you will complete the road test using that equipment.

During the test, the examiner looks at how safely you:

- Start and stop
- Stay in your lane
- Follow traffic signs and signals
- Check mirrors and surroundings
- Turn, park, and back up

After the test, the examiner will place your results in a sealed envelope. Do NOT open the envelope. Take it to the DMV office to complete the licensing process.

If you do not pass the road test, you can continue practicing and schedule another attempt.

Section 3: Your Rights and Requesting Accommodations

People with disabilities have rights during the driver licensing process.

3.1 Your Rights

You have the right to:

- Ask for reasonable accommodations
- Take tests in a way that works for you
- Be treated fairly and with respect

An accommodation helps you take the test. It does not lower safety rules.

3.2 How to Ask for Accommodations

You can ask for accommodations:

- When you schedule your test
- Before test day
- At the ITD office

If you need an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter, it is best to ask for this **ahead of time** so the interpreter can be scheduled.

You can say:

“I am requesting a reasonable accommodation because of my disability.”

You only need to share information that explains what help you need.

3.3 If Someone Is Not Sure or Says No

Sometimes staff are not familiar with accommodations.

If this happens:

- Ask to speak to a supervisor
- Ask for help in writing
- Contact your local Center for Independent Living for support
- Contact the ITD Office

Some drivers with disabilities may encounter DMV staff who are unfamiliar with adaptive driving equipment, disability accommodations, or the rights of drivers with disabilities. In some situations, staff may request additional medical documentation or ask questions that can feel confusing, inconsistent, or discouraging.

If this happens, do not give up. You have the right to ask questions, request clarification, and advocate for yourself. Your CIL may be able to help you understand the process, communicate with the DMV, identify accommodations, or connect you with additional resources and support.

Section 4: Disability-Specific Sections

Later sections of this guide focus on specific disabilities.

Each section explains:

- Common challenges people face
- Accommodations you can ask for
- What testing may be like
- Tips for practicing and preparing
- Available resources

You can use more than one section if it applies to you.

What Comes Next

The next sections focus on:

- Deaf and hard of hearing drivers
- Drivers who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices
- Neurodivergent drivers

More Than One Disability

Some people may identify with more than one disability category covered in this guide. For example, a person may be neurodivergent and also have a mobility disability. If this applies to you, it may be helpful to review multiple sections of the guide to better understand the accommodations, equipment, supports, and training options that may fit your needs.

Section 5: Deaf and Hard of Hearing Drivers

This section is for people who are Deaf and hard of hearing and want to get a learner's permit or driver's license in Idaho. Families and supporters may also find this section helpful.

Being Deaf or hard of hearing does **not** mean you cannot be a safe driver. Many Deaf people drive safely every day. Research shows that Deaf drivers often have:

- Stronger visual attention
- Faster peripheral reaction times
- High situational awareness

The key is having clear communication and equal access throughout the licensing process.

Note: You may also have the option to add Deaf on your Driver's License or any Medical Condition

In the United States, about **16% of people have a hearing disability**, and many Deaf and hard of hearing individuals drive safely every day.

5.1 Common Barriers

Deaf and hard of hearing drivers may face barriers during driver education, DMV visits, the written knowledge test, and the road test. Common barriers may include:

- No interpreter provided for driver education, written testing, driver testing, or DMV interactions
- Spoken instructions without a written or visual alternative
- Staff who are unfamiliar with accommodation requests
- Unclear communication about how road test instructions will be given
- Technical problems or confusing wording in the ASL version of the written test
- A limited number of driver education instructors who are fluent in ASL

If you experience these barriers, it is not your fault. Some offices may not have experience working with Deaf or hard of hearing drivers, and staff may need guidance on how to provide access.

5.2 Accommodations You Can Ask For

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you have the right to request reasonable accommodations. Examples of accommodations include:

- An American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter*
- Written instructions instead of spoken instructions
- Extra time for the written test
- Pulling over for instructions so you can keep your eyes on the road while driving
- Visual cues or gestures during the road test

Don't be afraid to ask people to communicate with you in the way that is most accessible for YOU. This can include asking them to look at you when they speak, speaking clearly and at a comfortable pace, not having facial hair that makes lipreading difficult, or using text or captions.

*If you need an ASL interpreter, a request must be made **ahead of time** so one can be scheduled. If an ASL interpreter is desired, use the following link to find the DMV closest to you and call the number for that location to make the request: https://itd.idaho.gov/dmv-locations/.

5.3 The Written Knowledge Test

What to expect

The written test is usually taken on a computer or on paper at an DMV office.

Helpful tips

- If you would prefer to use an ASL interpreter or Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) instead of the optional ASL version of the written test—which some people have found confusing—contact your local DMV office in advance when scheduling your exam to request one.
- When checking in for your written knowledge test, you can also ask DMV staff to provide instructions in writing or by text instead of verbally.
- If you would like to join a study group to prepare for the written exam, contact Meda Thompson at LINC to learn about upcoming sessions.

If something is not accessible on test day, you can ask staff for help or ask to speak with a supervisor.

5.4 The Road Test

How instructions are given

Road test instructions are often spoken. Deaf and hard of hearing drivers can ask for other ways to receive instructions.

Examples include:

- Written directions before driving begins
- Hand signals or visual cues
- Step-by-step instructions instead of long directions

During the test

The examiner is checking if you:

- Follow traffic laws
- Watch for other vehicles and pedestrians
- Use mirrors and signals
- Drive safely

The examiner should not test your hearing. They are testing your driving.

5.5 Emergency Vehicles and Safety

Deaf drivers are expected to notice emergency vehicles using visual information, such as:

- Flashing lights
- Movement of other vehicles

If you have questions about how this is evaluated, you can ask before the test.

5.6 Deaf-Specific Resources in Idaho

The following resources may be helpful for Deaf and hard of hearing drivers. Availability and procedures may change, and some options must be requested in advance.

- **Idaho Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ICDHH):** Provides information, referrals, and resources for Deaf and hard of hearing Idahoans, including help understanding rights and communication access.
- **Written test language options:** American Sign Language (ASL) is available as a language option when taking the written knowledge test.
- **Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI):** Deaf and hard of hearing drivers have the right to request a Certified Deaf Interpreter for the written test. This must be requested **in advance** through the Idaho DMV or ITD.
- **Idaho DMV study manual in ASL:** An ASL version of the Idaho DMV study manual is expected to be available in **2027**.
- **Deaf driving instructor:** A Deaf driving instructor is available for high school students through the **Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind (ISDB)** in Gooding, Idaho.

If you are unsure how to access any of these resources or need help making a request, your local Center for Independent Living can assist.

5.7 If Problems Come Up

If you have any trouble getting your accommodation needs met or are not treated respectfully, please contact one of the following:

Idaho Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CDHH)
VP: (208) 992-4996
Email: info@cdhh.idaho.gov

IESDB – Davina Snow
VP: (208) 639-1665
Email: davina.snow@iesdb.org

LINC Idaho – Meda Thompson
VP: (986) 206-0573
Email: mthompson@lincidaho.org

Section 6: Drivers Who Use Wheelchairs or Other Mobility Devices

This section is for people who use a wheelchair or other mobility device and want to get a learner's permit or driver's license in Idaho. It is also for families and supporters.

This may include people with:

- Paraplegia or quadriplegia
- Multiple sclerosis (MS)
- Cerebral palsy
- Dwarfism
- Other physical disabilities affecting movement

Using a wheelchair or mobility device does **not** mean you cannot drive. Many people drive safely using adaptive equipment or vehicle modifications. You may need extra planning and accommodations.

Mobility disabilities affect about **12% of the U.S. population** and are one of the most common disability types.

6.1 Common Challenges

Drivers who use mobility devices may face challenges during the licensing process. These can include:

- Limited access to a vehicle with adaptive equipment to practice in
- Staff who are not familiar with hand controls or other modifications
- Questions about whether a modified vehicle can be used for testing
- High costs for vehicle changes or training
- Private driver training companies that do not have accessible or adaptive training vehicles

These barriers are common. If you run into them, it is not your fault. Many offices and instructors do not regularly work with adaptive vehicles.

Some drivers may need adaptive equipment, vehicle modifications, or training that is not currently available in Idaho. In these situations, families and individuals may be referred to out-of-state driver rehabilitation programs that specialize in advanced adaptive driving technology and complex mobility needs. These programs may have specially certified staff and access to a wider range of adaptive vehicles and equipment.

6.2 Adaptive Equipment and Vehicle Changes

Some drivers use special equipment to operate a vehicle safely and independently. The type of equipment depends on a person's needs and abilities.

Common examples include:

- **Hand controls for gas and brake:** Allow a driver to control acceleration and braking using their hands instead of foot pedals. These are commonly used by drivers with limited or no leg movement.
- **Steering knobs or reduced-effort steering:** Steering knobs help drivers steer with one hand, while reduced-effort steering systems make the steering wheel easier to turn for drivers with limited strength or mobility.
- **Wheelchair lifts or ramps:** Help drivers or passengers enter and exit a vehicle while using a wheelchair or scooter. Some vehicles allow a person to remain in their wheelchair while driving or riding.
- **Seating or pedal adjustments:** May include transfer seats, swivel seats, pedal extenders, or repositioned controls to improve comfort, safety, and access based on a person's height, strength, or mobility needs.
- **Scooter or wheelchair carriers:** Exterior or interior systems that transport a wheelchair or scooter with the vehicle, helping drivers maintain access to their mobility equipment while traveling.

Not everyone needs the same equipment. What works well for one driver may not be right for another.

6.3 Practicing Driving with Adaptive Equipment

It is important to practice driving using the same equipment and vehicle setup you will use during testing and everyday driving.

Helpful tips:

- Get training from a qualified driving instructor or occupational therapist, if possible
- Practice in low traffic areas first
- Take breaks if you get tired
- Practice using the same adaptive equipment you will use long term, such as hand controls, a left-foot gas pedal, steering attachments, ramps or lifts, transfer seating, or wheelchair securement systems

At this time, Idaho does not have a fully wheelchair-accessible driver training vehicle available for people who drive directly from a power wheelchair. Existing adaptive driver training vehicles in Southwest and North Idaho require the driver to transfer from their wheelchair into the driver's seat.

Because of this, some drivers may need to own or have access to a fully accessible vehicle with the adaptive equipment that works for them, such as a ramp or lift and wheelchair tie-down system, in order to practice driving and complete a driving skills test. That said, you do not need to own your own vehicle to get a driver's license, but it may be more challenging to find training.

Your local Center for Independent Living can help you explore options, identify resources, and problem solve if access to equipment or training is limited.

6.4 The Road Test with a Modified Vehicle

You are allowed to take the road test using a modified or adaptive vehicle.

What to expect

- You may use your own vehicle for the test
- The examiner checks your driving skills, not your disability
- The examiner should not ask you to drive without your adaptive equipment

If staff are unsure about your vehicle or equipment, you can ask for a supervisor. The DMV does not use specialized driver testers to give a test to someone using adaptive equipment or a modified vehicle.

6.5 Paperwork and Medical Questions

Some drivers may be asked questions about their ability to drive safely.

Important points:

- You do not have to share your full medical history
- You only need to share information related to driving safety
- Adaptive equipment does not mean you are unsafe

If you are asked for information that you do not understand, you can ask for clarification or help.

Drivers using adaptive equipment may receive license restrictions identifying the equipment they are required to use (e.g., hand controls or left-gas accelerator).

6.6 Mobility-Specific Resources in Idaho

The following resources may be helpful for drivers with mobility-related disabilities.

- **Ada Occupational Therapy / Ada Therapy Services (Boise):** Provides occupational therapy focused on driving-related skills and community mobility. Services may include driving readiness assessments, support understanding DMV information and testing materials, help with attention and multi-step directions, and community mobility skills such as navigation and public transportation use. This service may be especially helpful for neurodivergent teens or adults or people who need additional support before or instead of driving. A doctor's referral is usually required.

- **Access Vans – Vehicle Modifications (Meridian):** Provides vehicle modifications that help people drive or ride safely. Modifications may include hand controls, wheelchair lifts or ramps, transfer seats, and seating or driving position changes. Vehicle modifications can be costly and may require planning, installation time, and additional driver training after equipment is installed.

- **Idaho Assistive Technology Program:** Offers financial assistance options that may help people with disabilities purchase a vehicle or adaptive driving equipment. Assistance may include low-interest loans or financing for vehicle purchases, adaptive driving equipment, or accessibility modifications. The program helps reduce financial barriers to transportation and independence. Eligibility and loan

terms vary. Local Centers for Independent Living may help individuals explore options and connect with the program.

- **Kootenai Health Driver Rehabilitation Program (Coeur 'd Alene):** Offers driver rehabilitation services in North Idaho for people who may need an evaluation or training before starting or returning to driving. Services may include clinical driving evaluations, assessments of vision and reaction time, on-road driving evaluations, and recommendations related to readiness to drive, training, or vehicle modifications. A doctor's referral is usually required. The program focuses on safety and readiness rather than guaranteeing approval for a driver's license.

- **Rocky Road Driving School (Meridian):** Rocky Road Driving School offers adaptive driver training for teens and adults using a modified Dodge Charger designed for drivers who need adaptive equipment. The vehicle includes MPS Right Angle Hand Controls, an MPS Left Foot Gas, a steering wheel knob, and tri pin and/or fork steering attachments. This allows teens and adults who use adaptive equipment to practice driving safely with a trained instructor. Availability may vary, and advance scheduling is recommended.

- **Adaptive Driving Idaho (Boise & Surrounding Areas):** Adaptive Driving Idaho provides **mobile**, occupational therapy-based driver rehabilitation services throughout the Treasure Vally and surrounding communities. Services may include comprehensive driving evaluations, adaptive equipment evaluations, behind-the wheel assessments, driver readiness services, adaptive driver training, and training for individuals with an instruction permit. Evaluations and training are provided in the individual's own community, allowing clients to practice in their real-world driving environments.

- **St. Luke's Driving Rehabilitation Program (Boise):** St. Luke's offers a Driving Rehabilitation Program led by a licensed occupational therapist with special training in driving rehabilitation. This program provides training on the use of adaptive gear for those who already have a valid driver's license. Services may include a clinical assessment related to driving skills, on-road driving evaluations using a rehab training vehicle, driver training sessions, and hand control training for people who cannot use foot pedals. A doctor's referral is required, and participants must be medically stable. Teen Driving Pathways are also available to help teens build readiness and driving-related skills step by step.

Some driver training, driving evaluations, and vehicle modifications may be paid for through Vocational Rehabilitation, insurance in limited cases, or self-pay. Your local Center for Independent Living can help you understand which services may fit your needs, explore funding options, and plan next steps if driving is delayed or not possible. Not everyone follows the same path, and the right support depends on the person, their goals, and their safety needs.

6.7 If Problems Come Up

If you are told you cannot test with your vehicle or equipment, or staff are unsure:

- Ask to speak to a supervisor
- Ask for the decision in writing
- Contact your local Center for Independent Living for help

In some cases, you may need to be referred to a provider outside of Idaho for specialized evaluation, training, or equipment.

CILs can help you plan ahead, understand your options, and advocate if problems come up.

Section 7: Neurodivergent Drivers

This section is for people who are neurodivergent and want to get a learner's permit or driver's license in Idaho. Families, caregivers, and supporters may also find this section helpful.

In this guide, the term neurodivergent is used broadly to describe people whose brains process information, learning, communication, attention, emotions, or sensory input differently from what is considered "typical." Neurodivergence is not a medical diagnosis. It is a broad term that may include people with:

- Autism
- ADHD
- Learning disabilities
- Dyslexia
- Intellectual disabilities
- Anxiety or other mental health-related differences
- Traumatic brain injuries (TBI)
- Other cognitive, developmental, or neurological differences

Being neurodivergent does not mean you cannot be a safe driver. Many neurodivergent people are careful, rule-focused, and attentive drivers. Some people may benefit from accommodations, additional practice, step-by-step instruction, or extra support during driver training and testing.

Neurodivergence is common. Researchers estimate that about **15–20% of the U.S. population may be neurodivergent**, including many people who do not have a formal

diagnosis. In Idaho, many of these differences are often grouped under “cognitive disability,” one of the most common disability categories in the state.

7.1 Common Challenges

Neurodivergent drivers may experience certain challenges during testing and practice. These may include:

- Test anxiety or high stress during exams
- Difficulty processing spoken instructions quickly
- Sensory overload from noise, lights, or busy spaces
- Trouble with scheduling, paperwork, or remembering steps
- Feeling rushed or pressured during tests

These experiences are common. The licensing process can be stressful for many people.

7.2 Accommodations You Can Ask For

You have the right to ask for accommodations that help you show your driving skills.

Examples of accommodations include:

- Extra time for the written test
- Written instructions instead of spoken instructions
- Step-by-step directions instead of long explanations
- Short breaks during testing, when allowed

You can ask for accommodations ahead of time or when you arrive, but asking ahead of time often works best.

7.3 Preparing for the Written Test

Helpful tips include:

- Studying in short sessions instead of long ones
- Using practice tests to learn the format
- Reviewing road signs and rules with pictures
- Taking breaks if you feel overwhelmed

If reading is difficult, ask if the test can be given in another format.

7.4 Building Skills Before Driving

Some people may benefit from additional preparation before beginning behind-the-wheel instruction. Building skills such as attention, visual scanning, decision-making, managing stress and emotions, and understanding the rules of the road may promote confidence and readiness for driving.

Additional support may include practicing with a family member or trusted support person, working with a driving instructor or occupational therapist, practicing community mobility skills, or participating in individualized driving preparation activities. Everyone learns at a different pace, and needing extra preparation does not mean you cannot become a safe driver. Developing driving-related skills at your own pace can improve confidence, safety, and long-term success.

7.5 Preparing for the Road Test

Helpful tips include:

- Practicing the same routes or skills many times
- Learning what the test will include before test day
- Practicing giving yourself extra time to think
- Using calming strategies that work for you

It is okay to ask questions before the test begins.

7.6 During the Road Test

The examiner is testing your driving skills, not how fast you think or talk.

You can:

- Ask for instructions to be repeated or written
- Ask for a moment to think before acting
- Ask for clarification if you are unsure what to do

7.7 Neurodivergent Resources in Idaho

The following resources may be helpful for neurodivergent drivers.

- **Ada Occupational Therapy / Ada Therapy Services (Boise):** Provides occupational therapy focused on driving-related skills and community mobility. Services may include driving readiness assessments, support understanding DMV information

and testing materials, help with attention and multi-step directions, and community mobility skills such as navigation and public transportation use. This service may be especially helpful for neurodivergent teens or adults, people with traumatic brain injuries (TBI), or people who need additional support before or instead of driving. A doctor's referral is usually required.

- **Kootenai Health Driver Rehabilitation Program (Coeur 'd Alene):** Offers driver rehabilitation services in North Idaho for people who may need evaluation, support, or training related to driving. Services may include assessments of attention, processing, vision, reaction time, and other driving-related skills, along with recommendations related to safety, readiness, training needs, or adaptive equipment. This program may be helpful for neurodivergent drivers, people with traumatic brain injuries (TBI), or drivers experiencing changes in cognitive or functional abilities.

- **Living Independence Network Corporation (Southwest Idaho):** LINC can help individuals and families prepare for the written knowledge exam, explore accommodations, build confidence, problem solve barriers to driving, and connect with community resources and supports. LINC may also help people think through transportation options if driving is delayed or not possible.

- **Rocky Road Driving School (Meridian):** Has experience working with neurodivergent drivers and drivers with disabilities. Rocky Road offers adaptive driver training using a modified vehicle with equipment such as hand controls and steering adaptations. Advance scheduling is recommended.

- **Adaptive Driving Idaho (Boise & Surrounding Areas):** Provides mobile, occupational therapy-based driver rehabilitation services for individuals with medical conditions, disabilities, and neurodivergent learning profiles. Services may include driver readiness evaluations, behind-the-wheel assessments, adaptive driver training, and individualized instruction for licensed drivers and individuals with an Idaho instruction permit. Training is provided in the individual's own community to support real-world driving skills and confidence.

- **St. Luke's Driving Rehabilitation Program (Boise):** Offers driving-related evaluations and rehabilitation services with trained occupational therapists. Services may include assessments of attention, reaction time, processing, vision, and readiness to drive, as well as recommendations for training, accommodations, or community mobility options. St. Luke's may also help neurodivergent drivers who already have a driver's license and want support related to driving safety, attention, processing, reaction time, or changing support needs.

7.8 If Problems Come Up

If staff are unsure about accommodations or say no:

- Ask to speak to a supervisor
- Ask for help in writing
- Contact your local Center for Independent Living for support

CILs can help with planning, practice strategies, and self-advocacy.

Section 8: Additional Resources and Acknowledgements

A Note About This Guide

This guide is intended to provide general information and resources related to driving with a disability in Idaho. Information, programs, technology, and services can change over time. While we have worked to make this guide as accurate and helpful as possible, it may not include every available resource or reflect every individual situation.

If you find information that is inaccurate, outdated, missing, or if you know of additional resources that may help Idahoans with disabilities pursue driving and transportation independence, please contact LINC so future versions of this guide can be improved and updated.

Acknowledgements

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Idaho Centers for Independent Living

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are disability-led organizations that help people with disabilities access information, advocacy, peer support, independent living skills, and community resources related to transportation and driving.

- **Living Independence Network Corporation (LINC)**
  Phone: (208) 336-3335
  Email: info@lincidaho.org
  Website: www.lincidaho.org
- **DisAbility Action Center NW (DAC NW)**
  Phone: (208) 457-3891

Toll Free: 1-800-475-0070
Website: www.dacnw.org

- **LIFE, A Center for Independent Living**
  Phone: (208) 232-2747
  Toll Free: 1-800-631-2747
  Website: www.lifeincidaho.org

Additional Resources and Partners

- **Idaho Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ICDHH)**
  Phone: (208) 334-0879
  Video Phone: (208) 992-4996
  Email: info@cdhh.idaho.gov
  Website: cdhh.idaho.gov
  Provides information, referrals, advocacy, interpreter resources, and communication access support for Deaf and hard of hearing Idahoans.
- **Idaho Assistive Technology Program (IATP)**
  Phone: 1-800-432-8324
  Email: idahoat@uidaho.edu
  Website: www.idahoat.org
  Provides assistive technology information, device demonstrations, financing options, and support related to adaptive equipment and vehicle modifications.
- **Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (IDVR)**
  Phone: 1-800-856-2720
  Website: www.vr.idaho.gov
  May help eligible individuals with disabilities access evaluations, assistive technology, transportation planning, driver training supports, and vehicle modifications connected to employment goals.
- **Access Vans**
  Website: www.accessvans.com
  Provides adaptive vehicle modifications and accessibility equipment, including hand controls, ramps, lifts, transfer seating, and wheelchair securement systems.
- **Ada Occupational Therapy / Ada Therapy Services**
  Website: www.adatherapy.com
  Provides occupational therapy focused on driving readiness, cognitive and community mobility skills, DMV preparation, and support for neurodivergent drivers and people with cognitive disabilities or traumatic brain injuries.
- **St. Luke's Driving Rehabilitation Program**
  Website: www.stlukesonline.org
  Offers driver rehabilitation services, clinical driving evaluations, adaptive driving assessments, and driver training support through trained occupational therapists.
- **Rocky Road Driving School**
  Website: www.rockyroaddrivers.com

Offers adaptive driver training using a modified vehicle equipped with adaptive driving controls and has experience working with drivers with disabilities.

- **Adaptive Driving Idaho**
  Website: www.adaptivedrivingidaho.com
  Offers occupational therapy-based driver training.
- **Kootenai Health Driver Rehabilitation Program**
  Website: www.kh.org
  Provides driver rehabilitation evaluations and support in North Idaho, including assessments related to vision, cognition, reaction time, and adaptive driving needs.
- **Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind (ISDB)**
  Website: www.iesdb.org
  Provides educational and transition-related support for Deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, and DeafBlind students, including access to a Deaf driving instructor for some students.

Idaho Driver Resources by Region and Disability Type: A Quick Reference Guide

Resource	Region	Deaf / Hard of Hearing	Mobility Disabilities	Neurodivergent / Cognitive Disabilities	Driver Rehabilitation / Medical Conditions
Idaho Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ICDHH)	Statewide	✓			
Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (IDVR)	Statewide	✓	✓	✓	✓
Idaho Assistive Technology Program (IATP)	Statewide		✓		✓
Access Vans	Southwest Idaho & Statewide		✓		✓
Living Independence Network Corporation (LINC)	Southwest & South-Central Idaho	✓	✓	✓	
DisAbility Action Center Northwest (DAC NW)	North Idaho	✓	✓	✓	

Resource	Region	Deaf / Hard of Hearing	Mobility Disabilities	Neurodivergent / Cognitive Disabilities	Driver Rehabilitation / Medical Conditions
LIFE, A Center for Independent Living (LIFE)	Eastern Idaho	✓	✓	✓	
Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind (ISDB)	South-Central Idaho	✓			
Rocky Road Driving School	Southwest Idaho		✓	✓	
Adaptive Driving Idaho	Southwest Idaho		✓	✓	✓
Ada Therapy Services	Southwest Idaho		✓	✓	✓
St. Luke's Driving Rehabilitation Program	Southwest Idaho		✓	✓	✓
Kootenai Health Driver Rehabilitation Program	North Idaho		✓	✓	✓

Final Thoughts

Driving is one pathway to independence, but it is not the only one. Some people will pursue a driver's license, some may choose other transportation options, and some may decide that driving is not the right fit for them right now. The goal is to help people make informed decisions, stay safe, and build the level of independence and community participation that is right for them.

Living Independence Network Corporation
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