

3 Types of Licenses and Vehicle Coverage

RT Law 84 II • III,
85, 86

(1) License Classifications

Driver's licenses are classified into the following three types.

| | |
|--|---|
| First-class license (category 1) | Required to operate automobiles and mopeds. (Excludes those vehicles that require a second-class license.) |
| Second-class license (category 2) | Required to operate a bus, taxi or other vehicle that transports fee-paying passengers, or a designated driving service's regular motor vehicle. ¹ |
| Learner's permit | Required to operate a large vehicle, a medium vehicle, a quasi-medium vehicle or regular motor vehicle for the purpose of learning to drive or taking a driving test. |

* 1

Refers to a regular passenger car operated by drivers working for a designated driving service operator (primarily for driving home people who have drunk alcohol).



Quick Hint

A passenger bus or taxi can be driven without a second-class license if this is to return the vehicle or for another reason that does not involve carrying passengers.

(2) Types of First-class Licenses

There are ten types of first-class licenses. The table below indicates which types of vehicles can be driven with each license.

| Vehicle qualified to drive / Type of first-class license (minimum age) | Large vehicle | Medium vehicle | Quasi-medium vehicles | Regular motor vehicle | Special heavy equipment | Large-size motorcycle | Regular motorcycle | Special light equipment | Moped |
|--|--|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-------|
| Large (21) *1 | ● | ● | ● | ● | | | | ● | ● |
| Medium (20) *1 | | ● | ● | ● | | | | ● | ● |
| Quasi-medium (18) | | | ● | ● | | | | ● | ● |
| Regular (18) | | | | ● *2 | | | | ● | ● |
| Special heavy equipment (18) | | | | | ● | | | ● | ● |
| Large-size motorcycle (18) | | | | | | ● *2 | ● *2 | ● | ● |
| Regular motorcycle (16) | | | | | | | ● *2 *3 | ● | ● |
| Special light equipment (16) | | | | | | | | ● | |
| Moped (16) | | | | | | | | | ● |
| Towing license (18) | This type of license is required to tow a vehicle that weighs in excess of 750 kg by using a large vehicle, a medium vehicle, a quasi-medium vehicle, regular motor vehicle, or heavy special equipment *4 | | | | | | | | |

*1

Minimum age is 19 if the person is specially designated as a self-defence official, etc.

*2

Only automobiles with automatic transmission can be driven with a license that specifies automatic transmissions only.

*3

Only motorcycles with a displacement of 125 cc or less or rated motor output of 1.00 kW or less can be operated with a license that specifies small motorcycles only.

*4

Only camping trailers or other trailers weighing a total of less than 2,000 kg can be towed with a license that specifies small trailers only.

4 Required driving experience

(1) Eligibility to take the test

Eligibility to take the tests for the following licenses requires that you meet the qualifications for candidacy, including driving experience, in addition to the age qualification.

① Large vehicle license

You are required to have held a medium, quasi-medium, regular, or special heavy equipment license for a total of 3 years or longer.

② Medium vehicle license

You are required to have held a quasi-medium, regular or special heavy equipment license for a total of 2 years or longer.

(2) Driver qualifications

Drivers of emergency vehicles are required to have held a driver's license for the applicable vehicle and meet the following additional qualifications. (This excludes those who have passed the screening by the Public Safety Commission.)

- ① For medium or quasi-medium vehicles...Must be 21 years old or older and have held a license for 3 years or longer
- ② For regular motor vehicles...Must have held a license for more than 2 years
- ③ For regular and large motorcycles...Must have held a license for 2 years or longer



Quick Hint

Eligibility to take the test may be eased upon completion of special lessons designated by the Public Safety Commission.

5 Towing License

Towing another vehicle using a towing vehicle¹ (large vehicle, medium vehicle, quasi-medium vehicle, regular motor vehicle, or heavy special equipment) requires a **towing license** in addition to a license for the towing vehicle.

License for the type of towing vehicle + Towing license



To tow another vehicle (over 750 kg) requires a towing license.

In the following two circumstances, however, a towing license is not required.

- ① The gross weight² of the vehicle being towed is **750 kg or less**.
- ② When towing a **broken-down vehicle** by rope or crane.



A towing license is not required in these cases.

* 1 Towing vehicle...

A vehicle equipped with a structure and apparatus for towing other vehicles is referred to as a "towing vehicle," while a vehicle equipped with a structure and apparatus for being towed is referred to as a "towed vehicle." Except for unavoidable situations, without this structure and apparatus on both vehicles, towing is not permitted. Refer to page 290 for details.

* 2 Gross weight...

This refers to the total weight of the vehicle including passengers and cargo.

*1

A Learner's Permit is required when trying to obtain a second-class driver's license, in the following circumstances:

- ① When a person with a quasi-medium vehicle licence, or first-class regular motor vehicle licence is attempting to obtain a second-class large vehicle licence or second-class medium licence.
- ② When a person with a first-class medium vehicle licence is attempting to obtain a second-class large vehicle licence.
- ③ When a person with a special heavy equipment licence is attempting to obtain a second-class large vehicle licence, second-class medium vehicle licence, or second-class regular licence.



Quick Hint

Never drive alone...

Even with a learner's permit, it is extremely dangerous to drive without a person in the car who is qualified to drive the car. You should never do this.

Driving alone is a "Driving illegally with a learner's permit" for which your learner's permit will be revoked.

6 Driving on a Learner's Permit

(1) When a Learner's Permit is Required

In the following circumstances, those who wish to obtain a first-class driver's license must obtain a license appropriate for the kind of automobile being driven¹:

- ① When a person is learning to drive a large vehicle, a medium vehicle, a quasi-medium vehicle, or a regular motor vehicle on a road
- ② When a person is driving a large vehicle, a medium vehicle, a quasi-medium vehicle, or a regular motor vehicle on a road in order to take a licensing test or a graduation test at a designated driving school.

(2) Term of Validity for a Learner's Permit

The term of validity for a learner's permit is six months from the date the license test was taken.

(3) Learning to Drive on a Learner's Permit

When a person with a learner's permit drives a large vehicle, a medium vehicle, a quasi-medium vehicle, or regular motor vehicle for the purpose of learning, he or she must have one of the following people **sitting next to him or her in the front seat** and must drive under this person's instruction.

- ① A driving instructor of a designated driving school (only when actually driving for practice)
- ② A person who has held a first-class license for driving the vehicle for 3 years or more
- ③ A person who is 21 years old or older and holds a second-class license for driving the vehicle

(4) Displaying a "Learner Driver" Sign

When a vehicle is being driven on a learner's permit for the purpose of driving for practice, a **"learner driver" sign** must be displayed in the designated positions at the front and rear of the vehicle.



Affixed between 0.4 meters and 1.2 meters from the ground in a clearly visible spot.

2 Renewing a Driver's License, etc.

1 Submitting Notification of Changes to Information Listed on Driver's License

- ① When one's personal information changes due to a change of address, marriage, or other reason, it is important to report the change as early as possible to one's local public safety commission.
- ② If one's driver's license is lost, stolen, damaged or going to be renewed for personal informations change, it is possible to apply to one's local public safety commission for the license to be reissued.

(3) Duties of a License Renewer

When renewing a driver's license, the holder must undergo the **renewal course** offered according to his or her classification. The content and time required for each course varies according to classification.

| Classification | Type of Course | Time (min.) |
|------------------------------|--|-------------|
| Exemplary driver | Course for exemplary drivers | 30 |
| Ordinary driver | Course for ordinary drivers | 60 |
| Driver with violations, etc. | Course for drivers who have committed traffic violations | 120 |
| | Course for drivers who have held a license for less than five years. | 120 |

A person who has undergone a specially designated course¹ provided by a public safety commission or other organization within a specified period prior to renewal is exempt from taking these courses.

(4) Invalidation of a Driver's License

If a driver's license is not renewed, the license becomes invalid.

Point

When a Driver's License is Invalidated

After a license has been invalidated, a person is required to take the licensing examinations over again in order to obtain another license. In the following instances, however, when the person takes a designated course², he or she will be exempt from taking part of the licensing exams.

① Within six months of the date of invalidation...

A person is exempt from taking the driving test and written test, and need only pass the qualifying examination to be issued a new driver's license.

② If for an unavoidable reason such as illness or being overseas a person is unable to take the qualifying examination within six months of the date of invalidation...

If a person applies, with documentation proving the validity of the reason, within one month of the date that the reason no longer applies, that person will be exempt from taking the driving test and written test.

However, if more than three years have passed since the expiration date for the term of validity, this exemption no longer applies.

4 Senior Driver's Course

If a person planning to apply for a license renewal will be **70 years old or over** on the last day of the renewal period, that person must take a senior driver's course given by a public safety commission or other organization within the six months prior to the last day of the renewal period.³ In addition, those who will be **75 years old or over** will have to take a cognitive function test, in addition to a senior driver's course.

*1

Specially designated course...

① A person who has taken a senior driver's course within six months of the expiration date for the renewal period.

② A person who has taken a course or educational course mandated by government ordinance within six months of renewal.

*2

Designated course...

A renewal course, senior driver's course, etc.



Quick Hint

If it has been more than six months from the date of license invalidation but less than one year, a person is exempt from part of the learner's permit examinations required to reobtain a license.

RT Law 101-4
102

*3

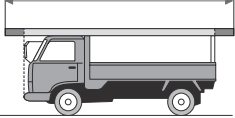
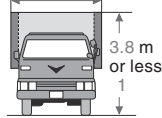
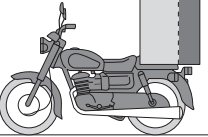
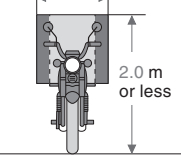
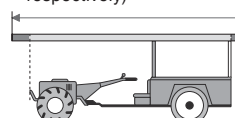
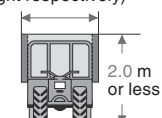
A person who has taken a course or educational course mandated by government ordinance within the six months prior to the last day of the renewal period is exempt from taking this course.

3 Restrictions on Passengers and Vehicle Loading

1 Seating Capacities and Loading Restrictions

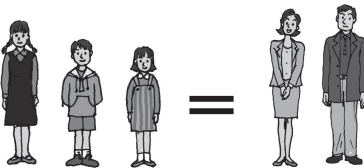
The driver of a vehicle must not attempt to carry more than the established seating capacity (including the driver) or more than the restrictions on cargo allow.

● Seating Capacities and Loading Restrictions

| Type of Vehicle | Seating Capacity | Loading Capacity | Size and Carrying Method of Cargo |
|---|--|--|--|
| Regular motor vehicles, quasi-medium vehicles, medium vehicles, large vehicles, and special heavy equipment | As noted on the automobile inspection certificate or the compact car registration certificate. (Minicars seat one person.) | As noted on the automobile inspection certificate or the compact car registration certificate. (Minicars can carry 90 kg.) | <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Length of automobile × 1.2 or less (Length + 1/10 of length or less to the front and back respectively)</p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Width of automobile × 1.2 or less (Width + 1/10 of width or less to the left and right respectively)</p>  </div> </div> <p>Heights up to 2.5 m or less are allowed for three-wheeled regular motor vehicles and regular motor vehicles whose total engine displacement is 660 cc or less.</p> |
| Regular motorcycles and large-size motorcycles (excluding motorcycles with side cars) | 1 (2 people may ride if there is a seat other than the driver's seat.) | 60 kg | <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Length of the carrying device + 0.3 m or less</p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Width of the carrying device + 0.15 m or less left and right sides</p>  </div> </div> <p>2.0 m or less</p> |
| Mopeds | 1 | 30 kg | |
| Special light equipment | 1 (2 people may ride if there is a seat other than the driver's seat.) | 700 kg | <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Length of automobile × 1.2 or less (Length + 1/10 of length or less to the front and back respectively)</p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Width of automobile × 1.2 or less (Width + 1/10 of width or less to the left and right respectively)</p>  </div> </div> <p>2.0 m or less</p> |

How to Calculate Seating Capacity When Carrying Children

Count three children under 12 years of age as two adults.



Calculation of seating capacity

(Seating capacity – number of adults riding) × 1.5 = number of children who can ride

Note: Discard the portion after the decimal point.

Practice example

If 2 adults are riding in an automobile having a seating capacity of 5 people,

Answer

children

RT Law 57 I
Enforcement
Ordinance 22, 23
Safety Standard
53 II

* 1

Height Restrictions of Loading Methods

Depending upon the road and driving conditions, there are special circumstances in which the Public Safety Commission has determined that a vehicle height not exceeding 4.1m is acceptable, if it is determined that there are no road obstructions.



Quick Hint

What are the restrictions regarding special-type regular motor vehicles and special heavy equipment?

The seating capacity and the maximum load of the following vehicles is as follows:

- ① Regular agricultural-use vehicles used for spraying pesticides that cannot travel at speeds greater than 35 km/hr:
Seating capacity: 1 Person
Loading capacity: 1,500 kg
- ② Special heavy equipment used for agricultural work that cannot travel at speeds greater than 35km/hr
Seating capacity: 1 Person
- ③ Special heavy equipment 4.7m or less in length, 1.7m or less in width and 2.8m or less in height that cannot travel at speeds greater than 15km/hr
Seating capacity: 1 Person
Loading capacity: 1,000 kg

Note: See answer on following page.

Duties of Those Responsible for Automobile Use or Driving Safety Supervisors

(1) Duties of Those Responsible for Automobile Use

- ① Those responsible for automobile use must ensure that vehicle drivers obey traffic regulations and driving safety supervisors keep automobiles suitably maintained for safe driving. Driver services must also ensure that their drivers maintain the same responsibilities when providing their substitutional driving services.
- ② Unless there is a driving safety supervisor present, those responsible for the use of emergency vehicles such as fire engines as well as road maintenance trucks must provide drivers with the traffic safety education required for safe driving.
- ③ Those responsible for automobile use must ensure that required measures are taken for proper parking of the vehicle.
- ④ In the event that a vehicle driver has committed a speeding violation, or has driven a vehicle with excessive load, or has driven in a state of extreme exhaustion, the Public Safety Commission may give those responsible for the use of the vehicle instructions to take necessary steps to prevent the reoccurrence of the violation. If the driver repeats the violation despite the instructions, those responsible for automobile use may be penalized by temporary suspension of driving privileges and by being prevented to have other people drive the vehicle for a certain period time.

In addition, in the event that drivers of hired cars or accompanying automobiles of driving services commit speeding violation or illegal parking or stopping, or has driven a vehicle in a state of extreme exhaustion, the driving services may be instructed by the Public Safety Commission to take necessary steps to prevent the reoccurrence of the violation or may have business suspended.

- ⑤ In the event that those responsible for automobile use has been fined for unattended illegal parking before, and is fined again for the same violation by the Public Safety Commission, he/she may be penalized by temporary suspension of driving privileges and by being prevented to have other people drive the vehicle for a certain period time.
- ⑥ If the person responsible for the use of the vehicle has not paid the fine for leaving his/her vehicle illegally by due date, and is then reminded to pay the fine by the Public Safety Commission, he/she will have to present a document that proves that the fine for the violation, delinquent charge, and processing fee have been paid, in order to have a new Vehicle Inspection Certificate issued.

(2) Duties of Driving Safety Supervisors

- ① Businesses that have 5 or more automobiles (large-size motorcycles and regular motorcycles count as half a vehicle) or one or more automobiles with a seating capacity of 11 persons or more must appoint a driving safety supervisor to provide drivers with traffic safety instructions and handle other duties necessary for the safe driving of the automobiles. In addition, driver services must also appoint a driving safety supervisor in each place of business.

Businesses that make use of 20 or more automobiles (driver services: business that make use 10 or more automobiles) must appoint a designated number of deputy safety supervisors according to the number of automobiles in use.

- ② Driving safety supervisors must reliably carry out the following duties and ensure that drivers drive safely. Deputy driving safety supervisors must assist driving safety supervisors in carrying out the following duties:
 - Provide traffic safety instruction.
 - Determine whether or not drivers are obeying traffic regulations and whether or not drivers have the aptitude, appropriate knowledge and skills required for safe driving.
 - Take sufficient care to create action plans to prevent acts such as speeding, driving with an excessive load, driving while exhausted, and illegal parking. Illegal parking includes leaving vehicles in a place far removed from the driver where they cannot be moved quickly. (This also applies to hired vehicles or accompanying vehicles which are illegally parked)
 - Assign co-drivers for long-distance driving.
 - Give orders as required to ensure safe driving in bad weather or in the event of natural disasters.
 - Confirm the health of drivers through daily pre-driving checks and by giving orders as required in order to ensure safe driving.
 - Check visually or otherwise whether the driver is under the influence of alcohol before and after driving, and record and preserve the details of the checks.
 - Require drivers to keep driving logs.
 - Provide instructions in driving skills and knowledge and other subjects required for safe driving.
- ③ The person directly responsible for the operation of automobiles, such as the driving supervisor, must not allow drivers to engage in any of the following actions. In the event of a violation, the person responsible may have his or her license temporarily suspended and he or she may be barred temporarily from engaging supervisory activities.
 - A) Driving without a license (or on a suspended license) or without qualifications
 - B) Speeding
 - C) Drunk driving or driving under the influence
 - D) Driving under the influence of narcotics or stimulants or driving while fatigued
 - E) Driving with excessive loads
 - F) Leaving a vehicle unattended

In addition, driver services and their safety supervisors, etc, must not order or tacitly allow the drivers of hired cars or accompanying automobiles to commit acts A) – F) or illegal parking or stopping violations.