

2019

Safe Driving Tips for Older Adults

How to Prepare for the Senior Driver Licence Renewal Program



A comprehensive guide to assist you in preparing for the Driver's Licence Renewal Program in Ontario for drivers age 80 and over, with other helpful resources included.

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Burlington Age-Friendly Council and Community Development Halton



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Introduction

This resource is designed to provide information for older adults about the Ontario Ministry of Transportation’s Senior Driver’s Licence Renewal Program for people ages 80 and over. The Ontario Senior Driver Program aims to keep seniors driving for as long as they can safely do so.

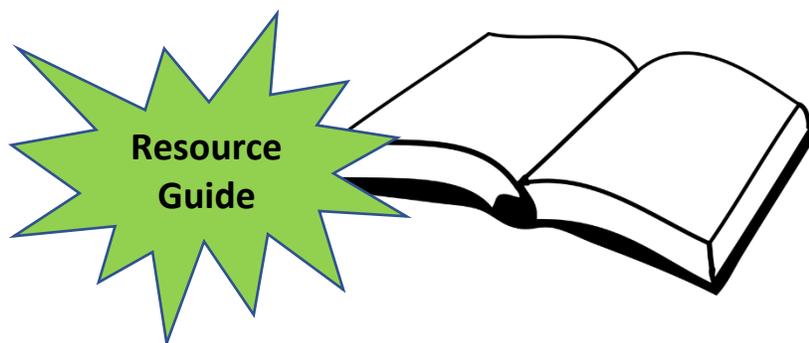
*“I don’t like the word **test**, as it makes me feel anxious, and as if I am back in school again.”*

Growing older does not mean you have to give up driving. However, as you age, your reflexes might get slower, and you may not react as quickly as you could in the past. Drivers need to recognize these changes in themselves and adjust their driving habits accordingly. Remember, having a “G” licence is a privilege and not a right.

“I am scared that I might lose my licence, which means I could lose my independence. I am not sure how I would get to places where I need to go.”

Contributions to the development of the resource was guided by several factors, including the experiences and narratives of older adults who have been driving for several years, and those who have attended the Senior Driver Licence Renewal Program.

“A comprehensive resource on the Senior Driver Licence Renewal Program would be very helpful to me and others who have to renew their class G driver’s licence.”



Four Steps to Renew a Class G Driver's Licence

For adults 80 years and over:

Step 1: You will get a notice in the mail

About 90 days or 3 months before your 80th birthday you will receive two items in the mail from the Ministry of Transportation:

- A renewal form
- A letter that will let you know what to do to renew



Step 2: Book an appointment

Once you receive your form and letter in the mail, you will need to attend a driver renewal session.

To book the appointment, you need to call the following number:

- Call **1-800-396-4233 (toll free)** or **416-235-3579 (in Toronto)**
- Have your driver's licence number ready, as you will be asked for that
- Please let them know if you have a language barrier, if English is not your first language
- Please let them know if you need help, such as a sign-language interpreter



At this time, you will be given a date, time, and location of your renewal session. There are 125 locations throughout the Province of Ontario. You will be assigned a location that is closest to where you live.

If you cannot attend on the given date, you can reschedule your appointment, **once**. If the next appointment is only available after your driver's licence expires, you can get a temporary permit.

What if I am away, out of Ontario or out of the country when I need to renew?

If you are out of the province or country when it becomes time to renew, you can call the above phone number(s) to book your session early. You can renew your licence up to 6 months before it expires. If you cannot attend a renewal session before your

licence expires, you could get a one-time temporary driver's licence permit. You will only get this permit once you have booked a renewal session.

Step 3: Attend a Renewal Session

It takes approximately 90 minutes to attend a renewal session.

What to bring to a renewal session:

- your driver's licence (or temporary driver's licence)
- the licence renewal form you received in the mail
- the eye glasses you use for driving
- hearing aids, if you need them
- a bottle of water (some locations might not have water available)
- snacks, if you need them (e.g., are diabetic or know you will need a snack)
- two pens (in case one runs out of ink)



At a renewal session, you will:

- take a vision test
- join others in a **45-minute interactive group education session** about new traffic laws, how aging affects driving, tips for older drivers and road signs
- complete a written in-class screening exercise/test
- undergo a driving record review

After the session, you may or may not need to:

- pass a road test before you can renew your licence
- follow up with your physician and submit medical information

This will depend on how you performed on the in-class screening components and a review of your driving record.

If you need to see a doctor, you will receive a letter in the mail with further instructions.

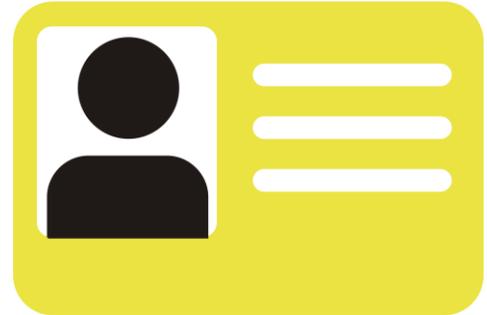
The driver improvement counsellor at the group education session can discuss these requirements with you if necessary.

Step 4: Get a new licence card

After you finish the session and take the required tests, you will need to visit a **Service Ontario Centre** to get a new driver's licence card.

You need to bring with you:

- Your written results from the test
- Original identification that shows your legal name, date of birth and signature
- **Service Ontario** will then process your results and renew your licence.



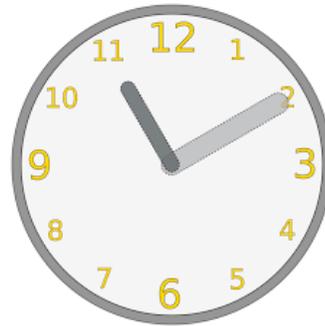
In-Class Screening Test

The two parts of the in-class screening components that you will be asked to complete at the driver renewal session are as follows (these are the same in-class screening components that you will see on the day of your renewal session, therefore, no surprises):

Part A: (5 minutes to complete this task)

1. Draw a large circle
2. Put all the numbers in to make it look like a face of a clock
3. Draw in the hands of a clock to set the time at **ten minutes after eleven.**
4. Stop when completed. The form will be collected after **5 minutes.**

Sample of a clock showing the time as 11:10



Part B: (5 minutes to complete this task)

1. Look at the all the letters below.
2. Whenever you see a letter “H”, cross it out.
3. Stop when completed. This form will be collected after **5 minutes.**

BHDFCHCFHGGIHCCHIHBDAHCFBHDEHDAFHICHFHBAFHEHFHC
BFHFGHEHEGHEHDFHCFBHADHCEHIHGDHGEHBHEGHIHCH
EHFCIHEBHGFDDHBEHBDAAEHBHCFAHFHGHCGDHCBAHGDEHC
HBEHDGHDADFHBIFHEBHDHEHGHGDGAHCHFBHAFHEBFHCDHF
HCDHBHDHFACHCHFDDIHCBIHBHACHDHFBEHBBHGBIHCHEHAF
HIHEBHGFBBHFAHEBGGHGFHDBHBHCFHADCHEIHFHGHDCBH
EDGHADFHBHIGEHGHDEHCGHDHEBAHFHBCDAHGBHCHDFH

Questions and Answers

Why do I need my driver's licence renewed and attend a Group Education Session at age 80 and every two years after that?

The purpose of the mandated driver licence renewal at age 80 plus is to determine the cognitive thinking ability of the person. This is done through the two part in-class screening;

- 1) You are required to draw a clock; this measures a driver's capacity to recognize and organize information (called visuospatial ability)
- 2) You must cross out all the letters H contained in a block of letters; this measures a driver's capacity to coordinate thinking with doing (psychomotor speed)

For some drivers, this will be relatively easy, while for others, it may be quite difficult.

What is involved in the 45-minute interactive group education session?

You will see a video that has some scenarios on driving, and these will be discussed. You will learn about some new laws and road signs, with some tips for drivers. You will also examine the strengths that older drivers have, through their life experiences, and their limitations, that can include health changes, such as, vision or hearing loss, challenges with flexibility, or changes in reaction times to driving situations.

How will my vision be tested?

A screen reader is used to test your vision. Remember to wear your most recent eyeglasses that you use for driving. If you have a certificate from an eye doctor, then a vision test is not necessary. However, you will need to bring a signed and dated certificate, dated within six months of the session.

What happens if I take the road test and do not pass?

If you are unsuccessful with any of the required tests, vision, or road, you may take them again. If you are unsuccessful in a road test, your driver's licence may revert to a Class G1 or M1 until you are successful. For that reason, bring a fully licensed driver with over four years of experience with you on the day of your road test.

G1 licence restrictions are as follows:

- Must be accompanied by a licenced G driver in good standing for 4 years
- Cannot drive from 12:00 a.m. (midnight) to 5:00 a.m.
- Cannot drive on any highway with a posted speed limit of 80 km/hr or higher
- Zero percent blood alcohol level
- No more passengers than working seatbelts

What happens if I get in an accident?

There is a specific collision program for older drivers.

If you are aged 70 or older and you were in a collision as a driver, and at the same time you were charged with a traffic offence (and later convicted for driving improperly), you will have to pass the 3-part driving test to keep your licence.

This includes:

- Vision test
- Written test
- Road test (includes expressway)

A letter will be mailed to you informing you about what to do. You don't have to get tested until you receive the letter. The tests are free and you can take the tests again if you don't pass the first time.



Senior Driver Renewal Session

How can I best prepare for the Senior Driver Renewal Program?

- Your health is an important factor in being able to drive
- Be proactive, keep active and exercise regularly. This will increase your mobility and flexibility
- If you are concerned about any current or new medications, check with your doctor or pharmacist to ensure that it does not negatively affect your driving ability
- Have your vision tested regularly
- If you experience any changes to your mental or physical health, report the symptoms to your doctor
- Consider taking a driver refresher course at a local Driver Education Program in your community
- Review the Driver's Handbook

PREPARED



A Personal Assessment of Your Own Driving Abilities

Take Some Time to Reflect:

- Do other drivers often honk at me?
- Have I been involved in some collisions, even if they were only “fender benders”?
- Do I get lost, or forget where I am, even on roads that I am familiar with?
- Do cars or pedestrians seem to appear out of nowhere?
- Do I get easily distracted while driving?
- Have any of my family or friends say they are worried about my driving?
- Am I driving less these days because I’m not as sure about my driving as I used to be?
- Do I have trouble staying in my lane?
- Do I experience difficulty at intersections, judging distances, when to turn or move forward?
- Do I have trouble moving my foot between the gas and the brake pedals, or do I sometimes confuse the two?

If you have answered “yes” to any of these questions, and you feel concerned or worried about your driving, then it may be time to talk with your doctor, family and/or friends to discuss further.



Helpful Hints and Tips for Safe Driving

- Plan your route ahead of time. Use routes that you are familiar with. If you are nervous about driving during peak hours when there is heavier traffic congestion, then avoid driving during those times
- Build time in your schedule if you need to stop for rest breaks, gas or food
- Ensure that you and your passengers always wear seatbelts
- Try not to drive in bad weather
- Avoid driving when you are tired, under stress or ill. Be aware that some medications cause drowsiness and can make driving very dangerous
- Don't follow the vehicle ahead of you too closely, keep enough distance between you, that will give you enough time to stop safely
- Pay close attention and stay alert to: pedestrians, traffic signals, cyclists, other vehicles on the road and be prepared for the unexpected as best you can
- Drive during daylight hours if possible, night vision can be challenging for many people
- Avoid distractions while driving, such as eating, or talking on the phone
- In the event that you may no longer have the desire or ability to drive, consider alternatives that might be available: public transit, taxi service, specialized transit, or volunteer driver programs.



Transportation Options to Consider

Are you worried you won't be able to do the things you want and need to do if you stop driving? Many people have this concern, but there may be other options and means of transportation to get to where you need to go. Consider the following options:

- Regular transit service
- Specialized transit service for older adults and people with disabilities
- Volunteer driver programs, such as the Canadian Red Cross
- Taxi service, and those with reduced fares or special programs for older adults
- Neighbours, friends and family members who can help drive
- UBER ride

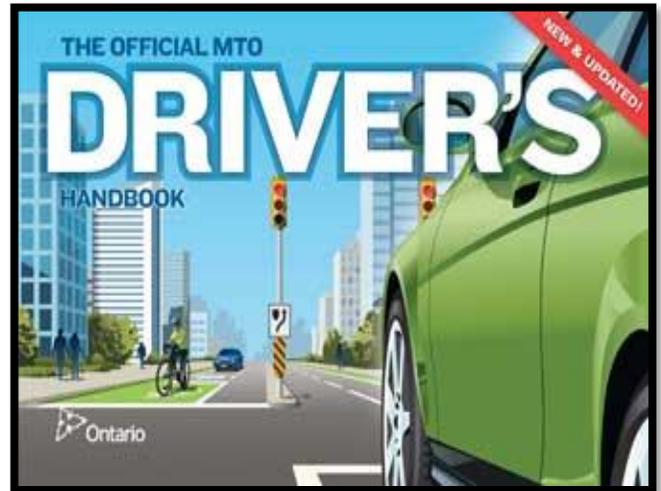


Get in touch with your municipality and explore what transit services are available, including the costs, maps, and schedules. Find out what others do in your community for transportation services.



Resources

- Driver's Handbook is published by the Government of Ontario. It is the only official handbook for drivers. Copies of this handbook may be purchased online on the Service Ontario publications website www.publications.serviceontario.ca MTO Driver's Handbook Series, from a retail store near you (for example, Canadian Tire store), a DriveTest centre, or select Service Ontario Centre. The cost is \$14.95 plus applicable taxes.
- DriveTest licensed by Government of Ontario: Senior Driver's Licence Renewal Program. drivetest.ca/licences/seniors.html
- Ministry of Transportation of Ontario: The Senior Driver's Licence Renewal Program. www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/driver/senior-driver-licence-renewal-program.shtml
- Ministry of Transportation of Ontario: Aging and Driving: Ontario's Licence Renewal Program for Drivers age 80 and Above. www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/driver/pdfs/ges-booklet-english.pdf
- Service Ontario
Access to programs and services from the Government of Ontario
Phone: 1-800-267-8097
www.ontario.ca/serviceontario
- Driver Refresher Course
[Wheels Driver Training Ltd.](#)
Address: 245 Commercial St., Milton, ON L9T 2J3
Phone: 905-703-5197



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Contact and Feedback

Did you find this guide useful? Please send us your feedback and thoughts.

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