

## Driver Education Frequently Asked Questions

### Driver Education

1. **What are the relevant California *Education Code* sections pertaining to driver education and how may I access them?**

Some of the key California *Education Code* (*EC*) sections are 51220(j), 51220.1, and 51850-51854. These sections may be accessed at [California Law](#) . (Outside Source)

2. **What is the difference between driver education and driver training?**

Education and Vehicle Codes make distinctions between driver education and driver training. Driver education refers to the 30 or more hours of classroom instruction a student must complete with a qualified instructor (*EC* Section 51851). Driver training refers to the minimum of 6 hours of behind-the-wheel training a student must complete with a qualified instructor in an approved vehicle (*Vehicle Code* 12814.6)

3. **Is driver education required to be offered by school districts?**

Yes. *EC* Section 51220(j) states in part that: "The adopted course of study for grades 7-12, inclusive, shall offer courses in the following areas of study . . . (j) Automobile driver education."

4. **Is driver education required for high school graduation?**

While driver education is required to be offered, the local school district governing board may, pursuant to *EC*Section 51225.3, determine if it is a required course for graduation. A driver education elective course may be applied toward meeting minimum graduation credits without requiring driver education for graduation.

5. **May a student be charged for driver education classes?**

No. A student in a public school setting may not be charged for driver education that is required to be offered by the school district regardless of when and where it is offered (California Constitution Article IX, Section 5).

6. **When may driver education be scheduled?**

Driver education should be offered as a 10th grade course since this usually matches most students' licensing age. Many districts are offering driver education instruction along with health education, since some course topics, such as alcohol, drugs, and driver fatigue, are discussed in both courses. Understanding this interrelationship is important since the leading health and safety issue among teens is associated with traffic collisions, the number one killer of teens in the state. The *EC* has several sections providing guidance.

*EC* Section 51851 states: "A course of instruction in automobile driver education shall . . . (B) Provide the opportunity for students to take driver education within the regular school day . . . Additional classes may be offered to accommodate those who have failed or those who cannot enroll in the regular school day program."

*EC* Section 41912 states in part: "The express purpose of the Legislature is that . . . this instruction properly belongs in the high school curriculum on a basis having comparable standards of instruction, quality, teacher-pupil ratio and class scheduling as in other courses in the regular curriculum in the regular academic program."

7. **What are the required classroom hours for driver education?**

*EC* Section 51851 states that the course of instruction in automobile driver education shall be at least two and one-half semester periods, which equals approximately 30 hours of instruction pursuant to *California Code of Regulations*, Title 5, Section 1600, subdivision (a) (2).

## Driver Training

1. **How many hours of driver training "behind the wheel" instruction are required?**

Vehicle Code 12814.6 states that a student must satisfactorily complete six hours or more of behind-the-wheel instruction with a qualified driving school or an independent driving instructor licensed under Chapter 1 of Division 5 and either an accredited course in automobile driver education in any secondary school of California pursuant to provisions of the *EC* or satisfactory completion of equivalent professional instruction courses acceptable to the Department of Motor Vehicles.

In addition, students shall complete 50 hours of supervised driving practice prior to the issuance of a provisional license, which is in addition to any other driver training instruction required by law (*Vehicle Code*, Section 12814.6 (4)). Not less than 10 of the required practice hours shall include driving during darkness as defined by *Vehicle Code* Section 280.

## Teacher Qualifications

1. **Who is considered a qualified driver education instructor?**

According to *EC* Section 41907 "A qualified instructor is one who has passed an approved driver's instruction examination and holds a designated subjects credential or who holds a valid prior credential authorizing instruction in automobile driver education and driver training."

2. **What is required to obtain a Driver Education teaching certificate?**

A public school teacher must have a certificate to teach driver education or in lieu of a certificate, a waiver issued by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) pursuant to *EC* sections 41907-41907.5. The certificate course work is 18 quarter units. Currently there are no CTC-approved certificate programs in driver education. Teachers seeking to teach driver education may obtain a waiver on a case-by-case basis from CTC. For further information, contact CTC. Out-of-state "long distance" college or university programs for driver education certification are not acceptable. It is highly recommended the CTC be consulted before embarking on a certification program.

### External Resources

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