



Driver's Education CURRICULUM

Board Approved: 05/21/2026

Course Information

High School Semester

Course Description:

This course will guide students through an in-depth study of the American Highway Transportation System, commencing with the fundamental mechanics of vehicle operation and culminating in the mastery of Missouri's Graduated Driver License (GDL) requirements. The curriculum will encompass a wide array of topics spanning legal responsibilities, advanced defensive driving strategies, the integration of modern safety technologies, and the grave societal impacts of distracted and impaired driving.

This course is deliberately crafted as a comprehensive foundation for the four-part driver examination, providing ample opportunities for students to bridge the gap between passenger and proficient operator. Beyond tactical maneuvers, students will explore the multifaceted nature of vehicle stewardship—investigating the essential principles of mechanical maintenance and the regulatory frameworks of mandatory safety and emissions inspections—ensuring they navigate the road with both confidence and civic responsibility.

Transfer Goals:

- Interact safely and courteously with all roadway users by effectively managing vehicle space, speed, and communication techniques
- Uphold the legal privilege of driving through continuous compliance with state licensing, vehicle registration, and financial responsibility laws
- Prioritize personal accountability by evaluating how physical fitness, mental readiness, and potential impairments like distractions or alcohol impact safe vehicle operation
- Execute methodical vehicle procedures to ensure mechanical reliability and maximize the effectiveness of occupant protection systems for all passengers

Curriculum Standards: [American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association Standards](#)

Curriculum Resource(s): Missouri Driver's Guide

**priority standards indicated in bold*

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Unit 1: Licensing and Missouri Driver Program

Timeframe: 2 weeks

Unit Description: In this unit, students will explore the legal roadmap to driving by identifying the specific requirements of Missouri's Graduated Driver License (GDL) program. They will learn to manage essential documentation for permits and licenses, including verification of identity, residency, and lawful status. The unit emphasizes the legal responsibilities of an operator regarding both driver licensing and vehicle registration. By the end of this unit, students will understand that driving is a legal privilege maintained through ongoing compliance with state regulations.

Enduring Understandings:

- Driving is a legal privilege that requires ongoing compliance with state laws regarding driver licensing and vehicle registration to maintain access to the Highway Transportation System.
- Missouri's Graduated Driver License (GDL) program is a structured process designed to reduce the over-representation of teenagers in traffic crashes by allowing novice drivers to gain experience under low-risk conditions.
- Being a responsible operator involves the accurate management of legal documents and understanding the safety responsibility laws that govern vehicle ownership and operation.

Essential Questions:

- In what ways does the GDL program balance the freedom of driving with the need for public safety?
- What are the specific legal "must-haves" for a driver and their vehicle to remain compliant with Missouri law?
- Why does the state impose tiered requirements (permits vs. licenses) for young drivers rather than granting full privileges immediately?
- How do licensing and registration laws ensure that all users of the Highway Transportation System are held accountable?

Unit 1 Standards

STANDARD CODE	STUDENTS WILL KNOW, BE ABLE TO, AND UNDERSTAND:
C 1.2	• I can recognize and comply with the rules of the road based on state and local requirements.
C 13.3	• I can describe operator responsibilities in regard to licensing and registration.

**priority standards indicated in bold*

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Unit 2: Driver's Exam Process

Timeframe: 4 weeks

Unit Description: In this unit, students prepare for the high-stakes four-part driver examination by outlining the written, vision, road sign, and skills test components. Students will identify the specific safety standards and equipment a vehicle must have to be used during the state's driving skills test. Learning focuses on recognizing and complying with the rules of the road while illustrating the vehicle operating space required for managed-risk driving. Additionally, students will practice methodical procedures for starting and securing a vehicle to ensure safe operations protect all roadway users.

Enduring Understandings:

- Mastery of the rules of the road is the objective baseline used to measure a driver's readiness for the Highway Transportation System during the state examination.
- Every vehicle has blind zones and visual limitations.
- Safe driving begins and ends with standardized procedures; consistently following steps for starting and securing a vehicle.
- The four-part driver examination is a high-stakes assessment where a student must prove they can translate theoretical knowledge of vehicle operating space and operating procedures into precise, real-world maneuvers.

Essential Questions:

- How does a driver's compliance with signs, signals, and markings demonstrate their ability to manage risk?
- Why is understanding a vehicle's "blind zones" and "tire contact patches" essential for passing the skills test?
- How do standardized routines for starting and securing a vehicle reduce the likelihood of mechanical or human error?
- In what ways does the state skills test evaluate a driver's spatial awareness and mental perception?
- How can a driver ensure their vehicle meets the specific requirements and safety standards necessary to be used for the examination?

Unit 2 Standards	
STANDARD CODE	STUDENTS WILL KNOW, BE ABLE TO, AND UNDERSTAND:
C 1.2	• I can recognize and comply with the rules of the road based on state and local requirements.
C 1.3	• I can recognize and illustrate vehicle operating space needed for managed-risk operation.
C 1.6	• I can identify and practice the procedures for starting a vehicle.
C 2.3, C 2.5	• I can explain and apply the four basic techniques related to steering control needed to operate a vehicle. • I can identify and practice methods for stopping a vehicle.

**priority standards indicated in bold*

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C 2.6	• I can identify and practice a procedure for securing a vehicle.
C 3.1	• I can recognize, understand, determine meaning, and relate roadway conditions, signs, signals, and pavement markings to make managed-risk driving decisions.

**priority standards indicated in bold*

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Unit 3: Rules of the Road and Safe Operations

Timeframe: 4 weeks

Unit Description: In this unit, students apply Missouri traffic laws and right-of-way rules to various driving scenarios to make managed-risk decisions. The unit covers the meaning of diverse road signs, signals, and pavement markings while emphasizing communication techniques and courtesy toward other roadway users. Students will learn to select and adjust speed based on roadway conditions and practice procedures for lane changes and various types of parking. Through a focus on intersection entry and traffic flow, students will develop the skills necessary to navigate both limited and non-limited access roadways.

Enduring Understandings:

- Traffic laws, signs, signals, and pavement markings serve as a universal language that drivers must interpret to make safe, managed-risk decisions in various driving scenarios.
- Safe driving is a collaborative effort that requires clear communication, courtesy, and respect toward all roadway users to avoid conflicts and reduce shared risk.
- Maintaining a safe speed is not just about following posted limits; it involves constantly adjusting based on vehicle capabilities, roadway conditions, and environmental limitations to minimize collision risk.
- Executing complex maneuvers—such as lane changes, passing, and various types of parking—requires precise procedures and the ability to manage the operating space around the vehicle in both moderate and high-speed environments.
- Driving on different roadway types (such as limited access vs. non-limited access) requires specific techniques for intersection entry, gap selection, and managing traffic flow at varying speeds.

Essential Questions:

- How do roadway signs, signals, and pavement markings help a driver predict and respond to potential risks?
- Why are early communication and driver courtesy essential for maintaining a safe path of travel for all roadway users?
- How does a driver determine the "best" speed and lane position when legal limits, roadway surfaces, and traffic flow conflict?
- What sequential steps must a driver follow to ensure that lane changes, parking, and passing are performed safely without infringing on the space of others?
- How do the requirements for gap selection and space management change when moving from a low-speed local street to a high-speed limited-access highway?

Unit 3 Standards	
STANDARD CODE	STUDENTS WILL KNOW, BE ABLE TO, AND UNDERSTAND:
C 1.2	• I can recognize and comply with the rules of the road based on state and local requirements.
C 2.4	• I can identify and practice use of communication techniques, courtesy and

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	respect in regard to other roadway users.
C 2.7	I can identify and develop vehicle reference points to know where the vehicle is positioned on the roadway.
C 3.1	I can recognize, understand, determine meaning, and relate roadway conditions, signs, signals, and pavement markings to make managed-risk driving decisions.
C 3.2	I can understand procedures and processes for basic vehicle maneuvering tasks.
C 4.2	I can select, maintain, and adjust speed to reduce risk of collision in compliance with rules of the road.
C 5.3	I can identify procedures and practice techniques for making managed-risk lane changes in a variety of lane change situations.
C 5.4	I can identify procedures and practice techniques for making managed-risk perpendicular, angle, and parallel parking.
C 6.1	I can identify and comply with roadway and traffic flow situations on limited access roadways and roadways without limited access at speeds up to 55 m.p.h.
C 6.2	I can identify and comply with space management situations on limited access roadways and roadways without limited access at speeds up to 55 m.p.h.
C 6.3	I can identify and comply with intersection entry situations on limited access roadways and roadways without limited access at speeds up to 55 m.p.h.
C 7.4	I can identify and comply with gap selection, communication, speed control, and lane selection during passing situations on limited access roadways at maximum highway speeds.

**priority standards indicated in bold*

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Unit 4: Safe Driving Practices

Timeframe: 4 weeks

Unit Description: In this unit, students focus on mastering the SEE (Search, Evaluate, Execute) system to implement defensive driving strategies in diverse environments. Students will understand the vital role of occupant protection and safety equipment as tools for crash prevention and loss reduction. They will refine vehicle preparation procedures, including pre-entry checks and mirror adjustments, to compensate for visual limitations and blind zones. By practicing basic maneuvers and speed management, students will learn to maintain a safe cushion of space around their vehicle in both everyday and hazardous conditions.

Enduring Understandings:

- Safe driving begins with a driver's mental and physical well-being and is supported by systematic pre-entry checks and vehicle adjustments to ensure total operational readiness.
- Occupant protection systems, including active and passive restraints, are critical loss-prevention tools that significantly reduce the risk of injury or death during a crash.
- Maintaining a managed-risk "safety cushion" requires a driver to recognize the vehicle's visual limitations, blind zones, and tire contact patches.
- Clear communication, courtesy, and respect are active defensive driving strategies used to manage the behavior of other roadway users and reduce conflict.
- Responsible speed management is a dynamic process where the driver must constantly weigh legal limits against roadway, environmental, and vehicle limitations to minimize collision risk.
- Executing basic maneuvers, such as backing in a straight line or performing turnabouts, requires divided attention and a mastery of steering and speed control to maintain vehicle balance.

Essential Questions:

- How do a driver's mental state and pre-drive procedures directly impact the safety of a trip before the vehicle even moves?
- Why is the proper use of occupant protection systems considered the most effective tool for managing risk during a collision?
- How does an awareness of a vehicle's blind zones and visual limitations change the way a driver approaches lane changes and maneuvers?
- How can early communication through signals, lights, and vehicle position influence the actions of other drivers to ensure a safe path of travel?
- In what ways do environmental conditions like weather or traffic flow override the posted speed limit when making safe driving decisions?
- What critical thinking and physical skills are required to safely execute a turnabout or backing procedure in a high-risk environment?

Unit 4 Standards	
STANDARD CODE	STUDENTS WILL KNOW, BE ABLE TO, AND UNDERSTAND:
C 1.3	• I can recognize and illustrate vehicle operating space needed for managed-risk operation.

**priority standards indicated in bold*

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C 1.4	● I can understand and practice processes and procedures for preparing to drive a vehicle.
C 1.5	● I can describe the value of occupant protection as a crash prevention and loss prevention tool for managed-risk driver performance.
C 1.6	● I can identify and practice the procedures for starting a vehicle.
C 2.4	● I can identify and practice use of communication techniques, courtesy and respect in regard to other roadway users.
C 4.1, C 5.1	● I can discover how visual skills and mental perception lead to making managed-risk driving decisions. ● I can review and apply the principles of a sequential steps for problem solving (i.e., SEE: Search, Evaluate, Execute) to managed-risk vehicle operation making appropriate communication, speed and lane position adjustments.
C 4.2	● I can select, maintain, and adjust speed to reduce risk of collision in compliance with rules of the road.
C 5.2	● I can demonstrate and practice basic vehicle maneuvers for managed-risk operation.

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Unit 5: Driver Health and Responsibility

Timeframe: 2 weeks

Unit Description: In this unit, students will evaluate how physical fitness, mental preparedness, and emotional management directly impact safe vehicle operation. The curriculum examines the high-risk effects of alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs on a driver's personality, perception, and reaction time. This unit also addresses the serious dangers of internal and external distractions, fatigue, and aggressive driving behavior. Finally, students will analyze the legal and personal consequences of traffic violations, including Missouri's point system and mandatory insurance laws.

Enduring Understandings:

- Operating a vehicle safely requires total physical and mental readiness; any degradation in fitness—whether from fatigue, illness, or disability—increases the risk of managed-risk driving.
- Alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs (including prescription and over-the-counter medications) fundamentally alter a driver's personality and cognitive performance, making it impossible to accurately assess risk.
- Traffic violations and driving while impaired carry significant legal and social consequences, including Zero Tolerance penalties, which are designed to reflect a driver's legal responsibility to the community.
- Distractions—be they visual, auditory, physical, or mental—compete for a driver's limited attention and are a primary cause of inattention to the driving task.
- High-risk behaviors such as driver aggression or "road rage" are often driven by internal emotions and motivations that must be managed to prevent injury and physical damage.
- A responsible driver must not only manage their own health but also identify and develop low-risk responses to the high-risk performance of other roadway users.

Essential Questions:

- How do a driver's daily health choices and physical condition determine their ability to respond to critical traffic events?
- What strategies and refusal skills are most effective for avoiding the risks associated with impaired driving or riding with an intoxicated operator?
- How can a driver identify and mitigate internal distractions (such as emotions or fatigue) before they escalate into a hazardous situation?
- Why are the legal and personal stakes of impaired driving higher for teen drivers under Zero Tolerance laws compared to the general population?
- What is the safest way to respond when you identify that another driver on the road is aggressive, distracted, or impaired?

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Unit 5 Standards	
STANDARD CODE	STUDENTS WILL KNOW, BE ABLE TO, AND UNDERSTAND:
C 8.1	I can identify the high-risk effects of alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs, including prescription drugs, on personality and driver performance.
C 8.2	I can recognize legal responsibility to not use alcohol, marijuana and other drugs that affect the ability to operate a vehicle safely and develop strategies for alternative means of safe transportation.
C 8.3	I can explain the need for driver fitness to aid managed-risk driver performance and recognize that external and internal vehicle distractions, fatigue, and aggression may result in injury and physical damage crashes.
C 8.5	I can identify risk factors affecting other drivers' performance and describe low-risk responses.
C 13.2	I can recognize problems consumers confront when making informed choices in purchasing insurance or an automobile.
C 13.3	I can describe operator responsibilities in regard to licensing and registration.

**priority standards indicated in bold*

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Unit 6: Vehicle Maintenance and Specialized Driving

Timeframe: 2 weeks

Unit Description: In this unit, students will identify the mechanical equipment required by law and understand the biennial process for Missouri's safety and emissions inspections. The unit explores modern vehicle health through the study of Advanced Driver-Assistance Systems (ADAS) and routine maintenance tasks like monitoring tire pressure and tread depth. Students will gain specialized knowledge on making informed consumer choices regarding vehicle purchases and mandatory insurance. Additionally, the unit covers the unique skills needed for specialized tasks such as safely towing a trailer and responding appropriately to law enforcement during traffic stops.

Enduring Understandings:

- Regular vehicle maintenance, including routine safety and emissions inspections, is a legal requirement and a fundamental safety practice that ensures a vehicle is fit for the road.
- Recognizing dashboard alert symbols and understanding the implications of mechanical failures (such as brake, engine, or tire malfunctions) allows a driver to respond in a managed-risk manner to prevent crashes.
- Safely towing a trailer or operating specialized vehicles requires unique skills in loading, equipment connection, and adjusted maneuvering techniques to compensate for changed vehicle dynamics.
- A driver's choices regarding fuel-saving habits, proper recycling of parts (like oil and batteries), and vehicle selection directly influence their carbon footprint and the environment.

Essential Questions:

- How does a driver's knowledge of routine vehicle checks (like tire pressure and tread depth) serve as the first line of defense against on-road emergencies?
- What is the critical difference between an alert symbol and a warning symbol, and how should a driver's immediate response change for each?
- Why does towing a trailer require a fundamental shift in how a driver evaluates space, speed, and following distance?
- How can a driver implement specific fuel-efficient habits to minimize the environmental impact of their travel?
- When considering purchasing a vehicle or adding aftermarket parts, how should a consumer evaluate the trade-offs between cost, comfort, and crashworthiness?

Unit 6 Standards	
STANDARD CODE	STUDENTS WILL KNOW, BE ABLE TO, AND UNDERSTAND:
C 1.4	• I can understand and practice processes and procedures for preparing to drive a vehicle.

**priority standards indicated in bold*

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C 12.1	• I can describe ADAS (Advanced Driver-Assistance Systems), including the benefits and concerns. • I can describe how to use advanced driver system (ADAS) safety features safely and effectively.
C 13.1	• I can perform map reading and trip planning exercises using current and emerging technology that leads to an in-car family trip activity.
C 13.2	• I can recognize problems consumers confront when making informed choices in purchasing insurance or an automobile
C 13.3	• I can describe operator responsibilities in regard to licensing and registration.

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