

South Dakota DPS

Permit Practice Test 2026

25-question test with answer key · permitpractice.us

South Dakota permit test: quick facts

Questions on the real test	Not published by the DPS
Passing score	80% correct
Wrong answers allowed	Depends on test length (not published)
Minimum age	14
Testing agency	Department of Public Safety (Driver Licensing Program) (DPS)
Official permit name	Instruction Permit
Permit fee	\$38.00
If you fail	No statutory waiting period found; the application fee covers up to 3 attempts to pass the examination within 6 months of the application date (SDCL 32-12-2)
Online testing	No - the knowledge test must be taken in person.
Driver's education	No - driver education is not required for the learner permit.
Supervised practice	50 hours of adult-supervised driving on the Instruction Permit, including 10 hours in inclement weather and 10 hours after dark (for permits issued July 1, 2020 or after)
Permit holding period	275 days (180 days if driver's ed completed) before upgrading to a Restricted Minor's Permit; permits issued before July 1, 2020: 180 days (90 with driver's ed)
Under-21 alcohol limit	0.02% BAC or higher

How to use this PDF

1. The DPS does not publish how many questions the real test has. This test uses 25 questions, the length of our online mock test.
2. Answer every question before you look at the answer key. To pass you need 80% correct.
3. Time: We found no published time limit for the South Dakota knowledge test.
4. Take it online, with every answer explained, at <https://permitpractice.us/south-dakota/> - the mock test there marks your answers only at the end, like the real test.

Questions are original study questions written from the South Dakota driver's handbook and general traffic law. They are not copies of actual DPS exam questions. State facts last reviewed 2026-09-28. Free for personal study; do not resell. © 2026 permitpractice.us

South Dakota Permit Practice Test: 25 Questions

Circle your answer. Answer key with explanations starts on the last pages.

1. Which lane position helps other drivers see you and gives you the best view of the road ahead?

- A) Stay close behind a larger vehicle to block the wind
- B) Ride beside other cars so they always see you
- C) Keep space around you and stay out of blind spots
- D) Keep to the far left edge of your lane

2. When are you required to use headlights?

- A) Only at night on roads without streetlights
- B) At night and when visibility is reduced
- C) Only on highways at night, not on city streets
- D) Only when it is fully dark, not in bad weather

3. What color background is used for most warning signs?

- A) White
- B) Red
- C) Purple
- D) Yellow

4. What does a flashing red light mean?

- A) Stop, then go when it is safe
- B) Stop and wait for the light to turn green
- C) Yield, but stop only if cars are coming
- D) Slow down and proceed with caution

5. What does a yellow traffic light mean?

- A) Proceed normally
- B) Stop at once, no matter how close you are
- C) The light is about to turn green
- D) Stop if it is safe to do so

6. If your vehicle's engine catches fire, you should:

- A) Open the hood to reach the fire quickly
- B) Stop, shut off the engine, and get everyone away
- C) Drive on to the nearest fire station
- D) Stay in the car with the windows up until help comes

7. What does a sign showing a car with curved skid marks indicate?

- A) Loose gravel ahead
- B) Winding road
- C) Sharp curve
- D) Slippery when wet

8. You want to pass on a two-lane road at 55 mph. About how much clear road does the South Dakota manual say you need?

- A) About 500 feet
- B) About one-half of a mile
- C) About one-tenth of a mile
- D) About one-third of a mile

9. Traffic ahead of you is moving slowly. May you use the shared center left-turn lane to drive around it?

- A) No - the lane is only for vehicles turning left
- B) Yes, if no oncoming vehicle is using it
- C) Yes, as long as you signal left first
- D) Yes, but only for a distance of one block

10. A yellow diamond sign showing a 'T' shape indicates:

- A) A truck route begins here
- B) A four-way crossroad ahead
- C) A side road enters from one side
- D) Your road ends at a T ahead

11. A motorcycle coming toward an intersection has its turn signal blinking. What should you do before pulling out in front of it?

- A) Go - a blinking signal means it will turn
- B) Flash your headlights and then pull out
- C) Wait until you are sure it is really turning
- D) Pull out quickly before it reaches you

12. A sign that reads 'DO NOT ENTER' on a red and white background means:

- A) Enter only after a full stop
- B) Only local traffic may enter
- C) Enter only if no cars are coming
- D) You may not enter the road ahead

13. Two cars reach a single-lane bridge on a rural South Dakota road from opposite ends. Who generally has the right-of-way?

- A) The driver who flashes headlights
- B) The larger of the two vehicles
- C) The first driver to reach the bridge
- D) The driver heading north or east

14. A school bus ahead of you turns on its flashing amber (yellow) lights. What does this tell you?

- A) The bus is turning, so pass it with care
- B) Children are crossing - stop right now
- C) The bus is pulling over with a breakdown
- D) The bus is about to stop - get ready to stop

15. Your brake pedal suddenly sinks to the floor. Which action may build up brake pressure again?

- A) Turning the engine off at once
- B) Pumping the brake pedal quickly
- C) Shifting the car into neutral
- D) Holding the pedal on the floor

16. How do prescription and over-the-counter medications affect driving?

- A) Legal medicines are always safe to drive on
- B) Only if you take more than the dose listed
- C) Many cause drowsiness - check the label first
- D) Only prescription drugs can impair driving

17. In most states, you must not park within how many feet of a fire hydrant?

- A) 30 feet
- B) 5 feet
- C) 15 feet
- D) 10 feet

18. One of your front tires suddenly blows out. What is the vehicle most likely to do?

- A) Pull sharply toward the blowout side
- B) Pull sharply away from the blowout side
- C) Lock both rear wheels at once
- D) Speed up on its own for a moment

19. Under South Dakota law, how much space must you leave when passing a bicyclist on a street posted at 30 mph?

- A) At least 3 feet
- B) At least 6 feet
- C) At least 2 feet
- D) At least 10 feet

20. In South Dakota, which months have the highest number of car-deer crashes?

- A) October and November
- B) March and April
- C) July and August
- D) January and February

21. The fog becomes so thick that you can barely see beyond your hood. What is the safest choice?

- A) Pull off the road as far as you can and stop
- B) Follow the taillights ahead of you closely
- C) Stop in your lane and wait for it to clear
- D) Switch to high beams so you can see farther

22. If you begin to skid on ice or a slippery surface, you should:

- A) Turn the wheel sharply in the opposite direction
- B) Brake firmly and hold the wheel straight
- C) Shift to neutral and pull the parking brake
- D) Ease off the gas and steer where you want to go

23. What does a triangular sign with a red border mean?

- A) No entry
- B) Yield the right of way
- C) Stop for all cross traffic
- D) Merging traffic ahead

24. What color are warning signs?

- A) Yellow or orange
- B) Blue or green
- C) White with black letters
- D) Red

25. If you must park on a rural South Dakota highway, how much of the road's width must stay open for other traffic?

- A) At least 20 feet
- B) At least 15 feet
- C) At least 10 feet
- D) At least 8 feet

Answer Key & Explanations

1. C - Keep space around you and stay out of blind spots

Maintain a space cushion around your vehicle and avoid lingering in others' blind spots. This keeps you visible, gives you escape routes, and improves your view of developing hazards.

Source: assets.dps.mn.gov - MN handbook - Blind spots

2. B - At night and when visibility is reduced

Every state requires headlights at night and when visibility is reduced. The exact period varies: some states say sunset to sunrise, many say 30 minutes after sunset to 30 minutes before sunrise. Many states also require headlights whenever your wipers are on or you cannot see a set distance (often 500 or 1,000 feet) ahead.

Source: dps.texas.gov - TX handbook - Chapter 9, Headlights

3. D - Yellow

Most warning signs have a yellow background with black symbols or letters. Yellow signals caution - slow down and watch for the hazard described.

Source: mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov - MUTCD 11th ed. (Dec 2023) 2C.02

4. A - Stop, then go when it is safe

A flashing red light must be treated exactly like a stop sign. Come to a complete stop, check for traffic and pedestrians, then proceed when safe.

Source: flhsmv.gov - FL handbook - Flashing Red Light

5. D - Stop if it is safe to do so

A yellow (amber) light means the signal is about to turn red. You should stop if it is safe to do so. Only proceed if stopping would be unsafe (e.g., you are too close to the intersection).

Source: dmvc.ca.gov - CA handbook - Traffic Signals, Solid Yellow Light

6. B - Stop, shut off the engine, and get everyone away

If your engine catches fire, pull off the road, shut off the engine, and get all occupants out and well away from the vehicle. Do NOT open the hood - adding oxygen can intensify the fire. Call 911.

Source: nj.gov - NJ handbook - Car Fires

7. D - Slippery when wet

A yellow warning sign with a car and curved skid lines means the road is slippery when wet. Slow down and increase following distance in rain or snow.

Source: mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov - MUTCD 11th ed. (Dec 2023) 2C.30

8. D - About one-third of a mile

A pass at 55 mph takes about 10 seconds, and you and an oncoming car each cover more than 800 feet in that time. That adds up to over 1,600 feet, or about one-third of a mile.

Source: sd.gov - p.53 (PDF p.53), Space to Pass - Oncoming vehicles

9. A - No - the lane is only for vehicles turning left

A shared center lane is reserved for left turns by traffic from both directions. Using it for through travel or to pass other vehicles is not allowed.

Source: dol.wa.gov - (PDF p.116), Signs - Shared center lane left turn only

10. D - Your road ends at a T ahead

A 'T' symbol warns that the road you are on ends ahead at a T-intersection. Be prepared to stop or yield and turn left or right.

Source: mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov - MUTCD 11th ed. (Dec 2023) 2C.41

11. C - Wait until you are sure it is really turning

Many motorcycle turn signals do not cancel by themselves, so a rider may have forgotten one. Wait until the motorcycle actually starts to turn.

Source: publicsafety.ohio.gov - Section 9 - Sharing the Road, Motorcyclists

12. D - You may not enter the road ahead

A 'Do Not Enter' sign means you must not enter the road or ramp ahead - usually because it is one-way or an exit ramp. Entering would put you in oncoming traffic.

Source: mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov - MUTCD 11th ed. (Dec 2023) 2B.46

13. C - The first driver to reach the bridge

On narrow or single-lane bridges, drivers take turns, and the driver who arrives at the bridge first generally goes first.

Source: sd.gov - p.67 (PDF p.67), Rural Road Driving

14. D - The bus is about to stop - get ready to stop

Flashing amber lights are a warning that the bus is preparing to stop to load or unload children. Slow down and prepare to stop; the red lights come on when the bus stops.

Source: oregon.gov - p.55 (PDF p.63), School Buses

15. B - Pumping the brake pedal quickly

Pumping the pedal can restore enough pressure for the brakes to work. If it does not, shift to a lower gear and apply the parking brake slowly.

Source: oregon.gov - p.85 (PDF p.93), Brakes Fail

16. C - Many cause drowsiness - check the label first

Many legal medications - including antihistamines, sleep aids, and pain relievers - can cause drowsiness, dizziness, or slowed reactions. Always read warning labels and avoid driving if a medication may impair you.

Source: dps.texas.gov - TX handbook - Drugs

17. C - 15 feet

Most states (including California, Texas, New York, Florida and Pennsylvania) prohibit parking within 15 feet of a fire hydrant. Some use a shorter distance (for example 10 feet in Connecticut, Minnesota, New Jersey and Oregon), so check your state handbook.

Source: portal.ct.gov - CT handbook - Parking restrictions

18. A - Pull sharply toward the blowout side

A front blowout pulls the vehicle hard toward the side of the failed tire; a rear blowout makes it wobble and pull a little. Grip the wheel firmly, keep it straight and let the car slow without hard braking.

Source: sd.gov - p.58 (PDF p.58), Vehicle Malfunctions - Tire Blowout

19. A - At least 3 feet

SDCL 32-26-26.1 requires at least 3 feet between your vehicle (mirrors included) and a bicycle you overtake when the posted limit is 35 mph or less. You must keep that gap until you are safely past.

Source: sd.gov - p.62 (PDF p.62), Bicyclists (SDCL 32-26-26.1)

20. A - October and November

The South Dakota manual names October and November as the peak months for deer crashes and says deer are the second most commonly struck object in the state.

Source: sd.gov - p.50 (PDF p.50), Watch for Deer

21. A - Pull off the road as far as you can and stop

When visibility drops to near zero, get completely off the road and wait for the fog to lift. Stopping in a travel lane invites a rear-end crash.

Source: in.gov - p.44 (PDF p.49), Fog

22. D - Ease off the gas and steer where you want to go

In a skid, take your foot off the gas (do not brake hard) and gently steer in the direction you want the front of the car to go. Smooth inputs are key - sudden movements worsen the skid.

Source: dmv.ny.gov - NY handbook - Skids

23. B - Yield the right of way

A yield sign is triangular with a red border and white background. It means slow down and give the right of way to traffic or pedestrians. Only stop if necessary.

Source: dps.texas.gov - TX handbook - Chapter 5, Table 17: Signs by Shape

24. A - Yellow or orange

Warning signs are yellow (standard warnings) or orange (construction/work zones). They alert drivers to potential hazards ahead such as curves, intersections, or pedestrians.

Source: dps.texas.gov - TX handbook - Chapter 5, sign colors

25. B - At least 15 feet

A vehicle parked on a rural highway must leave at least 15 feet of road width for others to pass, must be visible from 500 feet each way, and needs parking lights and taillights on after dark.

Source: sd.gov - p.43 (PDF p.43), Parking - No-Parking Zones

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<https://permitpractice.us/south-dakota/>

Official DPS website: <https://dps.sd.gov/driver-licensing/>
Official South Dakota driver's handbook: https://www.sd.gov/sys_attachment.do?sys_id=d8e0b08e47bd0390a497127ba26d4348

