

Washington DOL

Permit Practice Test 2026

40-question test with answer key · permitpractice.us

Washington permit test: quick facts

Questions on the real test	40
Passing score	80% (32 of 40 correct)
Wrong answers allowed	8
Minimum age	15½
Testing agency	Department of Licensing (DOL)
Official permit name	Instruction Permit
Permit fee	\$35 permit fee (knowledge-test fee is separate and varies by testing location)
If you fail	DOL states only that 'there may be a waiting period before you can retest'; no fixed period or attempts limit published. A passing score is valid for 2 years.
Online testing	No - the knowledge test must be taken in person.
Driver's education	Required for applicants under 18; DOL says you can apply for the permit at 15 if enrolled in a driver-training course, otherwise at 15 1/2
Supervised practice	50 hours (40 daylight + 10 night) with a driver licensed 3+ years
Permit holding period	6 months (may include out-of-state permit time)
Under-21 alcohol limit	0.02% BAC or higher

How to use this PDF

1. This test has 40 questions, the same number as the real Washington DOL knowledge test.
2. Answer every question before you look at the answer key. To pass you need 80% (32 of 40 correct).
3. Time: We found no published time limit for the Washington knowledge test.
4. Take it online, with every answer explained, at <https://permitpractice.us/washington/> - the mock test there marks your answers only at the end, like the real test.

Questions are original study questions written from the Washington driver's handbook and general traffic law. They are not copies of actual DOL exam questions. State facts last reviewed 2026-10-19. Free for personal study; do not resell. © 2026 permitpractice.us

Washington Permit Practice Test: 40 Questions

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

1. Using a handheld cell phone while driving is:

- A) Legal for every driver in every state
- B) No riskier than talking to a passenger
- C) Safe as long as you keep your eyes on the road
- D) Banned in most states and a major crash risk

2. What is the only real cure for drowsiness while driving?

- A) Turning the radio up loud
- B) Drinking strong coffee
- C) Getting sleep or rest
- D) Opening a window for cold air

3. On an undivided two-lane road, a school bus stops with its red lights flashing and stop arm out. What must drivers do?

- A) Stop, then pass slowly if no children are seen
- B) Slow down and pass on the left with caution
- C) Stop in both directions until the lights stop
- D) Wait until children reach the curb, then pass

4. When driving at night, you should:

- A) Look straight at oncoming headlights to judge them
- B) Keep your daytime speed and following distance
- C) Slow down and leave more following distance
- D) Use parking lights so you do not dazzle others

5. What is the safest action when you are being tailgated?

- A) Ignore them and maintain your exact speed
- B) Tap your brakes hard to warn them off
- C) Speed up well past the limit to pull away from them
- D) Move over or add space ahead and let them pass

6. Washington law requires your headlights to be on during which period?

- A) From 1 hour after sunset to 1 hour before sunrise
- B) From 30 min after sunset to 30 min before sunrise
- C) From sunset exactly until sunrise exactly
- D) From 15 min after sunset to 15 min before sunrise

7. What does Washington law say about wearing earbuds or headphones while driving?

- A) Noise-canceling ones are always allowed
- B) Both ears are fine at a low volume
- C) One ear only, for a legal hands-free device
- D) They are allowed if you are 21 or older

8. What is the purpose of a broken white line between lanes?

- A) Lanes are one-way only
- B) You may not change lanes or pass here
- C) Lane changes are permitted when safe
- D) Traffic moves in opposite directions

9. At an uncontrolled T-intersection, vehicles on the through road have right of way over:

- A) Pedestrians in a marked crosswalk
- B) Vehicles on the terminating road
- C) Emergency vehicles using sirens
- D) Vehicles already in the intersection

10. Alcohol affects driving by:

- A) Mainly causing drowsiness, which coffee can fix
- B) Slowing reactions only once you reach 0.08%
- C) Affecting judgment, but not reaction time
- D) Impairing reaction time, judgment, and vision

11. A diamond-shaped sign is used to indicate:

- A) A regulation you must obey
- B) A route number for a highway
- C) A warning of a hazard ahead
- D) A recreation or park area

12. A yellow sign showing a person walking indicates:

- A) A sidewalk ends ahead
- B) Pedestrians may be crossing
- C) A walking trail starts here
- D) No pedestrians allowed ahead

13. You are on a freeway on-ramp and the ramp meter signal shows red. What should you do?

- A) Merge carefully if the freeway looks clear
- B) Use the shoulder to go around the signal
- C) Slow down but keep rolling onto the freeway
- D) Stop at the line and wait for green

14. Green guide signs are used to show:

- A) Hazards on the road ahead
- B) Locations of gas and food
- C) Directions and distances
- D) Parks and historic sites

15. A yellow sign showing a truck tilted on two wheels warns of:

- A) A steep downhill grade for trucks
- B) A truck inspection station
- C) A curve where trucks may tip over
- D) A road with soft shoulders ahead

16. What does the 'basic speed law' require?

- A) Never drive more than 10 mph below the posted limit
- B) You may always drive at the posted limit, whatever the conditions
- C) Drive no faster than is safe for current conditions
- D) Keep up with the flow of traffic, even above the limit

17. Besides carpools, vanpools, and buses, which vehicles does the Washington guide say may use HOV lanes?

- A) Pickup trucks
- B) Rental cars
- C) Motorcycles
- D) Delivery vans

18. A flagger in a work zone turns the paddle so the word SLOW faces you. What should you do?

- A) Keep your speed - you have the right of way
- B) Proceed slowly and watch for workers
- C) Speed up to clear the work zone quickly
- D) Stop until the flagger waves you on

19. What is the 'point of no return' when approaching a yellow light?

- A) The stop line - once past it you must proceed
- B) The moment the light changes from green to yellow
- C) The point where you can no longer stop safely
- D) Exactly 100 feet before the intersection

20. When two lanes merge and there are 'zipper merge' signs, you should:

- A) Use both lanes to the merge point, then take turns
- B) Merge early - as soon as you see the sign - to be polite
- C) Let all vehicles in the other lane go first
- D) Stop and wait for all traffic to clear

21. A yellow diamond sign showing an arrow that curves back and forth several times warns of:

- A) A steep hill ahead
- B) A slippery road
- C) A winding road ahead
- D) A single sharp curve

22. When you parallel park next to a curb, where should your car end up?

- A) Parallel to the curb and as close as practical
- B) With front wheels turned in toward the curb
- C) About three feet from the curb so passengers can get out
- D) Angled with the back wheel touching the curb

23. A power line is touching your car and a fire starts, so you must get out. After jumping clear, how should you move away?

- A) Crawl about 20 feet
- B) Walk about 100 feet
- C) Run quickly about 10 feet
- D) Shuffle about 35 feet

24. What does a yellow pennant-shaped sign (a sideways triangle pointing right) on the left side of the road mean?

- A) No-passing zone begins
- B) A sharp curve
- C) Passing lane begins ahead
- D) Merge ahead

25. 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

26. In Washington, you may not park within how many feet of a driveway, alley, or private road?

- A) 10 feet
- B) 20 feet
- C) 5 feet
- D) 15 feet

27. The single most effective way to avoid an alcohol-related crash is to:

- A) Not drive at all after drinking any alcohol
- B) Drink coffee and wait 30 minutes before driving
- C) Stay under 0.08% by counting your drinks
- D) Drive slowly and stay in the right lane

28. In a Washington work zone, what happens to fines for traffic offenses when workers are present?

- A) They are cut in half
- B) They triple
- C) They double
- D) They stay the same

29. When should you use your vehicle's emergency hazard lights?

- A) When you plan to change lanes or make a turn
- B) To thank a driver who let you merge
- C) When your car is disabled on or near the road
- D) When parking briefly in a no-parking zone

30. Who must yield when a pedestrian is crossing at a marked crosswalk?

- A) The pedestrian, since cars cannot stop quickly
- B) The driver must yield to the pedestrian
- C) The driver, but only at a traffic signal
- D) Whoever reached the crosswalk first

31. What does 'implied consent' mean for drivers?

- A) You may refuse testing with no penalty
- B) You let police search your car at any stop
- C) You agree to chemical tests if arrested for DUI
- D) You agree to obey all traffic laws when you drive

32. A yellow sign showing a bicycle means:

- A) A bike rental station ahead
- B) Bicyclists may be on the road
- C) Bicycles must use the sidewalk
- D) Bicycles are not allowed ahead

33. 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

34. When driving in heavy rain, you should:

- A) Use cruise control to keep a steady, safe speed
- B) Use low beams and leave more following distance
- C) Turn on hazard lights and drive at normal speed
- D) Use high-beam headlights to see better

35. A warning sign showing a truck on a downgrade indicates:

- A) A steep downhill grade ahead
- B) A runaway truck ramp ahead
- C) A truck weigh station ahead
- D) A truck crossing ahead

36. 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

37. For drivers 21 and older, what THC blood level is the DUI threshold in Washington?

- A) 10 nanograms per mL
- B) 5 nanograms per mL
- C) Any detectable THC
- D) 2 nanograms per mL

38. In a shared center left-turn lane, you should not travel farther than:

- A) 300 feet
- B) 500 feet
- C) 100 feet
- D) 1,000 feet

39. A center lane has a solid yellow line and a broken yellow line on each side, plus two-way turn arrows. Who may use it?

- A) Drivers from either direction about to turn left
- B) Drivers waiting to merge into the right lane
- C) Drivers who need to pass a slow vehicle ahead
- D) Only buses and cars carrying two or more people

40. In states that use colored curbs, what does a red curb generally mean?

- A) Passenger loading only
- B) No stopping, standing, or parking
- C) Loading for commercial trucks only
- D) Parking allowed if you stay with the car

Answer Key & Explanations

1. D - Banned in most states and a major crash risk

Handheld cell phone use while driving is banned in most US states. Using a phone quadruples crash risk. Even hands-free calls significantly impair attention. Use do-not-disturb mode when driving.

Source: dmv.ca.gov - CA handbook - Distracted driving

2. C - Getting sleep or rest

Coffee, cold air and loud music may help for a short time, but they do not last. Only sleep or rest fixes fatigue, so stop and rest when you are tired.

Source: assets.dps.mn.gov - p.91 (PDF p.94), Drugs and fatigue

3. C - Stop in both directions until the lights stop

On an undivided road, traffic in both directions must stop for a school bus showing flashing red lights and a stop arm, and stay stopped until the lights stop. Rules for the opposite side of a divided highway differ by state (New York requires you to stop even then), so check your handbook.

Source: dmv.ny.gov - NY handbook - School buses

4. C - Slow down and leave more following distance

At night your visibility is reduced, so reduce speed and increase following distance. Do not overdrive your headlights - be able to stop within the distance you can see. Avoid staring at oncoming lights; glance to the right edge of your lane.

Source: dps.texas.gov - TX handbook - Night driving

5. D - Move over or add space ahead and let them pass

When tailgated, do not brake-check. Move to another lane if possible or increase the gap to the vehicle ahead so you have more room to stop gradually - this gives both you and the tailgater more reaction time.

Source: dmv.ca.gov - CA handbook - Space: tailgaters

6. B - From 30 min after sunset to 30 min before sunrise

The law requires headlights from a half hour after sunset to a half hour before sunrise. The guide also suggests using them in rain, snow, fog, or smoke.

Source: dol.wa.gov - PDF p.49, 2.5 Vehicle maintenance - Headlights

7. C - One ear only, for a legal hands-free device

It is illegal to drive wearing earbuds or headphones that play sound or cancel noise. A compliant hands-free device in one ear is allowed.

Source: dol.wa.gov - PDF p.70, 3.0 You behind the wheel - Hearing

8. C - Lane changes are permitted when safe

Broken (dashed) white lines separate lanes of traffic moving in the same direction. You may change lanes when it is safe to do so.

Source: dmv.ca.gov - CA handbook - Broken White Lines

9. B - Vehicles on the terminating road

At a T-intersection (where one road ends and meets another), vehicles on the through road (the top of the T) have the right of way over vehicles on the terminating road (the bottom of the T).

Source: dmv.ca.gov - CA handbook - Right-of-way rules

10. D - Impairing reaction time, judgment, and vision

Alcohol impairs all the skills needed to drive safely: reaction time slows, judgment and decision-making deteriorate, coordination suffers, and vision (especially peripheral) is reduced.

Source: flhsmv.gov - FL handbook - Alcohol

11. C - A warning of a hazard ahead

Diamond-shaped signs are warning signs. They alert you to hazards or changes in road conditions ahead, such as curves, intersections, or pedestrian crossings.

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

12. B - Pedestrians may be crossing

A pedestrian symbol on a yellow or yellow-green sign warns that pedestrians may be crossing. Slow down and yield to anyone in or entering the crosswalk.

Source: mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov - MUTCD 11th ed. (Dec 2023) 1D.05 Color Code

13. D - Stop at the line and wait for green

A ramp meter works like a traffic light. Stop at the stop line on red and go when it turns green, then speed up to merge.

Source: dol.wa.gov - (PDF p.113), Freeway ramp meters

14. C - Directions and distances

Green signs provide guidance: route numbers, directions, distances, and destination names. They help you navigate to where you are going.

Source: mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov - MUTCD 11th ed. (Dec 2023) 1D.05 Color Code

15. C - A curve where trucks may tip over

This sign warns of a curve sharp enough that trucks and top-heavy vehicles risk rolling over. All drivers should reduce speed before entering.

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

16. C - Drive no faster than is safe for current conditions

Every state has a basic speed rule: never drive faster than is reasonable and safe for traffic, weather, visibility and road conditions. You can be cited for driving too fast for conditions even while under the posted limit.

Source: dps.texas.gov - TX handbook - Basic speed law

17. C - Motorcycles

HOV lanes, marked with a diamond, are for vehicles that meet the posted occupancy rule. Motorcycles may also use them.

Source: dol.wa.gov - PDF p.134, 4.16 Road markings - HOV / Carpool

18. B - Proceed slowly and watch for workers

Flaggers use STOP/SLOW paddles to control traffic. SLOW means you may move ahead at a reduced speed with care; STOP means stop.

Source: in.gov - p.47 (PDF p.52), Flagger Signals

19. C - The point where you can no longer stop safely

The 'point of no return' is the position from which stopping safely (without running the light or causing a rear-end collision) becomes impossible. Before this point, slow and stop. After it, proceed through safely.

Source: pa.gov - PA handbook - Traffic signals - steady yellow

20. A - Use both lanes to the merge point, then take turns

Where zipper-merge signs are posted, stay in your lane until the merge point, then take turns with the other lane like the teeth of a zipper. Merging early leaves one lane empty and makes the queue longer; the Minnesota Department of Transportation reports that the zipper merge can cut the length of a backup by as much as 40 percent.

Source: dmv.colorado.gov - CO handbook - Zipper Merge

21. C - A winding road ahead

The Winding Road sign (a single arrow that bends back and forth) warns of three or more curves in a row ahead. An S-shaped arrow with only two bends is the Reverse Curve sign. Reduce speed and stay alert through the curves.

Source: mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov - MUTCD 11th ed. (Dec 2023) 2C.07 Paragraph 05

22. A - Parallel to the curb and as close as practical

Park parallel to and close to the curb. States set different maximum distances - for example 18 inches in California and Texas, 12 inches in Florida, Michigan and Washington, and 6 inches in New Jersey - so learn your state's limit.

Source: nj.gov - NJ handbook - Parking

23. D - Shuffle about 35 feet

Jump clear with both feet landing together and without touching the car. Then shuffle 35 feet away to avoid electric shock.

Source: dol.wa.gov - PDF p.178, 5.9 Collisions - Encountering power lines

24. A - No-passing zone begins

A yellow pennant-shaped sign on the left side of the road marks the beginning of a no-passing zone. It supplements the solid yellow line on the pavement.

Source: mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov - MUTCD 11th ed. (Dec 2023) 2C.53

25. 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

26. C - 5 feet

Leave at least 5 feet clear on each side of a driveway, alley, or private road so people can get in and out.

Source: dol.wa.gov - PDF p.143, 4.18 Parking - General parking rules

27. A - Not drive at all after drinking any alcohol

There is no safe way to drive after drinking. The only sure prevention is to not drive at all after consuming alcohol - arrange a designated sober driver, taxi, or rideshare instead.

Source: flhsmv.gov - FL handbook - Alcohol

28. C - They double

Fines double for offenses in construction areas when workers are present. Slow down in work zones even when you see no workers.

Source: dol.wa.gov - PDF p.117, 4.12 Signs - Work zone signs

29. C - When your car is disabled on or near the road

Hazard lights warn others that your vehicle is stopped, disabled or a hazard. Rules for using them while moving (for example in heavy rain) differ between states, so follow your state handbook.

Source: dmv.ca.gov - CA handbook - Using Your Emergency Flashers

30. B - The driver must yield to the pedestrian

Drivers must always yield to pedestrians who are crossing in a marked or unmarked crosswalk. Pedestrian safety is the highest priority.

Source: dmv.ca.gov - CA handbook - Pedestrians / Crosswalks

31. C - You agree to chemical tests if arrested for DUI

Implied consent laws mean that by driving on public roads, you have already consented to chemical tests (breath, blood, urine) if you are lawfully arrested for suspected DUI. Refusing has serious consequences including license suspension.

Source: pa.gov - PA handbook - Pennsylvania's Implied Consent Law

32. B - Bicyclists may be on the road

A bicycle symbol warns that bicyclists may be on or crossing the roadway. Share the road, slow down, and give cyclists adequate space when passing.

Source: mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov - MUTCD 11th ed. (Dec 2023) 2C.54

33. 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

34. B - Use low beams and leave more following distance

In rain, use low-beam headlights (high beams reflect off rain), reduce speed, and increase following distance to at least 4-6 seconds. High beams can reduce visibility in rain.

Source: assets.dps.mn.gov - MN handbook - Weather: rain

35. A - A steep downhill grade ahead

A sign showing a truck on a slope warns of a steep downhill grade. Trucks should use a lower gear; all drivers should check brakes and control speed.

Source: mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov - MUTCD 11th ed. (Dec 2023) 2C.14

36. 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

37. B - 5 nanograms per mL

Drivers 21 and older face DUI at 5 nanograms of active THC per milliliter of blood. For drivers under 21, any amount above zero counts.

Source: dol.wa.gov - PDF p.37, 1.15 Maintaining your license - DUI, THC concentration

38. A - 300 feet

Center turn lanes are only for left turns or U-turns from either direction. Never use them to pass, and do not drive more than 300 feet in them.

Source: dol.wa.gov - PDF p.134, 4.16 Road markings - Lanes

39. A - Drivers from either direction about to turn left

This is a two-way left-turn lane. Drivers from both directions share it, entering it only just before they turn left. It is not a travel or passing lane.

Source: publicsafety.ohio.gov - Section 4 - Rules of the Road, Two-way Left Turn Only Lane

40. B - No stopping, standing, or parking

Where curb colors are used, red means no stopping, standing or parking; it is often used for fire lanes and near hydrants. White usually means passenger loading, green limited-time parking and blue disabled parking. Curb rules vary by state and city, so obey posted signs.

Source: mvdmt.gov - MT handbook - Colored curb markings

Ready for the real Washington test?

Take the free interactive Washington DOL practice tests - shuffled every time, with instant explanations, road-sign picture questions, a missed-questions review and a 40-question exam simulator.

<https://permitpractice.us/washington/>

Official DOL website: <https://www.dol.wa.gov/>

Official Washington driver's handbook: <https://dol.wa.gov/media/pdf/4745/driver-guidepdf/download?inline=>

