

How to Choose a Driving School and What to Expect

Why Take Driver Training

There are many good reasons to take driver training from a professional Driver Training Instructor and a licensed Alberta Driving School. A professional Driver Training Instructor can teach you valuable driving skills that will stay with you for a lifetime. If your instruction is from an individual who is not a professional instructor, you may learn incorrect information and develop unsafe driving habits. As well, you may get an unrealistic sense of your driving ability.

A formal Driver Training program allows a learning driver to gradually learn driving maneuvers in a controlled and safe environment. A professional instructor will see a student's driving weakness and will suggest the most effective methods for improvement.

Successfully completing a Class 5 driver training program is recognized by insurance providers and may result in reduced car insurance premiums.

Choosing a Driving School

Choosing a professional driving school is not an easy task. With over 120 Class 5 driving schools operating in Alberta, knowing what to look for can make it easier to choose. The following are areas you should consider before making your driving school selection.

How many hours of instruction and training are included in the driver training program?

Alberta Transportation requires new drivers with a Class 7 Learner's and a Class 5 Graduated Driver's Licence (GDL) to complete at least 15 hours of classroom and 10 hours of in-vehicle instruction.

Drivers who already have a Class 5 non-GDL licence must complete at least 15 hours of classroom and a minimum of 6 hours of in-vehicle training. These hours are required to receive a Course Completion Certificate, used for an insurance discount.

Is the Driving School licensed?

To become licensed in Alberta, driving schools must meet specific requirements as outlined by Alberta Transportation, and the Driver Training and Driver Examiner Regulation.

Are the Instructors licensed?

Instructors in Alberta must meet specific requirements as outlined by Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation. They must:

- have at least a Class 4 licence
- successfully complete knowledge and practical tests, administered by Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation
- provide a criminal record check

- maintain a minimum number of teaching hours over a two year period to have their instructor's licence renewed

If you request, the driving school must provide a written policy of the rates (including all charges), hours of training and refund policy.

Ask for a course outline for in-vehicle and classroom education.

The program curriculum for classroom and in-vehicle training is set by Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation. The outline will give you an idea of the material that will be covered and how well the lessons are planned and carried out. While this is only an outline, it also shows what the average student should be able to do with the proper instruction by the end of the course.

What methods does the driving school use to instruct?

Ask to talk to someone who can tell you how the classroom is run and what teaching aids and methods are used. Some examples of classroom teaching methods are lecture, one-on-one, and group discussion.

Methods of instruction used during the in-vehicle instructor training sessions include demonstrations, observations, and illustrations by the instructor, and hands on practice.

Does the driving school involve parents/guardians or a coach in the education and training?

Parents play a large role in helping the new driver gain experience through practicing. Many driving school have programs to involve parents.

How do I know the training vehicles are safe and well maintained?

Alberta Transportation requires that driving schools have their training vehicles inspected annually, if the vehicle is older than the current year. The inspection Certificate must be in the vehicle at all times.

Is there the option of learning on a standard transmission?

Some driving schools will provide a vehicle for manual shift training.

Does the driving school have any references from past clients?

Often the best way to determine a driving school's quality is to hear what past students thought of the program.

What do I need to do to prepare for starting my course?

When you register for the course you should be provided with the books and information necessary for you to prepare in advance. This will usually include a Workbook, Progress Report Card and the Alberta Basic Licence Driver's Handbook.

What should I expect from a driving school?

Classroom Education

- You must attend all classes to qualify to write the final exam.
- The minimum number of hours a driving school can offer for classroom instruction is 15.
- Class size will range from 10 to 30 students.

- Times for classroom sessions will vary. Usually weekday evenings are 3 to 4 hours and weekends 6 to 8 hours.
- There will be lectures, group work, class discussions, videos and homework.
- The final exam is 25 multiple choice questions. You must score at least 80% (20 out of 25 questions answered correctly) to pass.
- You may re-write the exam another day if you are not successful. You DO NOT need to repeat the course if you do not pass the exam the first time.
- You will likely have the same instructor for all sessions.
- You classroom and in-vehicle instructor may or may not be the same person.
- Guest speakers may include someone from police, ambulance, and fire departments.

In-vehicle Education

- behind-the-wheel training
- discussing the lesson before and after driving
- preparing for new activities through demonstration, illustration, and observation
- grading and feedback after each lesson and at the end of the course

What should I expect from my in-vehicle instructor?

The instructor:

- will provide proof of identification, on request
- will keep the conversation focused on driver education material
- will be courteous and professional at all times

- will provide clear and accurate information and instruction, in a timely manner throughout the lessons
- will provide clear feedback regarding areas performed well and areas requiring improvement
- will provide assistance assessing when the student should take the road test

If you have any comments or concerns regarding any of the topics covered in this fact sheet, please contact a Driver Programs Administrator at Alberta Transportation.

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