

FLORIDA TEENAGE DRIVER – HOW TO AVOID LOSING YOUR LICENSE

You worked hard and finally earned your drivers license. Now you have to work just as hard to keep it. The State of Florida looks at driving as a privilege, not a right, and deals with younger drivers more severely on certain offenses. So if you're not careful, the State will restrict or cancel your privilege to drive in a lot less time and with a lot less effort than it took you to earn it.

Here are some things you need to keep in mind:

Restricted Hours of Driving

Drivers younger than age 17 are not allowed to drive between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. unless going to and from work or unless a licensed driver who is at least 21 is in the car. Seventeen year old drivers are subject to the same restrictions between 1 a.m and 5 a.m.

Points

For many traffic offenses, just paying a traffic ticket without more (i.e., taking driving school or hiring an attorney to protect you) automatically results in points on your license. Receiving six or more points in a twelve month period results in a license restricted to "business purposes only" for one year or until you turn 18. This only allows you to drive to and from work and school. If you receive additional points in a twelve month period, an additional three months will be added to your restriction.

If you accumulate too many points in a certain time period, your license will also be suspended. A license will be automatically suspended for:

- 30 days if you receive 12 points within 12 months
- 3 months if you receive 18 points within 18 months
- 1 year if you receive 24 points within 36 months

Point values:

Speeding - 3 - 6 points

Moving violation

(including driving during restricted hours) - 3 points

Passing a stopped school bus - 4 points

Reckless driving - 4 points

Skipping school

Fifteen unexcused absences in a 90-day period results in a loss of all driving privileges.

Cigarettes

If you are convicted for having cigarettes or other tobacco products in your possession, your driving privilege will be suspended for a minimum of six months for the first conviction. A second or third conviction will result in a longer suspension.

Possession of Alcohol or Drugs

A conviction for possessing alcohol or drugs will result in a minimum driver's license suspension of six months for the first offense.

Racing

The police are cracking down on any behavior that they believe fits the definition of racing. Florida's racing law is written in such a way that driving the speed limit combined with other driving behavior (e.g., frequently changing lanes, preventing someone from passing you) could result in a racing charge. If you are stopped for racing, you can be arrested on the spot, your car can be impounded and your driving privilege could be suspended for one year. A second racing charge within five years of the first can result in a two year license suspension and forfeiture of your car to the State (they own it now).

Drinking and Driving (DUI)

Easy. Don't do it.

Any driver under age 21 who drives with a breath or blood alcohol level of .02 or more will receive an automatic six-month license suspension. One drink will take most drivers over that limit. A DUI conviction will follow you for the rest of your life and additional DUI arrests subject you to increased penalties. If you receive a second DUI conviction within five years of your first conviction, the minimum jail sentence is ten days. A third DUI arrest becomes a felony with a maximum sentence of five years in prison.

Earning the privilege to drive was just the first step. Keeping that privilege will require an everyday commitment. Obviously, this article cannot cover all situations that you might encounter while driving. Use it as a guide and contact me if you have any questions.