

GETTING YOUR LICENCE

Being ready to go for your L's or P's is about much more than being able to pass the test. Licensing assessments are professional and thorough, but they are not infallible – it's possible to pass and still not be properly ready for the next stage.

As much as you might want your licence, we all have a responsibility to other people to be truly capable on the roads.

If you're preparing to go for your L's there are activities you can do from the passenger seat to give yourself a head start on the learning process and make sure you're prepared when it's time to get behind the wheel.

For aspiring P platers there are a number of things you need to consider to determine if you're ready for solo driving. In the time it takes to pass your practical driving test, you go from being, statistically, one of the safest drivers on the road to one of the most at risk. New drivers are 20 to 30 times more likely to be involved in a crash – defy the statistics by making sure you're really ready.



Before Going For Your L's

First, check the licensing requirements in your State or Territory to make sure you know what's required of you, and that you're eligible. Regardless of where you live, getting your L's means developing and demonstrating a solid understanding of the road rules in your area.

One of the best ways to learn the road rules is to practice them from the passenger seat – you'll learn faster in a practical setting and the rules themselves will make more sense when you see them in action. Grab the road rules book for your State or Territory and practice the road rules to help you accelerate your learning.

You're not allowed to get behind the wheel before you get your L's, but there are still lots of things you can do that will help you pass your learner licence test and prepare for L plate driving.



Before Going For Your P's

Are you really ready?

If you're thinking of going for your P's and have fulfilled the necessary licensing requirements, you probably feel confident handling a car in lots of situations. You might be nearly ready for P plate driving. But how do you tell?

People tend to feel ready when they know they've learned a lot and come a long way. But they might not be ready at all. Often there can be an important ingredient missing, but it's very hard to know what you don't know.

One of the most valuable skills a driver can have is accurate self-evaluation. Overestimating your ability is a classic mistake. We all know the dangers of complacent, overconfident driving. It means a lack of attention and concentration, and it's a regular cause of crashes.

Assess yourself

Take the ego out of driving by taking a good, honest look at your driving ability. If you realise it's not that great, don't beat yourself up about it – just keep practicing and improve it, for the sake of staying alive, in one piece, and not hurting anybody else.

If you discover that you are a decent driver, look after that ability and leave self-congratulations behind.

Over-confidence takes the edge off your alertness and wastes your hard work.

Drive on L's as long as possible

Most people will want to get their P's as soon as possible, but is the freedom to drive really more important than your safety and the safety of others? Use your parent/supervisor's experience, you can gain a lot from what they've learnt over the years.

Staying longer on L's is the simplest and most reliable tactic for safe solo driving. Give yourself time to work on weak spots and difficulties until you have overcome them.

Make a list of the major skills you know you need and practice them until they feel natural and automatic, in varied conditions and situations. This will allow you to become more conscious of your own mental processes while you drive.

For example, watch what state of mind you are in when you are driving really well and try to recreate it on other days. Or notice what happens when you drive in a bad mood. Time spent observing your own mind, in relation to your actions, is extremely productive time. The better you get at it, the better your solo driving will be.