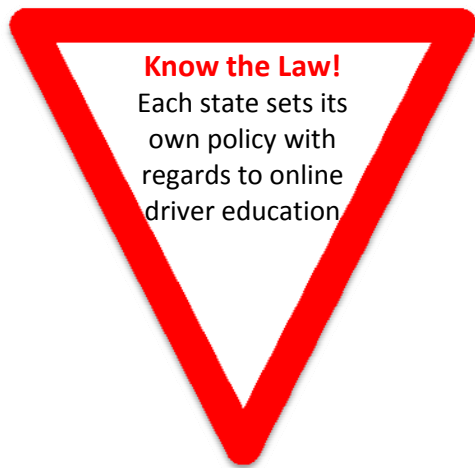


Online Driver Education

Parents: Get the Facts!

As the parent of a teen getting ready to drive, you probably know that completing some form of driver education is often an important step in the licensing process. Today, a number of states have approved one or more **online programs** that can be taken instead of the more traditional, 30-hour classroom courses to fulfill basic driver education

requirements. These online courses may be more convenient, less costly, and offer greater flexibility. However, these online courses can present some challenges, as well, so the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety has prepared this fact sheet to highlight some of the things **you** need to keep in mind when looking into course offerings.



Benefits of Online Driver Education

- Generally cheaper than traditional programs
- Convenient, flexible for busy teens and parents
- Improved access for families in rural areas
- Use technology many teens respond well to
- Students can learn at their own pace

Challenges of Online Driver Education

- Verifying the identify of person taking the course
- Effectiveness of teaching style is unknown
- State oversight/regulation may be lacking
- Risk of passive learning, low instructor engagement
- Teens may skip through lessons without learning
- Test security questionable if not given in person

There are big variations in content presentation, instructional methods, and overall rigor across online driver education programs. *What does this mean for your teen?* The tables on the next page highlight key **course components** to keep in mind when looking into programs.



There may be more than
program!



to create a strong online driver education

In fact, the “best” model has yet to be determined. Current judgments about online program strengths and weaknesses are grounded in established standards for internet-based learning in general, not in the ability of online driver education courses specifically to create safer drivers or reduce crashes.

Some Strengths and Weaknesses in Seven Key Course Characteristics

	Weak	Strong
General Course Delivery & Presentation	Lengthy screens of text	Short, easy-to-read screens, interactive animations, photos and diagrams, videos, puzzles
Interaction with Instructor	Clerical/technical support only; or interaction only when sought by the student	Certified driving instructors provide personalized feedback on tests, assignments, and progress
Time Requirements	Students advance through material as fast as they can, or can skip all lessons and take final exam	Lessons required to be spread out over a number of days/weeks; timers prevent skipping or moving too quickly through screens
Linkage with Other Training	None; standalone online program, enrollment in separate on-road training course required	Integrated behind-the-wheel component, either with parent or other driving school/instructor
Parental Involvement	Parents take no part; students complete the program independently	Parents copied on all correspondence with students, proctor tests, provide in-vehicle lessons
Security & ID Verification	Not addressed, or limited to "I Accept" button after words of caution regarding fraud	Students verify ID by answering security questions throughout course, parents monitor tests
Exam Difficulty/Rigor	One test only that can be re-taken after seeing correct answers; very easy multiple choice questions	Multiple versions of exams with large, challenging question pool

Online Driver Education Course Classification

Student Engagement	General Description	Typical Features
<i>High</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual classrooms with high degree of human interaction Require active learning Certified instructors or parents track student progress, provide feedback May be longer than traditional courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graded homework assignments Integrated behind-the-wheel activities, either with parents or professional instructors Students seek and analyze additional information; apply what they learn
<i>Average</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require more than a half-day to complete Teens generally can complete independently without seeking help from parents or instructors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short, readable screens with images or videos Retention aided by repetition Help available via internet or telephone from instructors
<i>Low</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Courses allow passive learning; can be finished quickly Students may complete without reviewing or learning the material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can click through text-heavy screens rapidly, or skip entirely Ability to take tests repeatedly, and copy/share responses

