# Signs you must recognize

Shape and color tell you what to do before you read the text.

## Sign color decoder

**Red**
Stop, yield, or do not enter

**Yellow**
Warning of hazard ahead

**Orange**
Work zone, construction, or detour

**Green**
Permitted movement or directions

**Blue**
Driver services, hospitals, rest areas

**Brown**
Recreation, parks, scenic areas

**White**
Regulatory — must obey the posted rule

**Yellow-green**
Pedestrian, school, or bike crossing

## New Mexico signs you will see on the test

**Bicycle crossing**
Cyclists may cross or ride along the road ahead. Yield and watch.

**Series of curves**
Multiple curves ahead. Slow before entering; stay in your lane.

**No U-turn**
U-turns are prohibited at this location.

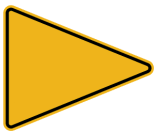
**Merging traffic**
Traffic will merge into your lane from the right. Be ready to yield.

**School zone warning**
Slow down and watch for children near the school.

**Sharp right turn**
Road turns sharply to the right ahead. Reduce speed now.

**Flagger ahead**
Construction worker directing traffic. Obey their signals.

**Cross intersection**
A cross intersection ahead. Watch for crossing traffic.



**No-pass pennant**
Pennant on LEFT side marks START of no-passing zone.

**Stop**
Come to a full stop. Check all directions before proceeding.

**Railroad crossing (adva**
Yellow diamond warns you are approaching a railroad crossing.

**Railroad crossing (round)**
Round yellow sign: railroad crossing ahead. Slow, look, listen.

**Low clearance**
Shows distance from road to bottom of bridge or overpass ahead.

**Steep hill**
Steep downgrade ahead. Use lower gear; do not ride brakes.

## Sign shape shortcuts

**Octagon —** Always means STOP. The only 8-sided sign.

**Downward triangle —** Always means YIELD. Red and white edges.

**Diamond —** Warning of a road condition or hazard ahead.

**Vertical rectangle —** Regulatory — speed limits, turn restrictions, lane use.

**Horizontal rectangle —** Guidance — route markers, exit info, distance signs.

**Pennant —** Sideways triangle on LEFT side = START of no-passing zone.

**Round —** Yellow circle with X+R-R = railroad crossing ahead.

**Pentagon —** School zone or school crossing — children present.

# Rules of the road

## Right of way

**4-way stop / signal out —** Treat as all-way stop. First to arrive goes first; ties yield to driver on right.

**Uncontrolled intersection —** Yield to vehicle already in the intersection or on your right.

**Left turn —** Yield to all oncoming traffic and pedestrians before turning.

**Pedestrian (any road) —** Always yield — in marked or unmarked crosswalk.

**Emergency vehicle —** Pull to right edge of road and stop when lights/siren active.

**Emergency vehicle on one-way —** Drive toward nearest roadside and stop.

**Stopped school bus —** Come to a full stop when stop arm is extended; wait to proceed.

**Roundabout —** Yield to traffic and cyclists already in the circle; enter on a gap.

**Right on red —** Allowed after full stop and yielding to pedestrians and cross traffic.

**Passing —** May pass only when broken line is next to your lane and road is clear.

## New Mexico speed limits

| | |
|---|---|
| **Business or residential area** | 30 mph |
| **School zone (children present)** | 15 mph |
| **Public highway (unposted)** | 55 mph |
| **Rural interstate highway** | 75 mph |
| **Advisory (exit ramp example)** | Posted on yellow sign |
| **Basic Speed Law** | Never faster than safe |

## Lane markings and changes

**Solid yellow —** No passing on your side of the line.

**Broken yellow —** Passing allowed when safe and road is clear.

**Double solid yellow —** No passing in either direction.

**Broken white —** Lane change OK when safe.

**No-passing zone sign —** Pennant + 'Do Not Pass' sign — illegal to pass for any reason.

**Two-way left-turn center lane —** For turning only — never travel straight through in it.

## Turning and signaling

**Signal distance —** Begin signaling at least 100 ft before turning or changing lanes.

**Hand signal — left turn —** Left arm extended straight out horizontally.

**Hand signal — right turn —** Left arm and hand extended upward.

**Hand signal — stop / slow —** Left arm and hand extended downward.

**U-turn — not permitted —** On or near any curve or hill where view is blocked.

**Right on red —** Full stop first; yield to all pedestrians and cross traffic.

**Starting from curb —** Signal and yield to all moving traffic before pulling out.

## Following distance and emergencies

**Following distance (normal) —** Maintain enough space to stop safely — increase in bad weather.

**Following distance (ice/snow) —** Reduce speed AND increase following distance on slick roads.

**Large vehicle —** Increase space behind trucks/buses to see around their sides.

**Tire blowout —** Ease off gas; slow gradually; apply brakes lightly when speed drops.

**Hydroplaning / skid —** Do not use cruise control on wet roads; steer smoothly.

**Wheels off pavement —** Steer straight with off-road wheels; slow gently; then ease back on.

**Move-over —** Slow and change lanes for stopped emergency or tow vehicles.

# Safety, DUI, parking and test-day

## New Mexico DWI quick-facts

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Adult driver BAC limit (21+)** | 0.08 % | **Open container on public road** | Illegal — driver and passenger |
| **Any amount impairs judgment** | Even below legal limit | **Drugs (legal or illegal)** | Any drug can impair driving |
| **Only cure for alcohol** | Time — coffee/exercise do nothing | **Signs of drunk driver** | Weaving, wide turns, jerky stops |

## Hazardous conditions

**DO**

+ Use low beams in fog, rain, or snow
+ Increase following distance in rain, ice, snow, or fog
+ Reduce speed on icy or snow-covered roads
+ Ease off gas and brake lightly during a tire blowout
+ Pull off road if visibility is dangerously reduced
+ Yield to pedestrians in any crosswalk — marked or unmarked
+ Stop for school bus stop arm — both directions unless divided median

**DON'T**

– Use high beams in fog — light reflects back, reduces visibility
– Brake hard on ice — locks wheels and kills steering
– Use cruise control on wet or icy roads
– Consume or possess open alcohol in any vehicle on a public road
– Pass in a no-passing zone for any reason
– Drive if drowsy — fatigue impairs like alcohol
– Cut across multiple lanes to reach a missed freeway exit

## Parking and curb-color rules

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Red curb** | Fire zone — no stopping or parking | **Blue curb** | Accessible parking — disabled placard only |
| **From fire hydrant** | Stay 50 ft away | **Downhill (with curb)** | Wheels TOWARD curb |
| **Yellow curb** | Loading zone or other parking restriction | **Uphill (with curb)** | Wheels AWAY from curb |
| **From crosswalk or intersection** | Stay 25 ft away | **Parallel park — curb distance** | Within 18 inches of curb |
| **White curb** | Short stops only | | |

## Equipment and vehicle rules

**Children in vehicle —** Must use proper child safety seat; never hold child while driving.

**Seat belt fit —** Lap belt snug across hip bones; shoulder belt across chest.

**Proof of insurance —** Carry evidence of financial responsibility at all times.

**Headlights — fog/rain/snow —** Use low beams; high beams reflect and reduce your vision.

**Horn — when to use —** Only to avoid a collision; never for frustration.

**Turn signals fail —** Use hand signals to indicate turns or stops.

## New Mexico test-day cheat box

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Permit fee** | $10 (lowest in nation) | **Permit hold time (under 18)** | 6 months minimum |
| **Knowledge test length** | 25 questions (all ages) | **Supervised hours required** | 50 total (10 at night) |
| **Passing score** | 18 of 25 (70% — NM's lowest threshold) | **Provisional curfew** | No driving midnight – 5 a.m. |
| **Supervisor for permit holder** | Licensed driver age 21+, min 3 yrs licensed | **Restrictions lift (LATER of)** | Age 18 OR 12 months clean record |

## Last-minute test-taking tips

NM's 70% passing threshold (18/25) is the lowest in the nation — but every question still counts. Read all options before choosing; the MVD often includes a partially-correct option. When two answers seem right, pick the more cautious one — 'slow and yield' beats 'proceed.' If you blank on a question, eliminate obvious wrong answers first, then guess — unanswered counts as wrong.