

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

South Carolina road signs to know

 Sharp left turn Road curves sharply left ahead. Slow before the curve.	 Reverse curve Road curves right then left. Reduce speed before first curve.	 Winding road Series of curves ahead. Slow down and stay alert.	 Cross road Another road crosses ahead. Be ready to yield or stop.	 Right lane ends Right lane is ending. Merge left when safe.	 Merge from right Traffic merging into your lane from the right ahead.
 Railroad crossing Round yellow: slow, look, listen, prepare to stop.	 RR crossbuck White X at the crossing: stop if train is approaching.	 Steep hill Steep downgrade ahead. Use lower gear, don't ride brakes.	 Slippery road Road may be slippery when wet. Slow down and drive carefully.	 Divided highway Highway divides ahead. Keep right of the median.	 Low clearance Bridge or overpass height ahead. Tall vehicles must detour.
 Stop Full stop at the line. Check all directions before proceeding.	 Yield Red triangle: slow and give right-of-way to cross traffic.	 Do Not Enter Wrong-way entry prohibited. Turn around immediately.			

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.

Round — Yellow circle with RR = railroad crossing warning.

Pentagon — School zone or school crossing — children present.

Orange diamond — Work zone. Workers on or near road; slow down.

Rules of the road

Right of way

Uncontrolled intersection — Yield to the vehicle on your right.

Left turn — Yield to all oncoming traffic and pedestrians.

Pedestrian — Always yield in any crosswalk, marked or unmarked.

Blind pedestrian — Stop and wait until the person is well away from your path.

Emergency vehicle — Pull to the right and stop. Clear a path of travel.

Stopped school bus — Stop until flashing lights turn off or bus moves.

Two-lane road / school bus — Stop regardless of your direction; wait for lights to stop.

Merging onto freeway — Freeway traffic has right-of-way; match their speed.

Motorcycle — Allow a motorcyclist a full lane width.

Right on red — Full stop first, yield to pedestrians and traffic, then go.

South Carolina speed limits

Urban district / residential	30 mph
Rural area (unless posted higher)	55 mph

School zone (when children present)	Reduced — obey posted sign
Basic rule	Never faster than safe for conditions

Signals, lane changes, and turns

Turn signal — Signal at least 100 feet before turning or changing lanes.

Signal timing — Signal early and cancel it after the turn.

Lane change — Signal, check mirrors, glance over shoulder for blind spots.

Hand signal — left — Arm straight out the driver's window.

Hand signal — right — Arm bent up at the elbow.

Hand signal — slow / stop — Arm bent down at the elbow.

Parallel parking — Park within 18 inches of the curb.

Downhill parking (two-way) — Turn wheels right toward the curb.

Downhill, no curb — Turn wheels right, toward the edge of the road.

Following distance and passing

Following distance — Increase following distance in rain, snow, fog, and poor visibility.

Do Not Pass sign — White rectangular sign: no passing for any reason.

No-passing zone — Never pass in tunnels, on hills, or near intersections.

Tailgater behind you — Move right or slow gradually; let them pass safely.

Dim headlights — oncoming — Dim to low beams within 500 feet of oncoming traffic.

Dim headlights — following — Dim to low beams within 200 feet of vehicle ahead.

Headlights in fog / rain — Use low beams. High beams reflect back, reducing visibility.

Headlights required — When visibility is 500 feet or less; when wipers are in use.

Railroad crossings and emergencies

Flashing red lights at RR — Stop. Never drive around lowered gates under any circumstances.

RR crossing — no signal — Slow, look both ways, listen, be prepared to stop.

Brake failure — Downshift, pump pedal, use parking brake, find soft shoulder.

Tire blowout — Grip wheel, ease off gas; when slowed, apply brakes gently.

After a crash — Stop, protect the area, notify authorities, care for injured.

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

Safety, DUI, licensing and test-day

South Carolina DUI quick-facts

Adult BAC limit (21+)	0.08%	Implied consent refusal	6-month suspension
Under-21 BAC limit	0.02%	Only way to reduce BAC	Time — nothing else works
Under-21 penalty	3-month suspension	Alcohol + prescription drugs	Combined effect: unfit to drive
Commercial driver BAC	Lower — CDL rules apply	Drowsiness effect	Impairs judgment like alcohol

Hazardous conditions

DO + Use low beams in fog, rain, or snow + Increase following distance on slippery roads + Steer in the direction of the skid; ease off the gas + Turn on headlights when wipers are in use + Pull off the road if visibility drops dangerously low + Check mirrors and blind spots before every lane change + Wear both the lap belt AND shoulder belt	DON'T – Use high beams in fog — light reflects back at you – Brake hard on ice — locks wheels and kills steering – Drive around or under a lowering railroad gate – Assume a stopped school bus is safe to pass – Use cell phone while driving — even hands-free is risky – Carry children 7 and under in the front seat – Refuse a chemical test — you lose your license 6 months
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Parking — where you cannot stop

Fire hydrant	Within 15 feet	Flashing signal / stop sign	Within 30 feet
Railroad crossing	Within 50 feet	Sidewalk or driveway	Never block either
Crosswalk at intersection	Within 20 feet	Bicycle lane	No parking in marked bike lanes

Graduated license — SC 3-window curfew

6 am – 6 pm — Unsupervised driving allowed (8 pm during Daylight Saving Time).	Passenger restriction — No more than 2 passengers under 21 unless adult 21+ is present.
6 pm – midnight — Must be accompanied by licensed adult age 21 or older.	Restrictions lift — At age 17, OR after 1 year with no offenses/at-fault crashes.
Midnight – 6 am — Needs a parent, guardian or approved adult.	Supervised hrs (age 15-16) — 40 total hours, including 10 hours of night driving.

South Carolina test-day cheat box

Permit fee	\$2.50	Driver ed required (age 15-16)	8 hrs classroom + 6 hrs driving
Permit supervisor	Licensed adult age 21+ with 1+ yr experience	Children age 7 and under	Car seat, in the back seat
Permit hold (under 18)	180 days minimum	Seat belt	Wear both lap belt AND shoulder belt

Last-minute test-taking tips

Read every option before you pick — a partly correct choice can look right at first. When two options seem right, pick the more cautious one ('slow and yield' beats 'speed up' or 'honk'). If you blank on a question, eliminate the obvious wrong answers first, then make your best choice.