

The logo for the Road Safety Authority (RSA) is an orange square with the letters 'RSA' in white, positioned in the top right corner of the document.

RSA

Introduction of N-plates to the Driver Licensing System Effective from 1 August 2014

July 2014

Údarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre
Road Safety Authority

Introduction of N-plates to the Driver Licensing System

An 'N' Plate is a symbol to be displayed during the period where a driver is considered a 'Novice' driver. The various scenarios and questions set out below are designed to assist the reader in understanding precisely when an 'N' plate / tabard must be displayed.

The introduction of this important step is a continuation of Ireland's Graduated Driver Licensing system (GDL). Research clearly indicates that the highest period of risk for a driver is the first two years following initial qualification. This measure is designed to reduce that risk by letting other road users know that the driver has qualified within the preceding two previous years and incentivising good driving behaviour by reducing the Penalty point threshold. It is expected that this measure will assist new drivers into becoming safe and socially responsible road users.

There is no requirement for novice drivers to have an accompanying driver – this is still only the case for learner drivers. However, a novice driver may not act as an accompanying driver for someone who holds a learner permit.

In this document you will find information about changes to the driver licensing regime that will apply effective from 1 August 2014. The information provided is for guidance and is not an interpretation of the law.

Summary of changes as it applies to new holders of a driving licence.

- A person granted a first full driving licence on or after 1 August 2014 must display N-plates on the vehicle for a period of 2 years, and during that period display N-plates on any other vehicle in respect of which they get a driving licence. Where the vehicle is a motorcycle, the rider must wear an N – tabard.
- Any period where the person is disqualified or otherwise ceases to hold a licence is not counted as part of the two years as a Novice.
- The novice period applies only once ie a person who holds a driving licence for a category of vehicle and who after a period of two years becomes entitled to drive another category, does not become a novice in respect of the new category.
- Non-display of N plates is an offence under traffic law and is punishable by a fine not exceeding €1,000 for a first offence. On becoming a penalty point offence failure to display an N-plate will carry 2 penalty points on payment of a fixed charge, or 4 on conviction by a court.
- A lower threshold of penalty points leading to disqualification will apply to any driver who is granted their first learner permit on or after 1 August 2014 while they drive under a learner permit, and subsequently during the first two years while they drive under their first full driving licence.

Introduction of N-plates to the Driver Licensing System

In this document the term 'driving licence' means a 'full driving licence' and the term 'first learner permit' means the 'first learner permit granted to a person regardless of the category of vehicle covered by the permit'.

More details about the changes together with questions and answers are set out below.

Position regarding N Plates

Q1. What are N plates?

Ans: N plates are a system of plates (similar to L- plates) which indicate that the driver is a novice driver i.e. has not held a driving licence in any category for a minimum period of two years.

Q2. What are the dimensions of N plates?

Ans: Rectangular plates or signs bearing the letter N not less than 15 centimetres high in red on a white ground in clearly visible vertical positions to the front and rear of the vehicle.

Q3. What does an N-plate indicate?

Ans: That the driver is a Novice, which means he/she has not had a driving licence for a total period of two years. (It does not matter how long you may have held a learner permit).

Q4. What drivers are required to display N plates?

Ans: Drivers granted a first full driving licence on or after 1 August 2014 must display N plates for a period of 2 years.

Q5. From what date does the requirement to display N plates apply?

Ans: 1 August, 2014

Q6. If I held a driving licence before August but have not held the licence for a minimum period of 2 years, am I required to display N plates?

Ans: No if you held a driving licence issued prior to 1 August 2014, you are not required to display N plates.

Introduction of N-plates to the Driver Licensing System

Q7. If I held a driving licence for an automatic car before 1 August but have not held that licence for a minimum period of 2 years and I get a driving licence for a manual car after 1 August, am I required to display N plates?

Ans: No if your first licence issued prior to 1 August 2014, you are not required to display N plates.

Position regarding being a motorcyclist. Categories AM, A1, A2, and A.

Q1. What are the dimensions of an N-tabard?

Ans: A yellow fluorescent tabard worn over the person's outside clothing bearing the letter "N" not less than 15 centimetres high in red on a white ground in clearly visible vertical positions to the front and rear of the person's torso.

Q2. If I get a first learner permit before 1 August 2014, and subsequent to that date pass the driving test in a motorcycle category and am granted a driving licence, am I required to display N-tabard?

Ans: Yes, you are required to wear an N- tabard when you get a first full driving licence.

Q3. If I get a first learner permit on or after 1 August 2014, and subsequently pass the driving test in a motorcycle category and am granted a driving licence, am I required to wear an N- tabard?

Ans: Yes, you are required to wear an N- tabard.

Q4. To which motorcycle driving licence category does the requirement to wear an N-tabard apply?

Ans: Any of the motorcycle categories AM, A1, A2 or A whichever is your first driving licence.

Introduction of N-plates to the Driver Licensing System

Q5. If I get a first learner permit and later a driving licence for an 'AM' motorcycle after 1 August 2014, and then some months later get a driving licence for an 'A1' motorcycle, do I have to wear an N-tabard while riding the moped, and then have to wear the tabard for a further two years when I get the driving licence for an A1 motorcycle?

Ans: Yes, within the 2 year period of being granted a driving licence. In this example category 'AM', you are required to wear a N-tabard for a period of two years while riding any motorcycle in respect of which you have entitlement on your driving licence. When you have held your licence for two years, you are not required to wear an N –tabard / display N plates after that time regardless of the motorcycle or other vehicle respectively you are using.

Q6. If I get a first learner permit and later a driving licence for an 'AM' motorcycle on or after 1 August 2014, and then some months later get a learner permit for a category A1 motorcycle, what tabards am I required to wear?

Ans: You are required to wear an N-tabard for two years while riding the category 'AM' motorcycle (in respect of which you hold a driving licence), and an L-tabard while riding the category 'A1' motorcycle for the entire period you hold a learner permit for A1.

Q7. If I get a first learner permit and later a driving licence on or after 1 August 2014, for a motorcycle category, and then get a car (Category 'B') on the driving licence, what am I required to display?

Ans: You are required to wear an N-tabard while riding the motorcycle, and display N-plates on the car while driving it, for two years from start of first driving licence ie the start date of the motorcycle licence .

Position regarding driving a tractor Category W.

Q1. If my first learner permit and later my driving licence is in respect of a tractor, am I required to display N-plates?

Ans: Yes, if the driving licence is granted on or after 1 August 2014, you must display N-plates on the vehicle during the first two years of holding that driving licence entitlement.

Introduction of N-plates to the Driver Licensing System

Q2. If my tractor is towing an implement or trailer where should the N-plate be placed?

Ans: On the rear of the tractor, or if not clearly visible there, it should be placed in a vertical position on the rear of the implement or trailer.

Position regarding drivers of trucks or buses (eg Category C or D).

Q1. If I get a first learner permit and later a driving licence for a car after 1 August 2014, and then some months later get a learner permit for a rigid truck or minibus licence, what plates am I required to display?

Ans: You are required to display N plates on the car for a period of two years, and L plates on the rigid truck or minibus for the entire period you hold the learner permit.

Q2. If I get a first learner permit before 1 August 2014 and after that date get a driving licence for a car, and then some months later get a learner permit for a rigid truck or minibus licence, what plates am I required to display?

Ans: When you get your driving licence for a car, you are required to display N plates on it for a period of two years and while you have a learner permit for rigid truck or minibus licence, you must display L plates on these vehicles. If during the first two years of having a driving licence for the car, you get a driving licence for a truck or bus, you are required to display N plates on those vehicles during the period of two years after the car licence was issued.

Q3. On or after 1 August 2014, if I get a first learner permit for a car and later a driving licence for a car, and then some months later get a driving licence for a rigid truck or minibus am I only required to display N-plates while driving the car.

Ans: No, within the 2 year period of being granted a driving licence in any category, if you are granted entitlement on your driving licence to another category or categories, you must display N plates on any vehicle you drive during the period of two years after the car licence was issued.

You must in this example display N plates on the car and on the rigid truck or minibus, until you have held entitlement to drive a car for two years.

Introduction of N-plates to the Driver Licensing System

Q4. If I get a first learner permit for a car on 22 August 2014 and get a driving licence on 28 March 2015, and then in September 2015 get a driving licence for a truck, am I required to display the N-plates on the truck for two years from September 2015.

Ans: No, if you hold the entitlement to drive a car for two years without a break, you would cease to be required to display N-plates on both the car and truck on 28 March 2017.

Q5. If I held a driving licence for the car (category 'B') before August and get a driving licence for a truck or bus after this date, am I required to display N plates?

Ans: No, as you held a driving licence prior to August, you are not required to display N-plates.

Q6. If my truck is towing a semi-trailer where should the N-plate be placed?

Ans: In a clearly visible vertical position to the front of the truck and to the rear of the container/trailer.

Position regarding drivers in Ireland with EU driving licence or from Iceland, Liechtenstein, or Norway. is set out in Questions 1 to 10. Questions 2, 3 and 4 also relate to licence exchange regarding Australia ,Gibraltar , Guernsey ,Isle of Man ,Japan Jersey , South Africa , South Korea ,Switzerland , New Zealand or Taiwan.

Q1. If I hold a licence from another EU state am I required to display N-plates while driving in Ireland where I am normally resident?

Ans: No, you are not required to display N-plates if your driving licence is issued by another EU state.

Q2. If my driving licence was issued by another EU or exchange state prior to 1 August 2014, and subsequent to this date I exchange the licence for an Irish licence, will I have to display N-plates?

Ans: No, you are not required to display N-plates when issued with an Irish driving licence.

Introduction of N-plates to the Driver Licensing System

Q3. If my driving licence was issued by an EU or exchange state after 1 August 2014, and subsequent to this date I exchange the licence for a Irish driving licence, will I have to display N-plates?

Ans: Yes, if the EU or exchange licence is less than two years old and then only until the two year period is up.

Q4. If my driving licence was issued by an EU or exchange state on or after 1 August 2014, and I exchange it in Ireland two or more years later for an Irish driving licence, will I have to display N-plates?

Ans: No, you will not be required to display N-plates then.

Q5. If my driving licence was issued by an EU state prior to 1 August 2014, and subsequent to this date I take out a learner permit for a second category, while retaining my EU licence until I subsequently pass the driving test in the second category, and then obtain an Irish driving licence for both categories, will I have to display N-plates?

Ans: No, you are not required to display N-plates when issued with an Irish driving licence.

Q6. If my driving licence was issued by another EU state on or after 1 August 2014, and subsequent to this date I take out a learner permit for a second category, while retaining my EU licence until I subsequently pass the driving test in the second category, and then obtain an Irish driving licence for both categories, will I have to display N-plates?

Ans: Yes, you are required to display N-plates when issued with an Irish licence until you have held the EU and Irish driving licences for a total period of two years.

Introduction of N-plates to the Driver Licensing System

Position regarding lower threshold of 7 penalty points leading to disqualification which will apply from 1 August 2014 to a person driving under a learner permit or while considered as a novice driver.

Q1. To which drivers does the lower disqualification threshold of penalty points apply?

Ans: To any driver who is granted their first learner permit on or after 1 August 2014 while they drive under a learner permit, and subsequently during the first two years while they drive under their first full driving licence.

Q2. If I have a learner permit before 1 August 2014 will the lower disqualification threshold of penalty points apply to me with effect from that date?

Ans: No, the existing disqualification threshold of 12 or more penalty points will apply to you. This is regardless of whether you are driving under a learner permit, or as a novice driver during the first 2 years of holding a driving licence.

Q3. I get my first learner permit on or after 1 August 2014. What disqualification threshold of penalty points will apply to me while I hold a learner permit, and what will apply when I get a driving licence and until I have this driving licence for two years?

Ans: A disqualification will apply in both cases where the number of points equal or exceed 7.

Q4. I get my first learner permit on or after 1 August 2014. What disqualification threshold of penalty points will apply to me when I pass the driving test and get my driving licence?

Ans: During the first two years of your driving licence, where the number of points equal or exceed 7 a disqualification will apply. After two years of holding that driving licence, the disqualification threshold is 12 or more penalty points.

Q5. I hold my driving licence for less than 2 years. Does the lower threshold of penalty points apply to me?

Ans: If you hold your driving licence before 1 August 2014, the threshold of 12 or more penalty points applies to you.

Introduction of N-plates to the Driver Licensing System

If your first full driving licence is granted on or after 1 August 2014, and you held a learner permit before 1 August 2014, the threshold of 12 or more penalty points applies to you.

The threshold of 7 or more penalty points applies to you if you got your first learner permit on or after 1 August 2014. This applies while you hold a learner permit and until you hold your first driving licence for two years.

Q6. I had a learner permit for a motorcycle before 1 August 2014 and I get a learner permit for a car on or after 1 August 2014, what disqualification threshold of penalty points will apply to me?

Ans: The threshold of 12 or more points will apply where you held a learner permit in any category before 1 August 2014. This is regardless of the vehicle category covered by the learner permit.

Q7. I had a learner permit for a tractor before 1 August 2014 and I get a learner permit for a car on or after 1 August 2014, what disqualification threshold of penalty points will apply to me?

Ans: A person who held a learner permit before 1 August 2014 continues to be subject to the threshold of 12 or more points on or after 1 August 2014 regardless of whatever learner permit or driving licence they then have.

Q8. I hold a driving licence for a car before 1 August 2014 and after this date obtain a learner permit for a bus. Does the lower threshold of penalty points apply to me?

Ans: No, the threshold of 12 or more points will apply where you held a learner permit or driving licence in any category before 1 August 2014, even where you get a learner permit in a different category.

Q9. If I get a first learner permit for a car on 22 August 2014, and then on 22 March 2015 get a driving licence for a car, and on 15 May 2015 get a learner permit for a truck, will the lower threshold of penalty points apply to me from 22 March 2017 at which time I will have had a driving licence for two years?

Ans: No once you have been a novice driver and have had a driving licence in any category for two years, you are no-longer considered as a novice even

Introduction of N-plates to the Driver Licensing System

though you may still have a learner permit in another category, so the threshold of 12 or more penalty points would apply to you..

Q10. If I get a first learner permit for a car on 22 August 2014, and then in 22 March 2015 get a driving licence for a car, and on 15 September 2015 get a learner permit for a minibus, will the lower threshold of penalty points continue to apply to me from 22 March 2017 at which time when I will have had a driving licence for two years?

Ans: No once you have been a novice driver and have had a driving licence in any category for two years, you are no-longer subject to the lower threshold of penalty points, so the threshold of 12 or more penalty points would apply to you from 22 March 2017.

Q11. If I held a learner permit after 1 August 2009 and the permit has expired, if I renew the permit within 5 years of expiry, what threshold of penalty points will apply to me?

Ans: The threshold of 12 or more penalty points applies to you if you got your first learner permit on or after 1 August 2014. This applies while you hold a learner permit and until you hold your first driving licence for two years.

Q12. If I held a learner permit on or after 1 August 2009 and the permit has expired for more than 5 years, and I have to take out a first learner permit again so as to commence the process again from the beginning as if for the first time, what threshold of penalty points will apply to me?

Ans: The threshold of 7 or more penalty points applies to you if you got your first learner permit on or after 1 August 2014. This applies while you hold a learner permit and until you hold your first driving licence for two years.

Q13. If I held a driving licence which has expired for more than 10 years and so cannot be renewed for a further driving licence, and after 1 August 2014

I take out a first learner permit so as to commence the licensing process again from the beginning as if for the first time, what threshold of penalty points will apply to me?

Ans: The threshold of 7 or more penalty points applies to you while you hold a learner permit and until you hold your driving licence for two years.

Working To Save Lives

Údarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre Road Safety Authority

Páirc Ghnó Ghleann na Muaidhe, Cnoc an tSabhaircín, Bóthar Bhaile Átha Cliath, Béal an Átha, Co. Mhaigh Eo
Moy Valley Business Park, Primrose Hill, Dublin Road, Ballina, Co. Mayo
local: 1890 50 60 80 fax: (096) 25 252 email: info@rsa.ie website: www.rsa.ie