

6/7/25 (birthday)

All I wanted was my license. That's it. But apparently, in Massachusetts, it's the equivalent of requesting for top-secret clearance. Anyways, I began this multi-step journey on my 16th birthday, starting with trying to get a permit appointment.

Alright, here's what I went through today. First, I called the RMV, I got placed on hold, and listened to the same four-minute hold music for over 10 hours. After 5 hours, a robotic voice informed me that all agents are currently assisting other customers. And by the time a real human finally picked up, they informed me that you can't book an appointment over the phone. So today, I decided to camp outside the rmv site for a walk in. I got there at 3 a.m., armed with a lawn chair, a granola bar, and the last scraps of my sanity.

The parking lot looked like a dystopian refugee camp for teenagers, hoodies as blankets, empty Dunkin' cups rolling in the wind, and parents slumped in their cars, praying to whatever higher power oversees state motor vehicle departments. A security guard patrolled the line like we might attempt an uprising. When the doors finally opened, an employee stepped out and announced, with bureaucratic glee, that walk-ins are no longer accepted... and that we should "check the website." So, naturally, I moved to the RMV website. I refreshed the appointment page. Every time I clicked "Book Appointment," the screen flashed the same message "No appointments available. Try again later."

It's funny, in a tragic sort of way, that Massachusetts has some of the worst drivers in the country, yet somehow also the strictest licensing requirements. You'd think all this suffering would produce excellence. Instead, it just produces... more suffering.

8/1/25 (getting the appointment)

I finally got it! I got my appointment. After refreshing the page every day for at least 2 hours, I finally got an appointment, and it's on a Saturday, which is perfect. It's in 3 months, but that's earlier than most people get them. But who knows if that's enough time to study. I can't risk failing, I can't go through this process all over again. I have a study schedule already laid out.

PERMIT STUDY GRIND:

August-September: Study for 1 hour at LEAST every day

November: Study for 2-3 hours every day and take every available practice test

Week before: re-take every practice test and have the Massachusetts Driving Manual memorized

Day before: Skip school, study all day, no breaks. Go to bed early so I can get 8 hours of sleep so as to not fall asleep at the wheel, but wake up early to continue the grind until the time I have to leave.

This seems reasonable. I'm still scared it's not enough, My friend is skipping the entire WEEK. Let's hope I can pass, I don't know what I will do if I don't.

11/1/25 (day of test, morning)

It's the day of my appointment and I am scared beyond belief. What if I fail? What if I have to go through that 5-month process of even GETTING the appointment again? I can't even risk one mistake, because one mistake turns into another, and another, and another, and then I fail. If you ask me right now, I can recite the entire Driver's Manual back to you, but that might not even be enough. I shouldn't have slept, I missed out on critical study hours. I need to get there 3 hours before my test to make SURE I'm not late.

But, I'm going to fail, I know it.

11/1/25 (after the test)

I PASSED. I can't believe it! I got two questions wrong and I was scared beyond belief. BUT I STILL PASSED. I think I'm happier than I was when school got canceled for snow.

Now, I need to start booking my lessons. I've heard those are a real pain too. I've seen my friends all have theirs spaced out by months and forget everything they learned in between. I plan to practice everything from every lesson in between to avoid that. I hope my mom won't mind having to set up the cones for me so I can practice my parallel parking at least 100 times.

Looking at the website now, there are no appointments available. I think I'll set up camp again and try to get my appointments that way, I think that's my plan for Monday. I think I'll get there at 4:30, no, 4 o'clock, set up, and wait for them to open. I'll have to come late to school, but who needs English and math.

4/25/26 (first lesson)

After endless rights waiting outside the RMV, trying to get my first lesson, through all the cold, all the snow, I finally booked one! I got the appointment two months ago but this was the soonest one I could get. Booking these lessons is harder than securing a seat at the Constitution Convention. The confirmation email looks like one of the 51 one essays Hamilton wrote while he was running out of time. I've heard that scheduling the first lesson gives you momentum to schedule the next ones, maybe a month apart now, but hopefully even less than that.

I have to go to my lesson now, wish me luck!

4/25/26 (after the first lesson)

That was TERRIBLE. Suddenly, I don't know how to drive. I've already gotten 50 of my 100 supervised hours with my dad as I was waiting to get my lessons. I thought I came prepared enough. Apparently not. It was always something stupid, like I didn't turn the wheel the exact degree they wanted me to for that turn or I was parked 14.9 feet away from the fire hydrant and not 15.

I also can't believe they actually end up GRADING these lessons, like how you do. Watch me fail every single one and have to book the same one again.

This is insane, I can't even begin to imagine what the test is going to be like.

1/10/27 (last lesson)

I DID IT! I finished all my lessons. It only took 260 days, but that's not terrible, I've seen way worse. I did already turn 17 in that time, so that kinda sucks. I COULD BE DRIVING ALL MY FRIENDS BY NOW!

Well, at least it's over with. Now, I need to start practicing for my road test. It's kind of hard to do this with my mom's SUV since they taught us how to drive the sedans they have. They teach us everything just like how it is on their cars, how to parallel park referencing the dimensions of only THAT car, like how close to be or to back up until the line in the backup camera touches the curb. Those things apply to no other car but theirs. I hope that's not the reason I fail.

3/24/27 (road test)

Finally, it is my road test. Hopefully this means I will get my license today. I walk into the RMV, check in for my appointment. Everything is just like I remember. I wait in the line leading up to the check-in desk. Teenagers collapsed across chairs. I get to the front of the line and speak to the women at the counter. Paperwork is spilling all over the tables. I state my name to the women, and she asks for my name, phone number, permit number, address, social security number, name of my first pet, my mother's maiden name, the street I lived on in my childhood, and my favorite type of pizza. After she inexpressively types my answers into the computer, she hands me a slip of paper with a number on it. I grab the slip, take a seat, and look at the screen. I'm 55 places away.

“Could be worse,” I thought. I watched the number on the screen slowly tick up. After hours of waiting, the screen finally shows 55. I walk over to the examiner, who is a grumpy old guy with a head full of gray hair.

He gestures to the car without saying a word. I get in. He follows, sighs deeply—like he’s about to deliver tragic news to a family—and mutters, “Alright. Let’s see if you can operate a motor vehicle without endangering the Commonwealth.”

We take a left to pull out of the RMV lot. Immediately, he marks something on his clipboard.

“Take two lefts here. We’re going back,” he orders.

My heart sinks. “What did I do wrong?” I wonder. As we pull back into the parking lot, he briefly explains what went wrong.

He tells me that I can schedule another lesson in a couple months, of course after paying the ridiculous fee again. I guess today was not the day.

6/7/27 (retake)

Okay so today is *the* day, again. Exactly two years after this whole nightmare began. I woke up at 4 a.m., not because I had to, but because the RMV has psychologically conditioned me to expect suffering before any appointment. I checked all my documents, then checked again, then checked for any sign that the RMV might have spontaneously burned down overnight. No luck.

On the drive there, I mentally rehearsed every turn, every stop, every bizarre rule on page 47 of the Driver’s Manual that no real human has ever used. When I pulled into the lot, it felt weirdly familiar, like returning to the scene of a crime I was both the victim

and the perpetrator of. Teenagers pacing. Parents stress-eating. The faint smell of bureaucracy poisoning the air.

I checked in, answered what felt like a full federal background check (I'm pretty sure they asked for my blood type this time), grabbed my number, and sat down to wait. Eventually, the screen called me. My examiner was different this time, someone younger, with a face that didn't automatically radiate hatred for the world. Good sign. He got in the car, buckled his seatbelt without sighing, and said, "Alright, whenever you're ready."

And somehow... I did everything right.

Every turn was smooth. Every stop was perfect. I didn't park 14.9 feet from any hydrants. I didn't accelerate too fast or too slow. I parallel parked like the sedan from my lessons magically transformed into my mom's SUV. For once in this entire saga, everything worked.

We pulled back into the lot, and I braced for the worst. He wrote something, calmly, on his paper. Then he looked at me and said the words I've been waiting two years, two birthdays, and roughly 400 hours of waiting-room time to hear:

"You passed."

It didn't feel real. I half expected him to follow it up with, "Just kidding, reschedule for December." But no—this time it was real.

I DID IT. I finally, *finally* got my license. After all the hold music, the camping out, the refreshing, the failing, the scheduling, the freezing, the cones, the practicing, the panic, the existential crises... it's over.

Now I can drive myself. I can drive my friends.

I can drive literally anywhere that is *not* the RMV.