

Inquiring Minds: *Dealing with the DMV: lessons learned by both*

#67 Jan-Feb "Ours is not to reason why, ours is but to do or die." - modified* from [Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem, The Charge of the Light Brigade](#).

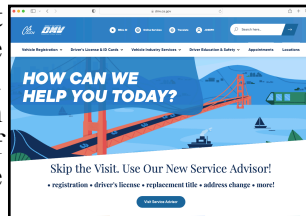
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Tips for Seniors on License Renewal in CA

As if this 3/10 writing, if you are **70 years old or older at the time your driver's license expires, you are required to renew your driver's license in person, unless otherwise instructed by DMV**. Knowledge and vision tests are required, as are proper ID papers. The DMV sends a renewal notice to your address of record about 60 days before your driver's license expires, but you may want to start preparing earlier. If you do not receive a renewal notice, complete a Driver License or Identification Card Application at dmv.ca.gov/dlsservices or at a DMV office. Visit dmv.ca.gov/driver-ed for more information and sample tests." -P90, DMV Handbook

If you have a smartphone or a computer, you can download a paperless (pdf) CA Driver's Handbook at dmv.ca.gov. There you can read what the procedures are for getting a Real ID and/or renewing your license, address other issues, take practice tests, etc. **Be careful not to go to look-alike bogus sites which might steal your money and/or your identity**. If your DMV has any hard copies of the CA Drivers Handbook (ours didn't), get the most recent one.

As stated in the handbook, about 50% of the takers fail the Knowledge Test the first time. There are literally 2000+ facts in this 116 page booklet, most of which you know, but you have to get 80-85% correct to pass. And there's no keeping the old tests to study from.



After I failed the knowledge test the first time, I really studied the handbook, reading it 2-3 times. A friend suggested taking notes helped him study, so I took 11 pages of notes. I also took several of the practice tests just to familiarize myself with the types of questions. However, since there are literally thousands of facts, do not rely on the practice tests as your only teaching tool, for every test is different, and your margin of error for passing the test is about 20-16%. In RWC, adults renewing a license were given 25 questions and 20 (80%) was passing. If you fail three times within an 8 hour day, you will have to pay another \$40 dollars and go through the entire process again a different day. **So don't just rely on taking the practice tests. Read the book to see the rationale behind the laws, not just try to memorize facts**. Even though you probably know most of the questions, there are quite a few which are just trivial, and just deal with numbers which have to be memorized.

If you can get one, an appointment will get you to the front of the line at the DMV. A month before my birthday the DMV Appointment scheduling program was not working,

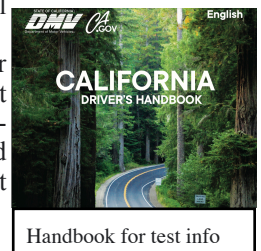
and I had to phone a number in the Driver's Handbook to have a person book one for me. The problem with this was the only time he could find was two weeks away and 1:15 in in the afternoon. I did not want to sit on pins and needles and possibly forget what was most fresh in my mind, and be there in the afternoon when the after-work group crowds appear and things get noisy and slow, making it difficult me to concentrate and maybe not have time enough to retake the test again if I failed the first one.

So, I took a gamble and showed up 20 minutes early on a weekday before the doors opened at 8 am. I got lucky. There were only 7 people in front of me, and was promptly pre-checked by a very efficient staff person that I had the proper paperwork before the doors opened. From there it was easy it was easy. Also there were helpers inside to answer any questions I had about procedures. It sure made a difference being really prepared. I am happy to report my second attempt only took an hour to complete the whole process, and I aced the test, and passed my vision test, a huge boost to my wounded ego, and my previous poor experience.

Problems with the DMV's Testing System itself

Some of these may have been already fixed by the people at the DMV or by an automatic computer analysis of missed test questions, but just Do the Prep and don't fight City Hall as the banner quote suggests.*

1. Some facts seem trivial, it makes no difference to the DMV. There were many 10-12 facts about children under 8 sitting in child-proof seat containers. Here one should know that toddlers under a certain age and weight need to do thus and so for their safety, but every exception seemed a bit much.
2. Factoids about numbers were very confusing. 1000 feet for this, and 200 feet for that. How many people know what those distances are actually are on the road.
3. The test sight site my first visit to the DMV was open and noisy, making it difficult to concentrate. The first test proctor I had was overworked, frustrated, and trying to do several jobs at once. He himself was making the most noise by yelling at people to put their cell phones away.
4. The knowledge test on the computer would X an incorrect answer, but not give one time to view the correct answer to know what to study. In the old days, one could keep the paper test and learn for the errors made.



Success the Second Time!

Of course much of this confusion was my not knowing the new system and not studying well enough. There was an influx of clueless seniors like myself, and the my local DMV wasn't prepared either—but both of us learned and adjusted, as my second attempt showed. *Prep well, Joe B*