

Driver licence classes

There are 6 classes you could have on your New Zealand driver licence.

Class	Vehicle type
1	Car (light vehicle)
2	Medium rigid vehicle
3	Medium combination vehicle
4	Heavy rigid vehicle
5	Heavy combination vehicle
6	Motorcycle

If you have an **L** next to the licence number, this means you have a learner licence for that class. So 1L is a car learner licence.

If you have an **R** next to the licence number, you have a restricted licence for that class. So 1R is a car restricted licence.

If you don't have a letter next to your licence class, then you have a full licence for that class.

Check the table over the page for the vehicles you can drive with each class.

Which class of licence you need

Classes are based on the type and weight of the vehicle.

Vehicles can be rigid (car or truck) or combination (truck and trailer).

The class you need will depend on the gross laden weight (GLW) for rigid vehicles, and the gross combined weight (GCW) for combination vehicles.

The GLW or GCW generally refers to the weight specified by the vehicle's manufacturer.

How to find the weight

Most cars weigh less than 4500kg and you can drive them on a class 1 licence.

All vehicles over 3500kg are required to have a certificate of loading, usually displayed on the vehicle's front windscreen. The certificate of loading will state the gross vehicle mass (GVM) or gross combined mass (GCM) of the vehicle.

In most cases the GVM will be the same as the vehicle's GLW, and the GCM will be the same as the vehicle's GCW.

Don't use the vehicle's unladen weight, tare weight, or the weight on the road user charges (RUC) licence.

Endorsements

As well as holding the right class of licence for the weight, you may also need an endorsement for some kinds of vehicles.

For forklifts, read *F endorsements for driving forklifts* (Factsheet 10).

For special-type vehicles that run on rollers, tracks or wheels, read *R, T and W endorsements for special-type vehicles* (Factsheet 40).

Light trailers

If you have a class 2 or 4 licence you can tow a light trailer (GLW of 3500kg or less) behind a rigid vehicle in that class. Don't count the weight of the trailer in any gross combined weight calculations.

Tractors

You don't need an endorsement to drive a non-agricultural tractor (like those at airports and wharves). You just need to hold the right class of licence for the weight of the tractor.

Agricultural tractors and motor vehicles

The type of licence you need depends on the weight of the agricultural vehicle and the speed you'll drive it at.

Traction engines

A person steering (or directing) a traction engine must hold a New Zealand class 1 full licence and the relevant qualification. See our website for more information: www.nzta.govt.nz/traction-engines

Articulated vehicles

You can drive an articulated vehicle on a class 2 or 4 licence, depending on its weight.

Definitions

Combination vehicle means a towing vehicle in combination with one or more trailers or other motor vehicles that are being towed.

Gross weight means the weight of a rigid or combination vehicle, together with any load it's carrying (including equipment and accessories).

Gross laden weight (GLW) is the greatest of the following:

- any weight specified (following the latest modification, if applicable) as a vehicle's gross laden weight by the vehicle's manufacturer
- any weight specified as the gross laden weight of a particular vehicle (or a vehicle of its kind) by NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA)
- the weight of the vehicle together with any load it's carrying, including any equipment and accessories.

Gross combined weight (GCW) is the sum of the gross laden weight of the vehicles that make up a combination vehicle.

Tare weight means the total weight of the vehicle and load at any particular time.

Gross vehicle mass (GVM) is the greater of:

- the mass specified as the gross vehicle mass of a particular vehicle, by the manufacturer
- the mass specified as the gross vehicle mass of a particular vehicle (or a vehicle of its kind) by NZTA.

You can drive a...	with a weight of...	at a speed of...
Class 1L (car learner) or 1R (car restricted)		
Vehicle (includes tractors and combination vehicles, but not motorcycles)	GLW or GCW 4500kg or less	-
Moped or all-terrain vehicle		-
Motorhome or tradesperson's vehicle	GLW 6000kg or less, but with an on-road weight of 4500kg or less	-
Class 1R (car restricted)		
Agricultural tractor	GLW less than 18,000kg	40km/h or less
Agricultural tractor towing an agricultural trailer	GCW 25,000kg or less	40km/h or less
Class 1 (car)		
Any vehicle (includes tractors and combination vehicles, but not motorcycles)	GLW or GCW 6000kg or less	-
Moped or all-terrain vehicle	-	-
Motorhome or tradesperson's vehicle	GCW 6000kg or less	-
Combination vehicle which isn't a tractor/trailer or agricultural tractor/trailer	GCW 6000kg or less	-
Tractor	GLW 6001kg-18,000kg	30km/h or less
Agricultural tractor	GLW 6001kg-18,000kg	40km/h or less
Agricultural tractor towing an agricultural trailer	GCW 25,000kg or less	40km/h or less
Tractor towing a trailer, being used in non-agricultural land management operations	GCW 25,000kg or less	30km/h or less
Electric truck that is a variant of an existing diesel truck model that weighs 6000kg or less <i>Due to a class exemption expiring 28 February 2028. Must not be larger than the diesel model. Has specific requirements around braking systems, lane assistance and battery placement. Must operate under transport service licence and follow work-time and logbook rules. For more information go to www.nzta.govt.nz/etruck-class-exemption</i>	GLW 6001kg-7500kg	-
Class 2 (medium rigid vehicles)		
Rigid vehicle	GLW 6001kg-18,000kg	-
Combination vehicle (that isn't a tractor/trailer combination)	GCW 12,000kg or less	-
Rigid vehicle (that isn't a tractor) towing a light trailer	GLW of rigid vehicle 18,000kg or less	-
Rigid vehicle with two axles or less	GLW over 18,000kg	-
Tractor	GLW 6001kg-18,000kg	30km/h or less
Electric-powered bus used in a public transport service <i>(due to a class exemption expiring 7 March 2028 www.nzta.govt.nz/ebus-class-exemption)</i>	GLW 18,000kg-22,000kg	-
Class 3 (medium combination vehicles)		
Combination vehicle	GCW over 25,000kg	-
Any vehicle covered in classes 1 and 2		
Class 4 (heavy rigid vehicle)		
Rigid vehicle (including a tractor)	GLW over 18,000kg	-
Rigid vehicle towing a light trailer	GLW of rigid vehicle over 18,000kg	-
Vehicles covered in classes 1 and 2 (but not class 3)		
Class 5 (heavy combination vehicle)		
Combination vehicle	GCW over 25,000kg	-
Vehicles covered in classes 1, 2, 3 and 4		
Class 6L (motorcycle learner) and 6R (motorcycle restricted)		
Motorcycles acceptable under the learner approved motorcycle scheme (LAMS)		
Moped or all-terrain vehicle		
Class 6 (motorcycle)		
Any motorcycle		
Moped or all-terrain vehicle		



This factsheet is a general guide only. It doesn't replace legal advice, and your exact requirements will depend on current legislation.

Make sure you have the most up-to-date version of this factsheet by checking www.nzta.govt.nz/factsheets



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