ONTARIO PRACTICE TESTS

❄️ Winter Driving Tips for Ontario

Free printable winter driving checklist

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Ontario winters bring snow, ice and short days. This guide explains how to prepare your vehicle, drive safely on winter roads and stay safe if something goes wrong, using official Ontario government advice.

🚗 Prepare your vehicle before winter

A well-maintained vehicle is more likely to start and run safely in cold weather. Do these things before the snow comes:

- Get a maintenance checkup.
- Keep your fuel tank at least **half full**.
- Carry an ice scraper and extra windshield washer fluid rated to **-40°C**.
- Have your exhaust system checked if it is noisy or rattles. A faulty exhaust is especially dangerous in winter, because drivers keep windows and vents closed.
- Put a winter emergency kit in your vehicle (see the list below).

❄️ Winter tires

Winter tires give better traction and control on frost, snow and ice. Ontario says they can shorten braking distance by **as much as 25%**.

- Install **four** winter tires. Do not mix different tire types on one vehicle.
- Look for the **three-peak mountain snowflake** symbol. It shows the tire is made for severe snow.
- All-season tires are not winter tires. They can start to lose grip at **7°C**.
- The MTO Driver's Handbook recommends four winter or all-weather tires with the same tread pattern.
- Replace tires older than 10 years, or when the tread is less than 1.5 mm deep.
- Studded tires are allowed in Northern Ontario. They are not allowed in Southern Ontario, with some exceptions for visitors from outside Ontario and Northern Ontario residents.

Insurance: your auto insurance may be discounted if you use winter tires. Ask your insurance provider.

🧹 Clear snow and ice before you drive

- Clear all windows so you can see in every direction.
- Clear your lights so other drivers can see you.
- Clear your mirrors.
- Clear the roof. Snow and ice can slide onto your windshield or fly off and hit other vehicles.

Truck drivers should also clear the tops of trailers and check their lights along the route.

🧊 Watch for black ice

Black ice is a thin layer of ice that is hard to see. Wet roads can turn icy when the temperature drops below freezing.

- In winter, asphalt should look **grey-white**. If the road looks **black and shiny**, it may be covered in ice. Slow down.
- Shaded areas, bridges and overpasses freeze before other parts of the road.

📏 Leave more space to stop

It takes longer to stop on slippery roads. Many winter collisions happen because drivers go too fast for the conditions.

- Slow down and increase your following distance.
- Stay well back from large trucks. Their braking distance on ice can be **4 to 10 times longer** than on a dry road.
- Do not use cruise control on wet, snowy or icy roads.
- Steer, brake and accelerate gently. Sudden moves can cause a skid.

If your vehicle has anti-lock brakes (ABS), press the brake firmly and keep pressing. You may feel the pedal pulse. This is normal. ABS helps you keep steering control, but do not expect it to shorten your stopping distance.

🚜 Share the road with snowplows

- Snowplows and other winter maintenance vehicles use **flashing blue lights**. You can see them from 150 metres away.
- Stay well back from a working plow.
- **Never pass a working snowplow.** Blowing snow and the snow ridge reduce visibility. Passing can cause a serious or fatal collision.
- Some plows have a wing that extends up to 3 metres to the right. They are wide and slow.
- On freeways, several plows may work side by side, staggered across the lanes. Do not try to pass between them. There is not enough room, and the ridge of wet snow can make you lose control.
- Be patient. Roads are plowed in sections, so you usually wait behind a plow for no more than 20 to 30 minutes.

↩️ If you skid

- Stay calm.
- Take your foot off the brake or the accelerator.
- On a very slippery surface, shift to neutral if you can.
- Look and steer where you want to go. Do not oversteer.
- When you have control again, brake gently and smoothly as needed.

If your vehicle does not have ABS, use threshold braking: brake hard until a wheel starts to lock, ease off a little, then brake again. Do not pump the brakes. Practise emergency braking in a safe place, ideally with a qualified instructor.

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🆘 If you get stuck or stranded

- Stay with your vehicle for warmth and safety until help arrives.
- Turn on your emergency flashers.
- Open a window slightly for fresh air.
- Run the engine only sometimes, not all the time.

In a whiteout (blowing snow that hides the road), use low beams, not high beams. If visibility is near zero, leave the road only where there is a safe place to park. Do not stop on the travelled part of the road.

🧰 Winter emergency kit

Ontario recommends keeping these items in your vehicle:

- ☐ A charged phone
- ☐ Water and non-perishable food
- ☐ A flashlight
- ☐ A blanket and warm clothes
- ☐ Jumper (booster) cables
- ☐ A shovel
- ☐ Traction mats or sand
- ☐ Candles and a lighter or matches
- ☐ Emergency flares or warning lights
- ☐ A chain for towing

📱 Check road conditions with Ontario 511

Check the weather and road conditions before you leave and during your trip. If conditions are poor, delay your trip.

- Visit ontario.ca/511 or use the Ontario 511 app.
- Dial **511**. It is hands-free and voice-activated.
- Use the **Track My Plow** feature in the Ontario 511 app to see where snowplows are on provincial highways.

Practise free in 11 languages: ontariopracticetest.ca

Free study aid. Based on Ontario government advice. Not an official government document.

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