Different Types of Licenses

The California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) offers many different types (classes) of driver licenses. Each license allows the driver to tow objects up to a certain weight and drive different vehicles. It can be overwhelming to know which license you need to apply for if you are planning on purchasing a new vehicle or embarking on a new driving career. Below is a description of a few of the different types of licenses and the responsibilities attached to them.

**Standard Driver License**

**Class C driver license**

This is the basic driver license motorists receive after passing the written and behind-the-wheel driving test. Drivers with this license are able to tow objects up to 10,000 lbs and are able to drive the following vehicles:

- 2-axle vehicle weighing up to 26,000 lbs
- 3-axle vehicle weighing up to 6,000 lbs
- A motor home 40 feet or less
- 3-wheel motorcycle with two wheels located in the front or back
- Large passenger vans that carry a maximum of 10 - 15 people, including the driver

**Non-commercial License**

**Class A**

A driver with a class A license is able to drive the same standard vehicles that those with a class C license, however the driver can tow more than 10,000 lbs.

**Class B**

A driver with a class B license is able to drive the same standard vehicles that those with class A and C license drive, however the driver can also drive a motor home that is more than 40 feet long.

**Motorcycle License**

**Class M1 or M2** can be added to any other license class after the driver passes law and skill tests.

- **M1 License**
  - Drivers with an M1 license are able to drive two-wheel motorcycles, motor-driven cycles, or motorized scooters.

- **M2 License**
  - Drivers with an M2 license are able to drive a motorized bicycle, moped, scooter or any bicycle with an attached motor.

**Commercial License**

Drivers that operate commercial vehicles require special licenses and, at times, endorsements or certification as well. Each license requires successfully passing a different written test:

- **Commercial Class C**
  - Drivers with a commercial class C license can drive any class C vehicle carrying hazardous materials. The hazardous materials (HAZMAT) endorsement must be displayed on the license.

- **Commercial Class B**
  - Drivers with a commercial class B license are able to drive the same vehicles as those with a class C license, along with vehicles that weigh more than 26,000 lbs. These drivers are also permitted to drive farm labor vehicles as long as they obtain the proper endorsement.
towing capabilities of those with a commercial class B license includes the same vehicles that can be towed as a class C driver as well as any vehicle up to 10,000 lbs.

Commercial Class A
Drivers with a commercial class A license can drive any legal vehicle. They can tow the same vehicles as those with a class B and C license, as well as any single vehicle that weighs more than 10,000 lbs. Additionally, commercial class A drivers can tow multiple vehicles or trailer buses as long as they obtain an endorsement.

Depending on the type of vehicle they drive, and what is being transported in the vehicle, the driver may need certification or an endorsement along with the special license. A certificate is issued as a separate document while an endorsement is marked directly on the driver license. Below are certificate and endorsements that are offered by the DMV:

- Commercial Endorsements:
  - Doubles/triples trailer towing
  - Hazardous materials
  - Passenger transportation
  - Tank vehicles
    - Firefighter Endorsement
    - School Bus Endorsement
    - Ambulance Driver Certificate
    - Tow Truck Driver Certificate
    - Verification of Transit Training Certificate

Detailed information on driver license types and endorsements can be found in the California Commercial Driver Handbook, Recreational Vehicles and Trailers Handbook, Ambulance Drivers Handbook, CaliforniaParent-Teen Training Guide, and California Motorcycle Handbook. Please visit [www.DMV.ca.gov](http://www.DMV.ca.gov) to find online versions of these handbooks.