



# Certified to **DRIVE**

## Getting You and Your Vehicle **ROAD READY**

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*Submitted by DriveLab Inc. with contributions from The War Amps*

**Whether you are already a licensed driver who has recently become an amputee, or an amputee going for your driver's license for the first time, you will likely have questions. Will you need special devices on your vehicle? Will you need special driver training? What will obtaining or renewing your driver's license look like? Will you have any restrictions on your license?**

Of course, most amputees are still able to drive. Depending on the level of amputation, some individuals can still drive unmodified vehicles. For those who cannot, there are modifications available for most vehicles that can accommodate different levels of ability.

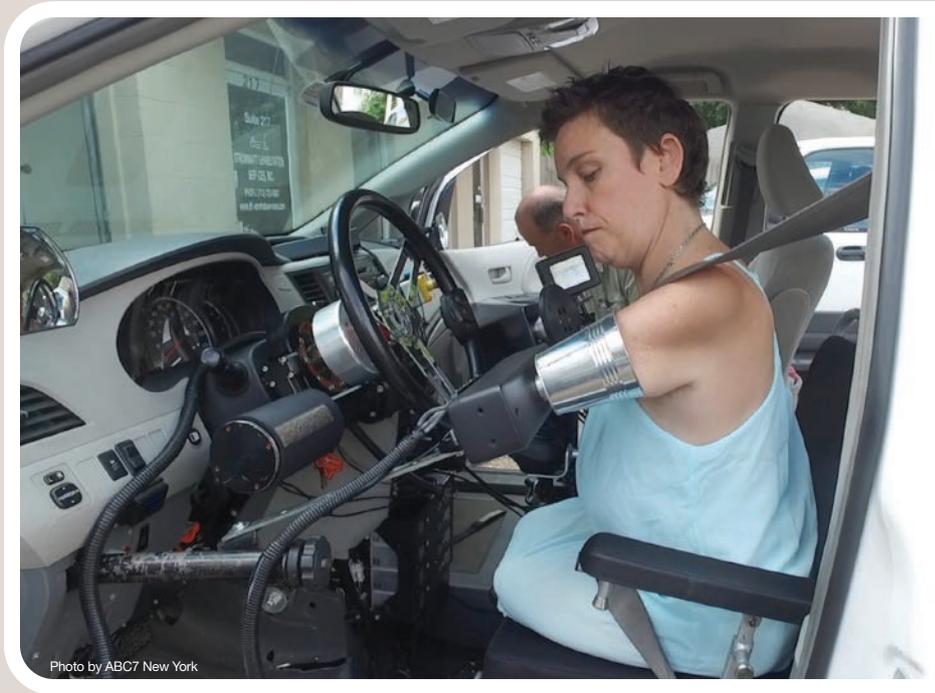
Driving is an area under provincial, rather than federal, control. Therefore, the criteria differ for each province. In many cases there are no specific provincial procedures. Rather, there are guidelines for motor vehicle offices, so experiences may vary from city to city within a province. In some cases, obtaining a driver's license may not necessitate any special requirements. In other cases, a Ministry official may presume that some, or all, amputees must undergo a special assessment.

### THE PROCESS

Obtaining a driver's license is a lengthy procedure for anyone, and for an amputee that process can be even more extensive. You may be required to be assessed at a rehabilitation centre or hospital, which sometimes have long waiting lists. Be sure to start early and allow yourself plenty of time to go through each step of the process. Knowing what the process entails in advance and preparing ahead of time can prevent some of the frustration and disappointment that can result if you are not prepared.

Throughout the process you might have to deal with individuals who, understandably, have little or no knowledge of amputation. Individuals might not be aware of your capabilities and thus, question your ability to drive safely. They could suggest or even insist that you undergo an assessment or more testing than you personally feel is necessary.

Driving carries very serious responsibilities – driving is a privilege, not a right. Therefore, although you may feel certain procedures are unnecessary, you have to do what is reasonably requested to prove your ability to operate a vehicle safely. Knowing in advance which devices you need will certainly help and speed up the process.



### ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT

There are several types of adaptive driving devices and modified equipment that can assist amputees with safe operation of a vehicle. In most cases, the adapted equipment involves compensation for the inability to reach and operate primary driving controls like the accelerator, brake and steering wheel, and secondary ones like the wipers, turn signals, and lights.

**Right Lower Extremity** (above or below knee): Left foot accelerator or hand controls for brake and accelerator, spinner knob.

**Bilateral Lower Extremity** (above or below knee): Hand controls for brake and accelerator, spinner knob, emergency brake extension, chest strap.

**Upper Extremity** (right or left): Steering device, modified gear shifter and secondary controls.

**Triple or Quadruple Limbs:** Additional modifications can be made including reduced-effort steering system, servo brake and accelerator control, and joystick driving systems.

Adaptive driving equipment and vehicle modifications are available for most vehicles. An occupational therapist (OT) and Driving Instructor working in driver rehabilitation can assist in making the correct vehicle choice and will provide a comprehensive Functional Driving

and Adaptive Equipment Assessment to determine your ability to drive. Driver rehabilitation training is required with any adaptive driving equipment recommended.

## EQUIPMENT ASSESSMENT

A Functional Driving and Adaptive Equipment Assessment (FDA) consists of two parts – an In-Clinic, with an OT, and an In-Vehicle with a Driving Instructor and an OT. The In-Clinic includes an assessment

of physical, cognitive, attention, visual/spatial/perceptual capability and knowledge of the rules of the road.

The In-Vehicle/Adaptive Equipment Assessment is done in the Driving Instructor's vehicle, equipped with a secondary brake for safety and numerous adapted driving controls to trial. Adapted driving controls are selected that are best suited for each client. After the FDA, an equipment plan is prepared by the OT for the client and the Driving Instructor.



## DRIVER TRAINING

In-Vehicle Training Sessions come next, with the Driving Instructor. If primary vehicle controls are modified, it generally takes longer to acquire the skills necessary to safely operate the vehicle. The safe operation of secondary adaptive controls typically takes less training time. Just like no two individuals are the same, nor do two people learn the safe usage of adaptive driving controls in the same timeline.

Some of the more common primary adaptive devices such as hand controls or left foot accelerators take most drivers eight to 15 hours of training time. One of the challenges for experienced drivers is unlearning “automatic” driving movements. A driver learning to use a left foot accelerator will often attempt to press the pedals with their prosthetic leg on their right side.

## EQUIPMENT PRESCRIPTION

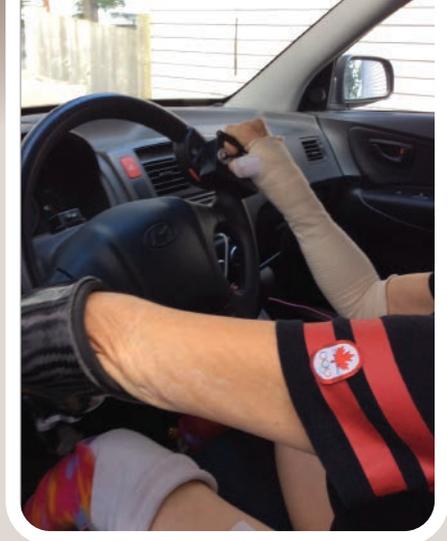
A Re-Assessment after training is done by the OT and the Driving Instructor. Once it's determined that the client is safe to operate a vehicle with the adapted driving equipment, the OT prescribes the appropriate modified equipment. An Adapted Driving Equipment Prescription is required for the vehicle modifier to install the equipment. A list of vehicle modifiers is provided to the client to select the modifier of their choice.

A Post-Vehicle Modification Fitting Checkout is done by the OT and/or the Driving Instructor to ensure that the prescribed equipment has been installed according to the OT's instruction and that the client is satisfied with the adaptive equipment.

The OT is required to inform the provincial government's transportation ministry of the client's driver status for adaptive equipment for primary controls. This will place a restriction on the client's driver's license in that it is valid only with the use of adaptive driving controls. Ministries may also require the driver to complete a provincial on-road driving test at a Drive Test Centre.

**For more information**, including a complete list of available devices, provincial government contact information, and provincial lists of vehicle modification centres, contact The War Amps for the Licence to Drive booklet at [nac@waramps.ca](mailto:nac@waramps.ca) or call 1-877-622-2472.

**About DriveLab:** As a leader in Driver Rehabilitation since 1998, DriveLab Inc. continues to be committed to the education, awareness and advocacy of its clients. For more information regarding its services, consultations, referrals and education seminars, contact [info@drivelab.ca](mailto:info@drivelab.ca) or call toll-free 1-814-413-7483.



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