How Old Do I Have To Be?

IN ALBERTA

At 12 years old you can:

Be charged with a criminal offense.

Youth aged 12 to 17 can be charged according to the Youth Criminal Justice Act. Youth aged 14 to 17 can receive adult sentences if:

- they are found guilty of any offence for which an adult could get a prison sentence of more than two years; and
- they committed that offence when they were 14 years or older.

See Canada's *Criminal Code*, RSC 1985, c C-46, and Canada's *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, SC 2002, c 1

At 13 years old you can:

Get a part-time job, but with restrictions on types of work and hours of work.

Employees 12 years and under can only be employed in an artistic endeavor if the employer has a permit and the parent or guardian consents.

Employees aged 13 to 14 years:

- require parent or guardian permission;
- can only work in certain types of jobs (some jobs require a permit or approval) that are not harmful to their life, health, education, or welfare;
- can only work outside of normal school hours;
- cannot work longer than 2 hours on a school day or 8 hours on a non-school day;
- cannot work between 9pm and 6am.

Employees aged 15 to 17 years:

- can do any type of work;
- cannot work between 9pm and 12am in certain jobs unless the employee is working with another person who is 18 years or older;
- cannot work between 12am and 6am in certain jobs but can work between 12am and 6am in other jobs with their parent or guardian's permission and if the employee is working with another person who is 18 years or older.

See Alberta's *Employment Standards Code*, RSA 2000, c E-9

At 14 years old you can:

Drive an ATV on public lands.

A person younger than 14 must be either accompanied by an adult or closely supervised by an adult. On public land, an ATV rider must have a properly registered and insured ATV. The minimum age to register an ATV is 18 years. You can register an ATV if you are younger than 18 if your parent or guardian also signs the registration or you can prove you are married or in an adult interdependent relationship. On private land, there is no minimum age requirement.

See Alberta's *Off-Highway Vehicle Regulation*, Alta Reg 319/2002, and Alberta's *Traffic Safety Act*, RSA 2000, c T-6

Get a learner's license to drive a car.

See Alberta's *Traffic Safety Act*, RSA 2000, c T-6

At 16 years old you can:

Drop out of school.

All children must attend school until at least 16 years of age. If you graduate high school before you turn 16, then this rule does not apply.

See s. 27 of Alberta's *Education Act*, SA 2012, c E-0.3

Get a license to drive a car, with some restrictions.

You must have had a Learner's License (Class 7 License) for at least one year and pass both a vision screening and the basic Alberta road test in order to receive a Probationary License (Class 5 Graduated Driver's License (GDL)).

While you have a GDL you:

- cannot have more passengers than the number of seat belts in the vehicle;
- will have your license suspended at 8 demerit points;
- are not allowed to have any alcohol, cannabis or illegal drugs in your blood when driving;
- cannot upgrade to a commercial driver's license (Class 1, 2, 3 or 4);
- cannot be the accompanying driver to a learner

You must hold a GDL for at least two years before you can become a fully-licensed driver (Class 5 License). You must also have no license suspensions during the last 12 months of the probationary stage and pass an advanced road test.

See Alberta's *Traffic Safety Act*, RSA 2000, c T-6

Get a passport (without guardian consent).

If you are under the age of 16, your legal guardian must apply for your passport for you. This is governed by the Canadian Passport Order (CPO).

Legally consent to sexual activity.

In general, Canadian law says that the age of consent for sexual activity is 16 years old, but there are exceptions:

- a person aged 12 or 13 can consent to sexual activity with someone less than 2 years older;
- a person aged 14 or 15 can consent to sexual activity with someone less than 5 years older.

People under 12 years of age cannot give consent at all, even with someone who is close in age.

However, if you are under 18 years of age, you cannot consent to sexual activity with anyone who:

- is in a position of trust or authority over you (such as a teacher, coach or employer); or
- you are in a relationship of dependency with; or
- you are in a relationship with and who is exploiting you.

See Canada's Criminal Code, RSC 1985, c C-46

Get a sports fishing license.

If you are younger than 16 years of age or older than 65, then you do not need a license, but you still must follow the regulations. You also do not need a license if you are an "Indian", as defined by the Indian Act and its regulations. There are also certain days across the province when anyone can fish without a license.

See s. 10 of the *General Fisheries (Alberta) Regulation*, Alta Reg 203/1997.

At 18 years old you can:

Buy alcohol.

You must be the age of majority which, in Alberta, is 18 years of age. Therefore, if you are under the age of 18, you cannot buy, drink, or possess alcohol. The age of majority is different in other provinces.

See s. 87 of Alberta's *Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Act*, RSA 2000, c G-1.

Get married.

If you are 16 or 17, you can marry if you have parent or guardian permission or a court order allowing you to get married. If you are under age 16, you cannot marry in Alberta.

See Alberta's *Marriage Act*, RSA 2000, c M-5.

Adopt a pet.

Although there is no legal age, most animal protection agencies have requirements that potential adopters be 18 years of age.

Give consent for medical treatment.

A person younger than 18 years old may be able to give consent if they are able to understand the consequences of the treatment.

Change your name.

You can apply to change your name if you are under 18 years old only if you are married, divorced, widowed, an adult interdependent partner, or the parent or guardian of a minor.

See s. 22 of Alberta's Vital Statistics Act, SA 2007, c V-4.1

Sit on a jury.

See s. 3 of Alberta's *Jury Act*, RSA 2000, c J-3

Request information about birth parents in adoption cases.

All requests go through the Post Adoption Registry in Alberta.

See Alberta's *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*, RSA 2000, c C-12

Get a credit card.

Generally, if you are under 18, you will have to get a parent or guardian to co-sign for a credit card. A credit card is a form of contract. If you do not pay the loan back, the person who co-signed will be responsible for repayment.

Vote in an election (federal, provincial or municipal).

See s. 47 of Alberta's *Local Authorities Election Act*, RSA 2000, c L-21 (municipal elections), s. 16 of Alberta's *Elections Act*, RSA 2000, c E-1 (provincial elections), and s. 3 of the Canada *Elections Act*, SC 2000, c 9 (federal elections)

Write a will.

You must also be mentally capable. A person under the age of 18 can make a will if they are:

- married or in an adult interdependent relationship;
- a member of a "regular force" as defined in the National Defence Act (Canada);
- a member of the Canadian Forces on active service under the National Defence Act (Canada); or
- authorized by a court order to do so.

See s. 13 of Alberta's *Wills and Succession Act*, SA 2010, c W-12.2.

Join the Canadian Armed Forces.

You can join at 17 years old if you have parent or guardian consent. At the age of 16 years, you can join the Reserves or enter the Military Colleges with parent or guardian consent.

See s. 20 of Canada's *National Defence Act*, RSC 1985, c N-5.

Gamble.

This includes purchasing lottery tickets.

See s. 37.1 of Alberta's *Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Act*, RSA 2000, c G-1.

Donate blood.

According to Canadian Blood Services.

Sign a contract.

If you are under 18, you may still be able to make a contract with others, but you are generally limited to:

- contracts that may benefit you; and
- contracts for the necessities of life. This usually includes things such as food, shelter, education and medical services, but can also include other things depending on the circumstances.

Be legally considered an adult.

See Alberta's *Age of Majority Act*, RSA 2000, c A-6

Buy a firearm.

If you are at least 12 years old you can get a minor's license to borrow a rifle or shotgun for certain purposes, such as hunting, target practice, or shooting competitions. To get a minor's license, you must pass an approved safety course and have parental or guardian consent.

See s. 8 of Canada's *Firearms Act*, SC 1995, c 39

Legally purchase cannabis.

If you are under 18 years old, then you cannot buy, use or possess legal cannabis. A person under 18 years old cannot grow cannabis plants either.

See s. 90.26 of Alberta's *Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Act*, RSA 2000, c G-1, and Canada's *Cannabis Act*, SC 2018, c 16

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