



2026 Edition — All 50 States

Permit requirements. Constitutional carry status. Stand Your Ground vs. Duty to Retreat. Prohibited locations. What every carrier needs to know before crossing a state line.

50	29	12
STATES COVERED	PERMITLESS CARRY STATES	DUTY TO REATREAT STATES

For informational purposes only. Not legal advice. Laws change — confirm current statute with a licensed attorney in your state before making any carry decisions. Updated June 2026.

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This cheat sheet gives you a fast-reference snapshot of carry law in all 50 states. It covers four variables that matter most to everyday carriers: whether a permit is required, the state's force doctrine (Stand Your Ground vs. Duty to Retreat), key prohibited locations, and reciprocity notes. It does not replace an attorney. Laws change. Confirm the current statute in your state with a licensed attorney before making any carry decision.

PERMIT STATUS	Whether the state requires a carry permit for concealed carry. Permitless = no permit required. Shall-Issue = permit required; must be granted if you meet objective requirements. May-Issue = permit required; issuing authority has discretion.
FORCE DOCTRINE	Stand Your Ground (SYG) = no duty to retreat before using force in public. Duty to Retreat (DTR) = must attempt safe retreat before using deadly force if safely possible. Castle Doctrine always applies in the home, regardless of state doctrine.
KEY RESTRICTIONS	Common prohibited locations listed — schools, government buildings, bars/alcohol-primary venues, and any federal property. This list is not exhaustive. Always verify your specific destination.
RECIPROCITY NOTE	Whether the state broadly honors out-of-state permits (Wide), honors select permits only (Limited), or generally does not honor out-of-state permits (Narrow/None).

50-STATE CARRY LAW REFERENCE

SYG* = Stand Your Ground through case law (no codified statute). DTR = Duty to Retreat required in public. All states apply Castle Doctrine in the home. West Virginia note: permitless carry age lowered from 21 to 18, effective April 1, 2026 (HB 4106).

STATE	PERMIT STATUS	FORCE DOCTRINE	KEY RESTRICTIONS (partial — verify locally)	RECIPROCITY NOTE
Alabama	Permitless (21+)	SYG	Bars, schools, govt buildings	Wide
Alaska	Permitless (21+)	SYG	Schools, bars, govt buildings	Wide
Arizona	Permitless (21+)	SYG	Bars require permit; schools; fed land	Wide
Arkansas	Permitless (21+)	SYG	Schools, police stations, bars	Wide
California	Shall-Issue	SYG*	Most public places restricted; no-go list is extensive	Narrow
Colorado	Shall-Issue	SYG*	Schools, public buildings, Denver adds restrictions	Limited
Connecticut	Shall-Issue	DTR	Schools, govt buildings, hospitals	Limited
Delaware	Shall-Issue	DTR	Schools, recreation areas, vehicles	Limited
Florida	Permitless (21+)	SYG	Schools, police stations, bars, polling	Wide
Georgia	Permitless (21+/18 mil)	SYG	Schools, govt buildings, bars	Wide
Hawaii	Shall-Issue	DTR	Nearly all public places; most restrictive state	None
Idaho	Permitless (18+)	SYG	Schools, jails, courts, bars	Wide
Illinois	Shall-Issue	SYG*	Extensive no-carry list; bars, parks, transit	None
Indiana	Permitless (18+)	SYG	Schools, govt property, airports	Wide
Iowa	Permitless (21+)	SYG	Schools, casinos, courthouses	Wide
Kansas	Permitless (21+)	SYG	Schools, law enforcement, govt buildings	Wide
Kentucky	Permitless (21+)	SYG	Schools, police stations, detention	Wide
Louisiana	Permitless (21+)	SYG	Schools, bars, places of worship, courts	Wide
Maine	Permitless (21+)	DTR	Schools, courthouses, federal property	Wide
Maryland	Shall-Issue	DTR	Schools, public buildings, bars	None

STATE	PERMIT STATUS	FORCE DOCTRINE	KEY RESTRICTIONS (partial — verify locally)	RECIPROCITY NOTE
Massachusetts	May-Issue	DTR	Schools, govt buildings, bars	None
Michigan	Shall-Issue	SYG	Extensive list incl. churches, bars, dorms	Limited
Minnesota	Shall-Issue	DTR	Schools, govt buildings, private property posted	Limited
Mississippi	Permitless (21+)	SYG	Schools, polling places, bars	Wide
Missouri	Permitless (19+/18 mil)	SYG	Schools, law enforcement, polling	Wide
Montana	Permitless (18+)	SYG	Schools, govt buildings, banks	Wide
Nebraska	Permitless (21+)	DTR	Schools, hospitals, bars, sports venues	Wide
Nevada	Shall-Issue	SYG	Schools, childcare, airports, airports	Limited
New Hampshire	Permitless (18+)	SYG*	Schools, courts, polling, govt buildings	Wide
New Jersey	Shall-Issue	DTR	Most public places restricted; extensive list	None
New Mexico	Shall-Issue	SYG*	Schools, bars, govt buildings	None
New York	May-Issue	DTR	Sensitive locations list is very broad post-Bruen	None
North Carolina	Shall-Issue	SYG	Schools, bars, govt, places of worship	Limited
North Dakota	Permitless (18+)	DTR	Schools, gambling sites, liquor establishments	Wide
Ohio	Permitless (21+)	SYG	Schools, courthouses, police stations	Wide
Oklahoma	Permitless (21+/18 mil)	SYG	Schools, courts, bars, govt buildings	Wide
Oregon	Shall-Issue	SYG*	Courts, federal, schools; local bans expanding	Limited
Pennsylvania	Shall-Issue	SYG	Schools, courts, Philadelphia adds restrictions	Wide
Rhode Island	May-Issue	DTR	Schools, courts, govt, restricted	None
South Carolina	Permitless (18+)	SYG	Schools, govt buildings, places of worship	Wide
South Dakota	Permitless (18+)	SYG	Schools, courts, posts, fed property	Wide
Tennessee	Permitless (18+)	SYG	Schools, bars, parks, govt buildings	Wide
Texas	Permitless (21+/18 mil)	SYG	Schools, bars (51%), courts, polling	Wide
Utah	Permitless (21+)	SYG	Schools, govt, mental health facilities	Wide
Vermont	Permitless (16+)	SYG*	Schools, courts; among most permissive	Wide
Virginia	Shall-Issue	SYG*	Schools, courts, places of worship	Wide
Washington	Shall-Issue	SYG*	Schools, courts, bars, govt buildings	Limited
West Virginia	Permitless (18+)*	SYG	Schools, courts, law enforcement	Wide
Wisconsin	Shall-Issue	DTR	Schools, courthouses, police stations	Limited
Wyoming	Permitless (21+)	SYG	Schools, courts, bars, govt buildings	Wide

PRE-CARRY LEGAL CHECKLIST

Complete this checklist before carrying in any new state or at any unfamiliar venue.

PERMIT STATUS

- ☐ Confirm whether destination state requires a carry permit
- ☐ Verify your home state permit is recognized (check reciprocity)
- ☐ Carry your physical permit even in permitless carry states
- ☐ Confirm you meet the age requirement for that state's permitless carry law

PROPERTY TYPE

- ☐ Identify who manages your destination (city, state, federal, private)
- ☐ Look up the managing agency's current firearm rules
- ☐ Check for posted signs — 51% signs (TX), no-carry postings, or event restrictions
- ☐ If on federal land, verify NPS or USFS rules for that specific unit

LOCAL ORDINANCE

- ☐ Search the municipality's code for carry restrictions at permitted events
- ☐ Check for local ordinances that layer on top of state law
- ☐ Confirm alcohol-service rules for your destination (many states restrict carry at bars)
- ☐ If traveling to a city like Denver or NYC, research city-specific restrictions separately

FORCE DOCTRINE

- ☐ Know whether your destination state has Stand Your Ground or Duty to Retreat
- ☐ Understand that your home state's SYG law does not travel with you
- ☐ If in a DTR state, be prepared to articulate why retreat was not safely possible

GEAR AND CARRY

- ☐ Use a retention holster in crowds, events, and unfamiliar environments
- ☐ Zero alcohol while carrying — impaired carry is a separate offense in most states
- ☐ Carry your legal defense insurance documentation
- ☐ Know the post-incident protocol for your destination state

KEY LEGAL TERMS

Permitless Carry	Also called constitutional carry. You may carry a concealed handgun without a government-issued permit, provided you are legally eligible to possess a firearm under state and federal law. Age requirements vary (18 or 21 in most states).
Shall-Issue	The state must issue you a carry permit if you meet objective requirements (background check, training, fees). The issuing authority has no discretion to deny a qualified applicant.
May-Issue	The state requires a permit and the issuing authority has discretion to approve or deny. Historically used to effectively prohibit most carry. Post-Bruen (2022), pure may-issue regimes are constitutionally suspect.

Stand Your Ground (SYG)	No legal duty to retreat before using force in any place you have a right to be. Does not eliminate the requirement that the threat be imminent and your force be proportional.
Duty to Retreat (DTR)	You must attempt to safely withdraw from a threatening situation before using deadly force in public, if retreat is safely possible. Castle Doctrine still applies inside your home regardless of DTR status.
Castle Doctrine	Removes the duty to retreat inside your home (and in some states, your vehicle or workplace). Every U.S. state recognizes some form of the Castle Doctrine.
AOJ Triangle	Ability + Opportunity + Jeopardy. All three must be present for a threat to legally justify deadly force. Used by courts and attorneys to evaluate whether a defensive response was justified.
Reciprocity	Whether a state will honor a carry permit issued by another state. Wide = most out-of-state permits honored. Limited = only select states. None = out-of-state permits not recognized.
GFSZA	Gun-Free School Zones Act (federal). Prohibits carrying a firearm within 1,000 feet of a K-12 school, with exceptions for permit holders in states that require a background check for permits. Applies in every state.

WATCH SIGNALS — WHEN TO RE-CHECK THE LAW

Carry law is not static. These events should trigger an immediate law review before your next carry decision.

- ☐ A new state legislature convenes (January of odd-numbered years for most states)
- ☐ A governor signs or vetoes a firearms bill that has been in the news
- ☐ You cross a state line to a state you have not carried in recently
- ☐ You plan to attend any permitted event, festival, or large gathering
- ☐ Your destination is on or adjacent to federal land (national parks, monuments, military installations)
- ☐ You change your primary carry state (move, extended travel, new state residency)
- ☐ A court ruling affecting your state's carry law makes the news (monitor law-of-self-defense.com)
- ☐ Your carry permit expires or is renewed — re-verify reciprocity upon renewal
- ☐ Any location you plan to carry in posts new signage — check it every time, not just once

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