



The Age of Majority

“... a person eighteen years of age or more is an adult for all purposes whatsoever and has the same legal capacity, rights, powers, privileges, duties, liabilities, and responsibilities ... and the ‘age of majority’ is hereby declared to be eighteen years.”

Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 1, Section 24(a)

The provision of law cited above, in the very first article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, appears to define adulthood in a very clear manner. But does it? While the threshold age of 18 applies to most areas of Maryland, it is not so throughout.

There are some interesting exceptions.

For instance, the legal drinking age in Maryland is 21, though for a period of time it was 18 for beer and wine. See if you know how old a person has to be to do each of the following:

- 1. Be elected to the General Assembly**
- 2. Hold a job**
- 3. Buy cigarettes**
- 4. Give blood**
- 5. Be elected Governor**
- 6. Get married without parental permission**
- 7. Get married with parental permission**
- 8. Make a will**
- 9. Be a cosmetologist**
- 10. Be a private detective**

Answers:

1. 21 for the House of Delegates and 25 for the Senate
2. 14, but not during school hours or for night or hazardous work (16), and work permits are needed
3. 18
4. 17* (without parental permission)
5. 30 (35 for U. S. President)
6. 18*
7. 16*
8. 18
9. 17
10. 25

*There are allowances for special circumstances.

You should note that, while the answers to these questions appear above, no explanations are presented as to why these ages were deemed necessary for each of the listed endeavors. The intentions or reasons behind these laws, as with all State laws, are essential ingredients of democracy in action. Do you know how to find out why a law has passed?



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