Obtaining a U.S. Driver's License / State ID

Obtaining a driver's license can be a tricky, time-consuming task. To expedite the process for you, the ISO has created this handout with information for each Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) in the DC area. After reading, we hope you will be more prepared to tackle the DMV!

Required Documentation (only originals will be accepted)

Regardless of the state in which you hope to obtain a driver's license or State ID, bring the following documents with you to the DMV:

★ Valid, unexpired passport
★ Additional form of identification (GWorld, valid employment card, resident alien card, health insurance card, etc.)
★ Valid, unexpired visa
★ Form I-20 or DS-2019
★ Visa form I-94 with certification
★ Proof of residency (utility bill, copy of lease, etc.)
   • If living on campus, visit Office of the Registrar for official "proof of residency" letter
★ Social security number (SSN)
   • If unable to get SSN, visit Social Security Administration for official letter of rejection
★ Foreign driver's license (if applicable)
   • With non-English driver's license, include official English translation from your embassy (on official letterhead) or from certified translator (with a raised certification stamp)
   • Date of the translation must be on or after the date on your non-English driver's license
★ Necessary fees (subject to change; visit websites provided for current charges and fees)
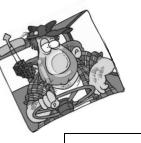
In Maryland

For complete information, visit www.marylandmva.com/driverserv/apply/license.htm. All non-U.S. citizens applying for an MD license will need to submit an electronic **SAVE Verification Request Form**. You can find this link on the DMV website or visit: http://www.mva.maryland.gov/save.htm. Upon completion of this form, a MVA official will contact you within two (2) business days with the verification results and information to continue the process. If you experience any difficulties with the form, or do not receive a response within two (2) days, please write to sdecal@marylandmva.com. The office closest to GW is in Gaithersburg, MD, at 15 Metropolitan Grove Road. It is open Mondays through Fridays from 8:30am – 4:30pm, or on Saturdays from 8:30am – 12:00pm.

First-time drivers must hold a Maryland learner's permit for 9 months, and pass a vision test, written knowledge test, and road skills test before applying for a license.

To convert a foreign license, you are required to bring all of the above listed documentation as well as take a 3-hour drug and alcohol education program prior to your appointment. Bring the certificate to your appointment, and note that there is a fee for this course. You are also required to take a vision, written knowledge, and road skills test. Some exceptions apply for certain countries and territories. Visit the website for more details.

To convert an out-of-state license, bring your old license, proof of residency, age, identification, social security number, and any applicable payment fees. You will be required to pass a vision test and surrender your old license. If your out-of-state license has been expired for more than 1 year, you will be required to pass a written knowledge exam and road skills test. Note that if you are presenting an out-of-state license with foreign issued documents, you will be required to schedule an appointment.

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In Virginia

For complete information, visit www.dmv.virginia.gov/webdoc/citizen/drivers/applying.asp. Non-residents temporarily living in Virginia can drive with a foreign license for up to six months. A certified English translation must accompany the license. To obtain a license, visit the DMV office in Arlington, VA, at 4150 South Four Mile Run Drive. It is open Mondays through Fridays from 8:00am – 5:00pm, and on Saturdays from 8:00am – 12:00pm.

First-time drivers (age 19 or over) must obtain and hold a learner's permit for 30 days prior to applying for a license. Then a written knowledge exam, a road skills test, and an eye exam must be passed before receiving a license. If the driver is under 19, proof of driver's education is required.

To convert an out-of-state license, provide your old license, proof of residency, social security number, ability to drive, and identification. You will be required to pass a vision test and surrender your old license.

To convert a Canadian, French, or German license, you may not be required to take the written knowledge exam or the road skills test, show proof of successful completion of driver's education, or hold a learner's permit for 30 days, but you are required to pass a vision test and surrender your old license.

To convert any other foreign license, you may not be required to show proof of driver education or hold a learner's permit for 30 days, but you must pass the written exam, road skills test, and vision test.

In Washington, DC

For complete information, visit dmv.washingtondc.gov/serv/dlicense.shtm. Non-U.S. citizens may obtain a DC license with a minimum of 6 months duration in the U.S. To obtain a license, visit the DMV office in Washington, DC, at the Georgetown Park Mall at 3222 M Street, NW, Lower Level.

First-time drivers over 21 years of age may apply for a license after passing the written knowledge test, vision test, and road skills test. Those under 21 are required to participate in the Gradual Rearing of Adult Drivers (GRAD) Program to safely gain driving experience.

To convert an out-of-state license, bring your old license, proof of residency, social security number, ability to drive, and identification. You will be required to pass a vision test and surrender your previous license.

To convert a foreign license, you will be required to pass a vision test and a written knowledge test. Questions on this exam are specific and thus it is recommended to study beforehand. Visit dmv.washingtondc.gov/serv/dlicense/learners_sample.shtm for study guide and additional information.