

THE CALIFORNIA DRIVER LICENSE/CALIFORNIA IDENTITY CARD

Do I need to have a California Driver's License?

Anyone who is resident in the state of California must have a valid California Driver's License to operate a motor vehicle in California. This includes students, visiting scholars, and anyone in an employment immigration status and their dependents. "Tourists" (persons on B-1/B-2, WT, WB visitor status) may drive in California for up to a year as long as they have a valid driver's license from their home country. If you are going to purchase a motor vehicle (a car, scooter or motorcycle), most insurance companies will not provide coverage unless you have a valid California License.

In addition to permitting you to operate a motor vehicle, a driver's license is also the most recognized means of identification. A California ID Card is also available through the DMV as a means of identification for those who do not plan to drive.

When to Apply for Driver's License/State Identity Card (DL/ID)

Wait at least 30 days after your arrival in the U.S. and after your SEVIS immigration status is "active" before applying for a DL/ID.

Do I need to have a Social Security Number (SSN) before I apply?

No, but the process will be much easier if you have a Social Security card before you apply. Students who are not eligible for a SSN may apply for an DL/ID, but should come by our office for more information before going into the DMV. When asked for a SSN, be sure to tell the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) employee "I am not eligible for a Social Security Number." DMV will then follow procedures to verify your immigration status with USCIS. If the person at the front desk insists that you have to have a SSN, be sure to ask to speak to their supervisor, who should know the requirements.

Where are the local DMV offices?

You can go to any of the local DMV offices, but we have been told that the Oakland Coliseum office if you do not yet have a social security number, as this office is most accustomed to working with international students.

San Francisco

1377 Fell Street (at Baker St.)

Oakland

Rockridge area: 5300 Claremont Avenue (at Cavour St.)

Oakland Coliseum area: 501 85th Ave., Oakland, 94621 (near the Oakland Coliseum)

How do I Apply for the California Driver License (DL) ?

The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) website at <http://www.dmv.ca.gov/> has the latest California Driver Handbook, forms, instructions on how to apply for a driver's license and a section on frequently asked questions. Our office also has copies of the current "Driver Handbook," a free publication with all of the California driving laws and "rules of the road."

- Visit a DMV office. It's best to make an appointment before you go in as the lines can be very long. Call (800) 777-0133, or [make the appointment on-line](#).
- Complete application form DL 44 (An original DL 44 form must be submitted. Copies will not be accepted.)
- Give a thumb print and have your photo taken
- Provide full name, birth date, and evidence of legal presence. You will need to present your passport, I-94 and I-20/DS-2019, and your SSN card if you have one. *If you do not currently have a SSN, please come to our office before you go to the DMV.*
- There is a fee (currently USD \$26.00); credit cards are not accepted as form of payment.
- You will be given a written test of driving laws and a vision test, You can take the written test in your own language, if available, and you have three chances to pass the test. Samples of the test are available at: <http://www.dmv.ca.gov/pubs/interactive/tdrive/exam.htm>

Once you pass the written test, you will then be issued a learner's permit if you have never been licensed before. When you practice, you must have an accompanying adult who is 18 years of age or older, with a valid California license. This person must be close enough to you to take control of the vehicle if necessary. It is illegal for you to drive alone. Even if you have a license from another country, you will be required to take a behind-the-wheel driving test.

To take your driving test, you will need to:

- Make a driving test [appointment](#) online, or by calling 1-800-777-0133.
- Provide a car, and proof of financial responsibility and insurance.
- A document with the liability insurance policy or surety bond number.
- An Assigned Risk insurance card with the name of the assigned insurance company, file number, and current coverage dates.
- Current insurance binder or copy of an insurance policy signed or countersigned by an insurance company representative.
- Rental car contract *if the driver is listed on the contract as the insured.*
- DMV-issued certificate of self-insurance or acknowledgment of cash deposit.
- Written confirmation from the insurer that the person is insured.

Once you have presented a Social Security card or been "cleared" by USCIS, the official license should arrive by mail within 90 days.

How do I apply for a California Identity Card (ID)?

If you are not planning to drive, the DMV also issues the California Identity Card (ID)

with your photo on it. This is an easily recognizable form of I.D. used for cashing checks, proving your age, etc.

- Visit a DMV office. Make an appointment before you go in. Call (800) 777-0133, or [make the appointment on-line](#).
- Complete application form DL 44 (An original DL 44 form must be submitted. Copies will not be accepted.)
- Give a thumb print and have your photo taken
- Provide full name, birth date, and evidence of legal presence. You will need to present your passport, I-94 and I-20/DS-2019, and your SSN card if you have one. *If you do not currently have a SSN, please come to our office before you go to the DMV.*
- There is a fee (currently USD \$21.00); credit cards are not accepted as form of payment.

There is a three to eight week wait for the card if your application is "clear" when the DMV verifies your immigration documents.