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CA Driver's License & ID card

If you are a **visitor** in California over 18 and have a valid driver's license from your home state or country, you may drive in this state without getting a California drivers license **as long as your home state license remains valid.**

How to apply for a California driver's license or identification card

- Visit a DMV office (make an appointment for faster service)
- Complete application form DL 44. An **original** DL 44 form must be submitted.
- Give a thumb print
- Have your picture taken
- Provide your social security number
- Verify your birth date and legal presence
- Pay the \$12 application fee (\$6 for identification card application)
- Pass a vision exam (not necessary for identification card application)
- Pass a traffic laws and sign test. There are 36 questions on the test. A passing score is at least 31 correct answers. You have three chances to pass (not necessary for identification card application).

The Social Security Act allows any state to use the SSN to establish the identification of an individual. The California Vehicle Code requires the collection of the Social Security Number.

Why? The California driver's license and identification card have been declared as primary identification documents in this state by the California legislature.

*State law requires every applicant for an original California identification (ID) card and driver's license to show **verification of birth date and proof of legal presence** within the United States to help safeguard the accuracy and integrity of departmental documents.*

How? Only the **original or a certified copy** of one of the following documents is acceptable:

- Resident Alien Card •Temporary Resident Identification Card
- Canadian Passport or Birth Certificate •Nonresident Alien Canadian Border Crossing Card
- Valid foreign passport with a valid Record of Arrival/Departure (form I-94 Arrival-Departure Record)

If you have a license from another country, you will be required to take a driving test. If you have a license from another state, the driving test can be waived. You have three chances to pass the drive test.

To take your driving test, you will need to:

- Call a DMV office to set up an appointment. (Driving tests are not given without an appointment.)
- Provide proof of financial responsibility/Show evidence of liability insurance

After you pass your drive test you will be issued an **interim license** valid for 60 days until you receive your new photo license in the mail. If you did not present complete documentation to verify birth date and legal presence, you will be issued a **temporary license** valid for 60 days until you complete the documentation requirements. Make sure you provide the DMV with your correct mailing address.

WARNING: International students applying for a California driver's license may have to wait up to one year to receive a permanent license. The reason for this is that the DMV has to go through the extra step of verifying the student's immigration status with the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services before issuing a license. If you have not received your license after 60 days, you can write or fax the Sacramento DMV (phone: 916-657-7445 or fax: 916-657-6419) and ask again that they solicit the verification from the Immigration Service. Send to DMV a copy of your passport, 1-94card, temporary driver's license and phone number. The DMV will renew your request for verification with the San Francisco BCIS office. In the meantime you should continue to update your temporary license until the permanent license arrives.

If you wish to apply for a motorcycle license, the procedure is similar; however, you must complete a motorcycle riding training course given by the California Highway Patrol or the Department of Motor Vehicles. Obtain the Motorcycle Driver Handbook for more information.

Vision exam requirement: A 20/40 visual acuity with or without glasses is the department's vision guideline. The department has authority for administering the vision exam per the California Vehicle Code.

Bring your eyeglasses if you wear them. Applicants who do not pass the eye exam may, depending on the circumstances, be referred to a vision specialist. The vision specialist may prescribe eyeglasses or a stronger prescription for the current eyeglasses worn.

Negligent operator violation point count: Once you are licensed to drive in California it is important that you continue to follow all the laws and practice safe driving habits. If you start accumulating tickets for moving violations, which count as 1 or 2 points, you may be considered a negligent operator and may lose your privilege to drive. Driving offenses, such as hit and run, reckless driving, and driving under the influence, are designated as 2 points and will remain on your record for 7 years from the violation date. Most other offenses are designated as 1 point and will remain on your record for 3 years from the violation date. Any "at fault" accident is normally counted as 1 point. *If you are cited for a 1-point violation, use a local traffic school to keep the point off your record. Valid once every 18 months.*

You will be considered a negligent operator if your driving record shows any of the following point count totals: 4 points in 12 months, or 6 points in 24 months, or 8 points in 36 months

When you are required to report an accident to the DMV

If you are involved in a vehicle accident that occurred in California, you must report it to the DMV if:

- There was property damage of more than \$500 **or**

- Any one was injured (no matter how minor) or killed.

Each driver must make a report to the DMV within 10 days, whether you caused the accident or not and even if the accident occurred on private property. *If you have insurance, notify your insurance company and they will file the report on your behalf.*

DMV Traffic Accident Report form SR 1/SR 1A.

If you do not submit this report, your driving privilege will be suspended. DMV may ask your insurance company to verify that you had coverage in effect at the time of the accident. If you did not have insurance, your driving privilege will be suspended for 1 year. To get your license back, after the suspension, you will need to provide proof of financial responsibility and maintain it on record for 3 years. The accident may count as 1 point on your driving record.

Identification (ID) cards

DMV issues ID cards to persons of any age. The ID card is similar to a driver's license, but is used for identification purposes only. A regular ID card is valid for 6 years.

To apply for an ID card you will need to do the following:

- Visit a [DMV office](#) ([make an appointment](#) for faster service)
- Complete application form DL 44 (An original DL 44 form must be submitted. Copies will not be accepted.)
- Give a thumb print
- Have your picture taken
- Verify your [birth date and legal presence](#). (**Provide your passport, *valid Record of I-94 Arrival/Departure form and I-20 as verification***).
- Pay the \$20 regular fee

*F-1 students must present the Certificate of Eligibility for F-1 student status, also frequently called the I-20 ID (Student) Copy. (The I-20 must have the notations stamped "F-1 D/S" by the BCIS)

*A current I-94 card, also known as the "arrival/departure card." (This I-94 card should be stamped with the correct notation "F-1 D/S")

Warning: If your I-94 card or I-20 is not properly stamped, you will not be allowed to apply for a CA ID card. You will need to go to the local USCIS (U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services) Office and request that your documents be corrected.