



## Getting a Driver's License

International students and their dependents **over the age of 15** may be eligible to drive a motor vehicle while residing in the United States. However, those who wish to operate a vehicle must successfully apply for and receive a driver's license. Driving a car without a driver's license is illegal. To acquire a driver's license, you must apply for one at your local Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), which can have a different name in some states.

**DMV offices are the only place that issue legal and valid U.S. driver's licenses in the United States. Attempting to get a U.S. driver's license from any other person or place is illegal.**

### Driver's License Application Process Prerequisites:

The application process for receiving a driver's license may be different in each state. Generally, these steps include:

- Enter the USA on an F-1 visa.
- Register for full course load as per SEVP regulations.
- Complete the New International Student Orientation (NISO) and its check-in process by submitting copies of your passport, F-1 visa, I-94, U.S. address, U.S. telephone number, and emergency contact information.
- Get your I-20 signed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> page by an ISSS office staff. If you are a new student, wait until the classes begin. Please note that signature is valid for 6 months only.
- Wait 10 days after arriving in the United States to apply for a driver's license so that your [Form I-94, "Arrival/Departure Record"](#) information can update in all the government systems.
- Obtain a Social Security number (SSN), if required by your state or territory. Please contact ISSS about the SSN process and the SSN Support Letter from ISSS.
- Locate your local DMV Office:
  - For New Mexico: <https://www.mvd.newmexico.gov/>
  - For Texas: <https://www.dps.texas.gov/section/driver-license>
- Visit and submit the proper documentation below to the DMV.

### Required Documentation

When you apply for a driver's license at your local DMV, make sure to bring original copies of the following documents:

- Hard copy of your I-20 signed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> page by ISSS office.
- A valid passport and your most recent and valid student visa (Please note that you do not need a visa if you are from a visa-exempt country, such as Canada or Bermuda).
- I-94
- If you are on optional practical training (OPT), bring your Form I-766, "Employment Authorization Document" (EAD card).

- 2 proofs of residency (must include your New Mexico or Texas address), such as:
  1. Rental Agreement
  2. Bank Statement
  3. Utility Bill
  4. Phone Bill (landline only; a cell phone bill will not be accepted as proof of residency)
  5. Paycheck Stub

**If you are under the age of 25**, you must also bring in documentation that you successfully completed the DWI Prevention and Education Program, called None for the Road. You can download the workbook and watch the instructional videos online at <https://www.nonefortheroad.org/>.

Please note that you are NOT required to have a social security number in order to obtain a state driver's license as a foreign national in New Mexico.

**MVD:** You can schedule an appointment with them and please check the website for more information and FAQ's: <https://www.mvd.newmexico.gov/nm-drivers-licenses-ids/> for New Mexico or <https://www.dps.texas.gov/section/driver-license> for Texas.

**MVD express:** You can schedule an appointment with MVD Express at a premium fee and contact them if you have any questions. <https://www.mvdexpress.com/blog/new-mexico-dmv/foreign-national-dl-information/>

### **Take the Tests**

When you have met the above requirements, you are eligible to take the written driving test and the road test. The written test is generally available for you to take a half an hour before your scheduled road test. To study for the written test, you can download the New Mexico Driver's Manual at [http://www.dmv.org/nm-new-mexico/driver-handbook.php#Driver License Manual](http://www.dmv.org/nm-new-mexico/driver-handbook.php#Driver_License_Manual). If you do not pass the written test, you will need to reschedule your road test.

For the road test, you must bring a vehicle. Without a license, you will need to have someone drive you to the road test. An examiner will go on a short ride with you to assess your driving skills. After you pass the road test, you must also pass a vision test in order to obtain your [New Mexico driver's license](#).

### **Additional information:**

- If you are required an SSN card or a [Form SSA-L676, "Refusal to Process SSN Application."](#)
- If you are on optional practical training, bring your [Form I-766, "Employment Authorization Document."](#) The DMV will use the A number on this card to verify your status.

If you are an F-2, or J-2 dependent, go to the DMV with your primary F-1, or J-1 and make sure you both have all your required documents.

After a successful application process, a DMV official will explain the next steps for attaining your driver's license. It is normal for some nonimmigrants to only get temporary licenses. In addition, you may receive the license immediately or you may have to wait several weeks, depending on the state.