

Driving in the U.S.

Each state government issues driver's licenses through their own Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). These state licenses are valid for a period of time in all U.S. states and in many countries. The U.S. has a one-year reciprocity agreement with some countries. Citizens of these countries who have a license and an International Permit may drive without a U.S. license for up to one year from the date of admission to the U.S. (List available at <https://drive.ky.gov/driver-licensing/Pages/Non-US-Citizens.aspx>.) After that, you must obtain a U.S. license.

Students from other countries, without a license, or moving from another state must obtain a Kentucky license within 30 days of moving. Car insurance is a legal requirement. The minimum age to rent a car is 21. Purchasing a vehicle requires additional paperwork.

Things To Know

- Always keep your driver's license with you in your wallet
- Licenses have expiry dates and you must get a new license if you have moved states
- Always keep a copy of your insurance and your vehicle's title in the car (also keep electronic copies)
- Violations of license laws can be severe, from significant fines to arrest

Adult Dependents

Dependents of appropriate age may also obtain a driver's license in the U.S. In addition to the materials listed on the next page, F-2 dependents should be accompanied by the F-1 student to the DMV and bring documents proving their relationship to the F-1 student (a marriage or birth certificate).

Resources

- Overview of Driving Issues: <https://www.usa.gov/visitors-driving>
- Kentucky Rules: <https://drive.ky.gov/driver-licensing/Pages/Non-US-Citizens.aspx>
- Kentucky Drivers Manual: kentuckystatepolice.org/drivers-testing
- Louisville-area DMV: www.drivejefferson.com

Louisville DMV

Students in the Louisville area should only use the DMV location at Bowman Field, 3501 Roger Schupp St, Louisville, KY 40205. Their phone number is 502-595-4405 and they are open 8am to 4pm. They can be quite busy, so plan accordingly.

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Timeline

Step One: Gather and request all required identity materials (including from DSO and Registrar)

Step Two: Obtain the “Blue Letter”

Step Three: New drivers must pass the written test, then practice driving with a licensed driver, then pass the practical test. Drivers with a valid license from another state do not have to take these tests.

Step Four: Purchase driver’s insurance

Step Five: If you are purchasing a vehicle, you will need to make sure it has proper paperwork and have that paperwork transferred to your name. This includes the vehicle’s title and registration, as well as the license plate and tags. A car from out-of-state will need to pass an inspection. Be cautious of scams or sellers without the proper paperwork.

Identity Materials

1. Passport and visa
2. Updated I-94
3. I-20 for F-1 students or DS-2019 for J-1 students
4. Proof of Kentucky residence (<https://drive.ky.gov/Docs/ValidProofDocuments.pdf>)
5. Letter from Registrar’s office (no older than 30 days)
6. Form TC 94-159 from Bellarmine DSO (no older than 30 days)
7. Either Social Security Number (SSN) or Form SSA-L676 (refusal to process SSN application)
8. OPT students only: EAD card

Social Security Number

Only students authorized to work can obtain a Social Security Number (SSN). If you do not have an SSN, you will need to submit a Form SSA-L676 to the Social Security Administration, so they can confirm their refusal to process an SSN for you and you can provide this proof to the DMV. The Louisville branch is located at 601 W Broadway Room 101 and they can be reached at 1-866-716-9671.

The “Blue Letter”

The “Blue Letter” is an additional document only produced by the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet and required for all noncitizens to apply for a license. Gather all other materials and visit the Regional Field Office in the Buechel Station Shopping Center at 4109 Bardstown Rd, Unit 105 in Louisville, KY 40218. They are open Monday-Friday from 8am to 3pm and can be reached at 502-493-1477.