

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · ALABAMA

How to Get a Driver License in Alabama: 2026 Guide

Research found no status-independent second card, and no county counter handles foreign national transactions. Picking the right door from the start is what this guide is about.

SHORT ANSWER

In this state **research found no second, status-independent driving card**. The agency's own driver manual requires every first-time applicant to **submit proof of authorized presence in the United States as authorized under federal law**, and the same manual states that the agency **presumes an applicant's status to be unauthorized** until documents are presented. **This is not a procedural tip, it is a reason to consult a lawyer**. And on the door side there is a measured fact that shapes your first week: **at all 124 county counters of the local type, foreign national transactions are handled at none of them**, with not a single exception; at state offices they are handled at **most, not all**. **Do not decide from the office's name**; the rule follows the agency's type field, not the name.

The right door first: read this before you book

This item was read from the agency's own office data set, all 203 offices, October 12, 2026. **Even with every document in order, the wrong door will not process you**, and that is a separate question from which documents will be asked for.

OFFICE TYPE	FOREIGN NATIONAL TRANSACTIONS
Local (county) counters, 124 offices	Handled at none of them . Neither original issuance nor renewal, with not a single exception
State offices	Handled at most of them , but not all : six state offices do not, and one of them is the office in the state capital

The first conclusion, and it is rare in this series: on the county side we can write **none of them** rather than we could not find out. Queueing at the counter in the city printed on your envelope is **a wasted day**. **The second conclusion:** the sentence every state office handles them cannot be written either. The right word is **most**, not all.

ASK TWO QUESTIONS ON THE TELEPHONE, NOT ONE

- In the agency's data set **original issuance** and **renewal** are two separate fields, and **they can come apart**. At one state office issuance is closed while renewal is open.
- **First question:** does this office issue a first license or identification card to a foreign national applicant?
- **Second question:** does this office process a renewal for a foreign national holder?
- **Do not assume that a yes to one means a yes to the other**, and write the two answers down separately.

THE OFFICE NAME GIVES THE WRONG ANSWER

- What decides whether the transaction is handled is the office's **type, not its name**. At four offices the name and the type do not match.
- An office carrying the state agency's abbreviation in its name can be of the **local** type. The reader takes it for a state office, goes there, and **the transaction is not handled**.
- An office named simply License Office can be of the **state** type. The reader takes it for a county counter and never goes, even though **the transaction is handled there**.
- **We give you no shortcut:** confirm the type through [the agency's own office finder](#), then ask the two questions above by telephone.
- **Office schedules also differ sharply by county.** In some small counties the office is open **one day a week** and the last testing hour falls well before the end of the day.

Three documents, and no fourth one

DOCUMENT	FOR WHOM	TERM
Driver license (standard Class D)	Applicants who meet the document requirements	4 years
Non-driver identification card	People who do not drive but need identification	No term given on the agency page
STAR ID	The federal marking added to an existing license or card	Tied to the card
A separate, status-independent driving card	Research found no such card. We do not write that there is none	No term question arises

The agency's three sentences, and the fourth that was not found

The three quotations below come from the **official driver manual** and all three were verified. We present them as **neither a promise nor a threat**; they are the agency's own words.

- **The authorized presence requirement:** All applicants for an original Alabama driver license or identification card must submit proof of authorized presence in the United States as authorized under federal law.

- **The presumption sentence:** ...the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency presumes their status in the United States to be unauthorized until the applicant presents documents evidencing, to the satisfaction of the Department, that their presence in the United States is authorized.
- **For a person who has been deported:** in addition to the identity requirements, the agency asks for **documentation from the federal immigration agency that lawful presence status has been restored.**
- **And the fourth sentence that was not found:** in some states in this series the agency's own publication carried an explicit sentence saying the information used for the card **would not be used to determine status. Research found no such sentence in Alabama** and the agency's privacy page does not open. **We do not write that there is none; we write that it was not found**, and those are not the same thing.

Documents required, and the route open to an applicant with no number

- **A valid foreign passport**, together with an accepted visa or a permanent resident card.
- **Verification of the Social Security number, or a letter from the Social Security Administration stating non-eligibility.** For a reader with no number the second is the real route, and it appears on the agency's own list. **Obtaining that letter means a separate appointment and a separate wait;** put a second line on your calendar.
- **A document from the secondary list** authorizing presence for more than a set period. The list includes an **employment authorization document** with a valid Social Security card, a **valid visa** with its supporting documents, a **valid arrival and departure record**, and an **action notice** showing approval of a change or extension of status.
- **Among the primary documents a reader may hold:** a valid foreign passport with a valid immigration document, and a permanent resident card.

A CONFLICT WE PRINT AND DO NOT TAKE SIDES ON

- One agency page requires the secondary document to authorize presence for more than **160 days**.
- Another page of the same agency says more than **30 days**.
- **The official driver manual is also on the 30-day side.** So two of three publications say 30 and one says 160.
- **Call the office before you go** and ask by naming the document you hold.

Accepted visa classes

The manual names the accepted nonimmigrant categories: A, B (excluding B-1), E, F, G-4, H, I, J, K, L, M, NATO, O, P, Q, R, S, T, TN, TD, TPS, U, V. Three points touch the reader directly: **B-1 is excluded**; F and M holders are also asked for an I-20 and J-1 and J-2 holders for a DS-2019 or IAP-66; and **temporary protected status is named on the list**.

Test language: no Turkish, but an oral test exists

The manual states that the written test is given in **eleven languages**: Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Thai and Vietnamese. **Turkish does not appear on that list**. But the same manual names a second route: an **oral test for applicants who cannot read and understand the knowledge tests**. Which languages the oral test is given in could not be found; ask the office before you book.

Fees and terms

ITEM	AMOUNT OR TERM
Test fee	5 dollars , checks not accepted
The license itself (Class D)	36.25 dollars
Non-driver identification card	36.25 dollars , plus 5 dollars document review on first issuance
Transfer of an out-of-state license	5 dollars transfer plus 36.25 dollars
Paying by credit card	A 4 percent processing charge on the total
License term	4 years . The statute describes a separate calculation for a first license tied to the birth year, so your first card may be shorter
Renewal window	From 180 days before expiration
After expiration	60 days of statutory grace, renewal without testing for up to 3 years . But driving on an expired license is not lawful
Address change	Within 30 days of moving inside the state; free, and no new card is printed
Mailing of the card	Cards are not forwarded to another address . The agency's own sentence

A note on status-linked terms: research **did not find** a legend on the face of the card tied to the length of your status; but that does not mean the term issued is not shortened to match your status. This item could not be verified, so ask the office.

A Turkish license: not exchanged, obtained from scratch

QUESTION	ANSWER
Is a Turkish license exchanged for an Alabama license?	No . The reciprocity announcement the agency published names Taiwan, Korea and Germany. Türkiye is not on that list and research found no other list; the announcement itself dates from 2015
Is a Turkish license useful at all?	Partly, as identification . A valid international driving permit appears as an item on the agency's secondary document list. It is not a test waiver

QUESTION	ANSWER
What if I came from another U.S. state?	No driving test is required of a person whose out-of-state license has not been expired for more than one year . That route is for U.S. licenses only
How long do I have?	The statute requires an Alabama license within 30 days of establishing residence in the state. No clear agency sentence applying the same period to someone arriving directly from abroad could be read ; ask the office in writing

THE TEXT IN THE CODE, AND WHY WE PRINT IT WITH AN ATTORNEY WARNING

- A section dating from the 2011 act sits in the code and touches this counter directly. It treats **a plate application and renewal and a license or non-driver identification card application and renewal** as a public records transaction, requires the applicant to show citizenship or lawful presence, and ties verification to **a federal system**.
- The same section also contains two limits: agencies applying it **may not consider race, color or national origin**, and **no state or local official may make a final determination on an alien's lawful presence on their own**.
- **The text sitting in the code does not mean the provision can be enforced today**. The state's own legislative server shows repeals but **gives no signal at all about provisions a court has stopped**; enjoined texts sit there in full and **without warning**.
- **The current standing of this section could not be verified**. So we give you no procedural tip here: **talk to a lawyer about your own situation before you apply**.
- **What is certain regardless of the court order is separate**: the agency asks for proof of lawful presence in its own publication. **That is the requirement you will meet at the counter**.

- 1 Talk to your attorney first.** There is no easy path in this state and we are not describing one.
- 2 Pick the right door:** no county counter handles foreign national transactions. Confirm the office type through [the agency's office finder](#).
- 3 Ask two separate questions by telephone:** original issuance and renewal. Write both answers down.
- 4 With no number, request the non-eligibility letter from the Social Security Administration;** that is a separate appointment.
- 5 Gather your documents** and ask how much time must remain on your secondary document: the agency's publications conflict between 30 and 160 days.
- 6 Ask about the oral test before you book.** The written test is given in eleven languages and Turkish is not among them.
- 7 Do not wait for a waiver.** Türkiye does not appear on the reciprocity list; prepare for all three tests.
- 8 Tie the car errand to this one:** registration requires a valid license or state identification card from every owner on the title.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN ALABAMA

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