

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · DELAWARE

How to Get a Driver License in Delaware: 2026 Guide

There are two separate card regimes and they exclude each other. With lawful status you get a federally compliant card; without it, a Delaware-only card whose price is two years of state tax filings.

SHORT ANSWER

Delaware is the **first clearly two-track state in this series**, and the two tracks exclude each other. With lawful status you get an **ordinary, federally compliant Delaware license**. Without lawful status the state issues a separate card that is **valid only inside Delaware** and carries, in red lettering, **Driving Privilege Only** and **Not Valid for Identification**. There is no choice to make: **U.S. citizens and people with valid proof of lawful presence cannot even apply for the second card**. The entry price of that second card is the steepest in this series, because it requires **two years of Delaware tax filings**, a compliance certificate from the state revenue agency, and a fingerprint file. The clock is **60 days** after you become a Delaware resident.

Separate the two cards up front, because there is no crossover

TRACK	WHO IT IS FOR	WHAT THE CARD DOES
Ordinary license and ID card	Citizens, green card holders, and nonimmigrants who can document lawful presence	Federally compliant card; it works as identification at the airport and in federal buildings
Driving privilege card	Delaware residents without proof of lawful presence, in the agency's words regardless of nationality	Authority to drive inside Delaware only ; in the agency's own sentence it is not considered a valid form of identification

The second card was created by a 2015 law and has been issued since **December 27, 2015**. The agency writes two things twice on the same page: the card is not valid outside Delaware, and **citizens and people with valid proof of lawful presence are not eligible for it**. So this is not an alternative, it is a separate regime, and moving from one track to the other depends on your status changing. On the ordinary track the agency's sentence reads: the lawful status and authorized period of stay of every applicant who is not a U.S. citizen must be verified **at first issuance, on out-of-state transfers, and at every renewal**. Note that renewal is covered: you need your status document in hand when the card is renewed as well.

DELAWARE PRINTS THE INELIGIBLE IMMIGRATION STATUSES BY NAME

- Most states in this series say "lawful presence is required" and stop there. **Delaware is the first state to list the ineligible statuses one by one**, and we pass the list along because it concerns a Turkish reader directly.
- **Not eligible:** B-1 (business visitor) and B-2 (tourist visitor); visa waiver business and tourist entries; C-1, C-2 and C-3 (transit); D-1 (ship and aircraft crew); G-1 (permanent representative to an international organization, staff and family members); A-1 (ambassadors, diplomatic and consular officers, family members), because in the agency's words a person in A status can be licensed only by the U.S. Department of State; and A-2 (other foreign government officials and family members), except foreign military personnel and their family members.
- Also ineligible: anyone whose immigration or passport documents are **invalid or expired**, holders of an I-94 **without a valid stamp**, and anyone with an unexpired temporary I-551 visa attached to a passport.
- **Türkiye is not a visa waiver country, so those two lines do not reach a Turkish reader; the B-1 and B-2 lines do.** The practical result for someone who arrived on a tourist or business visa is plain: **Delaware will not license you.**

Temporary status: the card is not marked, it is shortened

Delaware handles temporary status **by shortening the card rather than marking it**, which is the opposite choice from states that print a band across the card. The consequences are opposite too: **the card works at the airport, it just keeps expiring.**

STATUS	CARD TERM
U.S. citizen	8-year license or 4-year ID card
Lawful permanent resident	8-year license or 4-year ID card; alien registration number required , and no document is issued until federal verification clears
Nonimmigrant with a fixed-term status	The card expires no later than the authorized period of stay
Records showing indefinite or duration of status	In the agency's own sentence, a one-year expiration date

That last row is the sharpest rule for an F-1 or J-1 reader: if the record says duration of status, which is the typical student situation, Delaware issues a **twelve-month** card. Put the renewal appointment on your calendar now. On documents: nonimmigrants need an **I-94 number**, except in refugee, asylee and parolee situations where an alien registration number exists. F-1, F-2 and M-1 bring an **I-20** plus an unexpired foreign passport and the I-94; J-1 and J-2 bring a valid **DS-2019** or IAP-66. The document structure is two-layered: **one primary document plus one secondary document**, plus your Social Security number if you are eligible, plus **two separate proofs of Delaware residency**. The most important line for a Turkish reader: **a valid foreign passport is accepted as proof of identity and lawful presence, but the agency says in the same sentence that an appropriate immigration document is also required.** A Turkish passport does not travel alone here.

The second card: the steepest entry price and the clearest paper trail

- 1 **Fingerprints.** Taken by appointment at the state identification bureau, and since **September 11, 2023** the appointment must be made **online**; the agency publishes the address **uenroll.identogo.com** and the service code **27S424**. The fee in the agency's own fee file is **\$52**.
 - 2 **Two years of Delaware tax filings.** The applicant must obtain a **Certification of Filing Compliance** from the state revenue agency. It confirms that Delaware taxes were filed **for the previous two years** and carries the applicant's name, date of birth, the years filed, an **ITIN or Social Security number**, and a document tracking code. On top of that, the certificate is **re-verified with the revenue agency at the counter**. Revenue agency: 302-577-8200.
 - 3 **Appearing in person.** Every document must be an **original or a certified copy**; photocopies, altered documents and expired documents are not accepted. **A document in a foreign language must be translated into English by a professional translator, and the original must be presented alongside the translation.** The agency verifies, scans and retains an image of every document submitted.
 - 4 **At that same first visit** the vision screening and the knowledge test can be done. Anyone who passes receives a **learner permit**, and the agency requires everyone to hold that permit for **at least 10 days** before the road test.
- **Proof of residency is stricter on this track: two documents from two separate sources**, each showing a **physical address** (no post office box), each **delivered by the postal service**, and each **mailed or received within the last 60 days**. Private courier deliveries, printouts of bills, and non-commercial letters and cards are not accepted.
 - **Türkiye is on the identity list: a valid foreign passport** that the agency recognizes and can verify electronically is accepted, and the published country table shows **2010** for Türkiye, meaning a Turkish passport **issued in 2010 or later**. The agency also writes that the list can change, so confirm before your appointment.
 - **Card terms:** the learner permit runs 6 months, the card 4 years. The card carries two red legends and a red frame around the photograph.
 - **Family members are eligible too** if they meet the conditions; minors also bring the **original and the translation** of their birth certificates.
 - **One enforcement rule:** anyone who previously obtained a Delaware license under a different identity must surrender that document, **serve a six-month suspension**, and pay a restoration fee; only then can they apply under their real identity.
 - **A fee note:** the sentence on the agency's explanatory page is broken and has dropped the figure. The agency's own fee file lists **\$20** for this card. We take the figure from the file but tell you to **confirm it at the counter**, because the published sentence is incomplete.

THE AGENCY'S USCIS SENTENCE IS A POLICY STATEMENT, NOT A LAW

- In its frequently asked questions the agency writes that **the DMV does not report this card information to USCIS and is not in the deportation business**, and that its only interest is credentialing drivers for highway safety.
- We pass that sentence along as written, but **we also say what it is: an answer in a frequently asked questions section, not a statutory provision**. Some states in this series wrote the same protection into statute; Delaware did not.
- So this is an **administrative policy statement**, not a legal assurance, and **policy can change**. We do not present it as a promise either.
- If you are weighing a risk tied to your status, do not rest the decision on that sentence; talk to an attorney who is looking at your own file.

A Turkish license is not converted, but it is not taken from you either

- **The reciprocity list is the shortest in this series** and carries three countries: Germany, Taiwan and France. Those drivers are exempt from the knowledge and road tests **for a Class D license only**, and the agency notes that endorsements are not part of reciprocity. **Türkiye is not on the list, so you take both tests**.
- **But your card stays with you**. The agency's own sentence: drivers from other countries may retain their foreign license. Some states in this series take a foreign card at the counter or punch it void; Delaware does not. When you go back to Türkiye, or rent a car in another country, the card is still in your hand.
- **How the sixty days are counted**: in the agency's words, a nonresident driver must apply for a Delaware license sixty days after becoming a Delaware resident. Until then, a nonresident over 16 with a valid license from their country may drive **as long as the license is directly on their person**. **Leaving the card at home is a violation**.
- **Transfers from another U.S. state** run on the same sixty days with different conditions: you surrender the out-of-state license or submit a **current certified driving record** instead; you bring proof of citizenship or lawful presence, proof of your number, and two proofs of Delaware residency; you sign a surrender affidavit and pass a vision screening; and the agency says the tests are normally waived if your license is valid. **A suspended, revoked or restricted license cannot be transferred until those matters are cleared**.
- **An international driving permit is not a license**, it is a translation carried alongside the national license. We **could not find** any requirement about it on Delaware's pages, so we say neither that it is required nor that it is pointless.

The test, the language question and the fees

The examination has two parts: a **vision screening** and a **test on traffic signs and signals**. The vision standard is **20/40**, with or without correction; if correction is needed the card is marked accordingly, and vision between 20/40 and 20/50 can carry a **daylight-driving-only** restriction. In the sign test, signs are shown **without their wording**, by shape, color or symbol alone. **On language we promise nothing in either direction**: the agency publishes no list of the languages the test is offered in, so we can neither write that

Turkish is available nor that it is not. The only language accommodation we found in writing is this sentence: **interpreters are permitted to assist during the application and testing process**, and that sentence sits on the **driving privilege card page**, not the ordinary license page. Before you book, call **1-877-477-7117** or **302-744-2500** and ask in two parts: in which languages is the test offered, and may I bring my own interpreter.

ITEM	FEE
Class D license, 8 years	\$50
Class D license, 5 / 6 / 7 years	\$25 / \$30 / \$35
Photo identification card	\$40
Driving privilege card, 4 years	\$20; the published sentence is broken, confirm at the counter
Fingerprints, on the second-card track	\$52
Duplicate license / duplicate ID card	\$20 / \$10
Change of address	No charge
Change of name / late renewal	\$10 / \$10
Motorcycle endorsement, 8 years	\$12
Driving record	\$25
Restoration after suspension / after revocation	\$50 / \$200

Where you go: four facilities, and none in Smyrna

COUNTY	FACILITY AND ADDRESS	PHONE
Kent, the office for a Smyrna resident	Dover DMV, 303 Transportation Circle, P.O. Box 698, Dover, DE 19903	302-744-2500
New Castle	Delaware City DMV, 2101 Mid County Drive, New Castle, DE 19720	302-326-5000
New Castle	Greater Wilmington DMV, 2230 Hessler Boulevard, New Castle, DE 19720	302-434-3200
Sussex	Georgetown DMV, 23737 DuPont Blvd., Georgetown, DE 19947	302-853-1000

Read the hours twice, because they do not follow the usual pattern in this series: all four offices are open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday **8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**, and **Wednesday 11:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.** **There is no Saturday service**, and Wednesday is the only evening window. Cash, checks, money orders and credit cards are accepted; a returned check costs \$25, and if the amount and the penalty are not paid within **10 days** the license is suspended. If you are on the second-card track, three of the four appointments are in Dover: the state identification bureau's Kent office for fingerprints (655 South Bay Road, Suite 1B, Dover, DE 19901; 302-739-2528), the revenue agency's Kent office for the tax certificate (Thomas Collins Building, 540 S. DuPont Highway, Dover; 302-744-1085), and the DMV itself. **We could not read the ZIP code of the revenue agency's Kent office from the agency's page**, because the address block is printed broken;

confirm it before you go. One convenience: you can reach the Dover DMV by bus, since route 301's stop list includes the stop across from the DMV administration building.

YOU DO NOT FLY ON THAT CARD, YOU FLY ON YOUR PASSPORT

- **The driving privilege card is not identification**, and the red legend on it says exactly that. It does not substitute for an acceptable identity document at an airport checkpoint.
- The federal transportation security agency set a **\$45** fee for travelers who arrive at a checkpoint **without an acceptable identity document** and choose to use the agency's alternative identity verification program. The rule is dated **December 3, 2025** and is effective from that date; the text is readable at govinfo.gov.
- **Get the structure of the fee right**: in the agency's words the \$45 applies **per individual, per 10-day use**, and the condition in the parenthesis matters: **the individual must be able to verify their identity for each use during that 10-day period**. So this is not a per-flight charge, it is a ten-day window, but the verification requirement stands at every use inside the window.
- **And the agency's own warning is the part that matters most to a reader**: participation is **voluntary**, the fee is **nonrefundable**, and paying it **does not assure** that your identity will be verified or that you will be admitted to the screening checkpoint; a person may be subject to additional screening or experience delays. **Paying \$45 and still missing the flight is a real risk**, which is exactly why you bring your passport.
- **What it means for Delaware, in one sentence**: do not go to the airport on that card, **go on your passport**. This is a planning note, not a threat.
- For someone with lawful status who receives the ordinary Delaware card there is no problem here, because that card is **federally compliant**; but since the term follows your status, **check the card's expiration date against your travel date**.

- 1 **Work out which track you are on**. The two tracks exclude each other, and your status decides; the ineligible statuses are printed by name above.
- 2 **Put the sixty days on your calendar**. The clock runs from the day you become a **Delaware resident**, not from your visa date.
- 3 **Carry your status document on every visit**. Verification repeats at first issuance, on transfer, and **at every renewal**.
- 4 **Prepare two Delaware residency documents**; on the second-card track both must have arrived by mail within the last 60 days and show a physical address.
- 5 **If you are on the second-card track, plan the tax filings now**. No filings means no compliance certificate, and no certificate means no card.
- 6 **Do not discard your Turkish license, bring it with you**. It is not surrendered, and it is useful when you travel back.
- 7 **Ask the agency about the test language**, not this guide, and ask for the answer in writing.
- 8 **If you are a student whose record says duration of status, treat the card as a one-year card** and book the renewal appointment early.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN DELAWARE

Have a question about your immigration status?

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