

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · HOUSTON

How to Get a Driver's License in Houston: 2026 Guide

For Houston newcomers, green card and visa holders, and drivers arriving with a foreign license: documents, tests, fees and DPS offices.

SHORT ANSWER

Texas driver's licenses are issued by DPS offices, by appointment only. For a first license you need proof of lawful presence (green card, EAD, or passport + visa + I-94), your SSN (or a DL-13 affidavit at the office), two documents showing a Texas address with at least 30 days of residence, and Texas insurance for any car you own. The fee is \$33. On September 16, 2026, first-time appointments in Houston were 2 to 8 days out.

Before you start

- **You cannot apply in your first month.** One address document must show at least 30 days of Texas residence.
- **Register your car first.** The Harris County Tax Office says to register your vehicle before you apply for a Texas license. Bring the Tax Office receipt and your insurance to DPS.
- **Appointments come fast in Houston.** On DPS's September 16, 2026 report, first-time appointments at Houston offices were 2 to 8 days out and road tests 8 to 20 days out. The road test is the real wait.
- **The knowledge test is English or Spanish only.** Interpreters are not allowed during the test.
- **Most foreign licenses cannot be exchanged.** Only France, Germany, South Korea, the UAE, Taiwan and other U.S. states are exempt from testing. Türkiye is not on the list.
- **Your previous license is valid for 90 days** after you become a Texas resident.

Step by step

- 1 **Book an appointment** at txdpsscheduler.com, choosing the "Original" service. Slots open up to 6 months ahead, and every office offers a limited number of same-day slots, first come, first served.
- 2 **Gather original documents.** No photocopies. DPS's document check tool builds a checklist: dps.texas.gov/apps/DriverLicense/RealID.
- 3 **Complete ITAD.** If you are 25 or older, finish the one-hour Impact Texas Adult Drivers video (impacttexasdrivers.dps.texas.gov); the certificate is valid for 90 days. Ages 18 to 24 also need a 6-hour adult driver education course.
- 4 **Apply at the office** with Form DL-14A. Fingerprints, photo and a vision test.

- 5 Take the knowledge test** on traffic laws and signs, in English or Spanish.
- 6 Take the road test** in an insured, registered vehicle. It may be scheduled separately, so book it early.
- 7 Pay the fee.** You leave with a temporary license; the card arrives by mail in 2 to 3 weeks.

Document checklist

DOCUMENT	NOTES
☐ Proof of lawful presence	Green card (I-551), EAD (I-766), or a valid passport + visa + I-94. DPS verifies it with DHS.
☐ Identity	A green card, an EAD and "passport + visa + I-94" count as primary ID. A foreign passport alone is only a supporting document.
☐ SSN	Provide your number. If you are not eligible for an SSN, you sign a DL-13 affidavit at the office (no CDL on this basis).
☐ Address document #1	Lease or deed, or an electric, gas, water, internet or cell phone bill from the last 180 days.
☐ Address document #2	Bank statement, pay stub, insurance policy, government mail or a USCIS notice. One must show 30 days in Texas.
☐ Vehicle documents	Texas insurance and the Harris County Tax Office receipt for each vehicle you own. If you own none, you say so.
☐ ITAD certificate	Age 25 and older, before the road test. Valid 90 days.
☐ Driver education certificate	Only for first-time applicants aged 18 to 24.

Fees (2026)

ITEM	FEE	VALID FOR
Driver's license, ages 18 to 84	\$33	8 years
Limited Term license	\$33	Your authorized stay
Texas ID card, age 59 and under	\$16	6 years
Replacement card	\$11	-

Texas does not let you hold a license and an ID card at the same time. Since May 7, 2025, domestic flights accept only REAL ID cards (marked with a star) or a passport.

If you are not a U.S. citizen

NOTE FOR IMMIGRANTS

- Green card holders get a standard 8-year license. Other statuses get a "Limited Term" card that expires with the authorized stay on your I-94.
- For duration-of-status (D/S) holders such as F-1 and J-1 students, the license is valid for one year.
- After an extension or change of status you renew in person with the new documents. DPS recommends coming at least 30 days before expiration.
- If DHS verification is not instant, track it at txapps.texas.gov.
- **If you are not a citizen, answer "no" to "Are you a U.S. citizen?" on the form.** USCIS treats a "yes" as a false claim of citizenship, with serious consequences.

Houston-area DPS offices

Estimated days to the next appointment (DPS report, September 16, 2026). Waits change daily; check the current report before you book.

OFFICE	FIRST LICENSE	ROAD TEST
Houston North Mega Center, 8418 Veterans Memorial Blvd, Houston 77088	about 2 days	about 10 days
Houston Southeast Mega Center, 10810 Galveston Rd, Houston 77034	about 2 days	about 12 days
Spring Mega Center	about 3 days	about 11 days
Rosenberg Mega Center, 27750 Southwest Fwy, Rosenberg 77471	about 3 days	about 8 days
Houston Gessner Mega Center, 12220 S Gessner Rd, Houston 77071	about 4 days	about 8 days
Houston East (Tidwell)	about 4 days	about 13 days
Baytown	about 4 days	about 19 days
Houston Dacoma	about 7 days	about 12 days
Humble	about 8 days	about 20 days

Other addresses and hours: [DPS office locator](#). Current waits: [DPS wait-times report](#).

Driving on a foreign license

- **Visitors:** your home license with an International Driving Permit (or English translation), for up to one year from entry (ages 18 to 75, private vehicles).
- **New residents:** get a Texas license within 90 days. There is no test exemption for most foreign licenses, including Turkish ones.
- **Renting a car:** rental companies may also ask for the International Driving Permit.

Common mistakes

- Trying to apply in your first week (no 30-day address document yet).
- Going to DPS before registering your car in Harris County.
- Bringing photocopies.
- Showing up for the road test without the ITAD certificate.
- Letting a Limited Term license expire.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN HOUSTON

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