

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · LEXINGTON

Getting a Driver License in Lexington: 2026 Guide

Licensing is no longer handled at the courthouse clerk. There are two regional offices in the city, you may book at any office in the Commonwealth, and a Turkish license leads to a full set of exams, not a course.

SHORT ANSWER

Know three things from the start. **First, a Kentucky driver license is no longer handled at the courthouse clerk:** the work moved in 2022 to the state's own **Driver Licensing Regional Offices**, so the "go to the circuit court clerk" instructions still circulating online are **out of date**. **Second, Lexington has two of those offices**, and the agency's own rule lets you book an appointment at **any regional office in the Commonwealth**, so you are not tied to your county. **Third, licensing and vehicle work do not end at the same counter:** the license is at a state office, **vehicle registration is at the Fayette County Clerk**, and testing is with the **Kentucky State Police**. If you arrived from Turkey, the result here is **not a course but a full set of exams**.

The calendar: 30 days for the license

On the license side the agency is clear: a Kentucky driver license must be obtained **within 30 days** of establishing residency. **For vehicle registration the same page gives two different numbers** and we print both: **10 days** at the top of the page and **15 days** in the insurance section of that same page. **We take no side**. Practical advice: if you own a vehicle, go to the Fayette County Clerk's office **in your first week** and the argument becomes moot.

The two regional offices in Lexington

In the state licensing agency's own office dataset, Lexington shows **two** regional offices. Both are in the same ZIP code, both are in the **Eastern time zone**, and both are open **Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM**:

- **Leestown** - 141 Leestown Center Way, Ste 125, 40511
- **Spindletop** - 2624 Research Park Dr, 40511

Each office has its own email address in the form **KYTC.DDL<OfficeName>@ky.gov**. For testing appointments the Kentucky State Police rule says that since July 5, 2022 you may book at **any regional office in the Commonwealth, regardless of your county**. **That is a concrete bit of flexibility for a Lexington reader:** if both local offices are full, book elsewhere.

TIME ZONE: THE STATE IS SPLIT IN TWO

Lexington is in the Eastern time zone and both city offices carry the **Eastern** label on the agency's own list. **But Kentucky is a state split between two time zones:** on that same list, **26 offices appear as Eastern and 9 as Central.** If you book at an office in the western or southern part of the state, **ask which zone the time is given in.** One hour is a missed appointment.

Fees, from the agency's own price list

CARD	STANDARD 4 YEARS	STANDARD 8 YEARS	REAL ID 4 YEARS	REAL ID 8 YEARS
Driver license	\$21.50	\$43.00	\$24.00	\$48.00
Motorcycle license	\$21.50	\$43.00	\$24.00	\$48.00
Driver and motorcycle combined	\$26.50	\$53.00	\$29.00	\$58.00
ID card	\$11.50	\$23.00	\$14.00	\$28.00
Instruction permit	\$15.00 (3 years)	\$15.00 (3 years)	\$18.00 (3 years)	\$18.00 (3 years)

The agency's payment line: **credit, debit, cash and check** are accepted. **But the choice between 4 and 8 years may not apply to you:** for a non-citizen the term is tied not to your choice but to **your immigration document.**

The card issued to a non-citizen: the term follows your document

What the agency and the statute in force (its own stamp: **Effective: July 1, 2025**) say:

- **A license or ID card issued to a non-U.S. citizen will expire with their USCIS documents.**
- An applicant who is neither a citizen nor a lawful permanent resident **shall only be issued a standard operator's license or instruction permit.** No REAL ID and no voluntary travel ID.
- The application goes to **the Transportation Cabinet in Frankfort or a Transportation Cabinet field office;** the statute's own sentence **does not list the county circuit clerk.**
- The information is verified through the **Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE)** program and through **federal government systems and databases.**
- If identity and status are verified, a **temporary credential valid for 30 days** is issued until the permanent card arrives by mail.
- **If your immigration status changes you must apply to update the card within ten days.**
- Validity: the term of the DHS document **or eight years, whichever is shorter.** If the document is indefinite with no expiration date, **one year** at the normal license fee.
- **Special status individuals** such as asylees, refugees, people paroled in the public interest and K-1 applicants receive a **4-year** credential.
- **A special rule for K-1 fiancé visa holders:** the application must include the **original or a certified copy of the marriage certificate** signed by the officiant and two witnesses, together with the petition for entry to marry; if the names do not match, the agency **is not required to issue a license.**

The section that immediately follows sets the same framework for ID cards: again **only a standard personal identification card**, again SAVE verification, application **in person**, and no voluntary travel ID for an applicant without a fixed nighttime residence, whose card is then valid **one year**.

Does the card show your status? The text of such a marking **was not found** on the agency's page and there is no sample card image; the only thing the statute says is that the card is **standard**. In the 2026 session a bill would have required a citizenship or status marking on every identification document issued after January 1, 2027, and **it did not become law**; the last action line on the bill's own record page leaves it in committee. **We do not write "nothing will appear on your card"**; what we write is that the research found no text for such a marking.

Where your information goes

We state this plainly. The agency's own step list includes: visit a regional office, bring all required documents, **complete the SAVE verification process at the office**. SAVE is the federal homeland security department's immigration status verification system. The same page also notes that the status list may be reviewed and changed as the division **continues strengthening review procedures within the issuance process for non-U.S. citizens**, and the statute points the same way. **So there is no "we will not share this" protective sentence in this state**; on the contrary, verification through federal systems is written down.

Documents and four hard rules

- **No photocopies:** the agency says all documentation must be in the **original form** and is subject to approval.
 - **Notarized translation is required:** **"Foreign licenses, birth certificates, and marriage licenses must include a notarized, translated statement."** Your Turkish documents will not be processed without a translation.
 - **Permanent residents** must present a current permanent resident card or a photo I-551 **for all transactions**, including renewals and updates.
 - An **I-797C in digital format** may be accepted for those awaiting an extension, but it has to be **printed** so the office can scan it into the record.
 - For a transfer from another U.S. state: proof of lawful presence, a **Social Security card, Kentucky residency proof dated within the past year (two documents for a REAL ID)**, the previous state's license, any name change document, and a **certified driver history record or clearance letter dated within the last 30 days**.
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Test languages: Turkish is not among them

The Kentucky State Police list says the written test is available in **Arabic, Burmese, Chinese, Dari, English, French, Kinyarwanda, Japanese, Pashto, Somali, Spanish and Swahili**. Twelve languages, and Turkish is **not on the list**. The driver manual is translated only into Spanish. Two doors do stay open: **some locations have audio versions** of the test and where that is unavailable the test **may be administered orally**; the licensing agency also lists a form called **TC 94-197, Interpreter Affidavit of a Foreign Country Driver License**. **Whether an interpreter may be used during the written test, or only for the office transaction,**

could not be verified. For deaf applicants the agency says to **call your testing site, make an appointment and request a sign language interpreter.**

Renewal and commercial licensing

- For a non-citizen, renewal is done **in person at any regional office** and a **vision screening** is required. All documents appropriate to your status, including the Social Security card and proof of address, have to be brought **again**.
- **Whether online renewal is open to non-citizens could not be verified from the agency's page;** the site has an online renewal button but the in-person requirement for non-citizens is written explicitly.
- **Commercial licensing:** the agency lists who may qualify under the updated federal rules - **H-2A, H-2B, E-2 treaty investor** visas and certain island nations. The concrete result for a Turkish reader: **E-2 is on this list; H-1B, F-1 and L-1 are not.**

Arriving with a Turkish license: exams, not a course

Do not carry over the rule from the previous round of this series. In a neighboring state, not being on the reciprocity list meant a **mandatory driving course. Kentucky is different.** The licensing agency's reciprocity parenthesis names two countries - **Taiwan and South Korea** - and **Turkey is not on it**, but the consequence is not a course, it is the **full testing set:** vision, written and **road test**, with the agency's own line that **the applicant must start with a driver's permit**. Mandatory driver education in this state is written only for permit holders **under 18**.

YOUR SITUATION	WHAT KENTUCKY REQUIRES
Turkish license + green card holder, country on the U.S. accepted list	Vision + written
Turkish license + green card holder, country not on the accepted list	Vision + written + road ; must start with a permit
Turkish license, no green card, country on the accepted list	Vision + written + road
Turkish license, no green card, country not on the accepted list	Written + vision + road ; must start with a permit
A valid license from another U.S. state	No test
Another U.S. state's license, expired less than a year	No test

What the table tells you: with the same foreign license a **green card holder takes only the vision and written tests**, while **someone without a green card also takes the road test**. The difference in status turns directly into a difference in the number of exams.

TWO CONTRADICTIONS WE PRINT, BOTH FROM THE AGENCY'S OWN PAGE

- **First:** the agency uses the phrase "**U.S. accepted foreign country license**" in its tables but **does not publish the list or the definition**. Which row a Turkish license falls into is **unclear**, and we are not going to invent it. The practical result: **be ready to take the road test** and ask the office directly when you book.
- **Second:** the right to drive for a year on a foreign license is tied at the top of the page to **being party to the Geneva Convention** and in the FAQ on the same page to **being on the reciprocity list**. **Turkey is a party to the 1949 Geneva Convention on Road Traffic but is not on Kentucky's two-country list**.
- **We take no side.** The safe advice: do not build a routine on that ambiguity, start the Kentucky licensing process **in your first week**, and ask the office **in writing**.

The order for an applicant with a Turkish license

- 1 **Get an instruction permit.** The agency says an applicant holding a license from a country that is not on the accepted list **must start with a permit**. The fee is **\$15.00** and it is valid three years.
- 2 **Take the written test** with the Kentucky State Police. **There is no Turkish**. Ask your testing site about an audio version or oral administration.
- 3 **Pass the vision screening.**
- 4 **Take the road test.** Appointments can be made at **any regional office in the state**, which helps if both Lexington offices are full.
- 5 **Bring complete documents:** a **notarized translation** of your Turkish license, the original passport, your immigration document and Kentucky residency proof.

Checklist before your appointment

TASK	WHERE OR HOW
☐ Book at whichever office has the earliest slot	The agency's rule allows an appointment at any regional office in the Commonwealth , regardless of your county
☐ Ask about the time zone	Both Lexington offices are Eastern , but 9 offices in the state appear as Central
☐ Prepare original documents	Passport and immigration documents in the original ; photocopies are not accepted
☐ Get a notarized translation of your Turkish license	The agency's sentence ties foreign licenses to that requirement explicitly
☐ Collect residency proof	Kentucky residency proof dated within the past year ; two documents if you want a REAL ID
☐ Ask about audio or oral testing	The written test is offered in twelve languages and Turkish is not among them

TASK	WHERE OR HOW
☐ Put the thirty days in your calendar	30 days from establishing residency in Kentucky
☐ Track any change of status	The statute allows 10 days to apply to update the card after a status change
☐ Expect SAVE verification	It happens at the office and is normal ; your documents are verified through federal systems

One last sentence: what slows a Turkish reader down in this state is not a course, it is the **testing calendar**. Get the instruction permit in your first week and line up the test appointments back to back.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN LEXINGTON

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