

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · NEW YORK

How to Get a Driver's License in New York City: 2026 Guide (NYC DMV)

For New York City newcomers, applicants of any immigration status, and drivers arriving with a foreign license: documents, tests, fees and NYC DMV offices.

SHORT ANSWER

New York's Green Light Law lets anyone age 16 or older apply for a standard driver's license regardless of immigration status; if you have no SSN, you sign an affidavit instead. A first license needs documents proving your name, date of birth and New York residency, a knowledge test (offered in 20 languages, including Turkish), a 5-hour pre-licensing course and a road test. A standard license cannot be used to fly domestically; a REAL ID costs the same, and an Enhanced license costs \$30 more. In New York City a first license costs \$73.25 to \$77.50, including the MCTD surcharge.

Green Light Law: open to everyone in New York

- **Immigration status is not asked.** Since December 16, 2019, anyone 16 or older living in New York can apply for a standard license or learner permit. If you have no SSN, you sign an affidavit at the DMV instead; the law does not affect voting eligibility and creates no path to citizenship.
- **There are three card types.** A Standard license is marked "NOT FOR FEDERAL PURPOSES" and cannot be used for domestic flights or entry to some federal buildings. A REAL ID costs the same as Standard and is required for domestic flights since May 7, 2025. An Enhanced license (EDL) costs \$30 more and can be used instead of a passport for land or sea entry from Canada, Mexico and some Caribbean countries.
- **Most foreign licenses, including Turkish ones, cannot simply be exchanged.** New York's only confirmed reciprocity is with Canadian provinces; no official DMV page lists Türkiye as reciprocal. Once you become a New York resident, a Turkish license must go through the full process (knowledge test, course, road test), and it is surrendered once you pass the road test.
- **No fixed day limit is printed for visitors.** DMV's own page says you can drive on a valid foreign license until you become a New York resident, without stating a specific day count. Once you are a resident, you have 30 days to get a license; 90 days of residence is treated as presumptive evidence that you are a resident.
- **The knowledge test is offered in 20 languages, including Turkish,** unlike Texas, which offers only English and Spanish.

Step by step

- 1 Gather documents proving your name, date of birth and New York residency (see DMV's document guide). If your foreign license is not in English, bring an International Driving Permit or a certified translation for the road test.
- 2 Take the knowledge test: answer at least 14 of 20 questions correctly (70%), including at least 2 road-sign questions. Offered in 20 languages, including Turkish.
- 3 Complete the 5-hour pre-licensing course. Applicants 18 and older with a valid permit can take it online; cost runs roughly \$39 to \$80 depending on the provider.
- 4 Book an appointment at an NYC DMV office or through the online reservation system. The road test may be scheduled separately, so book it early.
- 5 Apply at the office with your documents and course certificate.
- 6 Take the road test. Your fee covers two attempts; if both fail, \$10 covers two more.
- 7 Choose Standard, REAL ID or Enhanced and pay the fee; your foreign license is surrendered once you pass.

NYC DMV offices

There is no single "NYC DMV" building; each borough has its own office (some have more than one). Do not go without an appointment: walk-ins may be turned away during long waits, and road and permit tests generally require one.

OFFICE	ADDRESS	HOURS
Midtown Manhattan	366 West 31st St, New York, NY 10001	Mon-Fri 7:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
Harlem	5 West 125th St, New York, NY 10027	Mon-Fri 7:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Manhattan also has License Express (145 West 30th Street) and a Lower Manhattan office (11 Greenwich Street); Brooklyn, Queens, Bronx and Staten Island each have their own offices. The long-time Fordham Road office in the Bronx reportedly closed in September 2025 and was replaced by a new office at Bronx Terminal Market (610 Exterior St). Check DMV's own office locator for the current address, hours and reservation link for every borough.

Fees (2026)

ITEM	FEE
First Standard or REAL ID license (without the MCTD surcharge)	\$64.25-\$67.50
First license, NYC and the 7 surrounding counties (with MCTD)	\$73.25-\$77.50
Enhanced license (EDL) add-on	+\$30
5-hour pre-licensing course	about \$39-\$80

ITEM	FEE
Two more road tests after failing two	\$10

The MCTD (Metropolitan Commuter Transportation District) surcharge applies only in New York City's five boroughs and in Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Dutchess, Orange, Putnam and Rockland counties; it does not apply in Albany, Buffalo or most of the rest of the state.

If you are not a U.S. citizen

NOTE FOR IMMIGRANTS

- The Green Light Law means your immigration status does not block a standard license application, but a standard license does not substitute for a REAL ID or Enhanced license for domestic flights or entry to some federal buildings.
- DMV's own page confirms reciprocity only with Canadian provinces; Türkiye is not on that list, so a Turkish license cannot be exchanged without testing.
- **If you are subject to the address-reporting requirement**, report your new address to USCIS within 10 days of moving (AR-11); A and G visa holders and Visa Waiver visitors are exempt.
- **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.

Common mistakes

- Assuming a foreign license can be exchanged without testing; only Canadian provinces have that arrangement.
- Showing up for the road test without the 5-hour course certificate.
- Trying to fly domestically on a Standard license instead of a REAL ID, Enhanced license or passport.
- Going to a DMV office without an appointment.
- Forgetting to budget for the MCTD surcharge.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN NEW YORK CITY

Have a question about your immigration status?

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