

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · NEW YORK STATE

How to Get a Driver's License in New York State: 2026 Guide

For newcomers to New York, green card and visa holders, and drivers arriving with a foreign license: the Green Light Law, card types, tests, fees and Turkish-license rules.

SHORT ANSWER

New York's Green Light Law lets anyone 16 or older apply for a standard license regardless of immigration status; if you have no SSN, you sign an affidavit instead. There are three card types: Standard, REAL ID and Enhanced. A first license costs \$64.25 to \$67.50 (\$73.25 to \$77.50 in New York City and the surrounding counties). You'll need a knowledge test (offered in 20 languages, including Turkish), a 5-hour pre-licensing course and a road test; a Turkish license does not simply convert.

Before you start

- **A standard license does not depend on immigration status.** Under the Green Light Law, since December 16, 2019, anyone 16 or older can apply for a standard license or learner permit regardless of citizenship or immigration status. If you have no SSN, you sign an affidavit at the DMV instead.
- **There are three card types.** A Standard card is marked "NOT FOR FEDERAL PURPOSES" and cannot be used for domestic flights. REAL ID costs the same as Standard and has been required for domestic flights since May 7, 2025. An Enhanced card, \$30 more, replaces a passport when you re-enter the U.S. by land or sea from Canada, Mexico and some Caribbean countries.
- **No confirmed reciprocity with Türkiye.** New York's only confirmed foreign reciprocity is with Canadian provinces. A Turkish license cannot simply be exchanged the way another U.S. state's license can.
- **The knowledge test is offered in 20 languages, including Turkish** (unlike Texas, where it's English or Spanish only).
- **No published day limit for visitors.** You can drive in New York on a valid foreign license; you don't need a New York license until you become a resident. Once you are a resident, you must apply.

Step by step

- 1 **Choose your card type.** You decide between Standard, REAL ID and Enhanced when you apply; if you plan to fly domestically, REAL ID or Enhanced may require extra documents, so check the document list at dmv.ny.gov before you go.
- 2 **Take the knowledge test.** 20 questions on traffic laws and signs; you need 14 correct (70%), including at least 2 of 4 sign questions. Offered in 20 languages, including Turkish: dmv.ny.gov.

- 3 Complete the 5-hour pre-licensing course.** Roughly \$39 to \$80; applicants 18 and older with a valid learner permit can take it online. It's required before your first road test.
- 4 Gather your documents.** You need a combination of documents proving your name, date of birth and New York residency; the full list is in DMV's document guide.
- 5 Take the road test.** Your fee covers two attempts; if you fail both, two more attempts cost \$10.
- 6 Pay the fee and receive your card.**

Card types

CARD TYPE	WHAT IT IS	EXTRA FEE
Standard	Marked "NOT FOR FEDERAL PURPOSES," not valid for domestic flights	none
REAL ID	Same price as Standard, required for domestic flights since May 7, 2025	none
Enhanced	Replaces a passport when re-entering the U.S. by land or sea from Canada, Mexico and some Caribbean countries	+\$30

Fees (2026)

ITEM	FEE
First license/permit (outside the MCTD)	\$64.25-\$67.50
First license/permit (New York City and 7 surrounding counties, MCTD)	\$73.25-\$77.50
Enhanced add-on	+\$30
MCTD surcharge	\$1.00 per 6 months
Road-test retakes after 2 failures	\$10

The MCTD (Metropolitan Commuter Transportation District) surcharge applies only to residents of New York City's five boroughs plus 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

- A standard license application does not ask for immigration documents; if you have no SSN, you sign an affidavit at the DMV.
- If you want REAL ID or Enhanced for domestic flights, extra identity documents may be required. Check DMV's current list before your appointment.
- If your Turkish license is not in English, you'll need an International Driving Permit or a certified translation (name, date of birth, expiration date and vehicle classes) for the road test.
- Once you're a New York resident, your Turkish license does not simply convert: you need the written test (available in Turkish), the 5-hour course and the road test, all of them. Your Turkish license is surrendered once you pass the road test.

Driving on a Turkish license

- **Visitors:** you can drive in New York on a valid Turkish license; DMV does not publish a specific day limit for visitors.
- **New residents:** you must complete the written test, the 5-hour course and the road test in full; there's no exemption.
- **Renting a car:** rental companies may also ask for an International Driving Permit.

Common mistakes

- Booking a REAL ID or Enhanced appointment without checking the extra document requirements first.
- Showing up for the road test without finishing the 5-hour course.
- Assuming a Turkish license can simply be "exchanged" and skipping test prep.
- Arriving without an International Driving Permit or a certified translation for a non-English license.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN NEW YORK

Have a question about your immigration status?

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