

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · OHIO

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

The status and SSN requirement, the limited-term non-renewable card, the 30-day clock, a supervised test with your own interpreter and the course you owe after one failure.

SHORT ANSWER

Ohio is the strictest state on status in this series. Both tiers of card, the federally **Compliant** card and the plain **Standard** card, require **proof of legal presence** and a **Social Security number**, and status is checked through the federal **SAVE** system. Say it plainly: **Ohio issues no driver's license and no state ID to a person without lawful status**. For someone who is lawfully present the clock is short: from the day you take a job, sign a lease, buy a home or enroll a child in school you have **30 days** to move your license, your vehicle title and your registration to Ohio.

What to know before you start

- **Enrolling a child starts the 30-day clock too.** Residency in Ohio begins on the day you take a job, sign a lease, buy a home or enroll a child in school. A lot of people do not know that school enrollment starts the count.
- **Three separate bodies do three separate jobs.** A **driver exam station** run by the State Highway Patrol tests you, a privately operated **deputy registrar** agency sells the card and the plates, and the **county clerk of courts** title office issues the vehicle title. The BMV itself neither titles vehicles nor administers tests.
- **The test is not offered in Turkish, but there is a published interpreter route.** The detail is below, and for a Turkish reader it is one of the most useful lines in this guide.
- **The BMV's document lists come in three languages only.** The accepted-document lists are published in English, Spanish and Somali; there is no Turkish version.
- **The card arrives by mail.** At the counter you are handed an interim document and you must carry it. The interim document lets you drive but **does not count as identification**. If the card has not arrived in 28 days, call 1-844-644-6268.

THERE IS NO SOFTENING THE STATUS AND SSN REQUIREMENT

- The BMV says on its own page that the Ohio BMV is required to verify your legal presence in the United States. Verification runs through the federal **SAVE** system, and **if USCIS does not verify lawful status no permit, license or ID card is issued**; a denial letter is mailed to the applicant.
- The accepted-documents page lists proof of a Social Security number as required proof for **both the Compliant and the Standard card**. Ohio's Standard card is therefore **not** a status-neutral license the way some states' standard licenses are.
- One nuance deserves accuracy: the BMV's first-time applicant and limited-term pages say Social Security number (*if assigned*), while the accepted-documents page lists SSN proof as a flat requirement. A lawfully present person who has never been assigned an SSN (a spouse without work authorization, for instance) is not barred up front, but **expect to be asked at the counter**. We could not confirm how an individual deputy registrar applies this, so call the BMV at **1-844-644-6268** before you go and ask about your own documents one by one.

The limited-term license cannot be renewed or taken to another state

- A **green card (I-551) holder** receives a normal Ohio license for 4 or 8 years, by choice and eligibility.
- **Everyone else** who is lawfully present receives a **limited term, non-renewable, non-transferable** license or ID. The card expires **on the same date as your USCIS document**, and the BMV page words it as without regard to federal extensions of that expiration date.
- The card **cannot be renewed in Ohio**: every renewal is technically a fresh first application and the whole document set is required again. The card also **cannot be transferred to another state**; move away from Ohio and you enter the new state's process from the beginning. No other state in this series combines non-renewable and non-transferable quite so explicitly.
- **Effective June 30, 2025**, applicants who will receive a limited-term, non-renewable card must satisfy the driver education requirement and bring a completed **BMV 5791 Fifty-Hour Affidavit** to the road test appointment. That sentence comes from the BMV's own page; we could not read the underlying rule page, so confirm the detail through otso.ohio.gov.
- The BMV's limited-term page also carries a standing note pointing **Temporary Protected Status (TPS)** holders to a separate BMV announcement; we could not read that announcement, so if you hold TPS ask the BMV directly.

Step by step

- 1 **Take the knowledge test.** Forty multiple-choice questions, passing score **75%**. You can take it online through BMV Online Services, at selected deputy registrar agencies, or at **any driver exam station**. Study the free **Ohio Digest of Motor Vehicle Laws** and the official practice test first.
- 2 **Know the identity check on the online test.** Online takers are asked for full legal name, date of birth and a **Social Security number**, verified electronically; applicants 19 and over also pass an identity verification step. Online attempts are capped at two in six months; in-person attempts are uncapped with a 24-hour wait between tries.

- 3 Vision screening.** Done at the exam station if you tested there, otherwise at the deputy registrar when you buy the permit.
- 4 Buy the temporary permit (TIPIC).** Within **60 days** of passing, go to a deputy registrar. The fee is **\$26.50**. The adult permit restriction: you may practice only with a licensed driver aged 21 or over beside you.
- 5 Book the road and maneuverability test.** In-car tests are **by appointment only**, through Schedule a Driving or Skills Test on BMV Online Services. Bring the permit and a roadworthy vehicle.
- 6 Fail once at 21 or over and a course becomes mandatory.** An applicant over 21 who fails the maneuverability or road portion must take the abbreviated adult driver training course before a second attempt: **4 hours of classroom** at a licensed school plus **4 hours of behind-the-wheel** with a licensed instructor, a certificate, and where required a notarized **Twenty-Four Hour Affidavit (BMV 5789)**. Anyone who completed a driver training course in the past 12 months is exempt. A second failure does not require the course again but does require a two-day wait. **This trap exists only in Ohio in this series**, so do not treat the first attempt as a cheap try.
- 7 Buy the license.** Within 60 days of passing the road test, return to a deputy registrar with the same document set. At 21 and over the fee is **\$27.50 (4 years) / \$54.00 (8 years)**.

Test languages: no Turkish, but a published interpreter right

The BMV's first-time applicant page lists the test languages one by one: in text and audio, **Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Haitian Creole, Japanese, Russian, Somali and Spanish**; in text and video, American Sign Language. **Turkish is not on that list**. But the same page also says that if you need the test in another language you may go to a driver exam station and schedule a **proctored test with your own interpreter**. That is a real published right, not a courtesy. The same page sets the limit: customers must be able to understand directions and to **read traffic signs printed in English**, and **the road test is conducted in English**. The driver's manual is published in English, Spanish, Somali and Haitian Creole; there is no Turkish version. A paper test and a Sign Language DVD test are available on request at all exam stations; for disability accommodations, write to HRRequestADA@dps.ohio.gov before you arrive. You find the interpreter yourself, so when you book the appointment get written confirmation that they will attend.

The document sets the BMV lists

SITUATION	DOCUMENTS REQUIRED
Student	A valid passport, visa, I-94 and a DS-2019 or I-20, plus SSN proof if assigned
Employment	A valid EAD (I-766) and SSN proof, or a passport, visa, I-94 with an I-797 in an accepted case type, plus SSN proof
Refugee	An I-94 stamped Refugee
Asylum	An I-94 stamped Asylum; accepted as the primary document for a license, ID and temporary permit, though the BMV says verification can take up to 15 days
Every application	Current USCIS documents together with proof of Ohio residency. For the Compliant card, also two Ohio address documents from different sources

SITUATION	DOCUMENTS REQUIRED
While SAVE is pending	The BMV warns plainly: you may or may not currently have valid Ohio driving privileges. Check your driving status before you get behind the wheel in that interval

Compliant card versus Standard card

Since May 7, 2025 the Standard card has not been accepted by TSA for domestic flights or at federal buildings; the **Compliant** card, with a star at the top, is. The Compliant card requires full legal name, date of birth, an SSN, two Ohio address documents from different sources and proof of legal presence. The Compliant card is **not valid for international travel**: a passport is still required, including for Canada and Mexico. Choosing Compliant or Standard makes no difference on a first application, because **the full document set is required either way**; the Standard card is lighter only at renewal.

Fees

TRANSACTION	FEE
First license, age 21 and over	\$27.50 (4 years) / \$54.00 (8 years)
License renewal	\$30.25 / \$59.40
Temporary permit (TIPIC)	\$26.50 (\$29.50 if the license has been expired between 6 months and 2 years)
State ID card	\$13.00 new / \$25.00 (8 years)
Duplicate license	\$29.00
Three-year driving record	\$13.00
Driving uninsured (noncompliance)	\$40 first, \$300 for a second within a year, \$600 for a third

The fee tables carry their own date stamps: the license table September 30, 2025 and the title table January 5, 2026. There is also a contradiction we are not publishing as fact: the ID card table shows \$13.00 / \$25.00 and then adds a note that new, renewal and duplicate cards are free for people 17 and over or permanently disabled. As written that cannot be right, because Ohio's free-ID rule is narrower than that. **Do not rely on the free ID claim**; confirm it at a deputy registrar.

Can a Turkish license be exchanged?

- **It cannot.** The BMV's transfer route is written only for an **unexpired license from another U.S. state**: it transfers at a deputy registrar agency with a vision screening and form **BMV 5745**, with no knowledge or road test.
- **A foreign license is not in the transfer category.** The BMV sends a foreign-licensed applicant straight to the first-time applicant route: knowledge test, temporary permit, then the road and maneuverability test.
- Let us write this as it stands: no official Ohio page says explicitly whether there is a reciprocity agreement with Türkiye or any other country. The research **found no exchange route**, but it also found no page

saying plainly that none exists. Read that not as a firm rule but as a question to put to the BMV for your own case: **1-844-644-6268**.

- **Three things to do before you leave Türkiye:** bring the original Turkish license; have a certified English translation made in Türkiye, which is far faster and cheaper than here; and obtain a copy of your Turkish driving record, because insurance pricing in Ohio looks at driving history and starting from a blank U.S. record raises premiums.
- **Under 18:** a parent or guardian accepting financial responsibility must attend with the applicant (ORC 4507.07).

Common mistakes

- Going to the BMV to take the test; a driver exam station gives the test and a deputy registrar sells the card.
- Treating the first road attempt casually; over 21 a failure makes an 8-hour paid course mandatory before the second try.
- Assuming the 30-day clock starts only with a job; enrolling a child in school starts it too.
- Leaving the interpreter to test day; you find the interpreter and the appointment comes from an exam station.
- Trying to use the interim paper document as identification; it lets you drive but does not count as ID.
- Thinking of a limited-term card as a normal license; it expires on the day your USCIS document does.



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