

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · PENNSYLVANIA STATE

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

For newcomers to Pennsylvania, green card and visa holders, and drivers arriving with a foreign license: PennDOT documents, SAVE verification, tests and fees.

SHORT ANSWER

Pennsylvania has no immigration-status-blind "Standard License" like New Jersey's; every license, permit and ID application is verified electronically through DHS's SAVE system for lawful presence. If you hold a recognized status (green card, H-1B, F-1, asylee, refugee, TPS, DACA and more), PennDOT's PUB 195NC chart lists exactly which documents qualify. The knowledge test is offered in 29 languages including Turkish, written and audio. A first license costs \$45.50 (valid 4 years, includes the permit). A Turkish license cannot be exchanged without testing, so you'll need both the knowledge test and the road test.

Before you start

- **There's no immigration-status-blind "Standard License."** Unlike New Jersey, every PA license, permit and photo ID requires proof of identity, SSN status, and PA residency, and non-U.S. citizens must additionally present DHS-issued proof of lawful presence, verified electronically through SAVE (Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements).
- **PennDOT's PUB 195NC chart is extremely detailed.** It lists the required documents for roughly 50 distinct immigration categories (green card, H-1B, F-1, asylee, asylum applicant, refugee, TPS, DACA and more): a Social Security card or an SSA ineligibility letter, two proofs of PA residency, and a status document.
- **Some statuses can't get any PA license or ID.** A-1 (ambassadors/consular officers, who must use a State Department-issued license instead), B-1/B-2 visitors, C-1/C-2/C-3 transit, D-1/D-2 crewmembers, and WB/WT visa-waiver categories.
- **Card expiration follows your authorized stay.** Not a flat 4-year term, but whatever DHS-authorized length of stay SAVE returns. If SAVE can't verify status on the first try, PennDOT resubmits for "additional" or "third level" verification, which can take 30 or more federal working days, so apply with time to spare.
- **New residents get only 60 days.** If you're transferring a valid out-of-state U.S. license, you must get a PA license within 60 days of establishing residency. If your license is valid or expired 6 months or less, you skip the knowledge test.
- **No test-free exchange for Turkish licenses.** Türkiye is not among the countries whose licenses Pennsylvania exchanges without testing. A Turkish license holder must pass both the knowledge test and the road test.
- **The knowledge test is available in Turkish.** PennDOT offers it in 29 languages, written and audio, including Turkish, at every Driver License Center upon request.

- **A Turkish license is valid in PA for up to one year** from your date of U.S. entry (or until it expires, whichever comes first). An International Driving Permit is recommended, though not stated as mandatory on PennDOT's FAQ.

Step by step

- 1 Choose your card type.** Standard license/ID, or REAL ID (the star-marked card needed for domestic flights and federal buildings).
- 2 Gather your documents per PUB 195NC.** The SSN card or SSA ineligibility letter, 2 proofs of PA residency (postmarked mail, a W-2/pay stub, a lease/mortgage document, official tax records, a current PA license/ID, vehicle registration, an insurance card, or a computer-generated utility bill), and your status document (passport + visa + I-94, green card, EAD, I-20, etc.), matching your specific immigration category.
- 3 Visit a PennDOT Driver License Center.** Find one at pa.gov/agencies/dmv/find-a-location.
- 4 Take the knowledge test.** 18 questions, 15 correct to pass. Ask for the Turkish written or audio version if you want it. Fail? Retest the next business day.
- 5 Get a Learner's Permit** (valid 2 years) and practice. Under 18? You need 65 supervised hours, certified on a parent/guardian form.
- 6 Take the road test.** The examiner checks vehicle safety equipment and tests parallel parking in a space 24 feet long and 8 feet wide.
- 7 Pay the fee and get your license.**

Transferring from another state

IN-STATE TRANSFER

- If your out-of-state license is valid, or expired 6 months or less, you don't need to take the knowledge test.
- The process: visit a Driver License Center in person, surrender your out-of-state license, pass a vision screening, complete Form DL-180R, and show your identity, residency and SSN documents.
- The 60-day clock starts when you establish PA residency.

Fees (2026)

ITEM	FEE
Initial permit + 4-year license	\$45.50
4-year license renewal	\$39.50
2-year renewal (age 65+)	\$27.50
Non-Driver ID (initial)	\$43.50

ITEM	FEE
Non-Driver ID (renewal)	\$44.50

PennDOT charges a one-time \$30 fee for your first REAL ID. Most centers take card, check or money order; only the Harrisburg Riverfront Office Center accepts cash. A returned check carries a fee of \$62 or more.

If you are not a U.S. citizen

NOTE FOR IMMIGRANTS

- If you hold a recognized status (green card, H-1B, F-1, asylee, refugee, TPS, DACA, and more), PennDOT's PUB 195NC chart shows exactly which documents qualify; many categories still accept an expired status document as long as the underlying status hasn't lapsed.
- Without a recognized lawful-presence status (or if you fall into an exempt category like B-1/B-2, C or D transit/crew, WB/WT), you cannot get any PA license or ID.
- SAVE verification can take 30 or more federal working days if it doesn't clear instantly, so apply well before any deadline.

Driving on a Turkish license

- **Visitors:** your Turkish license is valid for up to one year from U.S. entry (or until it expires, whichever comes first). An International Driving Permit is recommended.
- **New residents:** a Turkish license cannot be exchanged without testing, so you must complete both the knowledge test and the road test.
- **Renting a car:** rental companies may also ask for an International Driving Permit.

Common mistakes

- Showing up without checking PUB 195NC's document list for your specific immigration category.
- Not building in extra time in case SAVE verification runs long.
- Missing the 60-day in-state transfer deadline and continuing to drive on an out-of-state license.
- Under 18 and arriving for the road test without the 65-hour supervised-driving certification.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN PENNSYLVANIA

Have a question about your immigration status?

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