

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · PHILADELPHIA

How to Get a Driver's License in Philadelphia: 2026 Guide (PennDOT)

For Philadelphia newcomers, green card and visa holders, and drivers arriving with a foreign license: documents, tests, fees and PennDOT Driver License Centers.

SHORT ANSWER

Pennsylvania has no immigration-status-blind "Standard License" like New Jersey's; every license and ID application requires proof of lawful presence, verified through DHS's SAVE system. Green card holders, H-1B and F-1 visa holders, asylum seekers and nearly every other status each have their own document list on PennDOT's PUB 195NC chart. The knowledge test is available in 29 languages including Turkish, in audio format too. New residents must transfer an out-of-state license within 60 days; the first-license fee is \$45.50.

Immigration status is always verified in Pennsylvania

- **No Standard License.** Every license, ID and permit application must prove identity, SSN status and Pennsylvania residency; noncitizens must also present DHS documentation, which PennDOT verifies electronically through SAVE (Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements).
- **Validity depends on DHS.** A license or ID expires based on the DHS-authorized length of stay, not a fixed 4-year cycle.
- **Verification can take time.** If SAVE cannot verify status on the first try, PennDOT resubmits for additional verification, which can take more than 30 federal working days.
- **Statuses ineligible for any PA license or ID:** A-1 (ambassadors and consular officers), B-1/B-2 visitors, C-1/C-2/C-3 transit, D-1/D-2 crewmembers, and WB/WT visa-waiver entrants.
- **Do not expect a test waiver for a Turkish license.** Prepare for both the knowledge and road tests; you can ask a Driver License Center about the current list of waivers.
- **The knowledge test is offered in Turkish.** It is available in 29 languages, including Turkish, in both written and audio format, on request at every PennDOT center.

Documents by immigration status (PUB 195NC)

STATUS	CORE DOCUMENTS
Green card (Lawful Permanent Resident)	Social Security card; 2 Pennsylvania residency documents; one of: Green Card (I-551), passport/I-94 with an I-551 stamp, a machine-readable immigrant visa, or a Reentry Permit (I-327)

STATUS	CORE DOCUMENTS
H-1B	SS card or SSA ineligibility letter; 2 residency documents; valid passport; I-94; visa; I-797 extension receipt if status documents are expired or expiring
F-1 student (including OPT/STEM-OPT)	SS card or ineligibility letter; 2 residency documents; passport; I-94; visa; I-20 (plus OPT/STEM-OPT dates and EAD if applicable)
Asylum applicant	SS card or ineligibility letter; 2 residency documents; an I-797 receipt for I-589, or a court-stamped copy; plus a valid or expired EAD, passport, or foreign ID
Asylee	SS card or ineligibility letter; 2 residency documents; I-797 approval, a USCIS approval letter, or an IJ/BIA order; plus a valid or expired EAD, passport, or refugee travel document

Accepted as a Pennsylvania residency document: postmarked mail or package labels, a W-2 or pay stub, a lease or deed, official tax records, a current PA license or ID, a PA vehicle registration, an insurance card, or a computer-generated utility bill (cell phone, cable, electric, gas).

NOTE FOR IMMIGRANTS

- Unlike New Jersey, Pennsylvania has no path to a license or ID without proof of lawful presence.
- If SAVE verification is not instant, it can take more than 30 working days, so plan your application early.
- Even if your documents have expired, if your status continues (for example asylee or TPS status), PennDOT accepts expired documents in many categories; check PUB 195NC for the exact list.

Extra documents for REAL ID

For noncitizens, REAL ID proof of identity requires an unexpired EAD (I-766/I-688B), a valid Permanent Resident Card (I-551), or an unexpired foreign passport with a valid visa and an I-94 showing permanent residence. Proof of SSN can be a Social Security card, a W-2, an SSA-1099, or a pay stub showing the full number. Two Pennsylvania residency documents are also required. Your first REAL ID carries a one-time \$30 fee on top of the regular fee; check the current amount on PennDOT's site before you apply.

Step by step for a first license

- 1 Get your Learner's Permit.** Valid for 2 years.
- 2 Take the knowledge test.** 18 multiple-choice questions, 15 correct to pass. Available in 29 languages including Turkish, written or audio format, on request. If you fail, you can retest the next business day.
- 3 Complete supervised practice.** Applicants under 18 need at least 65 hours, documented with a parent or guardian certification form.
- 4 Take the road test.** The examiner inspects vehicle safety equipment and tests parallel parking in a space 24 feet long and 8 feet wide. If you fail, general PA practice allows a retest after 14 days.
- 5 Pay the fee and get your license.**

Fees (2026)

ITEM	FEE
Initial permit + 4-year license	\$45.50
4-year renewal	\$39.50
2-year renewal, age 65 and older	\$27.50
Non-Driver ID (initial / renewal)	\$43.50 / \$44.50

Payment is by card, check or money order. Cash is accepted only at the Harrisburg Riverfront Office Center.

Find a PennDOT center

PennDOT does not publish individual center phone numbers; use the DVS Customer Call Center. Because Philadelphia center addresses can change, always confirm the current one before you go, on the official locator: pa.gov/agencies/dmv/find-a-location. Addresses on third-party sites may be out of date.

If you are moving from another state, or arriving with a foreign license

- Transfer an out-of-state license to a PA license within 60 days of establishing Pennsylvania residency; if it is valid, or expired 6 months or less, you are exempt from both the knowledge and road tests.
- Process: apply in person at a PennDOT center, surrender your old license, pass a vision test, complete Form DL-180R, and show identification, residency and your Social Security card.
- A foreign license, including a Turkish one, 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.
- If you arrive with a Turkish license, do not expect a test waiver; prepare for both the knowledge and road tests.

Common mistakes

- Trying to apply without proof of lawful presence; unlike New Jersey, Pennsylvania never waives this for any status.
- Going to a PennDOT center using an outdated address found on a third-party site.
- Assuming SAVE verification is instant and leaving the application to the last minute.
- Letting the one-year foreign-license driving window expire.
- Missing the 60-day out-of-state transfer deadline.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN PHILADELPHIA

Have a question about your immigration status?

Attorney Asim Clinch serves clients in Philadelphia and the surrounding area, in Turkish and English.

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