

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · TENNESSEE

How to Get a Driver License in Tennessee: 2026 Guide

Research found no separate, status-independent driving card. The card you will be issued is temporary and prints your status on its face, but it costs the same as the eight-year card.

SHORT ANSWER

Research found **no separate, status-independent driving card** in this state; the agency's document lists recognize only three categories: citizenship, lawful permanent residence and **temporary lawful presence**. The card issued to a person with temporary lawful presence is a **temporary** card, and the state's administrative rule defines it as valid for the person's **authorized period of stay**, adding that **if there is no definite end to the stay the term is one year. Put two numbers side by side:** the regular card costs **28 dollars** for eight years, and the temporary card also costs **28 dollars**. And **the face of the card reveals your status:** on the agency's own sample image the words TEMPORARY DRIVER LICENSE appear in capital letters before the name, with CLASS XD in the class field. **There is no test in Turkish and interpreters are not allowed. This is not a procedural tip, it is a reason to consult a lawyer.**

Card types, terms and fees

Licensing is handled by **Driver Services** within the **Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security**. The figures below come from the agency's own fee schedule.

CARD	VALID FOR	TOTAL FEE
Regular driver license	8 years	28.00 dollars
Temporary driver license	Length of authorized stay	28.00 dollars
Identification card (18 and over)	8 years	12.00 dollars
Temporary identification card	Length of authorized stay	9.50 dollars
Temporary motorcycle license	Length of authorized stay	20.50 dollars

The measurable inequality sits here: a one-year card costs **exactly the same** as an eight-year card. The gap widens if you lose it: **the first duplicate of a regular card costs 6 dollars, the first duplicate of a temporary card costs 26 dollars**. The fee page adds its own note: a **county clerk partner location** charges an additional **4 dollars** administrative fee on every transaction.

What length of stay means, in the agency's own words

The state's administrative rule defines the temporary card as one valid for the person's **authorized period of stay in the United States**, and adds that **if there is no definite end to the authorized stay, the term is one year**. The same rule repeats the identical term for the temporary photo identification card.

The practical consequence: the date on your visa or arrival record is also the expiration date of your card. **If your status is extended the card does not extend itself**; you apply again. Put the end of your **status** on the calendar, not the end of the card.

THE FACE OF THE CARD REVEALS YOUR STATUS

- On the agency's own sample card image the words TEMPORARY DRIVER LICENSE appear **in capital letters** before the name, and the class field reads CLASS XD.
- That means **every time you show the card, the person looking at it sees at a glance that you are not a citizen**: at a bank, when starting a job, when renting a car, anywhere your age is checked.
- The sample card also shows the federal identification star in the corner, so a temporary card can be compliant with the federal identification standard. **We read that only from the sample image** and could not confirm it with a written sentence from the agency.
- **The card type can change at renewal**. The law in force since January 1, 2026 provides that a permanent resident who renews or reinstates and cannot present evidence of citizenship receives a **temporary document** in place of the standard one.

Documents accepted for temporary lawful presence

- **Conditional resident alien card**.
- **A valid foreign passport with a valid visa and the attached arrival record**. The agency's note reads: The passport must have an English translation. So **an English translation of your Turkish passport may be required**.
- A valid foreign passport with the attached record for visa waiver entries.
- Students must also present their **student certificate**, exchange visitors their **program certificate**.
- The agency's only written caution about documents concerns verification: All documents are subject to further verification with the issuing agency or source.

Social Security number: there is a written path for applicants with no number

SITUATION	WHAT THE AGENCY ASKS FOR
Card without the federal star	You may state the number verbally ; it is verified electronically with the federal agency
Card with the federal star	A certified document showing the full number is required

SITUATION	WHAT THE AGENCY ASKS FOR
If you were never issued a number	A sworn affidavit signed before an examiner or a notary

That path is written on the agency's own page, but it is not an exemption. It opens the door on the number side; it does not change the document regime on the status side. If a clerk tells you otherwise, **go knowing the written rule** and carry the agency's own page with you.

Test languages: no Turkish, and we publish a contradiction

The agency's official driver handbook states that at service centers with computerized testing the exam is offered in **three alternate languages: Spanish, Korean and Japanese**. Several news sources report **five** languages instead. **We publish the contradiction and take no side;** but **Turkish appears in neither version**.

- **Allowed:** a printed translation dictionary, provided its pages carry no notes or handwriting.
- **Not allowed:** smartphones, electronic dictionaries and similar devices. The agency's own sentence: Interpreters are NOT allowed to assist with any of the driver license testing.
- **The oral test is not a language accommodation:** the agency gives it only to applicants with a learning disability or who cannot read, by appointment and at selected centers. A certified sign language interpreter is provided for deaf applicants.

CHOOSING A LANGUAGE CARRIES A COST, BUT YOU ARE NOT IN THAT LANE

- A law passed in 2026 and **effective January 1, 2027** allows an applicant who cannot speak and read English to take the written exam **in another language**.
- **But a license issued that way is non-renewable and valid for only thirty-six months.** When it expires the applicant retakes the written exam **in English only** and may not use **a dictionary, an electronic device or an interpreter**. The law also does not oblige the agency to add new languages.
- **The practical consequence for a Turkish-speaking reader is subtle and we write it as it is:** there is no Turkish exam to begin with, so a Turkish applicant takes the test in English and **does not fall into the thirty-six month non-renewable regime**.
- **That is not a convenience; it is the absence of one.** Your real burden is that the exam is in English and interpreters are banned.

Where you will go

TYPE OF LOCATION	WHAT HAPPENS THERE
Full service Driver Service Center	Tests are given. If this is your first license or you arrived from abroad, this is where you go
Express location	The location's own note reads: No testing is done at this location
County clerk partner office	Some transactions are handled; an additional 4 dollars administrative fee applies to every transaction

TYPE OF LOCATION	WHAT HAPPENS THERE
Kiosk	Density varies a great deal by city; in one city there are kiosks open around the clock

Is there a restriction by office: the state's office data contains no field of the kind seen in some states indicating whether foreign national transactions are handled. The agency's only written distinction is between full service and testing-free centers. **That does not prove there is no restriction;** it means no record of one was found. Call the center before your appointment.

Appointments, pre-review and the calendar

- The agency runs an appointment system; **appointments are not available everywhere** and the transaction types vary by location.
- The agency recommends completing the application online before visiting. Documents can be sent for **pre-review**, with a response in roughly **five business days**; but you must **still bring the original documents**.
- Arrive **fifteen minutes early**; if you are late the appointment is canceled and you join the walk-in line.
- Centers are **closed on state holidays**.
- On a digital license in your phone the agency is clear: currently not available in Tennessee.
- **Deadline:** once you establish residency in the state you have **thirty days** to obtain a Tennessee license.

Two states' documents are not valid here

On its own page the agency names two states that issue a particular class of license and states that those documents are **invalid in Tennessee: Connecticut and Delaware**. If you are moving from either state, check which class your document is before you go.

A Turkish license: you will take all three exams

QUESTION	ANSWER
I arrived from abroad, which exams do I take?	The agency's own sentence: New residents from other countries must take the vision screening, Tennessee knowledge test and road skills test. So vision screening, written exam and road test
I came from another U.S. state?	If the license is valid, the vision screening only
Is Türkiye on a reciprocity list?	Research found none. We do not say there is none, we say none was found; the agency's distinction is not by country but between inside and outside the United States
Will my Turkish license be taken?	No. The agency's rule: Only foreign country licenses/IDs may be retained, so a foreign country document stays with you

QUESTION	ANSWER
Is an international driving permit enough?	No. The handbook states: Possession of an International Driving Permit does not mean that the holder is valid to operate an automobile in Tennessee or any other state. And the permit must be obtained in the home country; get it before you leave Türkiye

The translation requirement appears in two places: on the passport, where the agency's note asks for an **English translation**; and on a license or birth certificate not issued in English, where the agency asks for either a translation made with a **certificate of accurate translation** or a valid international driving permit.

- 1 Talk to your attorney first.** Which card you can get with which document depends on your status, and every decision touching your status can affect your immigration case.
- 2 Get your international driving permit before you leave Türkiye** and have your passport and license translations prepared.
- 3 Pick a full service center.** A testing-free location does not issue a first license; confirm the type from [the agency's location list](#).
- 4 Complete the online application and send your documents for pre-review;** the response takes about five business days. Still bring the originals.
- 5 If you have no number, ask about the sworn affidavit path.** The agency recognizes it in writing.
- 6 Prepare for all three exams** and arrange a car, insurance and an appointment for the road test. The road test **is not given after dark in winter** and is canceled in bad weather.
- 7 Put the thirty-day deadline on your calendar** and track the card's expiration together with your status.
- 8 Tie the vehicle work to this:** a Tennessee temporary driver license is by itself a sufficient document at registration.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN TENNESSEE

Have a question about your immigration status?

Attorney Asim Clinch serves clients across Tennessee, in Turkish and English. Free evaluation: clinchlaw.com/free-evaluation · +1 866-491-7669
Office: 321 N Central Expy, Ste 206, McKinney, TX 75070

Attorney responsible for this guide: Asim Clinch, Esq., Clinch Law Firm P.C. Attorney Asim Clinch is a member of the Missouri Bar (No. 76084) and practices U.S. federal immigration law.

Attorney advertising. This guide is general information only. It is not legal advice and is not a substitute for the advice of an attorney. Information compiled from official sources as of October 12, 2026; fees and procedures change, so check the official site before you act. Reading this guide does not create an attorney-client relationship. The choice of a lawyer is an important decision and should not be based solely upon advertisements. Latest version: clinchlaw.com/city-guides/tennessee-immigration-attorney