

CHECKLIST · TENNESSEE

Moving to Tennessee Checklist: The first 30 days (2026)

An ordered plan for the first 30 days: week one, the first month, and what to finish before day thirty. Four habits break here, and all four meet you in the first week.

SHORT ANSWER

We start this list with four warnings, because each breaks a habit brought from another state. First: **there is no state income tax on wages**, but **the sentence there is no tax cannot be written here**; the sales tax is high and the grocery rate differs from one city to the next. Second: **the name of the place does not tell you who you deal with**; the largest place is a merged city and county, the smallest has no municipal government at all, and everything from trash to taxes follows from that. Third: **there is no thirty-day deposit rule** and no cap in the statute; what actually operates is a **sixty-day response window**. Fourth: **you have thirty days to get a license after establishing residency**, and if you arrived from abroad you will take **all three exams**.

Deadlines: we separate the certain from the not found

TASK	DEADLINE	WHERE
Federal address report	10 days. A move inside the state also requires it	Through your online account or Form AR-11
Report to the court	5 days, if you have a pending case	Form EOIR-33/IC. The state has one immigration court , in Memphis
Driver license	30 days after establishing residency	A full service center ; testing-free locations do not issue a first license
Exams for an arrival from abroad	Three exams: vision screening, written exam and road test	An appointment, a car and insurance are needed
Vehicle registration	Research found no deadline recorded for a new resident . Ask the county clerk	County clerk only ; start insurance first
Life of a marriage license	30 days. If unused you apply again	Any county clerk in the state
Response to a deposit refund notice	60 days. Without a response the landlord may keep the money	To the landlord, in writing

Three rows of this table mislead readers often. First: **a change of address at the post office does not satisfy the federal report**, and filing the federal report **does not update the address in a pending case**; do both and enter the receipt number of every pending application, uscis.gov/addresschange. Second: **giving your**

address to a state or county agency does not satisfy the federal duty; no address you give from the license office to school enrollment takes the place of that report. Third: **there is one immigration court in the state and it sits at one end of it;** only the notice you receive tells you where and when your hearing is. One more thing changed in 2026: account for the federal rule **effective June 29, 2026** that reorganizes alien registration and what counts as evidence of registration, text at [federalregister.gov](https://www.federalregister.gov).

Week one

TASK	WHERE OR HOW
☐ File the federal address report within 10 days	uscis.gov/addresschange ; update the address in your pending case separately, and if you have a court case use EOIR-33/IC within 5 days
☐ Find out which local government your address falls under	A mailing address misleads in three ways here: a home carrying a large city's name may sit in a separate municipality inside the county ; the address can stay the same while the home has been deannexed from the city ; and a ZIP code can cover territory outside the city limits
☐ Note which county you are in	The county wheel tax, the marriage license fee, the property tax rate, the school district and the price of a library card all follow the county. You will be asked for the county name at the license, registration and school counters
☐ Learn what type your utility provider is	A regulated private company, a utility district, an electric cooperative or a municipal utility. Your complaint forum depends on it and it splits four ways across the five places
☐ Ask the right question when starting service	Do not say I have no number. Ask: what do you accept as alternative identification. In one city the utility's published list names passport, resident card, government-issued visa, individual taxpayer identification number and consular identification ; in another city no list is published
☐ Budget for a deposit	Often required of a newcomer with no credit history. In one city the minimum is 200 dollars with eight installments ; the refund schedule is twelve months in one city and twenty-four in the other
☐ Turn on weather alerts	There is both a winter and a tornado regime here and shelter arrangements differ by city. Do not wait for March
☐ Open your license file	Call a full service center, complete the online application and send your documents for pre-review ; the response takes about five business days

The first month

TASK	WHERE OR HOW
☐ Open school enrollment right away if you have children	A number cannot be required; the real obstacle is proof of address. If you are staying with relatives, two districts require a notarized affidavit
☐ Start insurance before registering the car	The policy must be written for Tennessee. Registration runs through the county clerk only , and no plate decal is issued until the county wheel tax is paid

TASK	WHERE OR HOW
☐ File your health coverage application	The state did not expand Medicaid and the coverage gap is real. If you are pregnant , the agency's present sentence still reads: If you are pregnant, no immigration documents are required.
☐ Redo your take-home pay math	There is no state income tax on wages , and the interest and dividend tax was fully repealed on January 1, 2021 . But do not say there is no tax : the sales tax is high
☐ Check your grocery rate on the receipt	The general rate is the same in all five places, the grocery rate is not , and the gap runs up to a full point. In Nashville the grocery rate drops from November 1, 2026
☐ If you need a birth certificate, go to the nearest county health department	Birth and death certificates can be obtained from all 95 county health departments . That sentence does not cover marriage and divorce : those go through the central office or the mail
☐ If you are marrying, pick the county yourself	A license can be obtained from any county in the state , with no residency requirement ; the fee differs by more than ten dollars and the payment rules differ too
☐ Check whether the privilege tax hits you	At state level, 400 dollars a year , due every June 1 , for five professions only: attorney, securities agent, broker-dealer, investment adviser and lobbyist
☐ Fix the name and date of birth on your documents	In work authorization verification, name order, a post-marriage surname change and a swapped day and month are real risks. Handle this before a job offer

Before day thirty

TASK	NOTE
☐ Finish the license	Thirty days after establishing residency. If you arrived from abroad there are three exams, and the road test can be canceled in bad weather
☐ Read every bold clause in your lease	A waiver set in twelve-point bold type can remove your right to a fourteen-day notice on late rent entirely
☐ Ask which account holds your deposit	The landlord must keep it in a separate account and must disclose where that account is at the time of the lease . The account number is not required
☐ Give the landlord your new address in writing when you leave	A tenant who does not respond within sixty days of the refund notice can lawfully lose the deposit
☐ Attend the move-out inspection	If you do not sign the list, state the items you dispute in writing, one by one ; a later lawsuit is limited to those items

DISCONNECTION RULES: WE DID NOT MEASURE THEM, AND THE PROTECTION WE DID MEASURE IS AGAINST A LANDLORD

- **The honest answer is that we did not measure it.** Whether Tennessee has a weather-based disconnection prohibition, what triggers it, and whether it covers municipal utilities and cooperatives **could not be verified from a primary source this round.**
- A claim built on November and March dates circulates online; **it is not official and could not be confirmed from any agency source, so we do not publish those dates.**
- **The protection that was measured, and it is strong, runs against the landlord:** the landlord-tenant statute prohibits a landlord from recovering the unit by **cutting off electricity, gas or other essential service**, and gives the tenant a three-option remedy if service is cut.
- **And a structural difference:** the city-owned multi-service utility in Memphis sits outside the regulator's scope, so **no state-level complaint forum was found**; the rules are the utility's own policy and its text says they may be changed without notice. In Nashville, by contrast, gas is with a private company inside the regulator's scope. **The same service, two regimes in two cities.**

SECURITY DEPOSITS: THE COMMON ADVICE IS WRONG

- **There is no cap in the statute** and **no rule requiring a refund within thirty days.** The statute does not require interest either.
- **The real mechanism:** the landlord must hold all deposits in **an account used only for that purpose** and must disclose **where that account is at the moment the tenant signs and pays.**
- **The sixty-day rule:** the landlord sends the refund amount to the last known address; **if the tenant does not respond within sixty days of that notice, the landlord may keep the money.**
- **The strongest item for a tenant:** if the landlord did not hold the deposit in a separate account **and** did not provide the damage list, **the landlord may keep no part of it.** Both conditions are required together.
- **Eviction law tightened in 2024:** the continuance window dropped from fifteen days to **seven**, and appealing an eviction judgment now requires a bond in the amount of **one year's rent.**
- **The statute does not apply in every county:** the landlord-tenant act applies only in counties above a population threshold. If you move to another county inside the state, **your set of protections can change entirely.**

PROTECTED CLASSES AND THE COMPLAINT DOOR THAT MOVED

- The statutory list in force: **race, color, creed, religion, sex, disability, familial status and national origin. National origin is on the list**, and it is the provision you rely on if you believe you were refused because of your accent, your name or where you came from.
- **Source of income and immigration status are not on the list**, and because of preemption in the landlord-tenant statute a city or county **cannot add them by local rule**.
- **One exception is a single city's own ordinance**: the Memphis fair housing ordinance adds **age and source of income** alongside national origin. **That belongs to that city only** and does not carry to the other places.
- **The complaint door moved**: the state human rights commission **closed on July 1, 2025**, and complaints now go to the **civil rights enforcement division of the attorney general's office**. **Any source that points you to the old agency is stale**.

TAX: THE SENTENCE THERE IS NO TAX CANNOT BE WRITTEN HERE EITHER

- **Wages and salaries are not subject to state income tax**, and the interest and dividend tax was fully repealed **on January 1, 2021**. A working person files no annual state return.
- **A local wage tax was searched for and not found**. We do not write **there is none**: not every city ordinance was scanned. Ask your employer whether payroll carries a local deduction.
- **Sales tax**: the state share is **7 percent** on general goods and **4 percent** on food and food ingredients; the local share is capped at **2.75 percent**. The general rate is **9.75 percent** in all five places.
- **They differ on groceries**: Nashville–Davidson **5.75 percent** (from November 1, 2026), Hendersonville **6.25 percent**, and Brentwood, Rockvale and Memphis **6.75 percent**.
- **The Memphis line is the city's own rate, and that joins up with the deannexation trap**: the description of the city's own boundary data lists deannexation ordinances, so **a home with a Memphis mailing address may have been removed from the city limits**. Confirm which boundary your address sits inside.
- **Not counted as food ingredients**: alcoholic beverages, tobacco, candy, dietary supplements and prepared food do not get the reduced rate.
- **On a single expensive item the tax is not flat**: the local share applies only to the **first 1,600 dollars** of a single article's sales price; the slice between 1,600 and 3,200 dollars carries the state's special rate, and anything above 3,200 dollars is not subject to this tax.
- **We print a conflict and take no side**: the revenue department's local rate map says the transit surcharge in Davidson County also raises the grocery rate, while the same department's September 2026 official notice does not mention the surcharge at all. **The grocery rate on your receipt can come out between 5.75 and 6.25 percent**; check it on the receipt.

HEALTH: OCTOBER 1, 2026 AND THE AGENCY'S PRESENT SENTENCE FOR PREGNANT APPLICANTS

- **The state did not expand Medicaid** and the coverage gap is real: an adult without children generally cannot enter the program at any income, and marketplace help starts at 100 percent of the poverty line.
- **From October 1, 2026 refugees and people granted asylum come off the program;** the agency director's own figure is **about 8,500 people**.
- **The state published the reconciling document:** a policy dated **September 10, 2026** was added to the policy manual. **But an older document from 2014 still sits on the same server without a warning** and still shows refugees as eligible; **that document is not current**. If you come across it online, **look at its date**.
- **For pregnant applicants the answer favors the reader:** the state covers pregnant women through the **unborn child** category of the children's health program, and the agency's present sentence still reads: If you are pregnant, no immigration documents are required.
- **On the child's side there is a condition,** and we write the plain consequence: **in the same household the mother may be covered while the child is not**. File the two applications separately.
- **Emergency care is a separate bucket:** the state's verification statute leaves **emergency medical care, immunization, testing and treatment of communicable disease, short-term disaster relief and short-term shelter** outside the definition of a public benefit.
- **And there is a court order, but a narrow one:** *Snader v. Tennessee Dept. of Health*, No. 26-0825-I, Davidson County Chancery Court; temporary restraining order **June 24, 2026**, agreed temporary injunction **July 14, 2026**. It covers **one children's health program only**, it is **temporary**, and **the merits have not been decided**.

WINTER AND TORNADOES: THIS STATE HAS BOTH

- **Winter is real:** the transportation department's statement of **January 25, 2026** describes icing as **statewide**; crews were clearing roads on the **fourth day**, **3,500 tons of salt** had been used, **861 incidents** had been managed, and the agency asked drivers to **stay home**.
- **The same statement records a limit:** if the pavement temperature falls below **16 degrees Fahrenheit**, **salt is not strong enough**. The priority order is written too: **interstates first and bridges, ramps, grades and curves that freeze first**; neighborhood streets last.
- **Research found no mandatory snow tire or chain rule;** the handbook treats equipment as a **recommendation**. **No rule, real events:** know both together.
- **On tornadoes the five places diverge, and the divergence reverses expectations:** in Rockvale, which has no municipal government, **the county publishes five public shelters with addresses and rules** and one of them is in that place; by contrast, in two cities that do have municipal governments **no standing public list was found**, and what was found is a system for **registering a private shelter with the authorities**, which is not somewhere you can go.
- In Nashville the emergency agency publishes, instead of a list, guidance on **how to choose the safest area inside a building**. **We do not say there is none;** we write what is published.
- **Timing matters:** the moment to travel to a community shelter is during a **watch**; setting out after a **warning** is not advised, and what you do then is move to **an interior room with no windows** in the building you are in.
- **We publish no risk ratio**, because none could be verified from an agency page. **The languages in which alerts are sent could not be found either.**

VITAL RECORDS: TWO OPEN DOORS FOR A READER WITH LIMITED DOCUMENTS

- **Birth and death certificates can be obtained from all 95 county health departments;** the agency's own sentence says you **no longer have to go to the county where the event occurred**. **Marriage and divorce records are outside that sentence:** central office or mail.
- **A valid passport is sufficient on its own** and the list says Current passport, **not U.S. passport**. An **alien, temporary or permanent resident card** and an **employment authorization card** are also sufficient on their own.
- **A Social Security card counts only as a secondary document** and only if signed.
- **Expired documents:** no statement was found on whether one is accepted or how many days of grace are allowed. We do not say there is none; we say **it is not stated**.
- **A notarized application removes the identification requirement:** the agency's own exception states that if the application is signed and notarized, **no additional identification is required**. That route works by mail too.
- **Who may obtain a copy:** birth and marriage records are subject to **the same restricted list**, that is the person, mother, father, son, daughter and spouse. **Do not carry over the line from another of our state guides that marriage records are open to anyone**. And a father whose name is not on a child's certificate cannot obtain it.
- **Record fees and processing times could not be verified**, so we give no amount and no number of days.

MARRIAGE: THERE IS A LICENSE, AND YOU CHOOSE THE COUNTY

- **There is a marriage license** and the **county clerk** issues it. The license can be obtained from **any county in the state**; there is **no residency requirement** and no requirement that the ceremony take place in that county. **The common guidance that you must use your county of residence is wrong.**
- **Verified fees:** Rutherford County **107.50 dollars**, Williamson County **100 dollars (cash only)**, Davidson County **99.50 dollars (no checks)**, Shelby County **97.50 dollars**. **No verified figure was found for Sumner County and we publish none.**
- **A sixty-dollar discount** is available with a four-hour premarital preparation course. **We print a conflict:** the revenue department says the discount also applies to people residing out of state, while the counties' technical assistance service says it applies **in a single county only**. **We take no side; ask the clerk.**
- **If you have no number:** the statute asks for a number on the form, but the state's published legal guidance, relying on an attorney general opinion, says **applicants who were never issued a number are not required to provide one**. **The field is left blank and no alternative number is requested.** Carry a printout of that sentence.
- **There is a conflict on waiting periods:** state sources record none, while one county's **2010** document states three days. **We take no side;** ask the clerk in the county where you will marry.
- **The license is valid for thirty days.** The sixty and ninety day figures circulating on third-party sites conflict with the state source.
- **Research found no witness requirement;** notaries may perform ceremonies. **Both parties must be present in person and together;** a ceremony by telephone is not accepted.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN TENNESSEE

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Attorney Asim Clinch serves clients across Tennessee, in Turkish and English. Free evaluation:

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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.

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