

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · WISCONSIN

How to Get a Driver License in Wisconsin: 2026 Guide

Proof of legal presence is required at every application, but the list of accepted documents is surprisingly broad. You get a license or an ID card, never both; the test comes in eleven languages and Turkish is not one of them.

SHORT ANSWER

Wisconsin states the legal presence requirement in the plainest language in this series: **applicants who are not U.S. citizens must present legal presence documents every time they apply**, not once but **at every application**, renewals included. Yet the same agency's accepted list is surprisingly broad: **a pending asylum application, a pending or approved temporary protected status application, an approved deferred action, a pending application to change status, and a standalone I-797 notice** all count. The line this guide draws is this: **an open file gets a card, no application at all gets nothing**. Know two more things up front: **you get a license or an ID card, never both**, and **the knowledge test is offered in eleven languages, none of them Turkish**.

The agency's own sentence, and why it matters

The sentence on the legal presence page reads: applicants who are not U.S. citizens must present legal presence documents **each time they apply** for a driver license, instruction permit or ID card. That matters in two directions. First, Wisconsin sits on the opposite side of this series from the states that do not ask about status; do not assume this works without documents. Second, "each time they apply" covers renewal, which means your status document has to be in hand again eight years later. The agency serves three status categories: **U.S. citizen, permanent or conditional permanent resident**, and **lawful temporary visitor**. The third covers everyone here on a time-limited status, and most members of a newly arrived Turkish family land there. One more procedural rule: **originals are required and photocopies are not accepted**, and the agency states on its own page that it may refuse a document whose authenticity it doubts.

Status documents accepted for the star-marked card

- a valid U.S. passport or passport card;
- a **certified** birth certificate issued by a U.S. state or local government (certified copy only; a birth registration or hospital record is not accepted);
- a consular report of birth abroad (FS-240, DS-1350, FS-545);
- a valid permanent resident card (I-551);
- a certificate of naturalization (N-550, N-570) or certificate of citizenship (N-560, N-561);
- a **valid foreign passport plus a certified I-94 plus a validated visa**;

- a **valid employment authorization card (I-766)**.

The practical result for a Turkish reader: someone holding a valid passport, visa and I-94 has the documents for the star-marked card. If no paper I-94 was issued, the agency directs you to print the electronic record: i94.cbp.dhs.gov. Do that **before** the license, ID card and Social Security number applications, all of them. One note: Puerto Rico birth certificates certified before July 1, 2010 are not accepted.

The non-compliant card: the list widens here

For a card without the star, **all** of the documents above work, and these are **added**:

ADDITIONAL ACCEPTED DOCUMENT	WHAT IT MEANS
Conditional permanent resident status plus an alien registration number	A conditional green card holder can also get the non-compliant card
Nonimmigrant visa or nonimmigrant visa status	Visa-based statuses come through this door
Approved asylum application or refugee admission document	An approved file is accepted
Pending asylum application	A file with no decision yet is accepted too; one of the broadest provisions in this series
Pending or approved temporary protected status application	The application does not have to be resolved
Approved deferred action status	Named on the list
Pending application to change status	You can get a card while a change of status file is open
Refugee travel document, including I-512T	On the accepted list
Form I-797 Notice of Action	Treated as sufficient on its own. Even if all you hold is a receipt notice, the door is not closed
State Department resettlement program assurance form plus I-94	For those who were resettled

THE LINE IS NOT ABOUT STATUS, IT IS ABOUT THE FILE

- **The accepted list is not a status query, it is a file query.** If you hold a receipt notice for a pending application, bring that paper to the appointment and do not assume the door is shut.
- **The limited-term card is a date restriction, not a use restriction.** For lawful temporary visitors the card's expiration matches the end date of the documented legal presence (up to the eight-year renewal cycle) and the card is printed with the words "**limited term.**" Whether you can board a domestic flight with it is determined not by that legend but by the card's **star**, meaning which status document you used to get it.
- The agency gives the federal enforcement date as **May 7, 2025**. A star-marked card from another state does not simply carry over here: **you present the documents again.**
- **Even so, the document you show for an international flight and for an identity check at a federal office is your Turkish passport**, together with its visa or I-94 record. The card does what it does; it does not replace the passport.

A license or an ID card, never both

The agency's sentence is literal: in Wisconsin you have either a driver license or an ID card, **not both**. This is the first time in the series we have seen it stated this plainly. The practical result: getting a state ID card to hold while you prepare for the road test and then moving to a license **does not mean holding two cards**; when the license is issued the ID card falls away. The ID card also asks for the **same legal presence documents** as the license, so it is not a way around the status requirement. The ID card fee is **\$28** for eight years. For applicants who cannot produce the standard documents at all, the agency has an **ID card petition process**; we saw that such a process exists but **could not read its contents**, so we do not state its requirements here and we tell you to ask the agency.

Proof of residency: two documents, both with a street address

Wisconsin asks for **two** residency documents, and each one has to show your name and your current street address. **Post office boxes and commercial mail receiving addresses are not accepted**. What works for a newcomer: a utility bill (water, gas, electric, cable, internet, phone; bundled bills count, electronic printouts accepted); a paycheck, pay stub or earnings statement; a bank, credit union or brokerage statement; a **lease that includes the landlord's name and phone number** (its date does not matter during the first term, and **a photocopy is accepted**); a home, renter or auto insurance policy or billing statement dated within the past year; correspondence from a federal, state, county or municipal body sent within the past year; a certified school enrollment record or transcript; a **university enrollment document or Form DS-2019**; an unexpired photo ID from an accredited university, college or technical college in the state; an employer photo ID; or a signed letter on the letterhead of a shelter. One trap: a **renewal or extension of a lease more than a year old "may not be considered"**; not a problem for a newcomer, but worth knowing when you renew in your second year.

Deadlines, tests and fees

ITEM	RULE OR FEE
Deadline for a regular license	60 days after you establish residency
Deadline for a commercial license	30 days
Knowledge and signs tests	\$0
Road test	\$15 , and charged for any appointment not canceled 24 hours in advance
Instruction permit (class D, 18 months)	\$35; renewal \$35
First regular class D license (8 years)	\$42.50
Renewal (8 years)	\$42.50; a \$5 late fee if you renew after your birthday
Duplicate license	\$14
ID card, original and renewal / duplicate	\$28 / \$16
Paying by card	A convenience fee of up to 2.35 percent ; no extra charge where bank account payment is offered

One detail deserves emphasis: **the knowledge test is free but a road test appointment you miss still costs \$15**. If you need to cancel, cancel more than 24 hours out. The test is given on a **touch screen** at most service centers and the agency states that **audio assistance is available on request**. The agency's residency definition has three tests: your principal residence is in the state, you pay income tax here, or you are registered to vote here. The third is written for citizens; if you are not a citizen you do not register to vote. After you move, the agency's own recommended order is: **change your address with the postal service first**, then the license or ID card, then the title and plates. The printable document list is Form **BDS316**, in English and Spanish. Read the requirements on the agency's own page: wisconsindot.gov.

ELEVEN LANGUAGES, AND TURKISH IS NOT ONE OF THEM

- According to the agency's language table, the class D knowledge test and the signs test are offered in **eleven languages**: English, American Sign Language, Burmese, Chinese (Mandarin), **Croatian**, Hmong, Polish, Russian, **Serbian**, Somali and Spanish. Croatian and Serbian are on the list while **Turkish is not**, a concrete difference for a Turkish reader, which is why we say it plainly.
- **The source document is stamped "11/2020"**, meaning it was last updated six years ago. We do not promise that all eleven languages are offered today; we say that **the published table says so**. Confirm with the service center when you book.
- **We could not verify whether you may bring your own translator**. The only agency statements we found on this were in application guides dated 1998 and 2000, and we will not describe a right to you on the strength of a document that old. The only support stated on today's page is **audio assistance on request**. If you want a translator, ask when you book and have the answer noted.
- The motorcycle knowledge test is English and Spanish only; some commercial license tests are English only.

For commercial licenses the broad door closes

For a commercial driver license and commercial instruction permit the legal presence list is **noticeably narrower**: no employment authorization card, no pending applications. An unexpired foreign passport plus a valid U.S. visa plus a certified I-94 is accepted, but **only in the H-2A, H-2B and E-2 classes**. The document is requested again at first issuance, at renewal, on transfer from another state, and whenever a class, endorsement or restriction is added or removed.

A Turkish license: two separate lists, two separate outcomes

- **List one, convention countries**. Türkiye is on this list with no notation beside it. In the agency's words, drivers from a convention country who are here **as tourists** may drive on their valid national license **for up to one year from the date of arrival**, and there is a separate sentence for students. But the line that follows is the critical one: **after one year they must meet the same license requirements as a Wisconsin resident**.
- **List two, the test waiver**. Among class D applicants, only holders of licenses from **France, Germany, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan** may be waived from the knowledge and road tests under a reciprocity agreement. **Türkiye is not among those four**, so you take both tests.
- **The most common mistake**: thinking "Türkiye is on the convention list, so I have a year." That year is written for tourists and foreign students. Someone who signs a lease and enrolls a child meets the residency test the day they move, and from that moment the deadline is **60 days**.
- Getting an **international driving permit** before you leave Türkiye is a cheap precaution, but it is not a license: it is a translation used together with the national license and it does not work on its own.
- We also say what the agency does not say: its pages are **silent on whether your Turkish license is surrendered**, and we will not answer in either direction. Do not plan on keeping the card or on losing it; ask at the appointment.



TURKISH-SPEAKING IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY IN WISCONSIN

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