

Your personalised First Steps Checklist

The First Steps Checklist is a personalised list of the first steps you need to take, from registration to tasks associated with setting up your daily life.

Start by answering the questions below. You will be able to save the list as a PDF file when you are finished.



More than 90 days

Citizens of non-EU countries who plan to come to Finland for more than 90 days must first apply for a residence permit from the Finnish Immigration Service ([Migri.fi](#)). It is not possible to apply for a residence permit on another person's behalf.

The type of residence permit you need to apply for depends on your reason for coming to Finland. Residence permit applications are different if you plan to 1) work in Finland, 2) be with a family member in Finland, 3) study in Finland, 4) return migrate to Finland, or 5) come to Finland on other grounds.

You can apply for a residence permit online at [EnterFinland.fi](#), but within three months of submitting the application, you will need to visit a Finnish mission (embassy or consulate) in person to confirm your identity and present original copies of your application appendices. Check if your documents must be translated or legalised before your scheduled visit.

Applicants must wait for their residence permit decisions in the same country they submitted the application.

Once the Finnish Immigration Service has granted you a residence permit and you have moved to Finland, you must register your municipality of residence with the population register ([Dvv.fi](#)). You will then be assigned a Finnish personal identity code. This means you will be considered a Helsinki resident and be entitled to municipal services.



I will study

Citizens of non-EU countries who plan on coming to Finland to study must already have been granted a study place before they can apply for a residence permit based on studies.

Please note that if your only reason for moving to Finland is to study, you will likely not be eligible for state-supported social benefits, as you will be considered a temporary resident. See the state benefit agency [Kela.fi](#) for more information.

You must register your municipality of residence at the population register ([Dvv.fi](#)) upon your arrival.



With family

If a non-EU citizen family member wishes to move to Finland to join you, they must apply for a residence permit from the Finnish Immigration Service ([Migri.fi](#)). Applicants must wait for their residence permit decisions in the same country they submitted the application.

In most cases, you must also have proof of sufficient funds to support both yourself and your family members in Finland. The required income varies by family size.

Please note that as a rule, Finnish law defines family as the nuclear family, so unless you can prove that for example your parents or siblings are solely dependent on your care, they will likely not be granted a residence permit based on this kind of family tie. See the website of the Finnish Immigration Service ([Migri.fi](#)) for more information.

After your family members have their residence permits, they must then register their municipality of residence at the population register ([Dvv.fi](#)). Once they have registered with these two authorities, they will receive personal identity codes. This means they will be considered Helsinki residents and be entitled to municipal services. They will also be eligible to work and study in the same way as other residents of the city.

☐ I'm already in Finland

If you are already in Finland, within three months of submitting your application for a residence permit, you must visit the Finnish Immigration Service ([Migri.fi](#)) in person to confirm your identity and present original copies of your application appendices. Check if your documents must be translated or otherwise legalised before your scheduled visit.

More steps to consider

☐ Arrange to use an interpreter, if necessary

If you do not speak Finnish or Swedish, you have the right to use an interpreter when interacting with some public authorities. Interpreter services must be arranged in advance and often come at no cost. Find more information at [InfoFinland.fi](#).

☐ Open a bank account

Book an in-person visit at your bank of choice to open an account. Ask beforehand about the documents you will need to show them. Remember to request access codes for online banking.

☐ Set up a form of strong identification

You will need to acquire a form of strong identification, i.e., online banking codes, a mobile ID or a police-issued ID card, to use various e-services in Finland. Learn more at [Suomi.fi](#).

☐ Find a place to live and buy home insurance

Almost all rental agreements will require you to buy home insurance. Some banks in Finland offer bundled banking and insurance services at a discount, so ask around for different offers. See the [Housing in Helsinki](#) section of [welcome.helsinki](#) for more information.

☐ Buy a phone and internet service

You must have a [personal identity code](#) and Finnish address to buy a mobile service and/or broadband subscription. If you do not have a credit history in Finland, you will be asked to make an advance payment. If you do not yet have an ID code or address, you can purchase a pre-paid subscription. Check if your housing agreement includes broadband before you buy a subscription from an operator. Let your operator know if you want to use a [mobile ID](#).

☐ Use your Kela card and learn about state benefits

If you are [eligible for national health insurance](#) in Finland, you will be issued a Kela card. You can also apply for it yourself from the state benefits agency ([Kela.fi](#)). You will need to show this card to receive state-supported healthcare and subsidies. Each Kela benefit must be applied for separately, and decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. Find a step-by-step guide to using Helsinki's health services in the [welcome.helsinki](#) section [Healthcare and social services](#).

☐ Make it a habit to use public transport

Public transport in Helsinki is convenient, reliable and eco-friendly. The handy [HSL app](#) allows you to buy tickets and access the [Journey Planner](#) on your mobile phone. Check the [Getting around the city](#) section of [welcome.helsinki](#) for more information.



Exchange your driving license

Driving licenses issued in EU/EEA countries are valid in Finland indefinitely, but it is a good idea to exchange your license for a Finnish one if you plan to live here permanently. Owners of driving licenses issued by other countries will need to pass a Finnish driving exam if they do not exchange their license by the deadline. See more at [Ajokortti-info.fi](https://ajokortti-info.fi).



Sign up for Finnish or Swedish language lessons

While it is true that almost everyone in Helsinki speaks English, we suggest you start learning one or both of the national languages right away, as it will bring many advantages. Check [Finnishcourses.fi](https://finnishcourses.fi) for suitable courses near you.



Explore your new home

Once you have settled in, take some time to get to know Helsinki's different neighbourhoods. See the welcome.helsinki sections [About the city](#), [Nature](#), and [Free-time activities](#) and the [MyHelsinki website](#) for city info and fun things to see and do!



Enjoy your new life in Helsinki!

Congratulations! You have now finished all the steps and are ready to start your Helsinki adventure.

Any questions?

[International House Helsinki](#)

Lintulahdenkuja 2 D, 00530 Helsinki
Mon–Fri 9–16

[Helsinki-info](#)

Tel. +358 9 31011 111 and [chat](#)
Mon–Thu 9–16, Fri 10–15
Service points: International House Helsinki and Central Library Oodi