

California Driver's License Guide

A step By Step
Guide For Earning,
Renewing, and
Replacing Your
Driver License





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Getting On The Road

This manual was constructed to help Arizona residents apply for and acquire a driver's license by going into detail about the requirements, how to prepare, and the application and examination processes. This manual is provided electronically for the benefit of Arizona residents, and is constructed in a way that will make it easy to follow so that you can get your driver's license in just a few steps. If you are in need of a motorcycle license, you will need to read the Motorcycle Operator Manual in conjunction with this manual, and if you need to apply for a Commercial Driver's License, you'll need to use the the Commercial Driver's License Manual. Those manuals are available at your local Arizona MVD, or online at azdot.gov/mvd.



There are two major steps that anyone applying for a license needs to take.

The first is the knowledge test, a written exam that tests your knowledge on the actual rules of the road. The rules of the road don't typically have too much variation from state to state, but there are always some differences. A big example for California comes in the form of Lane splitting for Motorcycles. Motorcycles are allowed to lane split and drive through traffic in California, but not in other states. This is just one example of how the rules of the road can vary from state to state. This is a test, so you will need to study beforehand.

The second step is, of course, the actual driver's test. This is an on the road test with a DMV certified exam proctor who will take you along a predetermined route and test your driving competency.

These tests are the two steps that most everyone prepares for and knows about, but there are other steps in applying for a driver's license. The first step is preparation. Not only should you study for the written test (study material, Such as the California Driver Handbook, is available online, and there are also third party groups and driver schools with study material and practice tests.), but you should have some amount of practice driving before your actual drivers test.

You will also need to have the required documents on hand to apply for your license. You need original, or certified copies of documents that establish your identity, birth date, true full name, residency, and/or legal presence. The following Documents are accepted as proof of identity documents by the CA DMV:

- Valid and unexpired U.S. Passport or U.S. Passport Card.
- Certified copy of your U.S. Birth Certificate (issued by a city, county, or state vital statistics office).
- Certified copy of a Birth Certificate issued from one of the following U.S. Territories:
 - American Samoa.
 - District of Columbia (Washington, D.C.).
 - Swain's Island.
 - Puerto Rico (issued on or after July 1, 2010).
 - U.S. Virgin Islands (issued on or after January 17, 1917).
 - Guam (issued on or after April 10, 1899).
 - Northern Mariana Islands (issued after November 4, 1986).
- U.S. Certificate of Birth Abroad or Consular Report of Birth Abroad of a U.S. Citizen.
- Certificate of Naturalization or Certificate of U.S. Citizenship.
- Valid and unexpired Permanent Resident Card/Resident Alien Card or valid and expired Permanent Resident Card/Resident Alien Card with Notice of Action (I-797 C or I 797).
- Valid foreign passport stamped with "Processed for I-551".
- Valid/unexpired Employment Authorization Document (EAD) Card (I-766) or valid/expired EAD Card with Notice of Action (I-797 C).
- Valid/unexpired foreign passport with an approved Record of Arrival/Departure (I-94).
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Important Note: You may have heard about the new change to IDs, with a new form of Federal Compliant card being required to board domestic flights or access federal facilities. This change will be enacted on October 1st, 2020. The CA DMV started offering REAL ID driver licenses and ID cards in January of 2018. To apply for a REAL ID compliant license or ID card you must visit a field office. You will need to establish the following with certified documentation to apply for a REAL ID:

- Identity: You need one document establishing your identity. Acceptable documents include certified U.S. Birth Certificates, U.S. Passport, Permanent Resident Card, or Unexpired Foreign Passport with a Valid U.S. Visa (And an approved I-94 form)
- Social Security Number: A single document, such as a Social Security Card.
- California Residency: TWO documents that list your Last Name, and physical address. Home utility bills are an example of accepted document.}



When you have your required documents you will need to head into your local DMV. Your first step will be to complete a Driver License or Identification Card Application (Form DL 44). A DMV representative will ask you to sign the form. You should NOT sign the form until asked to do so by a DMV representative. In addition to Form DL 44, you will also need:

- Correct Fee(s) (36\$ for a driver's license, 31\$ for an ID card.)
- Documentation establishing your:
 - Identity
 - Birth date
 - True Full Name
 - Residency (and/or your legal presence)



Note: The Documentation for a REAL ID is sufficient to establish the above categories.

- Additional requirements for those under the age of 18 (Provisional permit/license application)
 - Driver's ED completion certificate or document certifying enrollment in an integrated driver's ed training program
 - Parent and/or Guardian Signatures in the correct sections of your filled out Form DL 44

After providing adequate documentation and all required information, your fingerprint and photograph will be taken, and the knowledge test will be administered.

As stated before, the Knowledge test is administered to gauge an applicant's understanding of rules and regulations while driving. If you do not pass the knowledge test you may retake the test, but only after a week has passed. After three failures you will need to redo the entire application process. Upon passing your knowledge test you will be issued a licensing document. Once you have received your licensing documentation you will need to schedule an appointment to move to the next step, your drivers test.

In California Driving Tests are by appointment only. Do **NOT** drive to your test on your own. You must arrive with an accompanying licensed driver.



Note: Each DMV office is different! Some may have designated START HERE areas where you should pull up your car, and others may require you to park in a designated area and approach a check in counter or window.}





On the day of your driver test you will need the following information:

- Up to date proof of Vehicle Registration
- Up to date proof of Vehicle Insurance
- Permit or Licensing document issued to you after your Knowledge test
- A driver license or permit previously issued by any state or country (This step is only necessary if applicable)

Provisional drivers must also bring the following:

- Driver's Training completion certificate
- A signed permit (Parent/Guardian and Driving instructor Signature required)

Assuming all required documentation is present, an instructor or proctor will be assigned and you will begin your behind the wheel drivers test.

If you do not pass your driver test you may retake the test again (Another test date will need to be scheduled. Provisional applicants who have failed have a minimum of 2 weeks wait time before another behind the wheel test.) If you fail three times you must restart the entire application from the beginning

Upon passing your Behind the Wheel driver test you will be issued one of two licenses:

- An Interim License:
 - Interim licenses are paper drivers licenses issued to you while the hard final copy is processed and sent to you.
- A Temporary License:
 - A Temporary License is a paper License issued because some aspect of your application is incomplete. You will need to supply the missing information or complete the additional requirements.

Both Temporary and Interim licenses are valid for up to 60 days and function as valid driver's licenses. Should your final drivers license not arrive after 60 days, contact the CA DMV at the following number:

1-800-777-0133

ID Cards:



If you are not looking to get a Driver License, but would still like a valid form of state ID, you can apply for an ID or Identification Card. The DMV issues these cards to persons of any age. ID cards are for Identification purposes only, and do NOT allow the holder to drive. As with applying for a REAL ID Driver License, you may apply for a REAL ID ID card, and you must provide the required documents mentioned earlier in this guide. **The fee for an ID card is 31\$ USD.**

Note: The DMV offers a reduced application fee for original or renewed ID cards, if you meet income requirements. If you are eligible for a public assistance program you can receive a completed Verification for Reduced FEE Identification Card for (Form DL 937) from the public assistance organization. You will take this form to the DMV to apply for the reduced fee ID card.}



Renewing A License Or ID Card:

There are multiple methods to renew your California Driver License. The first is renewing in person at a physical DMV location. If you wish to renew your license in person you will need to either complete one of the following application forms:

- Driver License or Identification Card Application
- Commercial Driver License Application

And then bring the forms to your local DMV office, or if the DMV has mailed you a renewal notice, you will need to complete the following steps:

- On the DMV renewal notice, cross out any old or out of date incorrect information and write in your current up to date information.

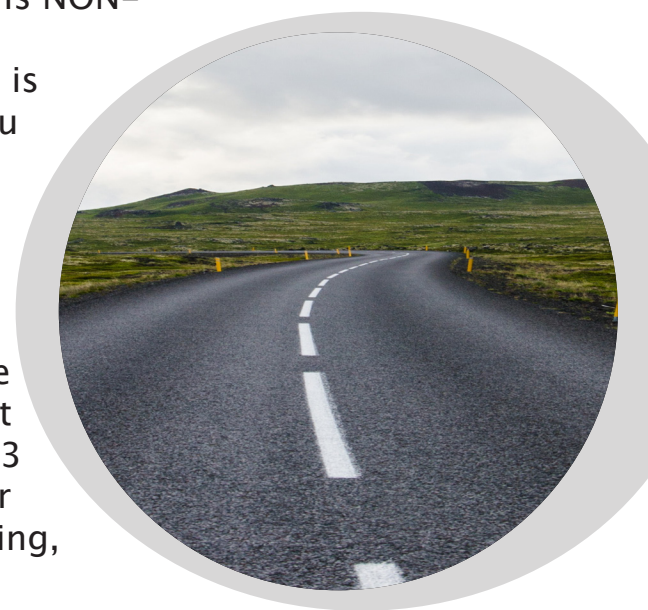
- Pay the application fee at the DMV (This fee is NON-refundable)

- **Note on the application fee:** Your fee is valid for 12 months. After 12 months if you have not met the requirements to renew your license your application will cease to be valid and the process will need to be started over from the beginning, including paying a new fee.

- As with earning your initial license, the fee and application are good for 3 different attempts at the required knowledge tests. 3 Failures mean your application is no longer valid and must be started from the beginning, including paying a new fee.

- Undergo a new fingerprint scan.

- Pass a Vision Exam.
- Have a new photo taken.
- Take any required knowledge tests (Your renewal notice will inform you if a knowledge test is required).
- You can use the renewal process to apply for a REAL ID driver license in person. You must provide documents that prove your Identity, SSN, and residency, as outlined in section one of this guide.



Similar to earning your initial license, the DMV will not give you a new license immediately. Instead you will receive a paper interim Drivers License. This interim license will remain valid for 90 days after being issued to you. If you have not received your new license in 60 days, call the following number: 1-800-777-0133. You should be able to check the status of your new license. When calling, please make sure to have your interim license on hand to provide any information requested.

Note: Commercial Drivers! (CDL Holders)



If you have been issued a DL in any name to operate any type of motor vehicle in any state or jurisdiction in the past 10 years. If you are renewing through the in person process you will need to complete a 10 Year History Record Check Form also known as Form DL 939. If your license has been expired for two or more years, you will be required to take a skills test.

Important!



If your Driver's License has EXPIRED, it is illegal for you to drive in the state of California. While there are no late fees to renew your license, it is highly recommended that you renew on time. You may be cited by police officers for driving with an expired license.

If you don't want to renew your license in person you may be eligible to renew your license by mail instead. You may be eligible if all of the following conditions apply to you:

- Your driver's license does not expire in the next 60 days.
- You will not be 70 years or older when your current license reaches its expiration date.
- You are not currently on probation or suspension of your driving privileges.
- You have not violated any written promises to appear in court in the previous two years.
- You have not had two 5 year extensions by mail back to back.
- You do not have a license from another state or jurisdiction.
- You are NOT applying for a REAL ID driver's license or ID card.
- You are not renewing a CDL (Commercial Driver's License)



Note: Commercial Driver's Licenses can no longer be renewed by mail or over the internet. This change was enacted on the tenth of May, 2017.}

An Additional method of renewing your Driver License is Internet Renewal.

According to the CA DMV you are eligible for Internet Renewal if you:

- Can access the Internet.
- Have no need to change any information (Such as address or name) on your license.
- Already have a verified SSN on file with the CA DMV.
- Have a Valid working credit card.
- Are NOT applying for a REAL ID.
- Are NOT attempting to renew a CDL.

You can renew over the Internet by going to the CA DMV website (www.dmv.ca.gov) and locating the Online Service Tab. You will see Driver License Renewal as an option. Follow the instructions on the following pages to renew your license online.



Note: The CA DMV recommends that, in order to avoid potential delays in receiving your renewed License, if you have submitted an online change of address or will submit an online change of address, that you complete the renewal process in the mail, and not online.

Replacing Your Lost or Stolen License or ID Card

Losing a Driver's license is a stressful and often harrowing experience. You worry constantly about being pulled over and not having your license, and for those who need valid ID to prove their identity or age, you are left with few options outside of carrying around your passport or similar documents. Most people are unsure of the process to apply for a replacement license. The DMV's website is expansive, but convoluted and difficult to navigate. Thankfully, we give you the information you need in a simple and easily organized packet.

Applying for a replacement license (or replacement ID card) is a similar process to renewing your license or applying for a new license. The first step is the completion of a Driver License application. (For those looking to apply for a replacement commercial driver's license, you will need to fill out a Commercial Driver License Application)



Note: Minor's looking to apply for a replacement or duplicate license must have parental or guardian's signatures on their applications or they will be unable to complete the process.

After filling out the required application forms, you will need to follow these additional step to complete the application process:

- Schedule an appointment to visit your local DMV office (appointments are not entirely necessary, but as everyone knows, lines at the DMV tend to be long, and an appointment will help avoid wait times.)
- Pay your application fee. Yes replacing your drivers license requires you to pay the fee again. According to the CA DMV website, the fees are as follows:
 - Regular ID Card replacement fee: 30\$ USD
 - Reduced Fee ID replacement fee: 8\$ USD
 - Class C License replacement fee: 28\$ USD
 - Non-commercial Class A or B replacement fee: 28\$ USD
 - Commercial class C replacement fee: 34\$ USD
 - Commercial class A or B replacement fee: 34\$ USD



Note: Senior citizens do not have to pay a fee to replace lost ID cards. You are classified as a senior citizen if you are age 62 or older.

- You will need to re-scan your fingerprints at the DMV (The main reason that this process cannot be completed online)
- You can use this opportunity, if you have not done so already, to apply for a REAL ID license or ID Card. As with all applications for a REAL ID compliant card, you will need to bring appropriate documentation to validate your Identity, SSN, and Residency.



NOTE: If you are not applying for a REAL ID compliant driver license or ID card, the DMV will still validate your identity with a photo, social security number, and personal information. This is done to ensure you are indeed you, and not an imposter trying to get a license in your name.


After providing all necessary documentation and required fees, the DMV will issue you an interim driver license. Interim driver licenses are valid for 90 days. You will also receive a receipt for your new ID (or if you are just replacing an ID card, you will only receive the receipt.) You should receive your new license in the mail within 60 days. If your new license has not arrived in 60 days, call 1-800-777-0133. Make sure you have your interim license on hand, as it will be required to answer the representative's questions.

Changing Information on Your Driver's License:

The three main areas of information that you may want to change on your driver license are:

- Name
- Address
- Gender

All of the above information can be changed on your license or ID card, although some information is easier to change than others. Address Changes and Gender changes can be done online. If you decide to change your address on your license a new card with the updated information is not issued.


 **Note: If you are a U.S. Citizen**– United States Law requires citizens to update voter registration if you move to a new permanent residence. You can authorize the DMV to notify the Secretary of State of a voter change of address, but only if you are already registered to vote. If you are moving to a new county or are not currently registered to vote, you must complete a voter registration application, which will be outline later in this guide.

You may change your address online if you meet the following requirements:

- You have a CA driver license or ID card.
- You currently have a Social Security Number.
- Have a physical address in the United States.

If any of the following apply to you, you cannot change your address online and must fill out form DMV14, a Change of Address form and mail it to the listed address.*

- You have a Commercial Driver License issued by the State of CA, but your listed residence is in a state other than California.
- Your address is either:
 - An Army Post Office address.
 - A Fleet Post Office address.
- Your address is outside the United States of America.
- You are currently in the process of waiting for your REAL ID that you previously applied for.

 **Note: If you have applied for a REAL ID** compliant license or ID card and you have not received your card, you cannot mail your completed DMV14 form to the listed address. To complete an address change you must visit a DMV office in person and present proof of California Residency to complete the address change.

If you are looking to change your gender on your driver license or ID card, you are in luck. You can self-certify, as of January 1, 2019, your chosen gender category:

- Male
- Female
- Nonbinary

To make a change to your gender category you need to fill out Form DL 329S, or the Gender Category Request form. You may complete this form before visiting the DMV.

- F = Female
- M = Male
- X = Nonbinary

While there is no additional fee associated with changing your gender category, the normal fees for replacing or renewing a license or ID card may still apply.



The final piece of information you can change on your driver license or ID card is your name. Applying for a name change on your license or ID card will require you to visit your local DMV in person. As with all DMV application processes, the application to change your name will require you to complete an application form, and confirm your identity with various documents.

- You must complete a Driver License or Identification Card application.
 - If you are applying to change your name on a CDL, you must instead complete a Commercial Driver License Application.
- Visit the DMV in person. Name changes CANNOT be done online or over the mail.
- You must provide proof of your legal name change.
- Pay the driver license or ID card application fee.
- Undergo a new fingerprint scan.
- Have a new photograph taken.



Note: Making a “True Name Change”

Your name, classified as your “True Full Name”, must appear on any document you submit to verify your identity. When changing your name you must provide, at minimum, one of the following documents verifying your legal name change:

- Adoption Documents, if your name change is the result of a legal adoption.
- A Certified name change document.
 - This document MUST contain your legal name both before and after your name change.
- A Marriage Certificate, if the name change is a result of marriage.
 - The marriage certificate MUST be issued from a local or state office of Vital statistics.



- One of the following documents that verifies the formation of a domestic partnership:
 - Certificate
 - Declaration
 - Or Registration
- Dissolution of Marriage document.
 - MUST be the result of a court action.

All of the above documents must be certified documents that have been issued by a government agency that is specifically authorized to disseminate such documents. Foreign jurisdictions are acceptable if recognized by the government as authorized to issue such documents. You may use originals or copies of your documents as long as:

- The document is legible
- The document is certified and has a one or more of the following:
 - Government Seal
 - Government Stamp
 - Other official marking or imprint

When changing your name, you will be required to surrender your current Driver License or ID Card.



Note: If you are changing your name on your driver license you need to make sure that you also change your name with the Social Security Administration. This step needs to be done before you have your appointment with the DMV. If you have not updated your name with the Social Security Administration, the DMV will be unable to verify your identity. The DMV verifies name, birth date, and social security number with the Social Security Administration.

If your information cannot be verified by the Social Security Administration, you will not receive a new license or ID card. You will instead be mailed a Request for Verification of Information letter from the DMV. This serves to inform you that some, or all, of the information you provided to the DMV could not be verified, or did not match the records kept by the Social Security Administration.}

After processing your change of name at the DMV, the DMV representative will issue you an interim California Driver License or ID Card, as well as a receipt for your new license or ID card. This interim license is valid for 90 days. Your new ID Card should arrive in the mail after 60 days have passed from your initial appointment. If you have not received your new license or ID card, call 1-800-777-0133 and inquire on the status of your application.

Reinstating a Suspended License

Driving is a privilege, and not a right. Your driving privileges can be revoked, suspended, or terminated. In the case of suspensions, most suspensions will be issued by the DMV or a Court of Law. There are many reasons you might be served with a suspension. The CA DMV gives the following reasons for suspension:

- Negligent Operator (NOTS Program)
- DUI (Driving Under the Influence)
- Physical or Mental Conditions that affect one's ability to drive
- Lack of Car Insurance and involvement in an accident that caused-
 - Injury
 - Death
 - Property damages over \$1,000
- FTA violations (Failure to Appear in Court for traffic Citations)
- Failure to pay Family Support

Note: Negligent Operator Violations and the Point System:



Driving in California, and in any state, requires that you follow the rules of the road, and maintain safe driving at all times. If you violate traffic laws and are issued tickets for any sort of moving violations, the DMV may revoke your driving privileges.

There are two points values that are assigned to violations:

2 Point Violations:

- Hit and Run
- Reckless Driving
- DUI
- Other Moving Violations

1 Point Violations:

- Minor Traffic Violations
- Any "At Fault" accidents

Two point violations will remain on your record for 7 years (after the violation date).

1 Point offenses will remain on your record for 3 years after the violation date.

The DMV will consider you a Negligent Operator if any of the following point totals are met:

- 4 Points in 12 months
- 6 points in 24 months
- 8 points in 36 months

Your license can be suspended for variable lengths of time, usually depending on the circumstances that lead to your suspension. Some suspensions might be 30 days, others a year, and you might even have an indefinite suspension due to medical condition or other ailment.

You can contact the DMV at the following number: 1-800-777-0133 to inquire about your suspension. Be sure to have your DL on hand to provide necessary information.

If your Driver License has been suspended you can get it reinstated. The DMV gives the following examples of steps you may need to take to reinstate your license along with the reason for suspension:

Negligent Operator Suspension:

- You must pay a reissue fee to the DMV
- You must pay any applicable court fines
- You must demonstrate proof of financial responsibility*
- You must complete you NO probation without incurring any new traffic violations.
- The DMV website also states that you cannot be involved in any AVOIDABLE accidents.

DUI Suspension:

- Complete the Mandatory Suspension period
- Pay the DMV reissue fee
- File Financial Responsibility proof*
- DL 101 (Notice of Completion of a DUI treatment Program)
- Pay all applicable Court fines
- Serve all applicable prison time



Note: If you meet certain conditions, as outlined by a judge or whichever official is presiding over your case, you may be issued a restricted DL in advance of your completion of the suspension period.



Mental Condition/ Disorder Suspension:

You must provide a completed Driver Medical Evaluation form (Form DS 326) and any other relevant medical info that certifies that the original condition no longer impairs your driving ability.

Accident Without Proof of Financial Responsibility*:

- Mandatory completion of a minimum 1 year suspension
- Pay your reissue fee to the DMV
- File proof of Financial Responsibility*

FTA Suspension:

- Appear in Court– You will be issued an FTA abstract stating you completed this requirement
- Pay your DMV reissue fee

***California Insurance Proof Certificate, SR 22. Financial Responsibility refers to Car Insurance.**

Every suspension case is different. Each individual case may have additional requirements. If you want to inquire about your specific case call 1-800-777-01133. Make sure you have your license on hand to provide your number, as well as any other information the DMV has sent to you.

Additional Information

Vision Exams:

The DMV has a vision requirement for driving. The standard guidelines of the CA DMV state the 20/40 visual acuity is required for those wishing to earn a driver's license. The 20/40 requirement is with or without glasses. Those who are applying for a non-commercial class C license, this requirement must be met with both eyes simultaneously.

If you are applying for a Class A, B, or Commercial Class C license, the requirements are stricter. Not only does your eyesight need to meet the 20/40 mark simultaneously, but each eye individually needs to have 20/40 vision.

According to the California DMV, the 20/40 measurement is obtained while both eyes are open. This is done to mirror the conditions of normal driving. There two tests that may be administered to test one's vision:

The Snellen Chart

Optec 1000 Vision Tester

If you do not pass either vision exam, the DMV may refer you to a vision specialist. If referred, the specialist may prescribe a stronger eyeglass prescription. Until you meet the vision requirements you will not be allowed to earn your driver's license.