

1 Michigan Driver's License Information

You must be licensed to operate a motor vehicle on public streets and highways. This chapter provides information about applying for and renewing a Michigan driver's license. The licensing procedures and requirements differ depending on an applicant's age.

MICHIGAN RESIDENTS AND NEW MICHIGAN RESIDENTS

To be considered a resident, you must reside in Michigan and have established that you are legally present in the state.

Under state law, the Secretary of State is prohibited from issuing an original standard driver's license or state identification card to anyone who is not a legal resident of the state.

If you are a new Michigan resident, you must immediately title and register your vehicle at a Secretary of State office and turn in the titles or proof of ownership from your previous home state. If you have a valid driver's license or state identification card from another state, these can be used in the interim until your state residency is established. Once residency is established, please visit a Secretary of State office to apply for a Michigan driver's license or state ID card.

You must also pass a vision test and pay a fee. No other test is required if you are surrendering a valid out-of-state or Canadian operator's license. An application for a Michigan driver's license other than an operator's license, such as a chauffeur's license or Commercial Driver License, may require additional testing and a background check.

The Secretary of State will contact your previous home state to obtain your driving record, which then becomes part of

your Michigan driving record. If your previous driver's license is suspended or revoked, you must contact your previous state to clear any outstanding issues before your application for a Michigan license will be accepted.

Once your application for a Michigan license is accepted, your current out-of-state driver's license will be invalidated and returned to you because Michigan law permits drivers to hold only one valid driver's license at a time.

GENERAL LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

You must meet certain requirements before a Michigan driver's license can be issued. If you are 18 or older and have never been licensed, you are not required to take driver education to obtain a license, although it is strongly recommended.

The requirements for obtaining a license will vary depending on the type of license, group designator or endorsement.

You will not be issued a license if you have never been licensed in Michigan, any other state or country, and you have two or more convictions for moving violations on your driving record within the three years before the date you apply. To be eligible to reapply, you must wait until you have no more than one conviction on your driving record within the three years before the date you reapply.

Teenagers younger than age 18 are required to successfully meet the requirements of Michigan's Graduated Driver Licensing program before they can be licensed. This requirement is waived if you have had a license from another state for more than a year.

GRADUATED DRIVER LICENSING

Under Graduated Driver Licensing, drivers younger than age 18 must complete two segments of driver education instruction and meet the requirements for each of the three GDL licensing levels. Driving privileges are increased at each new licensing level as the teen driver gains greater skill and confidence. GDL ends for teens when they turn 18.

APPLYING FOR A LICENSE IF YOU ARE 18 OR OLDER

If you are age 18 or older, before you can get a Michigan driver's license you must present the following:

- **Proof of Social Security Number:** A Social Security card or other Social Security Administration document containing your name and Social Security number or a letter of ineligibility from the SSA.
- **U.S. Citizenship or Legal Presence Documentation:** A certified copy of your birth certificate,* a valid U.S. passport or Certificate of Citizenship; or legal presence proof if not a U.S. citizen, such as a Permanent Resident Card or an Employment Authorization Card.

*A certified copy of your birth certificate must have a raised seal or stamp and have been issued by a government unit in the United States or U.S. territory.

- **Identity Document:** A valid driver's license or state-issued ID card, U.S. marriage license, U.S. school records or photo ID issued by a federal or Michigan government agency.
- **Michigan Residency (two proofs required):** A utility bill, bank statement, paycheck stub with the name and address of the employee, tax assessment or professional license.

In addition, you must:

- Pass a vision test and meet health standards set by the Secretary of State's Office.
- Pass a knowledge test.
- Pay the appropriate license fee.
- Complete a minimum 30 days of practice driving on a Temporary Instruction Permit.
- Pass a driving skills test. The skills test will be given by an independent testing organization approved by the Secretary of State.

If you have a valid driver's license from another state, the written knowledge and driving skills tests as well as the 30-day practice requirements may be waived.

If you meet the requirements, you will be issued a temporary operator's permit after paying the appropriate fees. Your driver's license will be mailed to you. In some instances, because of medical conditions or other reasons, restrictions may be placed on your driver's license. If any special licensing conditions are required, these conditions or restrictions will be printed on the driver's license. Drivers licensed for the first time will be placed on probation for a minimum of three years.

PROVIDING YOUR SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

State and federal laws require the Secretary of State to collect Social Security numbers to verify U.S. citizenship or legal presence and to assist in child support collection. A letter of ineligibility from the Social Security Administration must be presented if you do not have a Social Security number and wish to obtain a standard license or ID card. The letter can be no more than 30 days old. All Social Security information will be verified.

For questions about Social Security or to replace a lost Social Security card, contact the SSA at 800-772-1213 (voice), 800-325-0778 (TTY), or visit the SSA website at ssa.gov.

PROVIDING PROOF OF LEGAL PRESENCE

To apply for a standard driver's license or state ID card, valid proof of U.S. citizenship or legal presence in the United States must be presented. Some of the documents that may be provided as proof of U.S. citizenship or legal presence include a certified copy of your birth certificate with a raised seal that was issued by a government unit in the United States or U.S. territory, a valid, unexpired U.S. passport or a certificate of citizenship or naturalization, a Permanent Resident Card or an Employment Authorization Card.

The first and last names and date of birth on the legal presence and identity documents should match. If your current legal name is different from the name on your birth certificate or legal presence document, you must show legal proof of the name change, such as an original marriage license, divorce decree or court order.

PROVIDING PROOF OF IDENTITY

You must also provide proof of identity when applying for a driver's license or state ID card. Only original documents will be accepted. Photocopies or facsimiles cannot be used. More than one document may be required.

PROVIDING PROOF OF RESIDENCY

Before your driver's license or state ID card application can be processed, you must present proof that you are a Michigan resident. At least two documents must be presented. Acceptable documents include a utility bill, credit card bill or account statement issued within the last 90 days, pay stub, earnings statement, mortgage, rental or lease agreement or an insurance policy. Residency documents in a family member's name may be used if the family relationship can be established by other forms of documented proof.

PHYSICAL STANDARDS

The Secretary of State office staff will ask you a few general health questions as part of the screening procedure. Your application may be denied pending a reexamination with additional medical information should there be any question about your physical condition and your ability to operate a motor vehicle safely.

VISION AND KNOWLEDGE TESTS

You will be given a vision test to determine if your vision meets minimum standards. If corrective lenses, such as glasses or contact lenses, are needed to pass the test, your driver's license will indicate you must wear them while driving.

If you fail the vision test, your eye-care specialist must complete a vision statement documenting that you meet the vision standards. Sometimes special driving limitations, such as "daylight driving only," will be required based on the vision statement and other information acquired by the Secretary of State.

If you have never been licensed, you will be given a knowledge test to determine how well you know Michigan traffic laws and safe

driving practices. Applicants age 18 or older will be given this test at the Secretary of State office when applying for a Temporary Instruction Permit. Teens in the Graduated Driver Licensing program must pass a knowledge test as a part of the Segment 1 driver education class.

If you are required to take a knowledge test for your original operator's or chauffeur's license, arrive at the Secretary of State office at least one hour before closing to allow enough time to complete the test.

If you have difficulty speaking or reading English, branch office staff will provide a list of available foreign language interpreters. Knowledge tests are also available in many languages. Please contact the Department of State Information Center at 888-SOS-MICH (767-6424) in advance to obtain a list of interpreters. Hearing-impaired customers can request a sign language interpreter or use an interpreter they know.

TEMPORARY INSTRUCTION PERMITS

A Temporary Instruction Permit allows you to practice driving with a licensed adult for up to 180 days.

A TIP is issued if you are age 18 or older and:

- You have never been licensed.
- Your license has been expired for more than four years.
- You hold a driver's license from another country. However, obtaining a TIP is optional if your out-of-country license is valid; a written test, vision test, and road test are still required.

Before obtaining a TIP, you must present proof of a valid Social Security number or a letter of ineligibility, U.S. citizenship or legal presence in the U.S., identity and Michigan residency. You must also pass vision, written knowledge and road sign tests. You must practice driving with a licensed adult for at least 30 days before you are eligible to apply for a Michigan driver's license. The 30-day practice period is waived if you have previously had a driver's license. You must pass a driving skills test before a driver's license will be issued.

Michigan has reciprocity agreements that allow applicants with a driver's license from Canada, Germany and the Republic of Korea

(South Korea) to convert their driver's license to Michigan without taking a written test or road test. Only a vision test is required. All identity requirements must be met.

DRIVING SKILLS TEST

You will need to take a driving skills test if:

- You are applying for a Level 2 License under Graduated Driver Licensing.
- You are age 18 or older, have never been licensed and are applying for an original driver's license.
- Your last driver's license has been expired for more than four years.
- You hold a driver's license from a country other than Canada, Germany, or Republic of Korea (South Korea).

Eligibility requirements for taking a driving skills test differ depending on your age.

If you are younger than age 18, you must have:

- Completed Segment 2 of driver education.
- Your log showing that you have completed at least 50 hours of supervised driving, including 10 at night. (Driving logs are available in The Parent's Supervised Driving Guide or through the free mobile app RoadReady.)
- Held a Level 1 License for at least six months.
- Not had any convictions, civil infractions, license suspensions or at-fault crashes during the 90-day period immediately preceding your driving skills test and application for your Level 2 License.

If you are age 18 or older, you must:

- First obtain a Temporary Instruction Permit before taking a driving skills test. A 30-day practice period may be required.

Driving skills tests are administered by independent third-party testing organizations approved by the Secretary of State. A list of approved third-party testing organizations is available at all Secretary of State offices and from the Secretary of State website. Be sure to ask the third-party testing organization you choose about its pricing

policies before scheduling your test. The Secretary of State does not set driving skills test fees or pricing policies.

Applicants who are hearing impaired or not fluent in English may use an interpreter during the driving skills test. (Interpreters are not allowed during either the written knowledge tests or the driving skills test for a Commercial Driver License.) The interpreter will be required to present photo identification to the examiner and may only interpret the instructions as the examiner gives them. Lists of approved sign language and foreign language interpreters are available through the department. Applicants may also bring their own interpreters. For more information, please call 888-SOS-MICH (767-6424).

The first part of the driving skills test requires you to pass a series of off-street, closed-course maneuvers followed by an on-road driving skills test. After passing the first part, you must then pass an on-road driving test to receive your driving skills certificate. The driving skills test includes urban, expressway, rural highway and residential driving.

Complete study information is provided in the Secretary of State publication Driving Skills Test Study Guide available at any Secretary of State office or on the Secretary of State website. You should review this study guide thoroughly before taking the driving skills test.

RESTRICTED LICENSE DUE TO DISABILITY OR ILLNESS

When applying for an original or renewal driver's license, you may be requested to provide a "Physician's Statement of Examination." A vision statement may be requested in some cases. A physician or physician's assistant licensed in Michigan or another state must complete the physician's statement. A physician's statement is required if the Secretary of State has reason to believe you have had a fainting spell, blackout, seizure or other loss of consciousness in the preceding six months. For a chauffeur or Commercial Driver License, you must not have had any blackouts, fainting spells

or seizures within the last 12 months.

A physician's statement also is needed for any physical or mental infirmity, impairment, disability or disease that may affect your ability to drive safely. The physician or physician's assistant must accurately describe your condition, including any disability or illness, and any medications you have been taking. The form must be returned to the Michigan Secretary of State Traffic Safety Division where the physician's statement will be reviewed to determine if you meet Michigan's physical and mental standards.

- An unrestricted driver's license may be issued if a physician's statement does not indicate a physical or mental impairment is present and if all other standards are met.
- If a physician's statement indicates a serious physical or mental condition at the time you renew your driver's license, you will be required to attend a driver reexamination. During the reexamination, your ability to operate a motor vehicle safely will be evaluated. Every effort will be made to help you keep your driver's license and continue to drive safely. If you have such a condition and are renewing your license, please begin the renewal process several weeks before your license expires to allow adequate time for processing.
- If a restricted driver's license is issued because of a disability or illness, a periodic driver reexamination may be required.

OTHER LICENSES AND ENDORSEMENTS

Most Michigan drivers will only need an operator's license. However, professions such as taxi driver, school bus driver or commercial truck driver require special licensing and endorsements.

Chauffeur's License: You must be at least age 16, have completed driver education and passed a chauffeur's license knowledge test before a chauffeur's license can be issued. A chauffeur's license is needed to operate a bus, school bus, taxi, limousine, delivery vehicle or for any occupation in which you get paid to drive. A Commercial Driver License also may be required, depending on the vehicle type or the Gross Vehicle Weight Rating.

Commercial Driver License: Before you can operate commercial motor vehicles, you must be at least age 18, have been suspension free for 36 months before the date of application and have the appropriate Michigan CDL group designation on your driver's license. Drivers between ages 18 and 21 can operate a commercial vehicle only in Michigan. You must be at least age 21 to drive a vehicle across state lines or to transport hazardous materials in amounts that require the vehicle to be placarded.

A commercial vehicle endorsement will be required in addition to a group designation when operating double trailers, tank vehicles, vehicles carrying hazardous materials, commercial buses and school buses.

Moped License: If you have a valid operator's or chauffeur's license, you are allowed to operate a moped on public roadways. If you do not have a valid operator's or chauffeur's license and are at least age 15, you may apply for a moped license at a Secretary of State office. You are not eligible for a moped license if your operator's or chauffeur's license is suspended, revoked or denied.

Motorcycle Endorsement: A valid driver's license with a motorcycle endorsement is required to operate a motorcycle in Michigan. To obtain the CY endorsement, you must either pass a motorcycle safety course or the motorcycle skills test administered by a third-party testing organization. A motorcycle safety course is required for teens between 16 and 17 and for riders who fail the skills test twice.

PROBATIONARY LICENSE PROGRAM

New drivers, including teen drivers under Graduated Driver Licensing, are placed on probation for a minimum of three years. The probationary period is a way for the Secretary of State to monitor the driving performance of new drivers. Probation is a separate program from GDL, but works like GDL to encourage new drivers to reduce their crash risk and drive safely.

CHANGING INFORMATION ON YOUR LICENSE

Make sure your driver's license shows your correct name and residential address. If you need to change your name on your driver's license, you must first change your name with the Social Security Administration. Present your proof of name change along with your valid driver's license to the SSA. Allow at least three business days for the SSA website to update, before visiting a Secretary of State office. At the branch office, present your license and proof of the name change, such as a marriage certificate, divorce decree or legal name change document. The name change will be processed and a new driver's license will be issued for a fee.

Michigan law requires that your driver's license address correspond to your residence and match the address on your voter identification card. You may submit a change of address online at ExpressSOS.com, at a Secretary of State office or by mail. If you are submitting a change of address at a branch office, bring your driver's license. Your driver's license will be updated with your new address. There is no charge for this service.

You also may submit a change of address by mail. Change-of-address forms are available on the Secretary of State website. Complete the form and mail it to the address provided.

ExpressSOS.com is a convenient and secure option for changing your address online. A change of address submitted online will affect all Secretary of State files associated with your name, including your driver's license or state ID card, vehicle records and voter registration as well as transactions in your online shopping cart.

When you submit a change of address in person or by mail, the procedures for updating your voter registration address also will be explained. Your driver's license may be suspended or revoked if you fail to change your address with the Secretary of State.

RENEWING YOUR LICENSE

A driver's license is usually valid for four years and expires on your birthday in the year shown on the license's upper right corner. If you are younger than age 21, your driver's license expires on your

21st birthday.

To remind you to renew your driver's license, the Secretary of State sends a renewal notice about 45 days before expiration. The renewal notice is sent to the address listed on department records. Text and email reminders are available if you provide the department with your email address or mobile phone number.

Do not let your driver's license expire unless you will no longer be driving. Driving without a valid license is illegal.

If you renew your operator's license after its expiration date, you will pay a late fee in addition to the regular renewal fee.

A driver's license will not be renewed if your driving record shows three or more unpaid parking tickets or if your driver's license has been suspended or revoked. A renewal application also may be denied if you have failed to provide a valid Social Security number or letter of ineligibility from the Social Security Administration and proof of U.S. citizenship or legal presence.

When renewing your driver's license at a Secretary of State office, a vision screening will be given. A new photograph will also be taken.

Cash, checks and money orders as well as Discover, MasterCard and Visa debit and credit cards are accepted at Secretary of State offices. Find the office nearest you by using the department's online Branch Office Locator.

THE DECISION TO GIVE UP DRIVING

Choosing to give up your privilege to drive can be a difficult decision. There are many reasons to consider when deciding whether to continue driving, such as no longer being comfortable at the wheel, feeling that driving is becoming too risky, concerns that your health or medications are adversely affecting your driving, having a "close" call or a serious crash and worries about getting lost. Your decision is important because it not only involves your independence but your safety and the safety of others on the road.

There are a number of organizations that have publications and resources available to help you decide when it may be time to give up

driving. Aging drivers, their families and the professionals who work with them are invited to visit the Safe Drivers Smart Options: Keys to Lifelong Mobility website at michigan.gov/agingdriver. Developed by a consortium of state and private entities, it is an online resource for active older drivers, and for those needing to limit their driving and find other transportation choices. Website visitors will find useful information such as how to assess driving skills, transition to driving retirement and identify alternative transportation options in their area. The website includes a PDF of the booklet **Great Lakes, Great Years – safety from shore to shore: Michigan’s Guide for Aging Drivers and Their Families** (the booklet is also available in Secretary of State offices).

If you decide to leave the driving to someone else, return your driver’s license to a Secretary of State office, where you may obtain a state identification card.

A state ID card is used in place of the driver’s license for identification purposes. Free identification cards are provided to those who are legally blind, drivers 65 or older who voluntarily relinquish their driver’s license and drivers whose driving privilege is suspended, revoked or denied due to a physical or mental disability.