

Know the laws and rules relating to driver's licenses

Tips & Info from Maine's Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV):

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FAQs about: How can I legally drive a car now that I'm living in Maine?

Note: *The information below is about driving private passenger vehicles, not about commercial vehicles.*



Q: I immigrated to Maine recently and have an unexpired driver's license from my home country. Can I drive legally with my home country driver's license?

A: You must apply for a Maine driver's license within 30 days of moving to Maine to live, even if you have an unexpired driver's license from another country. Note that under current Maine law, driving without a Maine license after being in Maine for 90 days is a crime, and could cause future immigration complications if you aren't a U.S. citizen yet.

Q: If I have my unexpired home country's driver's license and an unexpired International Driving Permit (IDP), can I drive legally in Maine?

A: Even with a legitimate IDP, the answer is the same as in the first question, above. Also, IDPs don't give you the right to drive – they simply translate the information on your driver's license. Legitimate IDPs are only available to you before you leave the country that issued your driver's license, so, if you didn't get an IDP then, it is too late to get one once you are in the U.S. Websites selling "international driver's permits" online

to immigrants who are already in the U.S. are scams, selling fake IDPs.

Q: I lived in another state in the U.S. before moving to Maine and have an unexpired driver's license from there. Can I drive legally with that state's license in Maine?

A: You must apply for a driver's license within 30 days of moving to Maine to live, even if you have an unexpired driver's license from another U.S. state. Note that under current Maine law, driving without a Maine license after being in Maine for 90 days is a crime, and could cause future immigration complications if you aren't a U.S. citizen yet.

Q: What is the driver's license application process? Do I have to take a test?

A: It depends:

- If you have a driver's license from another U.S. state that is unexpired or expired less than 5 years ago, you will be able to transfer that license over to a Maine license without taking a driver's exam.
- If you have a driver's license from

another U.S.

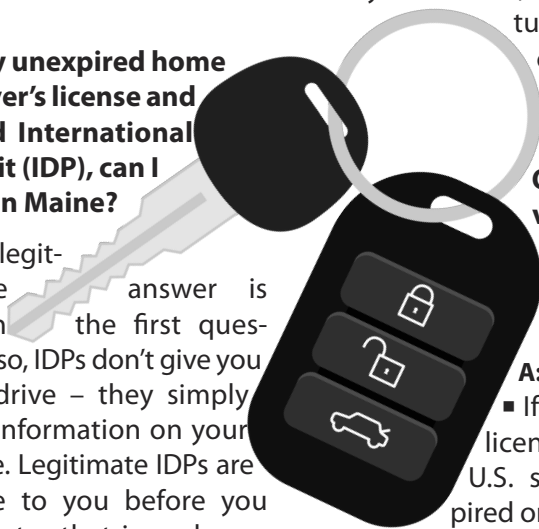
state that expired more than 5 years ago, or, your driver's license is from another country, you will need to take a written driver's exam and, later, a road test (a test of your actual driving skills, in a car with a BMV examiner).

- If you have never had a driver's license before, you will need to take a written driver's exam, and later, a road test (a test of your actual driving skills, in a car with a BMV examiner).

Q: How do I study and prepare for the written test?

A: You can:

- Study on your own using the BMV's study guide available online at <https://www.maine.gov/sos/bmv/licenses/motoristhandbook.html>. The study guide also has sample test questions. Note: Click on the Google Translate button at the top of the BMV web page to translate the Study Guide into many languages.
- Sign up for a driver's education course. Many privately owned businesses offer these (the BMV does not offer driver's education classes). Note: If you take a driver's education course, they will give you the written test and you won't have to take the BMV's written test.



Q: Can I have an interpreter with me when I take the written test at the BMV?

A: Yes. You can ask the BMV to provide an interpreter, at no cost to you, when you fill out the form to ask to be scheduled for the written test. Be sure to write on the form which language and dialect you need. You can also choose to bring your own interpreter if you prefer.

Q: After I pass the written test, can I start driving in Maine immediately?

A: Once you pass the written test (whether you take it at the BMV or through a private driver education course), you will get a temporary "Learner's Permit" that allows you to drive, but only with a licensed driver who has had a license for more than two years and is over 20 years old. A licensed driver must always be with you and must sit in the car's front passenger seat every time you drive. The licensed driver also must not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol when driving with you. Note: The permit is valid for two years. If at that point you're not yet ready to take the "road test" to get your driver's license, you can apply to take the written test again to get a new Learner's Permit for another two years.

Q: Do I always have to have a licensed driver in the car with me when I drive with a Learner's Permit?

A: Yes! And that person must be over age 20, must have had their driver's license for at least two years, must sit in the front passenger seat, and must not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. It is a

crime to drive without another licensed driver in the car with you when you only have your Learner's Permit, and this could cause future immigration complications if you aren't a U.S. citizen yet. To drive on your own, you must pass the road test and get your driver's license.

Q: How do I get ready for the road test to get my driver's license?

A: If you don't already know how to drive, once you get your Learner's Permit, practice driving a lot (always with a licensed driver with you, as explained above). Seventy (70) hours of driving experience (including 10 hours at night) is recommended to be ready to take the road test, and is required if you are younger than 21. If you are over 21 and you already know how to drive, schedule the road test as soon as

you'd like. You can watch this video to learn more about what to expect when you take the road test: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wuNcdlx6kL4>.

Q: Can I have an interpreter with me in the car when I take the road test?

A: No. An interpreter is not allowed in the car during the road test. You can have an interpreter with you before the road test begins, when the examiner explains what will happen during the road test.

Q: Once I've passed the road test, is there any way that my license can be taken away from me?

A: Yes. Your license can be suspended (taken away) if you are found guilty

of breaking any driving laws, like driving too fast, driving after drinking or using drugs, etc. Many driving violations, including driving when your license is suspended, are crimes that can cause future immigration complications if you are not a U.S. citizen yet. Note that under Maine's driving laws you also must always drive with your seatbelt on (and any passengers should have seatbelts on, too).

Q: What else do I need to know before taking the written test or the road test?

A: You will need to meet all the eligibility requirements for a Maine driver's license including:

- Showing two documents proving your identity (at least one should have your signature)
- Showing proof of your legal presence in the U.S. (many identity documents also prove legal presence)
- Having a Social Security number, if you are eligible for one
- Having documents showing that you live in Maine
- Passing a test of your eyesight
- Paying the required fees

For more information about driver's license eligibility and the application process, see this BMV webpage: <https://www.maine.gov/sos/bmv/licenses/getlicense.html>.

