



Information on driver’s licences in Germany

Anyone wanting to drive a vehicle on public roads in Germany will require a driver’s licence as per Section 2 of the German Road Traffic Act. The permit is issued for specific categories and is proven by a licence document. While it certainly won’t be the most important issue for you when it comes to assimilating into a new country, being mobile does mean a better quality of life and better opportunities on the job market. In addition to a broadened catchment

area for employment searches, it may also open up possibilities for other jobs. Obtaining a driving permit is also a key integrational measure.

Your local municipal or district licensing authority is responsible for handling all matters relating to your driver’s licence, from the application, to deciding on the necessary training and testing, to issuing the licence. In addition to approving driving permits, it also issues international driver’s licences, as well as licences to drive taxis and ambulances.

All matters submitted to the licensing authorities require you to present ID documents (e.g. personal ID, passport, residence permit,...), and often also appear in person. Individual requests are not usually answered over the telephone for privacy reasons. The legal regulations for transferring foreign driver’s licences vary greatly, and decisions are always made on the merits of the individual case. The information provided here serves as a guide only, and is not legally binding. For more details, visit the website of the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure (BMVI) or your local municipal or district licensing authority.

Applying for a driver’s licence for the first time?

It is important to comply with the following steps before applying for any driver’s licence, and prove this to the licensing authority:

- **Enrolment at a driving school**
- **Participation in a first aid course**
- **Eyesight test performed by an ophthalmologist or optician**
- **Biometric passport photo**

When applying for a licence in class C1, C, D1, D or associated E trailer classes, you also need:

- **Proof of physical and mental suitability as per Appendix 5 (FeV)**
- **Proof of vision as per Appendix 6 Number 2 (FeV)**
- **Proof of vision as per Appendix 6 then replaces the general eyesight test.**

The following documents must be provided at the time of applying with the relevant licensing authority:

Valid ID document (e.g. Personal ID/passport with latest proof of residence)

- **Biometric passport photo**
- **Proof of first aid training**
- **Eyesight test certificate from an ophthalmologist or optician**
- **Plus, for classes C1, C, D1, D and associated trailer classes**

1. **Certificate of physical and mental suitability as per Appendix 5 (FeV)**
2. **Eyesight confirmation as per Appendix 6 Number 2 (FeV); instead of the eyesight test certificate**

Once the application and registration are complete, you can undertake the theoretical and practical driving training. After passing this successfully, you may take the relevant driving permit examinations.

Wanting to transfer your existing driver’s licence over to a German driver’s licence?

In principle, any holder of a foreign driver’s licence who moves their primary place of residence to Germany is entitled to a German driver’s licence. This is the case when the person concerned lives in Germany for at least 185 days a year. The nationality of the foreign licence holder is not important, only their primary place of residence. Existing foreign driver’s licences are recognised for transferral in varying ways. Germany distinguishes between three groups of countries of origin for driver’s licences:

- **Driver’s licence from an EU/EEA member state.**
Only needs to be transferred upon expiry.
- **Driver’s licence from countries listed in Appendix 11 FeV (“Listed states”).** Transferral is mandatory. The exact extent to which driver’s licences from the listed states are recognised is established in Appendix 11 of the driver’s licensing ordinance (FeV). Driver’s licences (certain classes) from these states may be freely transferred in Germany in certain cases.
- **Driver’s licence from other countries („External states”).** Transferral is mandatory. Unlike the countries listed in Appendix 11 FeV, a theoretical and practical test is always required. Contrary to those obtaining a driver’s licence for the first time, however, holders of foreign driver’s licences are exempt from undertaking the mandatory training. However, accompaniment by a driver instructor is mandatory during the practical test. The attendance of a driving school in advance is highly recommended.

Wanting to drive in Germany using a licence not issued by an EU or EEA state?

If you hold a driver’s licence from a country which is not part of the EU or EEA, it will be valid for six months from the time you establish a primary place of residence in Germany (an extension for up to 12 months may be possible in some cases). Thereafter, your licence will no longer entitle you to drive vehicles requiring a licence within Germany.

In order to continue driving on German roads, you will require a licence issued in Germany. The requirements for issuing German driver’s licences depend on factors such as the country in which you obtained your licence.

A foreign driver’s licence does not entitle you to drive on German roads if

- **it is no longer valid,**
- **it is a learner’s permit or other temporary driver’s licence,**
- **you are not yet the minimum age required for a driver’s licence to be issued in Germany,**
- **your driver’s licence has been suspended in Germany, or**

- **you are banned from driving in Germany, or your driver’s licence has been confiscated, seized or taken into custody.**

Driving a vehicle with a foreign driver’s licence which is not or no longer recognised in Germany is a punishable offence equivalent to driving without a licence.

Selected references to the driver’s licensing ordinance (FeV)

Section 7 FeV -	Primary place of residence in Germany
Section 10 FeV -	Minimum age
Section 16 FeV -	Theoretical test
Section 17 FeV -	Practical test
Section 28 FeV -	Recognising driver’s licences from European Union member states or other countries in the European Economic Area
Section 29 FeV -	Foreign driver’s licences
Section 30 FeV -	Issuing driver’s licences to holders of licences from European Union member states or other countries in the European Economic Area
Section 31 FeV -	Issuing driver’s licences to holders of licences from countries outside the European Economic Area
Appendix 5 FeV -	Suitability assessments for applicants and holders of classes C, C1, D, D1 and the associated E trailer classes, as well as commercial/passenger driver’s licences
Appendix 6 FeV -	Eyesight requirements
Appendix 11 FeV -	List of countries associated with the special conditions for holders of foreign driver’s licences

