

# Overseas driver licences

## converting to a New Zealand licence

If you have a valid\* overseas driver licence you can convert it to a New Zealand driver licence. You can also convert the classes on your overseas licence to the equivalent classes for your New Zealand licence.

\*A **valid** overseas driver licence means that your licence must not be suspended, disqualified or revoked in the country of issue and must be either current or expired within the last 12 months.

If you've been in New Zealand for more than 12 months, you won't be able to drive on your overseas licence anymore. You must have a New Zealand licence.

### How to apply

You must apply at a specialist overseas conversion site.

Go to [www.nzta.govt.nz/overseas-conversion-site](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/overseas-conversion-site) to find your closest specialist site.

You'll need to:

- fill out an *Application for conversion of an overseas driver licence* form (DL5). This form is available from the agent or online at [www.nzta.govt.nz/forms-DL5](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/forms-DL5).
- present evidence of your identity (see Factsheet 20 *Identification for driver licensing*)
- present your overseas driver licence
- present a translation from an approved source, if your overseas driver licence is not in English
- provide a medical certificate (if required)
- provide high-quality, colour photocopies of all the original documents you've provided, as listed above (including any translations).

The agent will process your application, check your identification, take your photograph\* and a sample signature for your licence, check your eyesight and arrange an appointment for any theory tests required.

You'll need to pay the appropriate fees with your application.

\*When being photographed you must not wear sunglasses, a hat, any head coverings or anything else that might obscure your face or prevent the photograph from being a good likeness. The only exception is if the item is worn for religious or medical reasons and, if so, you must supply a signed statement confirming this. However, the photo must still show the face from forehead to chin and be a good likeness.

### Translation required if licence not in English

If your overseas driver licence is not in English, you must provide an original translation from an approved source together with your physical driver licence.

The approved sources are:

- a diplomatic representative at a high commission, embassy or consulate, or
- the authority that issued your overseas licence, or
- a translation service that has been approved by the Transport Agency.

An international driving permit (issued in accordance with a United Nations Convention on road traffic) may be acceptable as a translation.

A list of approved translation services is available on our website at [www.nzta.govt.nz/translators](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/translators).

### Eyesight requirements

You must prove that your eyesight meets the required standard. To do this, you can:

- present a satisfactory eyesight certificate issued by a New Zealand-registered optometrist (this certificate must be no more than 60 days old)
- present a satisfactory medical certificate issued by a New Zealand-registered medical practitioner (this certificate must be no more than 60 days old and must specifically cover eyesight)
- pass an eyesight screening check at a driver licensing agent.

The agents' eyesight screening machines eliminate the need for many drivers to be tested by an optometrist or medical practitioner. However, if you don't pass the screening check, then you must provide one of the certificates listed **before** your application can be completed and you can be issued with a New Zealand licence. Some drivers choose to provide a certificate instead of taking a screening check. If you have vision in only one eye, you must present an eyesight certificate from a doctor or optometrist.

### Age limits for New Zealand licences

New Zealand drivers must have reached a minimum age before they can hold a driver licence class. There are different minimum ages for learner, restricted and full licence classes. The minimum ages are outlined below.

Minimum age for licence class/stage			
Licence type	Age (years)		
	Learner	Restricted	Full
Car	16	16 ½	18 (without approved course) 17½ (with approved course)
Motorcycle	16	16 ½	18
Truck	18	N/A	18

This means that if you're under 18 years of age, you can only convert your overseas licence to the equivalent age-related New Zealand licence class.

If you successfully complete an approved advanced driving course\* and present the course certificate when you apply to convert your overseas licence, the minimum age for a full car or motorcycle licence class is reduced to 17½ years of age.

\*Approved advanced driving courses include Street Talk and Defensive Driving for cars, and competency-based training and assessment (CBTA 6F) courses for motorcycles.

For more information about licence classes see Factsheet 11 *Driver licence classes*.

## Tests required

All drivers must know the road rules, what the road signs mean and how to drive safely. You can find out more in *The official New Zealand road code*.

Some countries require similar driving skills and have similar licensing systems to New Zealand's. Depending on the country you've come from and the class of licence you're converting, you may not have to sit **theory** and/or **practical tests**. Other countries may have driver licensing systems that are very different from New Zealand's. People from these countries **do** have to sit both **theory** and **practical tests**.

## Theory test

You **do not** have to sit the theory test if:

- your licence is current (or has expired within the last 12 months), and
- you're converting a car or a motorcycle licence only, and
- you have a licence from one of the following countries:
  - Australia ▪ France ▪ Japan ▪ South Korea
  - Austria ▪ Germany ▪ Luxembourg ▪ Spain
  - Belgium ▪ Greece ▪ Netherlands ▪ Sweden
  - Canada ▪ Hong Kong ▪ Norway ▪ Switzerland
  - Denmark ▪ Ireland ▪ Portugal ▪ United Kingdom
  - Finland ▪ Italy ▪ South Africa ▪ United States of America

You **do** have to sit a theory test if:

- you have a licence from a country not listed above, or
- you're converting a heavy vehicle licence from any country.

## What if I can't sit the theory test in English?

Theory tests are also available in the following languages:

- Arabic
- Chinese (simplified and traditional)
- Gujarati
- Hindi
- Korean
- Maori
- Punjabi
- Samoan
- Thai
- Tongan.

If one of these languages is appropriate, but you have trouble reading, then you may be able to use a reader to read the test in English. Talk to the staff at the specialist overseas conversion site if you need to use a reader.

If none of these languages are appropriate, then you may be able to use an interpreter.

The interpreter should be an affiliate or full member of:

- the New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters (NZSTI), or
- the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI).

They'll need to present their ID card when they interpret the test for you.

If you can't use a member of the NZSTI or NAATI, you can provide someone else to interpret the test for you. They must be over 18 years of age, and present a passport or New Zealand driver licence when interpreting the test. Your theory test will be closely supervised at all times.

## Practical test

You **do not** have to sit the practical test if:

- your licence is current (or has expired within the last 12 months), and
- you've held that licence for more than two years, and
- you have a licence from:
  - Australia ▪ France ▪ Japan ▪ South Korea
  - Austria ▪ Germany ▪ Luxembourg ▪ Spain
  - Belgium ▪ Greece ▪ Netherlands ▪ Sweden
  - Canada ▪ Hong Kong ▪ Norway ▪ Switzerland
  - Denmark ▪ Ireland ▪ Portugal ▪ United Kingdom
  - Finland ▪ Italy ▪ South Africa ▪ United States of America

You may need to provide proof of the issue date of your overseas licence.

You **do** have to sit the practical test if:

- you have a licence from a country not listed above, or
- you have a licence from a country which is listed above but you've held that licence for less than two years, or
- you have a licence from Hong Kong or South Korea and you're converting a heavy traffic licence.

## Your application will be assessed by the NZ Transport Agency

Once you've made your application at the specialist overseas conversion site, your application will be sent to the Transport Agency to be assessed.

It could take up to three weeks for your application to be assessed and for your new driver licence to arrive (if your application is approved). If your application isn't approved, we'll send you a letter explaining our decision, and what you can do next.

Make sure you allow enough time for your application to be assessed before your 12 months of driving in New Zealand runs out. The agent won't be able to give you a temporary driver licence to allow you to continue driving.

## If you need to sit a practical test

Don't book your practical test until after we've assessed your application and you've received your New Zealand photo driver licence.

The New Zealand driver licence we send you will have a supervisor condition on it. This means you must be accompanied by a supervisor\* at all times when you drive.

\*A supervisor is a person who:

- holds a current full New Zealand driver licence for the class of vehicle
- has held their full New Zealand driver licence (or an equivalent overseas driver licence) for at least two years, and
- doesn't have a supervisor condition on their New Zealand licence.

If you're converting a motorcycle licence you don't need to have a supervisor. You'll be issued with a learner motorcycle licence and will need to comply with the learner conditions until you pass your practical test and are issued with a full licence.

That means you:

- must ride a LAMS-approved motorcycle (for more information on LAMS see Factsheet 28 *Learning to ride: getting your motorcycle licence*)
- must not carry passengers on the motorcycle or in a sidecar
- must not ride between the hours of 10pm and 5am
- must not tow another vehicle.

Once you've received your New Zealand photo driver licence, you can return to a specialist overseas conversion site and book your test. If you're paying by debit or credit card, you can call us on 0800 822 422 to book your practical test.

Once you've passed your practical test, we'll send you a New Zealand driver licence without a supervisor condition.

## If you don't need to sit a practical test

If your application is approved, we'll send you a New Zealand driver licence.

## Overseas driver licence no longer valid in New Zealand

If you've been issued with a New Zealand driver licence you'll no longer be able to use your overseas driver licence for driving in New Zealand.

The information in this factsheet is a general guide only. It is not the source of the law and should not be used in place of authoritative legal documents. Some factsheets are updated frequently and print versions can quickly become out of date. If the currency of the information you are reading is important, check the factsheet index on our website ([www.nzta.govt.nz/factsheets](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/factsheets)) or call us on 0800 822 422.

## What happens if I fail the theory or practical test?

If you fail the **theory** test and have been in New Zealand for **more** than one year, you **must not** drive in New Zealand. You can apply to sit the test again.

If you fail the **practical** test, you must continue to be accompanied by a supervisor when you drive until you resit and pass the test.

## What about motorcycles and heavy vehicles?

Different types of vehicle are grouped into classes. There are different theory tests and practical tests for different classes:

- Class 1 covers cars and other light-weight motor vehicles, such as vans and utilities.
- Classes 2-5 cover different types of heavy vehicles, such as trucks.
- Class 6 covers motorcycles.

Most people will sit the theory and practical tests for a Class 1 licence. If you had a motorcycle licence and wish to continue riding, you'll need to sit different theory and practical tests for a Class 6 licence.

If you drove trucks and want to do so here, or want to have both a car and a motorcycle licence, make sure you tell the driver licensing agent which licence classes you want to sit tests for (see Factsheet 11 *Driver licence classes* for more information).

## Can I convert to a New Zealand licence using only my international driving permit?

No. You must present your physical overseas driver licence at the driver licensing agent when you are applying to convert to a New Zealand licence. You can't present your international driving permit on its own.

**Note:** if you have an overseas alcohol interlock licence, you can't convert it to an equivalent New Zealand licence. If you wish to drive in New Zealand, we recommend that you apply for a New Zealand licence through the graduated licensing system.

## Where can I find out more?

- If you have questions about driver licensing go to [www.nzta.govt.nz/licence](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/licence) or call us on 0800 822 422.
- If you prefer, you can write to us: NZ Transport Agency, Palmerston North Office, Private Bag 11777, Palmerston North 4442.

### Contact details

- Call us: 0800 822 422.
- Visit our website: [www.nzta.govt.nz](http://www.nzta.govt.nz).
- Email us: [info@nzta.govt.nz](mailto:info@nzta.govt.nz).
- Write to us: NZ Transport Agency, Private Bag 11777, Palmerston North 4442.

## HOW TO CONVERT YOUR OVERSEAS DRIVER LICENCE TO A NEW ZEALAND LICENCE

**Make your application at a specialist overseas conversion site**

**Pass any theory tests required**

**Your application will be sent to the Transport Agency to be assessed**

**Is the application approved?**

No

**We'll send you a letter telling you why your application was declined, and explaining what to do next**

Yes

**Is a practical test required?**

No

Yes

**We'll send you a New Zealand driver licence (with a supervisor condition) in the mail**

**Book and pass your practical test**

**We'll send you a New Zealand driver licence in the mail**