

Overseas driver licences

Converting to a New Zealand licence

Factsheet

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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 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.
- 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 isn't 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 photo* and a sample signature for your licence, check your eyesight and arrange an appointment for any tests required.

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

*When your photo is taken you must not wear sunglasses, a hat, any head coverings or anything else that might obscure your face or prevent the photo 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 isn't 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.

Eyesight requirements

You must prove that your eyesight is up to standard. You can:

- pass an eyesight screening check at the overseas conversion site, or
- present a satisfactory eyesight certificate or medical certificate (no more than 60 days old).

The certificate must be issued by a New Zealand registered optometrist or health practitioner - this can be your usual doctor (GP), a registered nurse or nurse practitioner, or a specialist if appropriate. If you don't pass the eyesight check at the overseas conversion site, you'll need to provide a certificate instead.

If you have sight in only one eye, or have only one eye (monocular vision) you'll need to present an eyesight certificate.

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*.

To prove that you are familiar with our road rules and can drive safely, some people will need to sit theory tests and practical driving tests. The tests you need to sit depend on the country your licence is from.

Some countries require similar driving skills and have similar licensing systems to New Zealand's. These countries are considered **exempt** countries:

- Australia
- Austria
- Belgium
- Canada
- Denmark
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hong Kong
- Ireland
- Italy
- Japan
- Luxembourg
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Portugal
- South Africa
- South Korea
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- United Kingdom
- United States of America

If your licence is not from one of the countries above, then your licence is from a **non-exempt** country.

EXEMPT COUNTRIES

Car or motorcycle licence

If you're converting a car or motorcycle licence (New Zealand class 1 or 6) from an exempt country, you don't have to sit any theory tests.

If you've held your licence for more than two years, you won't have to sit any practical driving tests either. However, if your driver licence doesn't have an issue date on it, you may need to provide documentation from your licensing authority to confirm how long you've held the licence.

Truck licence

If you're converting a truck licence from an exempt country (New Zealand classes 2-5), you'll have to pass a theory test.

If you've held your licence for more than two years, you won't have to sit a practical driving test (unless your licence is from Hong Kong or South Korea, in which case you must pass a practical driving test).

Booking your test

If you need to sit tests, you can book them as soon as you've made an application at a specialised overseas conversion site.

Once the agent gives you a temporary New Zealand driver licence, this means you can't use your overseas licence in New Zealand any more.

If you have to pass a practical test to convert your licence, your temporary driver licence will have a supervisor condition on it. This means you can only drive with a supervisor* with you in the car, and you can't use your overseas driver licence any more.

*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.

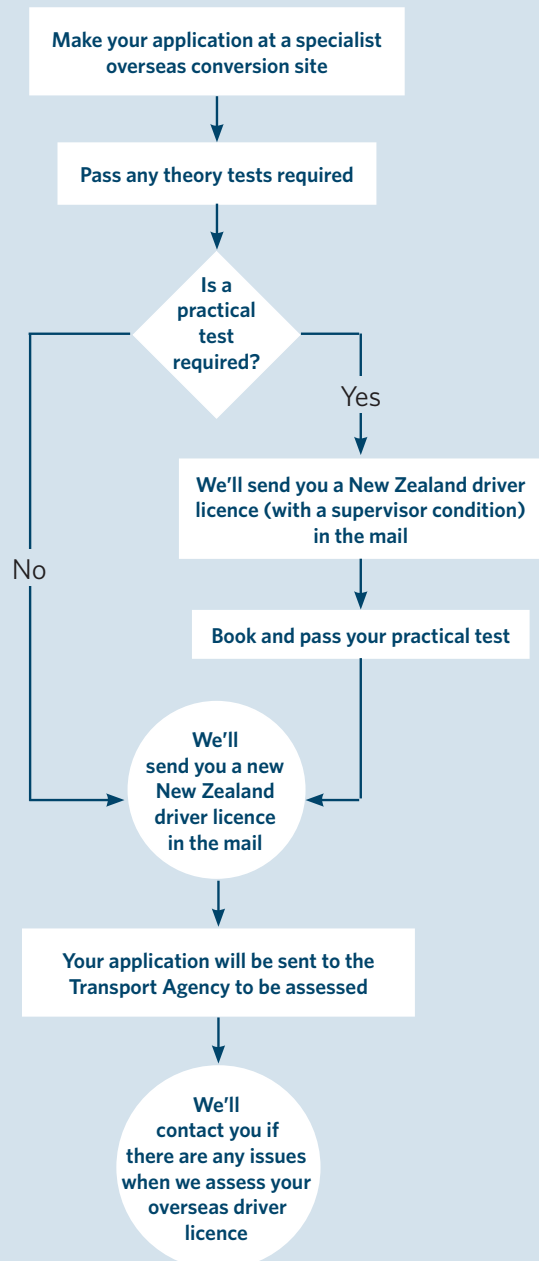
Application assessed

Your application will then be sent to the NZ Transport Agency for your overseas driver licence to be assessed. We'll check to make sure your driver licence is authentic and hasn't been tampered with in any way. We'll contact you if there are any issues with your driver licence.

Application completed

Once your application is completed and you've passed any tests that were required, we'll send you a New Zealand driver licence.

CONVERTING AN OVERSEAS DRIVER LICENCE FROM AN EXEMPT COUNTRY



NON-EXEMPT COUNTRIES

If your licence is from a non-exempt country, you must pass a theory test and a practical driving test.

You need to make your application at a specialist overseas conversion site first, and sit your theory test. Your application will then be sent to the NZ Transport Agency for your overseas driver licence to be assessed. We'll check to make sure your driver licence is authentic and hasn't been tampered with in any way.

Once the assessment is completed and your application has been approved, we'll send you a New Zealand driver licence with a supervisor condition. This means you can only drive with a supervisor* with you in the car, and you can't use your overseas driver licence any more.

*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.

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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 practical test. If you're paying by debit or credit card, you can call us on 0800 822 422 to book your test.

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

CONVERTING AN OVERSEAS DRIVER LICENCE FROM A **NON-EXEMPT** 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.

Age limits for New Zealand licences

In New Zealand there is a minimum age before you 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	
Class	Age (years)
Car or motorcycle	
Learner licence	16
Restricted licence	16½
Full licence (without an approved course certificate)	18
Full licence (with an approved course certificate*)	17½
Truck	
Learner licence	18
Full licence	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.

Medical requirements

You need to present a medical certificate with your application if:

- you're 75 years of age or older, or
- you're applying for a class 2, 3, 4 or 5 licence, or
- you have a medical condition that affects your ability to drive safely.

A medical certificate must be completed by a New Zealand registered health practitioner and must not be more than 60 days old. The health practitioner can be your usual doctor (GP), a registered nurse or nurse practitioner, or a specialist if appropriate.

The medical certificate must state that you're fit to drive safely, or indicate conditions that will enable you to drive safely.

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) 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 vehicles 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).

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.

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.

Where can I find out more?

- If you have questions about driver licensing go to 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.
- Email us: info@nzta.govt.nz.
- Write to us: NZ Transport Agency, Private Bag 11777, Palmerston North 4442.