INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CENTER
At Orange Coast College
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Driving in the U.S.

International Driving Permit

Are you planning to drive an automobile in the U.S. at any time? If so, it's important that you are aware that the state of California does not recognize an International Driving Permit (IDP), also known as an International Driver License or International License, as a valid driver license.

Apply for a CA Driver License

To apply for a driver license, an F-1 student must have paid the SEVIS I-901 fee, must be enrolled full time, and must have a 'continued attendance' I-20.
You may obtain a 'continued attendance' I-20 after the ADD/DROP deadline of your first semester. All immigration documents must be valid for at least 60 days. If valid for less than 60 days, the student is not eligible to apply for a driver license.

Required Documents (ORIGINALS only)

1. Current Passport valid for at least 6 months
2. I-94 Arrival/Departure record
3. Current 'continued attendance' I-20
4. Social Security Number (SSN) – only if you have one. Most international students are NOT eligible for an SSN
5. OPTIONAL: Driver license from your home country – may exempt you from the driving skills test

Application Steps

1. Gather all required immigration documents
2. Visit your local DMV – make an appointment for shorter wait times
3. Fill-out a Driver License application at the DMV – if you do not have an SSN, mark 'not eligible for SSN' on the application form
4. Pay the application fee
5. Complete the vision and written driving test
6. In most cases, you will have to return for a behind-the-wheel skills test – an appointment typically required
7. Allow two weeks for processing. If you do not receive your driver license within 30 days, contact the DMV office. Do not contact the DMV before 30 days

Resources

For more information about obtaining a driver license, visit www.dmv.ca.gov.

- How to obtain a driver license
- Sample Driver License Tests
- Schedule a DMV appointment

Nearest DMV locations

Costa Mesa DMV	**Santa Ana DMV**
650 W. 19th Street	1330 E First Street
Costa Mesa, CA 92627	Santa Ana, CA 92701
(800) 777-0133	(800) 777-0133

Follow U.S. and CA Laws

- Do not drive a car or motorcycle without a license
- No texting and driving
- Do not drive if you have consumed alcohol. Being pulled over while under the influence of alcohol or any other substance will result in a DUI, your license may be revoked, and you may have to pay expensive fines and legal fees
- You MUST have auto insurance
- You may only drive in CA for 10 days with an international driver license. If you plan to drive, you must obtain a CA driver license
- Once you pass the written driving test, you will be given a permit. You CANNOT drive alone with a permit. You must be accompanied by a licensed CA driver over the age of 25.
- You can drive alone, only once you have your driver license

Buying a Car

Whether you buy a car from a private party or from a dealer, it is always a good idea to find out if you are getting a fair price. Here are some resources for price comparison:

- Kelly Blue book
- Edmunds – How to Buy a Car