

Advice for International Drivers in the UK



In short

During the first year of your stay in the UK you can drive with a valid driving licence from your own country or an International Driving Permit but after **one year** you must take out a Provisional UK Licence and put 'L' plates on your car. You must take the UK Theory Test too. Once passed you can then arrange to take a full UK Driving Test. **You must have someone supervise you** when driving and they must be over 21 years old and hold a full UK license for 3 years. They must be in the same car as you.

More details

You will need to study the Highway Code before doing your theory test.

[The Highway Code, road safety and vehicle rules - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-highway-code)

Provisional Driving Licence

The learner can [apply for a provisional licence online](#) or by completing the D1 form (DL1 form in Northern Ireland) which is available in your local post office.

Do not use an unofficial website to apply for your licence, as you may pay more than necessary, and your application might not even be submitted.

You must have physically received your licence before driving on the road. Once you have received it, you can drive a car on the road (but not on motorways) **under supervision** and while displaying L Plates.

Once you get your provisional license your International license is becomes invalid.

[Driving in Great Britain on a non-GB licence - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/driving-in-great-britain-on-a-non-gb-licence)

You will need to prove your identity to obtain a provisional license, having a National Insurance number will help too.

Once you have a provisional driving license, you CANNOT drive without L plates AND supervision. You MUST have insurance.

Learner Driver

The Learner Driver must:

- Be at least 17 years old
- Have a valid provisional driving licence (for the type of vehicle being used - manual or automatic)
- Be insured to drive the vehicle
- Ensure the vehicle is in a safe and legal condition
- Meet the legal minimum eyesight standards
- Only drive when supervised by a person who is at least 21 years old and has a valid driving licence, which they have held for at least three years
- Put L Plates (or D Plates in Wales) on the front and rear of their vehicle.

The Supervisor

The Supervising Driver must:

- Be at least 21 years old
- Have a full driving licence (for the type of vehicle being used - manual or automatic)
- Have held that valid licence for a minimum of three years
- Ensure the car is in a safe and legal condition
- Meet the minimum eyesight standards
- Ensure the car displays L Plates (or D Plates in Wales) when a learner is driving
- Not receive any payment for supervising the learner (unless they are an Approved Driving Instructor)
- Comply with road traffic laws, such as not drinking and driving or using a hand-held mobile phone, even though they are in the passenger seat

You can have driving lessons whilst holding both licences

Once your 12 months on your international licence expires, only your provisional licence will be valid which will allow you to continue with your driving lessons.

Rules can change so keep a regular check on government websites which can be identified as www.gov.uk if you use unofficial sites you may pay more than necessary and not receive correct advice or may even be breaking the law.

Penalties

Put simply, you're breaking the law!

Any criminal prosecution *could* affect your immigration status.

It's illegal to drive on a provisional licence without a qualified driver beside you. If you are caught, **you'll receive a fine and penalty points**.

For new drivers, that could mean an instant ban as soon as you've passed your test! Or you may have to do the driving test once the ban has been completed.

Your insurance will cost you more if you have been prosecuted for driving offences and you must tell your insurance, as this is a further offence if you fail to inform them.