Texas photo identification card

Students and scholars who do not plan to drive in the U.S. should apply for a Texas Photo Identification Card at the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS). This card is not related to driving. It is useful as identification when a photo ID is required.

You will need the following documents in order to make your application: passport, I-20 or DS-2019, Form I-94 and current enrollment letter (Registrar’s Office, MAI Room 1). If you have a Social Security Number (SSN), present your Social Security card at the time of application. However, an SSN is not necessary to apply for a Texas ID. There is a $16.00 fee for this card. You may be asked to show two items proving your current address, such as a lease or piece of mail with your name and address (cable, gas or electric bills are good choices).

Driver’s license for international visitors (F-1 and J-1)

Students and scholars who will be in the U.S. for longer than 30 days and plan to drive a car should obtain a Texas Driver’s License at the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS). Access to a car, knowledge of Texas driving regulations, as well as testable driving skills is basic requirements for a driver’s license. You must provide your own vehicle when taking the driving test.

Take the following steps to obtain your driver’s license:

A. Study the information about traffic laws in the Texas Driver’s Handbook, which is available in both English and Spanish, from the Department of Public Safety (DPS), as well as, on-line at http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/internetforms/Forms/DL-57.pdf

B. Take the written and in-car examinations for driving at any DPS office. If you do not have a driver’s license from another state, you must take both a written and a driving test. There is an $11.00 fee, valid for three opportunities to take the test within a 90-day period.

C. Pay the $25.00 fee for your Driver’s License.

D. You will need the following documents in order to make your application: passport, I-20 or DS-2019, Form I-94, current enrollment letter (Registrar’s Office, MAI, Room 1), a completed application (http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/internetforms/Forms/DL-14A.pdf), and Social Security card (if you are eligible to obtain an SSN). If you are not eligible for an SSN, you will need to sign a “Social Security Affidavit” at the DPS office when applying for your Texas Driver’s License. You may be asked to show two items proving your current address, such as a lease or piece of mail with your name and address (cable, gas or electric bills are good choices).

Note: If you own a car but do not have insurance, you will NOT be permitted to apply for a driver’s license. If possible, it is recommended that you apply for a driver’s license before you purchase a car.

A list of DPS locations is on the last page of this handout.
Problems with Student Visa Status Verification

Sometimes the officer assisting you at DPS may not be able to verify your valid student or scholar visa status. Students or scholars in F-1 or J-1 status make up a small number of the visitors to DPS and new employees may not be familiar with processing applications for these individuals. If the DPS officer is not able to verify your status in the SAVE system, you should politely ask to speak with a supervisor. You can say something like, “I think I have a complicated case, may I please speak with a supervisor?” If a supervisor is not able to verify your valid student status, DPS should give you information for contacting DPS Headquarters for additional assistance. If you have any trouble with this process, contact the International Office for assistance.

Here are some common reasons students and scholars are not able to get a Texas ID or driver’s license:

1) You have gone to the DPS office too early. After you arrive in the US, the International Office updates your SEVIS record to show that you are here and that you have checked in with our office. Students should plan to wait at least 10 days from entering the US and at least 2 days from registering for classes before visiting DPS. J-1 scholars should wait at least 10 days from entering the US and 3 days after attending the J-1 Scholar Orientation. Transfer students will need to wait at least two days after checking in and registering for classes before visiting DPS.

2) Inconsistencies in your immigration documents. If your name on your I-20 or DS-2019 does not match your passport exactly, please bring this to the attention of the International Office before visiting DPS.

3) You have a pending status change or OPT application. The information DPS can see about your record is limited and DPS officers may not be experts in your immigration situation. If you are changing to a new immigration status or you are applying for OPT, it may be difficult for the DPS officer to verify your valid status. If this is the case for you, be sure to ask to meet with a supervisor at DPS. Even if you meet with a supervisor, additional research may be required to verify your status. If this is the case, the DPS officer will give you contact information for DPS Headquarters. Contact the International Office if you have difficulties. You should expect delays in the processing of your driver’s license or Texas ID if: you have a pending OPT application, you have a cap gap I-20, or you have a pending change of status application.
Driver’s license for international dependents

International dependents (F-2, J-2, H-4, etc.) can obtain a Texas Driver’s License at the Texas Department of Public Safety Office (DPS). Access to a car, knowledge of Texas driving regulations, and testable driving skills are basic requirements for a driver’s license. You must provide your own vehicle when taking the driving test.

Take the following steps to obtain your driver’s license:

1. If you are eligible to obtain an SSN (i.e. you are a J-2 dependent and have work authorization), take your EAD (Employment Authorization Document), passport, Form I-94 and DS-2019 to the Social Security Administration to apply for an SSN. It will take approximately two to four weeks to obtain your Social Security card.

   If you are not eligible for an SSN (i.e. you are an F-2 or H-4 dependent, or a J-2 dependent without work authorization), you will need to sign a “Social Security Affidavit” at the DPS office when applying for your Texas Driver’s License.

   Note: If you have already obtained an SSN from a previous visit to the U.S., you will not need to go to the Social Security Office. Simply present your Social Security card to the DPS when applying for your driver’s license.

2. Follow steps A and B on the reverse side of this handout.

3. You will need the following documents in order to make your application:
   a. Passport
   b. I-20 or DS-2019
   c. Form I-94
   d. Spouse’s current enrollment letter
   e. Social Security card (if applicable).

Texas Department of Public Safety

Regular office hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Central Austin: 6121 North Lamar Blvd (512-424-2076) – open till 6 p.m. on Tuesdays
Northwest Austin: 13730 Research Blvd (512-506-2847) - open till 6 p.m. on Tuesdays
South Austin: 6425 South Interstate 35, Suite 180 (512-444-5241) - open till 6 p.m. on Tuesdays
Austin-Pflugerville Mega Center: 216 E. Wells Branch Parkway, Pflugerville, TX 78660 (512-486-2800)
Vehicle and Title Registration Department (for questions concerning car registration) 512-465-3000