

# Driving in Great Britain (GB) as a visitor or a new resident

This leaflet explains the current rules affecting foreign driving licence holders who visit or come to live in Great Britain. **All drivers must comply with British minimum age requirements.** Generally, these are 17 years for cars and motorcycles, 18 years for medium sized vehicles and 21 years for large lorries and buses. Booklet D100 available at Post Office® branches provides further information about minimum ages.

## Terms used in this leaflet:

- **Resident/Visitor** – Your country of normal residence is taken to mean the place where you usually live and have personal and/or occupational ties. A visitor's stay in this country must be of a temporary nature and the driver must be normally resident outside the UK.
- **Ordinary/Vocational** – An "Ordinary" licence entitles you to drive cars, motorcycles, and small vehicles. A "Vocational" licence entitles you to drive minibuses, buses or medium/large vehicles over 3500kg towing a trailer over 750kg.
- **Small Vehicles** – Vehicles such as motorcycles, cars, vehicles up to 3500kg (e.g. vans) or with up to 8 passenger seats.
- **Community Licence** – A Community licence is one issued in any country of the European Economic Area as a result of taking a driving test there. A list of the countries is given in section 1.
- **Provisional/Full** – A Provisional licence shows vehicles for which you have learner status only. A full licence shows vehicles, which you may drive as the result of passing a driving test or tests.



## The following information can be found in this leaflet:

### Driving Licences issued by:

1. The European Community/European Economic Area (EC/EEA)
2. Northern Ireland
3. Gibraltar and designated countries
4. Jersey, Guernsey or the Isle of Man
5. All other countries, and

### If you wish to:

6. Drive in GB as a student
7. Exchange your licence for a GB licence
8. Apply for a Provisional Driving Licence

## 1. European Community / European Economic Area

Licences issued in the European Community and three other countries in the European Economic Area make up two groups that are treated equally. The full list is:-

**Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Cyprus, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom.**

### Visitors:

If you hold a valid Community licence and you are visiting Great Britain, you can drive any vehicle for as long as your licence remains valid. The appropriate full entitlement of the vehicle you wish to drive must be covered by the categories shown on your licence.

### Residents:

If you have a valid Community licence, this will authorise you to drive in this country for the periods set out below.

**Alternatively, you can apply to exchange your licence for a British one at any time.**

Provided your licence remains valid you may drive in Great Britain –

**Ordinary licence holders** – until aged 70 or for 3 years after becoming resident whichever is the longer period.

**Vocational licence holders** – until aged 45 or for 5 years after becoming resident whichever is the longer period; If you are aged over 45 (but under 65) until your 66th birthday or for 5 years after becoming resident whichever is the shorter period. If you are aged 65 or over for 12 months after becoming resident.

**In order to continue driving after these periods, a British driving licence must be obtained.**



## **Register of Community Licence holders**

Holders of Community licences with vocational entitlement who live in GB must by law register their details with DVLA.

Drivers of small vehicles may register also, if they wish. To register, drivers should notify DVLA of their name, address and driving entitlement. Drivers who register will receive their licence back together with a UK counterpart document. This would enable them to take advantage of the fixed penalty system for road traffic offences instead of having to go to court.

For further information please contact DVLA's Customer Enquiries Group, telephone number 0870 240 0009.

## **Notifying health conditions**

The booklet D100 (available at Post Office® branches) will provide more information about the types of conditions that you are legally obligated to notify DVLA. You must tell us about conditions which existed prior to you coming to live here and which you may have already notified to the authorities, as well as those health conditions you have recently become aware of. In most cases, our rules will be the same as those in other EC/EEA countries although there may be some differences. For example, higher visual standards apply for vocational drivers in this country.

## **Taking a test**

If you want to take a GB driving test you must be normally resident in Great Britain. However, if you have moved to GB having recently been permanently resident in another state of the EC/EEA, you must have been normally resident in GB for 185 days in the 12 months prior to your application for a driving test and a full licence.

To take a GB driving test you will need to either:

- apply for a GB counterpart document (D58/2) by completing a D9 (available from Embassies or DVLA) and enclosing your Community driving licence which will be returned to you. The provisional entitlement document is issued free of charge. However, the appropriate fee must be paid and your Community licence surrendered in exchange for a GB one when claiming the full entitlement, or
- exchange your Community licence for the British equivalent and request the appropriate provisional entitlement.

## **Vehicles which Community Licence holders may also drive in GB**

Community licence holders with category B entitlement can also drive certain vehicles in GB, which are exempt from the normal large vehicle driver licensing requirements. These include non-commercial minibuses driven on a voluntary basis, permit minibuses and large vehicles such as agricultural motor vehicles and road construction vehicles. Further details about these vehicles and the conditions that apply to them can be found in the fact sheet "Special Licensing Arrangements For Drivers of Large Vehicles" available from DVLA.

## Community Licences issued in exchange for licences from elsewhere

- A Community licence issued on the strength of a licence from a designated country (see section 3) will be valid for driving in GB for 12 months only and is acceptable for exchange purposes.
- A Community licence issued on the strength of a licence from a non-designated country will be valid for driving in GB for 12 months only (see section 5) but is **NOT** valid for exchange purposes.
- A licence from any country outside the EC/EEA, which was originally issued on the basis of a Community licence, will be valid for driving in GB for 12 months only and is acceptable for exchange purposes. Evidence of the original EC/EEA entitlement must be provided.

## 2. Northern Ireland

You can exchange a full Northern Ireland driving licence for a full GB licence or you can use your licence here until it runs out. When it expires you may apply for a GB licence.

A Northern Ireland ordinary licence may be exchanged provided it was issued on or after 1.1.76; a vocational licence may be exchanged if issued on or after 1.4.86. You may take a driving test in Great Britain using your Northern Ireland provisional or full licence if this gives the appropriate entitlement.

## 3. Gibraltar and Designated countries

Designated countries:

**Australia, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Canada, Hong Kong, Japan, Monaco, New Zealand, Republic of Korea\*, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland, Zimbabwe, .**

### Visitors:

If you are resident outside the UK, are temporarily in this country and hold full ordinary entitlement you can drive any category of vehicle, up to 7.5 tonnes and with up to 16 passenger seats, shown on your licence for up to 12 months from the date you last entered the UK whether or not you brought the vehicle into GB. If you also hold full entitlement to drive large lorries or buses you are only allowed to drive large vehicles registered outside GB that you have driven into the country.

### Residents:

Provided your full licence remains valid, you can drive small vehicles for 12 months from the time you became resident. To ensure continuous driving entitlement a GB licence **must** be obtained before this period elapses, by exchanging your licence for a GB one. If you do not do this you **must stop** driving although you may apply to exchange your licence at any time within 5 years of becoming resident.

\*Motorcycle entitlement from the Republic of Korea is not exchangeable.

**Vocational designated licence holders** – new residents may not drive medium or large vehicles or passenger carrying vehicles until they have passed the relevant GB driving test. Gibraltar vocational licence holders can drive for 12 months, and can exchange a valid vocational licence within 5 years of date of residency.

## 4. Jersey, Guernsey, Isle of Man

### Visitors:

#### Ordinary licence holders

Provided your full ordinary licence remains valid you can drive any category of vehicle shown on your licence for 12 months.

#### Vocational Licence Holders

If you are visiting Great Britain, and you hold a vocational licence issued in Jersey or the Isle of Man, you can drive British-registered, or vehicles registered outside GB that you have driven into the country, for a period up to 12 months. If your vocational licence was issued in Guernsey you can drive temporarily imported vehicles only.

### Residents:

#### Ordinary Licence Holders

You may drive in Great Britain for up to 12 months from the time you became resident. To continue driving after that time your licence must have been exchanged for the British equivalent. A licence from one of these countries can be exchanged for a GB one provided it has been issued after 1 April 1991.

#### Vocational licence holders

If you become resident in GB and you hold a vocational licence issued in Jersey, Guernsey or the Isle of Man, you may drive for 12 months and may exchange your vocational entitlement for the British equivalent.

## 5. All other countries

### Visitors:

You may drive vehicles up to 7.5 tonnes and with up to 16 passenger seats, provided your full licence or driving permit remains valid for up to 12 months from the date of entering the United Kingdom. However, you may only drive large vehicles which have been registered outside GB and which you have driven into the country.



## **Residents:**

### **Ordinary licence holders**

Provided your full licence remains valid, you can drive any category of small vehicle shown on your licence for up to 12 months from the time you became resident. To ensure continuous driving entitlement a provisional GB licence must have been obtained and a driving test(s) passed before the 12 month period elapses. If you obtain a provisional licence during this period you are not subject to provisional licence conditions e.g. displaying L-plates or being supervised by a qualified driver or being precluded from motorways. However, if you do not pass a test within the 12 month concessionary period you will not be allowed to drive as a full licence holder and provisional licence conditions will apply.

If you do not apply for a provisional licence within the first 12 months you must stop driving and obtain a British provisional licence with a view to passing a driving test. Provisional licence conditions will then apply.

### **Vocational licence holders**

New residents may not drive large vehicles until they have passed the relevant GB driving test. Driving test candidates are required to pass a motor car (category B) test before applying for provisional entitlement for larger vehicles.

**For more information about how to apply for a provisional GB driving licence, see section 8.**

## **6. Driving in GB as a student**

### **Students from a Community Country**

Students who hold Community licences may drive cars and motorcycles in GB for as long as their licence remains valid, or until age 70. Those who do not hold a licence must have been studying here for at least 6 months prior to taking a driving test or applying for a full licence.

### **Students from a Non-Community Country**

Students who hold a non-Community licence or an International Driving Permit may drive here for up to 12 months.

Those who hold a licence from a designated country may apply to exchange this for a British one up to 5 years after becoming a resident here (see Section 3). Students who do not hold a licence, or whose licence was not issued in a designated country, will need to apply for a provisional licence and then pass a driving test.

They will be able to take a test and obtain a full licence once they have been in GB for 6 months.

## 7. How to exchange your licence for a GB licence

To exchange your licence for a full GB one, you should complete an application form D1 and return it to DVLA, Swansea, SA99 1BT with your licence and the correct fee (see INS115 for details). If the licence being exchanged is **vocational** you should complete form D2 and if the original was issued in Jersey, Guernsey or the Isle of Man, you must also provide a medical report form D4 completed by a doctor. If your vocational licence was issued in an EC/EEA country you need only submit a medical report form if, on exchange, you are 45 years of age or over. This applies even if your vocational licence is still current. Application form D1 is available from Post Office® branches or DVLA. D2 & D4 forms from DVLA, its local offices or Traffic Area Offices.

**On exchange you must surrender your licence, which cannot be returned to you.**

Applicants submitting identity documents other than a UK/EC/EEA passport or Home Office issued travel documents and naturalisation papers are required to have their photograph and photocard application countersigned by an individual of good standing in the community who has known them for a minimum of two years.

Arrangements are now in place to assist applicants who may be unable to have their photograph authenticated by someone who has known them for two years in this country. DVLA staff at Local Offices are authorised to certify photographs in these circumstances.

### Rules for exchange

The following conditions must be met before a licence can be granted in exchange for a GB one:

- you must be normally resident in Great Britain and have a permanent address here;
- if you are a Community licence holder applying for a British test at the same time as exchanging your licence and you have moved to GB having recently been permanently resident in another state of the EC/EEA, you must have been normally resident in GB for 185 days in the 12 months prior to your application for a full driving licence;
- licences from the designated countries must be current at the time the application for exchange is received at DVLA. Licences issued in Northern Ireland, must have been issued after 1.1.76. Licences from the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands are acceptable for exchange if issued after 1.4.91. Those issued in any EC/EEA country may be valid for exchange even if they have expired;
- you must surrender your foreign licence which will be returned to the issuing authority;
- International Driving Permits are not exchangeable;
- test pass certificates are not exchangeable except for those issued in Northern Ireland or Gibraltar when the test was passed within two years of the date of applying for a GB licence;
- Japanese licences must be accompanied by an official translation, available for a fee from the Consulate General of Japan at 101-104 Piccadilly, London W1V 9FN or 2 Melville Crescent, Edinburgh, EH3 7HW.
- Republic of Korea licences must be accompanied by an official translation, available for a fee, from the Embassy of the Republic of Korea, 60 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6AJ.
- If you have lost/mislaidd your foreign licence you will need to apply for an official document from the issuing authority confirming your driving entitlement.

## 8. How to apply for a Provisional Driving Licence

If you are required to pass a GB driving test in order to gain a full British licence you must first apply for a provisional driving licence. To do this you should complete a D1 application form (available from Post Office® branches) and return it to DVLA, Swansea, SA99 1AD with the correct fee. N.B. Refer to booklet INF 1D.

Applicants submitting identity documents other than a UK/EC/EEA passport or Home Office issued travel documents and naturalisation papers are required to have their photograph and photocard application countersigned by an individual of good standing in the community who has known them for a minimum of two years.

Arrangements are now in place to assist applicants who may be unable to have their photograph authenticated by someone who has known them for two years in this country. DVLA staff at Local Offices are authorised to certify photographs in these circumstances.

Once you are in possession of the valid provisional licence you must comply with the conditions applicable to provisional licence holders. These are printed on the reverse of the counterpart itself. You may not take a test unless you are resident in this country. Once you have passed both the theory and practical parts of the driving test you may then apply for your full licence.

### About this leaflet

This fact sheet is not intended to be a definitive statement of the law but is for general guidance only. Other leaflets deal with towing trailers, minibuses, renewing a car licence, minimum test vehicle requirements, motorcycles and special licensing arrangements for drivers of large vehicles. These are available by ringing 01792 792792.

If you have any questions after reading this leaflet you can telephone the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's Customer Enquiries whose staff will be able to help. The telephone number is 0870 240 0009.

The lines are open between 8.00am and 8.30pm Monday to Friday and 8.00am to 5.30pm on Saturday.

You will be answered by an interactive VOICE system but will be able to speak to an operator during office hours. Some calls are monitored or recorded for quality purposes. Alternatively our e-mail address is [drivers.dvla@gtnet.gov.uk](mailto:drivers.dvla@gtnet.gov.uk) or fax 01792 783071

Minicom users should ring 01792 782787.

**If you change your name, address or vehicle, please notify DVLA immediately. Failure to do this could cost you a £1,000 fine.**

