

How to convert a foreign license into a Japanese one

Updated on 25 May 2021

Where to Apply

- > Fuchu Driver's License Testing and Issuing Center
- > Samezu Driver's License Testing and Issuing Center
- > Koto Driver's License Testing and Issuing Center
- **You may be asked to bring an interpreter if you don't speak Japanese.**
- At Fuchu or Samezu Driver's License Testing and Issuing Center, application can be made by those who have a driving license of any country or region.
- At Koto Driver's License Testing and Issuing Center, application can be made only by those who have a driving license issued in 29 countries and a region listed below.

You are not required to take a knowledge test and a driving skills test, if your license was issued by the authorities in the following countries and a region.

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Monaco, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The United Kingdom, The United States of America (States of Hawaii, Maryland, Ohio, Virginia and Washington only), and Taiwan

You are not required to take a driving skills test, if your license was issued by the authorities in the following country.

The United States of America (Indiana State only)

Office Hours

Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

(Application desk closed between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.)

- Driver's License Testing and Issuing Centers are closed during national holidays, year-end and new year holidays (between 29 Dec and 3 Jan).
- Depending on the volume of applicants, it may take up to half a day to complete all the procedures, or your license may not be issued on the same day of application.

Fees

Application Fee

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| • Ordinary motor vehicle license | 2,550 yen |
| • Moped license | 1,500 yen |
| • Large-sized, Medium-sized or Semi Medium-sized motor vehicle license | 4,100 yen |
| • Other | 2,600 yen |

Issuance fee	2,050 yen
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Requirements

1. Valid foreign driving license

- If your driving license does not show the issue date, you are required to submit a document which verifies the date you first obtained your license (e.g. your driver's record).
- If you have a license for multiple vehicle categories (e.g. ordinary motor vehicle and ordinary motorcycle, etc.), you are required to submit a document which verifies the dates you first obtained licenses for those categories.

2. Japanese translation of your license

You are required to submit a Japanese translation of your license that are issued by the authorities listed below.

- The embassy of the issuing country in Japan, or The Japan-Taiwan Relations Association (Taiwanese license holders)
- The Japan Automobile Federation (JAF)
- The German Automobile Federation(ADAC) (German license holders)
- ZIPLUS Co., Ltd. (American, Chinese, Philippine, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, and Hong Kong license holders)

3. Japanese driving license (if you have one or obtained one in the past)

4. Official copy of your Certificate of Residence (“Jumin-hyo”) which shows your registered domicile or nationality (if you are subject to the Residential Basic Book Act).

- You are required to submit a “Jumin-hyo” that does not show your “My Number” (photocopies are not accepted).
- If you brought a “Jumin-hyo” with “My Number”, you would be asked to black out the “My Number”.
- If your “Jumin-hyo” cannot be issued since you are currently working abroad, or due to other reasons, you are required to submit a Certificate of Temporary Return (“Ichiji Kikoku Shomeisyo”) and a Certificate of Family Register (“Koseki Tohon”). The former should be attached to a copy of an official ID (e.g. driving license) which shows the address of a person who certifies your temporary address in Japan.

Note: In case the address you are temporary staying at is different to the address of the person who certifies your temporary return, you are required to submit a document which confirms your temporary address in Japan.

5. Passport or other official ID (if you are not subject to the Residential Basic Book Act).

You are required to present one of the following.

- Passport
- Official ID issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan
- ID document issued by a competent authority

6. If you are not able to obtain a Certificate of Residence (Jumin-hyo) since you have deleted your Registered Domicile (thus, you are not subject to the Residential Basic Book Act), you are

required to submit a document which certifies the place you are currently staying at in Japan.

- You are required to submit a document made by the head of the household or the manager of the accommodation you are currently staying at. A photo copy of official ID (e.g. driving license) which shows such person's address should be attached to the document.

7. Document, ID, etc. which proves that you have stayed in the license-issuing country or region for a total of three months or more since you obtained your license (e.g. passport)

- Please bring all of your passports, including expired ones.
- If you got through the automated passport control at the immigration, please bring a certificate which proves you stayed in the license-issuing country or region for the required period.
- You may be required to submit an immigration certificate even if you did not go through the automated passport control.

For more details, please contact a Driver's License Testing and Issuing Center.

8. Photograph for application form (3cm × 2.4cm)

- Application photo must be coloured, front facing, showing your body above chest, with no hat or head covering on (unless you have religious or medical reasons), with plain background, taken within six months before the date of application.
- Please do not wear colored contact lenses.
- Photos are checked during the application process. Grainy photos or photos taken at home are not accepted.
- One photo is required for each vehicle category you apply for.
- This photo is not used to make a driving license.

9. Duration of Stay in Driver's License (DL) Issuing Country

- Please download and fill in the following form to indicate the duration of your stay in the country which issued your driver's license.
- Please fill in the form accurately as it will help process your application faster.
- Inaccurate forms or filling in the form after coming to the testing center may result in delays.
- You do not need to submit this form if you have your travel history records from the country which issued your driver's license. Records should start from the day your license was issued.

10. Additional documents

- Required documents may vary depending on your country or license status. Please check the requirements in advance.
- Please bring materials (e.g. foreign licenses you used in the past) which show your driving record and period of stay, so that we can determine if you fall under the category of "novice driver".

Qualifications

- Age
- Ordinary motor vehicle license 18 years old or older

- Ordinary motorcycle license 16 years old or older
- Medium-sized motor vehicle license 20 years old or older
- Large-sized motor vehicle license 21 years old or older
- You are required to have stayed in the country or region where you obtained your license for a total of three months or more since you obtained it.
- Visual acuity (Japanese scale)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ordinary motor vehicle License • Ordinary motorcycle license 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.7 or better for both eyes and 0.3 or better for each eye. • If the vision of one eye is under 0.3 or one eye has no vision, the other eye must have the visual field of 150 continuous degrees horizontally or more, and the vision of 0.7 or more.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi medium-sized motor vehicle license • Medium-sized motor vehicle license • Large-sized motor vehicle license 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.8 or better for both eyes and 0.5 or better for each eye. Applicants must go through depth perception tests by the three-rod method three times and the average error must be 2 cm or less.

- If you obtained a Japanese driving license in the past and received a penalty such as revocation (excluding the novice-driver revocation), you may not take a test without meeting the following conditions:
 - a) Within one year prior to the test, you took a lecture for drivers who had their licenses revoked.
 - b) You take the test after the penalty on your license is lifted.
- Your address must be in Tokyo.

Notes

- In order to convert a foreign license, you are required to take a knowledge test and a driving skills test.
- To take a driving skills test, you need to make an appointment in advance. You may not take a test on the day of your application.
- Drivers who obtained their licenses in the 29 countries and a region mentioned above are exempt from the knowledge test and driving skills test.
- As a result of the state of emergency declared by authorities, some drivers may be subject to special treatment. Normally, drivers who passed a knowledge test, yet failed a driving skills test, are exempt from another knowledge test, providing a reapplication is made within 6 months after the failed test. Under the current circumstances, a reapplication must be made within 6 months PLUS the number of days during which the state of emergency is in effect. This “window” keeps extending as long as the state of emergency remains intact in any area of Japan. For more information, please contact Driver’s License Testing and Issuing Centers.

License You Obtain after the Conversion (IC Chip Driving License)

1. Registered domicile (or nationality for foreign nationals)

• Your license does not show your registered domicile or nationality. Recorded information can be read by IC license readers.

2. Date of birth

- On your driving license, your date of birth is shown in the Japanese calendar.
 - * How to convert the Japanese calendar into the Western calendar.
 - Add 1988 to the year of birth on the license, if you were born in the Heisei (平成) era.
(e.g. Heisei 3 + 1988 = 1991)
 - Add 1925, if you were born in the Showa (昭和) era.
(e.g. Showa 60 + 1925 = 1985)

3. Expiry date

- The expiry date of a newly-obtained license is one month after your third birthday from the date you obtained the license.

4. Vehicle category

- Vehicles you may drive are shown in this column.
- Ordinary motor vehicle license holders aged 16 or older may drive a moped (engine size of 50 cc or less, maximum passenger of one)

Vehicles you may drive with your license

Please check your Motor Vehicle Inspection Certificate (Shaken-syou) before you drive.

	Gross Vehicle Weight	Maximum Load	Passenger Capacity	Age
Ordinary Motor Vehicle	Less than 3.5 tons	Less than 2 tons	10 or less	18 or older
Semi Medium-sized Vehicle	Between 3.5 tons and less than 7.5 tons	Between 2 tons and less than 4.5 tons	10 or less	18 or older
Medium-sized Vehicle	Between 3.5 tons and less than 11 tons	Between 4.5 tons and less than 6.5 tons	Between 11 and 29	20 or older
Large-sized Vehicle	11 tons or more	6.5 tons or more	30 or more	21 or older

Change of Address, Name, Registered Domicile, Nationality, etc.

- Please report change of your address, name, registered domicile, nationality, etc., as soon as possible at a police station, a Driver's License Renewal Center or a Driver's License Testing and Issuing Center.

License Renewal

- Please make a renewal application in the prefecture where your home address belongs to.
- Please make an application within one month before or after your birthday in the year your license expires.
- After converting your foreign license into Japanese one, you obtain a license with a "green" horizontal

stripe, in which the expiry date of your license is shown. However, depending on your driving experience or traffic offence record, you could be given a 5-year license which has a “blue” or “gold” stripe.

Obligation to Display “Novice Driver Stickers”

- If you fall under the category of “novice driver”, you are required to put “novice driver stickers” on the front and the back of your car for one year from the date of license issuance.
- If you accumulated 3 penalty points or more because of traffic offences and/or accidents (or 4 points or more, if you were given 3 penalty points in one offence or accident) during the one-year “novice driver” period, you would be required to take part in a “lecture for novice drivers”.

Restrictions on Riding Double on Motorcycles

- You may not ride double on a motorcycle unless you have more than one-year experience of riding motorcycle.
- You may not ride double on a motorcycle on motorways unless you have more than three-year experience of riding motorcycle.
- Motorcycles that have engine size of 12 cc or less are not allowed on motorways.
- If you have less than three years of driving experience in overseas (this will be judged from the submitted documents), the number of days since you obtained your license will be displayed on the back of your license.

FAQs

Foreign license conversion FAQs

Q1. Can I make a reservation for an appointment?

We do not accept reservations. Applicants will be processed in the order in which they arrive.

Q2. Can I ask somebody to make an application for me?

You must make the application yourself.

Q3. Do I need an interpreter?

Please bring an interpreter if you cannot speak Japanese.

Q4. I live in Kanagawa prefecture. Can I make an application?

Applicants must live in Tokyo. Applicants outside of Tokyo should consult their local prefecture.

Q5. Can I apply on weekends or holidays?

We accept applications on weekdays, Monday to Friday only (excepting holidays).

The testing centers at Fuchu and Samezu open at 8:00 am. Koto Testing Center opens at 7:45 am. Application desks are open from 8:30 am to 11:00 am and from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm.

Q6. When can I get my Japanese license?

If your license was issued by a country or region which exempts you from taking the driving skills test, you will be able to receive your Japanese license on the day of your application. If you need to take the driving skills test, you will be able to receive your Japanese license the day you pass your test.

Depending on the number of applicants, we may not be able to issue your license on the day of your application even if you are exempt from the driving skills test. You may be asked to come in again to receive your license.

Q7. My foreign license has already expired. Can I still apply?

You cannot apply if your foreign license has expired. Licenses must be valid.

If you need to take a driving skills test, your license must be valid until the day of your test.

Q8. Can I convert my international driver's permit that was issued overseas?

We do not accept international driver's permits. Please bring your foreign driver's license.

Q9. What happens to my foreign license after I have converted it?

Please return it.

In Italy, the law requires that you return your driver's license if you convert it to that of another country.

The Italian embassy in Japan will contact you. Please follow their instructions.

If your driver's license was issued by any other country that requires you to return it, please do so.

Q10. What is the aptitude test?

We will test your vision, color vision, hearing, and motor skills. Please bring your glasses or contact lenses. Applicants with certain medical conditions may be required to attend a beforehand consultation or asked to bring a medical certificate.

Q11. What is the depth perception test?

You will need to take the depth perception test when you convert your semi middle-sized/middle-sized/large vehicle license or towing licence. You will be tested using the three-rod method 3 times. The mean error must be less than 2 centimeters. You will not be able to proceed if you fail.

Q12. What is the knowledge test?

You will be given 10 questions about Japanese traffic law. You need to answer 7 questions or more correctly in order to pass.

Q13. Can I take the knowledge test in my native language?

You can take the test in Arabic, Bengalese, Burmese, English, French, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Malay,

Mandarin, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Turkish, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

Q14. When can I take the driving skills test?

Please make a reservation after passing the knowledge test. Please note that the earliest available date may be several months ahead.

Q15. Can I have an interpreter with me when I take the driving skills test?

The interpreter is not permitted to be in the vehicle with you during the test. The interpreter may be present when the examiner is giving the explanation before the test.

Q16. What happens if I fail my driving skills test?

You will need to make another reservation.

Q17. Where can I practice for my driving skills test?

We have practice areas that are open on Saturdays and holidays. However, you will need to bring your own vehicle and instructor. We cannot contact driving schools on your behalf.

Q18. How much does it cost to apply?

Application fees:

Ordinary motor vehicles: 2,550 yen

Semi medium-sized/medium-sized/large vehicles: 4,100 yen

Mopeds: 1,500 yen

Motorcycles (small/ordinary/large) and tow vehicles: 2,600 yen

Fee for adding vehicle categories to your license:

200 yen per category

Issuance fee:

2,050 yen for all licences

Ex 1) Total for an ordinary motor vehicle: 4,600 (2,550 + 2,050) yen

Ex 2) Total for an ordinary motor vehicle and a small motorcycle: 7,400 (2,550 + 2,600 + 200 + 2,050) yen

Q19. Do I have to pay each time I apply?

If you fail your aptitude test, knowledge test, or driving skills test, you must pay the application fee again the next time you apply.

Q20. Can I bring an old photo?

Please bring a photo taken within the past 6 months. The photo must have a plain background and include your head, shoulders, and upper body. Your mouth must be closed. The photo must be 30mm high and 24mm wide.

If you bring photos you printed out at an ID photo booth, the staff can cut out the photo for you.

You can also take a photo at the testing center for 800 yen.

Q21. Is my passport sufficient as documentation of how long I stayed overseas?

We will check the stamps on your passport. However, in recent years more and more countries are skipping the process of stamping passports due to installing automated gates at passport control.

It will be easier to process your application if you can obtain your travel history records from the country which issued your driver's license. If possible, please obtain your records beforehand. Records should start from the day your license was issued.

Countries such as Australia, New Zealand, China, and Turkey allow you to retrieve your travel history online, but countries and regions such as Thailand, the Philippines, and Hong Kong only allow you to obtain them locally.

Countries such as South Korea, Taiwan, and Saudi Arabia allow you to obtain records through their embassies in Japan.

Q22. I was unable to obtain my travel history. What else can I submit?

If you were employed in the country which issued your licence, please bring a proof of employment letter which verifies the period during which you were employed.

If you were a student, please bring your academic transcript and your graduation certificate. We will be able to determine the period you attended the academic institute based on the dates on the documents.

Please bring the original copies of the above documents.

Q23. How do you calculate "3 months or more since obtaining your license"?

We will determine whether you have spent 90 days or more (including the day your license was issued) in the country that issued your license. The 90 days do not need to be consecutive. Days when you entered or exited the country will also be counted.

Ex) 2020 January 2nd Entry into America

2020 March 10th Issuance of American driver's license

2020 May 14th Departure from America (duration of stay after issuance of license: 66 days)

2020 August 24th Entry into America

2020 October 1st Departure from America (duration of stay: 39 days) Total: 105 days

Q24. Do I need a driving record?

We recommend that you obtain it beforehand, as it will become necessary in many cases.

Very few countries allow you to obtain your driving record via the Internet or their embassies in Japan. In the past, we have had to ask applicants to obtain their driving record from overseas, so we recommend that you do so before coming to Japan.

Q25. Can I convert a driver's licence from any country?

You cannot convert your license if we are unable to obtain information about your license from the issuing country. Please go through the standard process to obtain a license.

Contact Information

For more information, please contact:

The Written Examination Section, Fuchu Driver's License Testing and Issuing Center,
the Metropolitan Police Department
Phone: 042-362-3591 (main number)

The Examination Section, Samezu Driver's License Testing and Issuing Center,
the Metropolitan Police Department
Phone: 03-3474-1374 (main number)

The License Section, Koto Driver's License Testing and Issuing Center,
the Metropolitan Police Department
Phone: 03-3699-1151 (main number)

Information provided by the First License Management Branch,
Driver's License Headquarters, the Metropolitan Police Department
Tel : 03-6717-3137 (main number)