

New residents and visitors

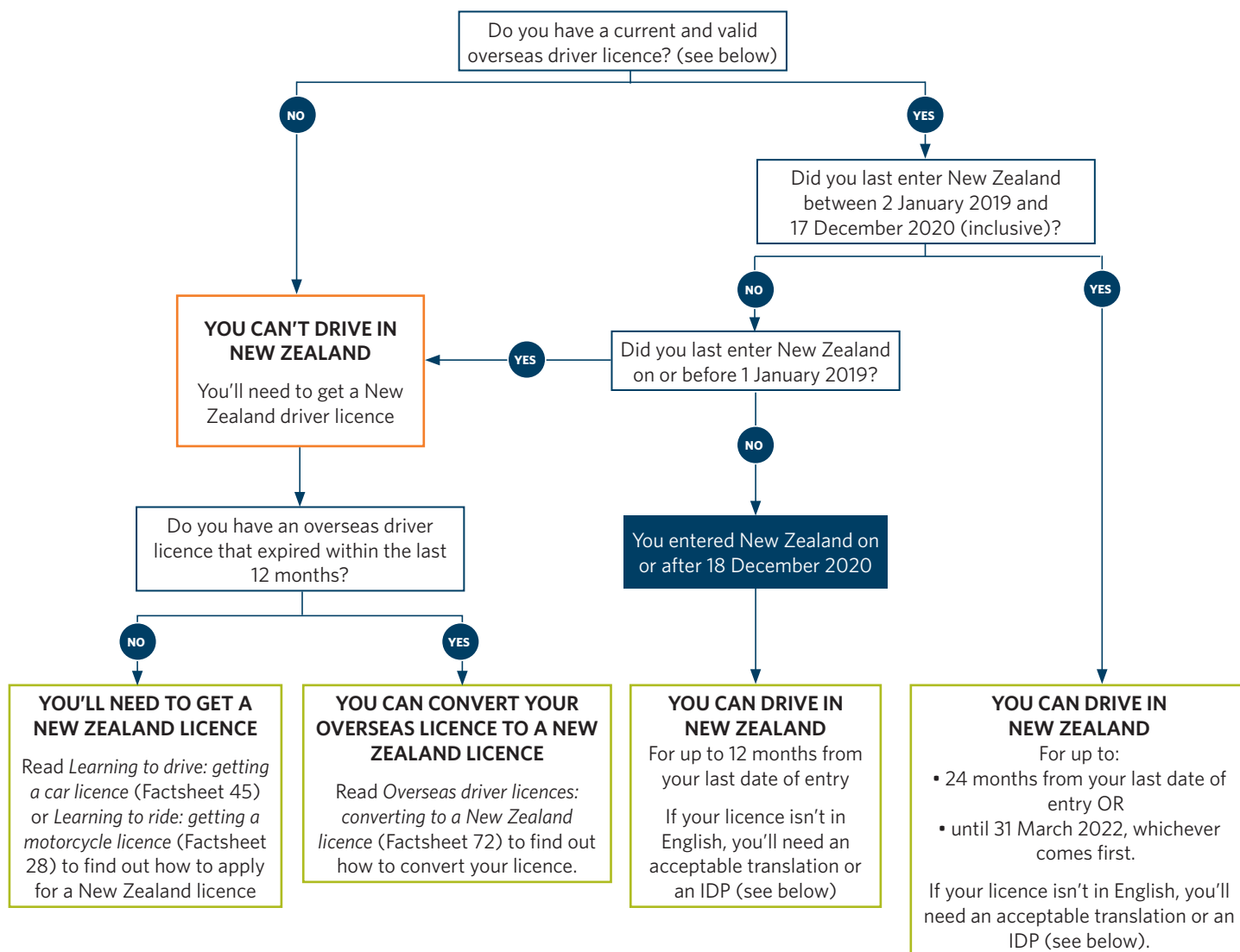
Driving in New Zealand



Factsheet
56

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What is a valid overseas licence?

To use your overseas driver licence to drive in New Zealand:

- your licence must be current (eg not expired)
- your licence must not be disqualified or revoked in the country of issue
- you must not have been disqualified in the country the licence was issued in
- you must not have been suspended or disqualified in New Zealand
- you must not have been given a New Zealand driver licence since you last entered New Zealand (see Extension of overseas driver licences (Factsheet 81) if you've already started your overseas conversion).

If you or your licence don't meet these requirements, you can't use that licence to drive in New Zealand. Go to www.nzta.govt.nz/overseas-conversion to find out more about converting an overseas driver licence.

What is an acceptable translation?

If your overseas licence or driver permit isn't in English, you must also carry an accurate English translation issued by:

- a translation service approved by Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency (go to www.nzta.govt.nz/translators for a list)
- a diplomatic representative at a high commission, embassy or consulate, or
- the authority that issued your overseas licence.

These documents may also be acceptable as a translation:

- an international driving permit (IDP) – issued in accordance with a United Nations Convention on road traffic
- a translation document issued by a Notary Public Office in China.

What if I only have an international driving permit (IDP)?

You can't drive in New Zealand or convert to a New Zealand licence if you only have an IDP on its own. You must have a current and valid overseas driver licence if you wish to drive in New Zealand. If you want to convert to a New Zealand licence, your overseas licence must be current or have expired within the last 12 months.

What happens if I don't get a New Zealand licence?

If you've been in New Zealand for more than 12 or 24 months (see the flowchart on page 1) and haven't converted to a New Zealand licence you must not drive. You could be charged by the police if you're caught driving and your insurance claims may be declined.

Can I drive to earn money?

If you want to earn a living from driving you'll probably have to convert your overseas licence to a New Zealand licence first, and you may also need to get a driver licence endorsement.

You'll definitely need to do so if you want to transport the public or carry dangerous goods. For example, before you can earn money carrying passengers, driving a tow truck or work as a driving instructor or testing officer, you must apply for an endorsement and be cleared by a police check in New Zealand.

Go to www.nzta.govt.nz/driver-licences/getting-an-endorsement to find out more about endorsements.

What happens if my licence is suspended or I'm disqualified while driving in New Zealand?

If you're using an overseas driver licence to drive in New Zealand and you're then disqualified or suspended, you can no longer use your overseas licence to drive in New Zealand. If you want to drive in New Zealand after your disqualification or suspension has ended, you'll need to get a New Zealand driver licence.

Can I drive on my overseas alcohol interlock licence?

If you have an overseas alcohol interlock licence and wish to drive in New Zealand, we recommend that you apply for a New Zealand licence through the graduated licensing system.

Go to www.nzta.govt.nz/driver-licences to find out how to get a New Zealand licence.

Do I need to carry my licence while driving?

In New Zealand you must have your overseas licence with you at all times when you're driving. If your overseas driver licence isn't in English, you must carry an acceptable English translation (see page 1).

What if I don't follow the New Zealand road rules?

If you're caught violating any of the New Zealand road rules, the police could take action against you. This could include:

- Roadside licence suspension. This means the police immediately seize and suspend a driver's licence at the roadside. In addition to any other charges, the driver is banned from driving for 28 days. This can happen if you:
 - » are caught driving at more than one-and-a-half times the legal alcohol limit
 - » refuse to supply a blood sample to be tested to excess blood alcohol
 - » are caught driving at more than 40km/h above a permanent

speed limit (other than by speed cameras)

- » are caught for a drink drive offence and you've had a previous drink drive conviction in the last four years.
- Roadside vehicle impoundment. This means the police can seize and impound a vehicle for 28 days. You have to pay a fee before the vehicle can be released. This can happen if you:
 - » race other drivers or perform any other street-racer stunts (wheelies, unnecessary displays of speed etc)
 - » are caught for a drink drive offence where you have two or more previous drink drive convictions in the last four years
 - » drive while disqualified
 - » drive while your licence is suspended or revoked
 - » are caught driving after being forbidden to drive by police, and before getting a current licence (eg you're unlicensed, your licence has expired, or you need to reinstate your licence and the police have stopped you and forbidden you to drive).

For more information about actions the police could go to www.nzta.govt.nz/driver-licences/driving-offences-and-penalties or read our factsheets:

- *Driving offences and penalties* (Factsheet 55)
- *Suspension of your licence at the roadside* (Factsheet 62)
- *Impoundment of your vehicle at the roadside* (Factsheet 63).

Where can I find out more?

Read our brochure *Driving in New Zealand*. This gives you brief advice on aspects of driving in New Zealand that you may be unfamiliar with. It's written in English and has sections translated into Spanish, Portuguese, French, German, simplified and traditional Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai and Arabic.

Go to www.nzta.govt.nz/driving-in-nz to download a copy.

Drivers who are new to our roads, people learning to drive and people wanting to get a new licence class must make use of the appropriate version of The official New Zealand road code. There are different versions for cars, motorcycles and heavy vehicles (trucks). The road code contains information you need to know to get a driver licence. It also has lots of information to help drivers be safe and courteous on the road.

You can read the road code online at www.nzta.govt.nz/roadcode or get a copy from bookstores, driver licensing agents and some public libraries.

Where can I find out more?

- If you have questions about driver licensing go to www.nzta.govt.nz/licence or call us on 0800 822 422.
- If you prefer, you can write to us: Waka Kotahi, Private Bag 11777, Palmerston North 4442.



This factsheet is a general guide only. It doesn't replace legal advice, and your exact requirements will depend on current legislation.

Make sure you have the most up-to-date version of this factsheet by checking www.nzta.govt.nz/factsheets

www.nzta.govt.nz

0800 822 422

info@nzta.govt.nz

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency,
Private Bag 11777, Palmerston North 4442

New Zealand Government