

# Basic information on driving permits in Germany



A joint leaflet from the Gütersloh District Municipal Integration  
Centre and Department for Road Transport

# Basic information on driving permits in Germany

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**PLEASE NOTE** This leaflet is for informational purposes only and should not be treated as a complete statement of law. We cannot accept any liability for errors and omissions in the information provided. Any future use of this document may be governed by legislation changes.

The following information relates to the most common driving permit types – cars and motorcycles. If you have any further queries about driving permit categories, e.g. for the commercial transport of goods and passengers (HGV, bus), please contact the Gütersloh District Department for Road Transport, Driving Permit Section.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

You already hold a permit to drive a motor vehicle, but it was not issued in Germany. Of course, you still want to stay mobile here. In this case, you may find one or more of the questions below extremely important:

- What do I need to do, if I hold a foreign driving permit in Germany?
- Is my driving permit from another country valid here in Germany? What conditions apply?
- What do I need to do to obtain a valid driving permit here in Germany and who do I need to contact in the district of Gütersloh?



You will find the answers to these questions on the following pages and also your local contact in the district of Gütersloh, where you will receive further assistance. Safe driving!

## 2. GLOSSARY

### DRIVING PERMIT

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A driving permit is the permission to drive a vehicle on public roads. Different permit categories have to be obtained for different vehicle types (e.g. car or motorcycle), allowing individuals to drive the type of vehicle specified in the vehicle category.

### DRIVING PERMIT CATEGORIES

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In Germany, all vehicles and the corresponding driving permit required are divided into four different vehicle categories:

Category A: Motorcycle classes and mopeds

Category B: All cars

Category C: All trucks & vans

Category D: All buses

Category E: Trailers

AM 	C1 	CE 
A1 	C 	D1E 
A2 	D1 	DE 
A 	D 	L 
B1 	BE 	T 
B 	C1E 	

### DRIVING LICENCE

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The terms, driving permit and driving licence, are not the same and mean different things. A driving licence is simply a document which proves that a driving permit has been issued for driving a specific vehicle category.

## 3. DRIVING PERMITS FOR TEMPORARY

### VISITORS TO GERMANY

If you are only taking a temporary trip to Germany, e.g. for a holiday or visit, your domestic driving licence (if necessary, in combination with an international driving licence) is enough, regardless of the country that issued your driving licence. Even if you regularly travel to Germany for business reasons (a so-called 'commuter'), this is not considered permanent residency in Germany and your foreign driving licence is still valid. However, you may also require an international driving licence.

If you have a driving licence from another country outside the European Union (EU)



and the European Economic Area (EEA), for a temporary visit, you will need to hold a valid domestic and international driving licence for the relevant vehicle category. If you do not hold an international driving licence, you will usually need to obtain a certified translation of your foreign driving licence.

As long as your stay in Germany does not exceed 185 days with this type of driving permit, you can drive motor vehicles in the Federal Republic of Germany using your foreign driving licence. However, if you stay or plan on staying more than 185 days in Germany, please observe the instructions in section 5 or contact your local driving permit office!

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**⚠ ATTENTION** An international driving licence is only valid when accompanied by a domestic driving licence!

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## 4. DRIVING LICENCE FROM AN EU/EEA COUNTRY

The following always applies: If you hold a driving licence from a country within the European Union or an EEA country, you are allowed to drive a motor vehicle in Germany according to the permitted category. This applies to all EEA countries (Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein) and the EU (see illustration below).



An updated list of all countries within the European Union can also be found at [www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/02-ewr-eu/606444](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/02-ewr-eu/606444).

### 4.1 Permanent residency

Even if you have permanently moved your place of residence to Germany, you are still allowed to use your domestic driving licence issued in your native country. However, please ensure you check the expiry date (validity period)! You do not need to obtain a certified translation of your foreign driving licence.

## 4.2 Exchanging driving licences

If you wish to exchange your driving licence from an EU or EEA country for a German driving licence, you can do this at any time. However, you will need the following documents, if you decide to exchange your foreign driving licence for a German driving licence:

- ID card or passport
- Registration certificate from the resident registration office
- Recent passport photo (biometric, 35 mm x 45 mm)
- Your original domestic driving licence issued in your native country.

In specific cases, you may be asked to submit further documents e.g. a certificate of good conduct.

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**! PLEASE NOTE** If you have already exchanged your driving licence in another European Union country, this may not/no longer be valid in Germany! In such cases, please contact your local driving permit office immediately!

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## 5. DRIVING LICENCE FROM A COUNTRY

### OUTSIDE THE EU/EEA

If you hold a driving licence from a country that does not belong to the European Union or is not an EEA country (see 4), there are a few things to keep in mind. Take time to note the difference between the countries that have a specific agreement with the Federal Republic of Germany (5.2) and all other countries.



#### 5.1 Permanent residency

If you have moved your place of residence to the Federal Republic of Germany and are planning on permanent residency, after a six-month period, you will need to exchange your foreign driving licence for a German licence.

#### 5.2 Countries with special provisions

The conditions for issuing a driving permit depend on the land where you obtained your driving licence. If you hold a driving licence from a country on this list ([https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/fev\\_2010/anlage\\_11.html](https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/fev_2010/anlage_11.html)), the German state has signed an agreement with the relevant country for specific categories. In this case, a test is usually not or only partially required (either practical or theory).

## 5.3 Other countries

Other rules apply to the countries not listed in section 5.2 regarding driving licence exchanges. In these cases, both the theory and practical test must be taken to retain a driving permit in Germany. In order to exchange a licence, you will need to submit an application together with

- a valid ID document,
- registration document from the resident registration office,
- a recent passport photo (biometric, 35 mm x 45 mm),
- your original domestic driving licence and
- the required certified translation.

You may be requested to submit other documents. As soon as the German driving licence is issued, the foreign licence is retained by the German authorities.

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**! PLEASE NOTE** The local driving schools in the district of Gütersloh often have a good knowledge of issues concerning 'Driving permits from abroad'!

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## 5.4 Exchanging driving licences

In order to exchange a driving licence, you will first need to submit an application together with

- a valid ID document,
- a registration document from the resident registration office,
- a recent passport photo (biometric, 35 mm x 45 mm),
- your original domestic driving licence,
- the required certified translation,
- an eye test and
- a certificate confirming completion of a first-aid course.

You may be requested to submit other documents. As soon as the German driving licence is issued, the foreign licence is retained by the German authorities.

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**ⓘ PLEASE NOTE** It may take some time to process exchange of your foreign driving licence. There may be a wait of several months, but the six-month period still applies. This often depends on the country from which further information on your driving permit needs to be obtained. For this reason, you should apply to exchange your licence as soon as possible!

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**⚠ ATTENTION** If you have not converted your driving permit from a country outside the EU/EEA and exchanged your driving licence after a period of six months, you are not allowed to drive any motor vehicle on the roads! If you decide to drive, this is a criminal offence and will be penalised as driving without a licence!

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## 6. CONTACT

### GÜTERSLOH DISTRICT DEPARTMENT FOR ROAD TRANSPORT DRIVING PERMIT SECTION

#### YOU CAN FIND US HERE

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Kreishaus Gütersloh – building section 7 (Room 717/718)  
Herzebrocker Straße 140  
33334 Gütersloh

#### POSTAL ADDRESS

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Kreis Gütersloh  
33324 Gütersloh

#### OPENING TIMES

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Mon., Thurs. 7.30 a.m. – 17.30 p.m.  
Tues., Wed., Fri. 7.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.

#### GENERAL CONTACT INFORMATION

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- ☎ 05241 85 1200
- 🖨 05241 85 31200
- ✉ [abt22@gt-net.de](mailto:abt22@gt-net.de)
- 🌐 [www.kreis-guetersloh.de](http://www.kreis-guetersloh.de)



## 7. IMPRINT

Gütersloh District Administration  
- District Chief Executive -  
Education department  
Gütersloh District Education Office

Gütersloh District Municipal Integration Centre

✉ [kommunales-integrationszentrum@gt-net.de](mailto:kommunales-integrationszentrum@gt-net.de)

🌐 [www.ki-gt.de](http://www.ki-gt.de)

In cooperation with the Gütersloh District Department of Road Transport, Driving Permit Section

Visuals:

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Flüchtlinge und Integration  
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