



# NEW TO IOWA?

## 8 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW TO GET YOU WHERE YOU NEED TO GO

**Q. I HAVE A VALID DRIVER'S LICENSE FROM ANOTHER STATE OR COUNTRY. AM I REQUIRED TO GET AN IOWA DRIVER'S LICENSE WHILE I AM A STUDENT IN IOWA?**

**A.** No. A student who has a permanent residence and a valid driver's license in another state or country may operate a motor vehicle on Iowa roadways without obtaining an Iowa driver's license. A student is required to possess the driver's license while operating a motor vehicle and may need to have the license translated into English if not already done so.

For information on having your license translated into English, please visit the website of your consulate or contact the consulate. AAA also offers international driving permit translation services at a cost. Information about AAA's translation service and associated costs is available on its website at:  
[www.aaa.com/Vacation/idpf.html](http://www.aaa.com/Vacation/idpf.html).

Each state or country's driving laws differ. For a comprehensive overview of Iowa's driving laws, including vehicle safety information, please visit the Iowa Department of Transportation's website and review the Iowa Driver's Manual at:  
[www.iowadot.gov/mvd/driverslicense/dlmanual.htm](http://www.iowadot.gov/mvd/driverslicense/dlmanual.htm).

**Q. WHAT IS VEHICLE INSURANCE? DO I NEED INSURANCE TO DRIVE A CAR IN IOWA?**

**A.** Vehicle insurance is a policy purchased by vehicle owners for cars, trucks, motorcycles, and other road vehicles. Essentially, it's an agreement between you and the insurance company in which you agree to pay a premium for the policy and in return the insurance company agrees to pay your losses in the event of an accident as defined in the policy. An insurance policy provides financial protection for physical damage and/or bodily injury to another vehicle or person that resulted from a traffic collision that you were involved in.

If you operate a motor vehicle in the state of Iowa (owned or not owned), there must be a motor vehicle liability policy in place to cover you as an operator (driver), in accordance with Iowa Code 321A, Motor Vehicle Financial Responsibility; Iowa Code 321A.21, "Motor Vehicle Liability Policy," Defined; and the Iowa Motor Vehicle Financial and Safety Responsibility Act.

For further information or to get insured, please work with an insurance agent.

**Q. IF I NEED TO OBTAIN AN IOWA ISSUED ID OR DRIVER'S LICENSE, WHAT DOCUMENTATION DO I NEED TO BRING WITH ME?**

**A.** To obtain an Iowa driver's license or identification card, you must document your date of birth, identity, and lawful status or presence in the United States as well as your Social Security number (if you have one) and two documents showing your current Iowa residence. You can create a personal checklist of the documents you will need to satisfy Iowa's identification requirements by following the steps at:  
[www.iowadot.gov/mvd/realid/success.html](http://www.iowadot.gov/mvd/realid/success.html).

**Q. I USE MY FRIEND'S CAR IF I NEED TO DRIVE SOMEWHERE, DO I NEED VEHICLE INSURANCE AND REGISTRATION?**

**A.** In accordance with Iowa Code 321A Motor Vehicle Financial Responsibility: If you operate a motor vehicle, there must be an insurance policy on file that covers you as a driver. If you are driving someone else's vehicle, you are responsible for making sure the vehicle insurance policy covers you as an operator. The consequences for not being covered are severe, which can include having your license suspended. It is important to make sure you are: **1)** covered as an operator before driving someone else's vehicle; **2)** that the vehicle you are operating has valid plates and are displayed in accordance with Iowa Code 321.37; and **3)** proof of registration is carried in the vehicle at all times in accordance with Iowa Code 321.32.



**Q. I DON'T HAVE ACCESS TO A VEHICLE TO GET AROUND. WHAT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION/TRANSIT OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE?**

**A.** Your local college, university, or city may have free or reduced-cost transportation options. Be sure to check with them. In addition to those services and the use of taxis and transportation network companies (think Uber, Rideshare or Lyft), the Iowa Department of Transportation's Office of Public Transit offers an interactive website showing what public transportation options are available in your area. Check [www.iowadot.gov/transit/interactive\\_map.html](http://www.iowadot.gov/transit/interactive_map.html) for options near you.

**Q. I JUST PURCHASED A VEHICLE. WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?**

**A.** A bill of sale conveying ownership is an important first step and should be obtained from the seller at the time of sale along with a properly assigned vehicle title. The bill of sale will list the vehicle description, name of buyer and seller, purchase price, and date of sale. The vehicle title and bill of sale are the proof of sale and serve as temporary vehicle registration. Within 30 days of purchase, submit these documents to your local county treasurer's office to obtain license plates. More details on vehicle sales are available at: [www.iowadot.gov/mvd/buyingselling/selling.htm](http://www.iowadot.gov/mvd/buyingselling/selling.htm)

**Q. WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF HAVING A FAKE ID OR DRIVER'S LICENSE?**

**A.** Someone in possession of a counterfeit or altered government issued driver's licenses or identification card or falsely using another person's driver's license or identification card may be charged with a misdemeanor offense. The fine for a conviction of this offense can range from \$100 to \$1,875 with a possible jail sentence up to one year. The Iowa Department of Transportation may impose a driving sanction as well as up to a six-month suspension of driving privileges. Students may also find themselves as victims of identity theft if they provide personal and financial information to another person for the purpose of manufacturing a counterfeit driver's license or identification card. This information is commonly used to commit identity fraud against the student, which results in an often drawn-out process to recover one's identity.

**Q. IF I GET STOPPED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT WHILE OPERATING A MOTOR VEHICLE, WHAT SHOULD I DO?**

**A.** The first thing to do is to remain calm and stay in your vehicle unless directed by the officer to exit the vehicle. The officer may not immediately come to your car as they may first check the status of your vehicle registration with their dispatch center. Before the officer approaches your car, make sure your hands are where the officer can see them and you should avoid making sudden movements. The officer may ask you questions about your trip and will ask to see your driver's license, proof of insurance, and vehicle registration. You should follow the officer's instructions and you should soon be on your way.