Driving in California

In order to drive in California, you must have a valid California Driver’s License. Students are considered by the Department of Motor Vehicles to be residents, and therefore are not eligible to use their home country license or the International Driver’s License.

To obtain a California Driver’s License, you must pass written and driving tests. The written test is based entirely on the California Driver’s Handbook. Free copies of the handbook are available at the Department of Motor Vehicles Office (DMV) or the information can be found at www.dmv.ca.gov. While the Handbook is available only in Spanish and English, the written test is available in many languages. After passing the written test, you may make an appointment to take the driving test. You will have three opportunities to pass each test – written and driving. You will need to provide a car for the driving test. To apply, visit the Department of Motor Vehicles Office at 500 Cohasset Lane (number 2 bus route). There is a $31 application fee. You will need your passport and a Social Security number (or a letter from the Social Security Administration that you are not eligible for a Social Security number).

**Auto Insurance:** California Compulsory Financial Responsibility Law requires that an owner of a motor vehicle have an auto insurance policy. It must cover at the minimum, $15,000 for personal injury or death; $30,000 for multiple injuries or deaths; and $5,000 for property damage. There are a number of insurance carriers from which you can purchase insurance coverage.

**Safety Belts:** Drivers and passengers are required to use safety belts. Drivers will be fined for not using their safety belts. A passenger 16 years of age or older, if unbelted, may also be cited. Infants and small children may be transported in cars only when the appropriate restraint devices are used. Failure to provide this protection will result in a heavy fine. The court may also take away your vehicle for 30 days and you will pay for vehicle storage. Safety belt laws are strictly enforced!

**Helmets:** The law requires that all riders of motorcycles and motorized scooters wear proper safety helmets on their heads.