Massachusetts will honor valid Driver’s Licenses and Registrations issued by the following countries:

Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Australia, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Central African Republic, Chile, China (Taiwan only), Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Rep., Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Fiji, Finland, France (inc. Overseas Territories & Principality of Andorra), The Gambia, Georgia (Republic of), Germany (by reciprocity), Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hong Kong (except Macao), Hungary, Iceland, India, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Korea, Kuwait, Kyrgyz Rep., Laos, Lebanon, Lesotho, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, Namibia, Netherlands Antilles & Aruba, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal (inc. Portuguese Territories), Romania, Russia, Rwanda, San Marino, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovak Rep., South Africa, Spain (incl. African localities and provinces), Sri Lanka, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland (by reciprocity), Syrian Arab Republic, Taiwan, Tanzania, Togo, Trinidad & Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom (Great Britain & Northern Ireland) & Cayman Islands, Gibraltar, Guernsey, Isle of Man & States of Jersey, Uruguay, Vatican City, Vietnam, Vietnam Rep., Western Samoa, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

* From a List of Treaties and other International Agreements of the United States in Force on January 1, 2000. The RMV reserves the right to amend this list at any time based on additional information received from the U.S. Department of State or other sources.

1. What is an International Driving Permit (IDP)?

An International Driving Permit serves primarily as a translation of a person’s foreign driver’s license into ten (10) major languages recognized by the United Nations. The Permit itself is a small (4” x 6”), gray covered, multi-page booklet with white pages, containing the driver’s first and last name, the date and place of birth and the person’s permanent address in the country of issuance. A Permit also contains a photograph of the driver and his/her signature. Other than the page containing the personal information and photograph, each page conveys the same information but in a separate language.

2. Who issues International Driving Permits?

Permits are only issued in the driver’s country of origin and only by a membership-type automobile association authorized to issue such Permits by an International Road Traffic Convention to which the United States is a party. A fee is charged for the issuance of the Permit. The cost is about $10. The American Automobile Association (AAA) and the American Automobile Touring Alliance (AATA) issue International Driving Permits to licensed drivers from U.S. jurisdictions who intend to drive in other countries. An International Driving Permit is usually valid for a one (1) year period and is not valid in the country of issuance.
FAQs about International Driving Permits, International Driver Licenses & Driving Privileges for Foreign Licensed Drivers

The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV)

Q #3. Does an International Driving Permit confer driving privileges in Massachusetts?
A No. It does not confer any driving privileges. The Permit is not a substitute for the person’s valid driver license. A driver who is licensed in another country must carry his/her valid foreign driver license when driving in Massachusetts. The operator should also carry an INS document which shows the date that the operator last entered the U.S. The valid I-94 containing the date of admission to the U.S. should be sufficient.

Q #4. Is a foreign licensed driver required to carry an International Driving Permit (IDP) when driving in Massachusetts?
A No. Although some countries require a foreign motorist to possess an IDP, the United States has not done so. It is suggested, however, that he/she carry an IDP if the foreign license is not printed in the English language.

Q #5. Does Massachusetts honor valid foreign driver licenses from every country?
A No. Massachusetts will only honor valid licenses from countries identified in Appendix “C” of the current Massachusetts Driver’s Manual. Appendix “C” is re-printed here for your review. Most of the identified countries are parties to one of the two major international road or automotive traffic conventions the U.S. recognizes. Germany and Switzerland are not parties to the 1949 Road Traffic Convention but their driver licenses are honored based on reciprocal agreements. At present, validly licensed drivers from some of the former USSR republics are also recognized. Note: Some countries that issue International Driving Permits include in the Permit a list of countries in which the holder is authorized to drive. Be aware that other Road Traffic Conventions that the U.S. is not a party to (such as the 1968 Convention) have a more expansive list of countries. You should be guided by the countries listed in Appendix “C.”

Q #6. What is an International Driver’s License and how does it differ from an International Driving Permit?
A The RMV does not recognize as valid any document purporting to be an International Driver’s License, or any other document that confers driving privileges, unless issued by the government agency that issues such licenses in the driver’s country of residence and the driver is validly licensed in that country. The governments of some countries issue an international version of their own domestic driver license to their validly licensed drivers who indicate a need for a driver’s license that will be recognized in other countries. The international version of the domestic driver license includes translations (usually including into English). The Federal Republic of Germany, and Switzerland issue such a license. Since Germany and Switzerland are recognized in Appendix “C” of the Massachusetts Driver’s Manual, we honor both the domestic and International version of their respective licenses as conferring driving privileges. Even if a country issues an international version of its own domestic license, the license will only be honored in Massachusetts if the country is identified in Appendix “C.” Remember, a foreign driver cannot drive in Massachusetts unless his/her driver’s license is issued by the government of a country identified in Appendix “C.” A validly issued International Driving Permit, while not required, merely serves to confirm that a license was issued and translates the relevant information on the license. It is not a substitute for a valid license and the license must be carried when operating in Massachusetts.
Caution: AAA and AATA usually require the applicant to produce the driver license before they will issue an IDP. Typically, however, they do not have access to information indicating whether the license has been suspended or revoked.

Q #7. Does the one year of eligibility to drive begin each time the person re-enters the US?
A Yes. The year of eligibility to drive in Massachusetts begins again each time the foreign visitor lawfully re-enters the US.

Driving Privileges for NATO Forces:
Massachusetts is legally required to honor the provisions of the Agreement Between The Parties To The North Atlantic Treaty Regarding the Status of Forces (NATO SOFA) entered into by the US on August 23, 1953. The Treaty accords driving privileges to active duty military members of NATO forces on assignment in this country (usually for training purposes) and also to civilian components attached to the NATO forces. Therefore, Massachusetts accepts as valid, without a driving test or fee, the driving permit, license or military driving permit issued by a NATO country to its own military personnel or to the personnel of a civilian component of the military force. NATO military and civilian component personnel are required to carry and present on demand: (a) a personal identity card issued by the sending NATO country showing names, date of birth, rank and number (if any), service, and photograph. (b) an individual or collective movement order, in the language of the sending country and in the English and French languages, issued by an agency of the sending country or NATO and certifying to the status of the individual or group as a member or members of a force and to the movement ordered.

Members of a civilian component and dependents shall be so described in their passports. Dependents of military personnel of NATO force personnel on assignment in the U.S., and dependents of civilian employees assigned to those NATO forces, who are from one of the NATO member countries listed below, may legally drive on the roads of the Commonwealth, on their home country license, for up to one year from the date of arrival, under the Multilateral Road Traffic Convention of 1949 or applicable reciprocal agreements.

List of NATO Member Countries: Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

A note about Appendix “C”:
A foreign visitor from one of the countries or territories listed in Appendix “C” may legally drive on the roads of the Commonwealth on his or her own country’s valid license (limited to a licensed driver who is at least 18 years old and limited to a vehicle of the type covered by the license) for up to one (1) year from the date of arrival. The visitor may operate his or her own private passenger vehicle if displaying valid license plates from the visitor’s country (and meeting insurance standards set by the Commonwealth if operated longer than 30 days) for up to one (1) year from the date of arrival.

Except for vehicles being operated in Massachusetts from Mexico and Canada, vehicles being operated in Massachusetts that are registered in any of the countries listed in Appendix “C” (including Germany and Switzerland) must also exhibit the International Distinguishing Sign on the rear exterior of the vehicle. The sign is a white oval that is obtained from the country of registration and contains one to three black letters identifying the country.

You may access the contents of the Massachusetts Driver’s Manual on the RMV web site at: www.mass.gov/rmv