

## Chapter 10

### Driver's License



Saitama's Prefectural Mascot  
Kobaton

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To be able to drive in Japan, you must have a Japanese driver's license. To obtain one, it is necessary to pass the Japanese driving test or to pass a screening for conversion of a foreign driver's license to a Japanese license. However, people with an international driver's license issued by a country that is a signatory of the Geneva Convention, or a driver's license (with a Japanese translation) from a country designated by Japanese government ordinance (France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Taiwan, Monaco, Estonia), are also allowed to drive.

In this case, you may drive a vehicle whose operation is permitted by the license for 1 year from the date of arrival to Japan, assuming the foreign license remains valid during that time.



## Consultation and Inquiries

Office	Telephone	Address	Hours Mon - Fri (Except National Holidays and during the New Year's Holiday Period)
Saitama Prefectural Police Department Drivers' Licensing Center	048-543-2001  Tel. & Fax Guide: 048-541-1234	405-4 Konosu, Konosu-shi Access: Take the bus from the no. 3 stand bound for "Menkyo Center" from the east exit of Konosu Sta. on the Takasaki Line – get off at the last stop	<b>Advance consultation on converting a foreign-issued license:</b>  9:30 - 10:00 14:00 - 14:30 <b>Inspection for license conversion (Only for those who have had an advance consultation):</b> 13:00 - 13:45

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### 1 Converting a Foreign Driver's License

With a valid driver's license issued overseas, you can apply to convert it into a Japanese license if you resided in the country that issued the license for at least 3 months in total after obtaining it. In Saitama, this procedure can be completed at the Saitama Prefectural Police Department Drivers' Licensing Center. When you apply you need the following:

- Passport
- Residence Card, or Special Permanent Resident Card, etc.
- Resident Record (with all your details (excluding your Individual Number))
- Your driver's license issued overseas (with date of issuance)
- An official Japanese translation either by your country's embassy or consulate in Japan, or by a corporation designated by the National Public Safety Commission (limited to the Japan Automobile Federation (JAF) and ZIPLUS)
- Two photos (3.0cm x 2.4cm)
- Application fee

Other information may be required, so please consult with the Saitama Prefectural Police Department Driver's Licensing Center's Foreign License Conversion Consultation Office before applying (If you don't receive confirmation on your documents at advance consultation, you can't apply for inspection for license conversion).

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## 2 Renewing Your Driver's License

Depending on the driver's age and accident and traffic violation history, the term of validity of a Japanese driver's license is 3 to 5 years.

The expiry date is written on the license. You will need to renew your license during the designated renewal period (starting one month prior to your birthday in the year your license is due to expire, and ending with the expiry date). Specific details about renewing your license will be written in the renewal notification you will be sent just before the renewal period begins. Please contact the Driver's License Center if you are not sent a notification by the time the renewal period begins.

When renewing your driver's license, the following are required:

- Old driver's license
- Document that certifies your status of residence, such as a Residence Card, Special Permanent Resident Certificate or passport
- Application fee

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## 3 Driver's License Tests

- (1) Test Venue: Saitama Prefectural Police Department Driver's Licensing Center.
- (2) Application Acceptance Hours: Between 8:30 and 9:15 AM, Monday - Friday (except holidays, the New Year's Holiday Period)
- (3) Bring the following (varies depending upon the type of license you apply for):
  - Residence Card, or Special Permanent Resident Certificate, etc.
  - Resident Record (with all your details (excluding your Individual Number))
  - 2-3 photos (3.0cm x 2.4cm)
  - Test fee

\* License tests in English or Portuguese are available for semi medium-sized vehicles, regular vehicles, 2 wheeled vehicles, mopeds, and learner's licenses.

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## 4 What to Do When Your License Expires

If you do not renew your license before the expiration date you will be required to apply for a license again. However, if you take the driver's license test within a certain amount of time even after the expiration date, it is possible to obtain a license by provisional measures exempting a part of the test (the techniques and theory section). (If your license expires, you are not allowed to drive until a new license is issued.).

Please undergo the procedures at the Saitama Prefectural Police Department Drivers' Licensing Center.

**(1) For those without a valid reason for having failed to renew their license:**

- a) Within 6 months of the expiration: Although it is possible to obtain a new license without taking the 'techniques and theory' section of the test by means of certain procedures, your driving record will not be carried over from your old license.
- b) If it has been over 6 months, but not yet a year since the expiration of your regular, heavy, medium or semi medium-sized vehicle license, you may apply for a learner's license without taking the techniques and theory section of the test. For all other license types, there is no such provision.

**(2) For those with an unavoidable reason for failing to renew their license (such as hospitalization and living abroad, etc.):**

- a) Within 6 months after expiration: It is possible to obtain a new license without taking the techniques and theory section of the test, and your driving record will continue from the license you had until then without interruption.
- b) Over 6 months but not yet 3 years after expiration: You can be issued a new license if you follow the specified procedure within one month after said unavoidable circumstances have subsided. It is possible to obtain a license without taking the techniques and theory section, and your driving record will be continued from the previous license.

**(3) Test procedures**

- a) Test times  
Monday - Friday, 13:00 - 13:45 (Closed over holidays and the New Year's Holiday Period)
- b) To apply you'll need
  - ① Your expired license
  - ② Your Residence Card or Special Permanent Resident Certificate, etc.
  - ③ Resident Record (with all your details (excluding your Individual Number))
  - ④ One photograph (3.0cm x 2.4cm) (Three photographs if you are applying for a learner's license)

- ⑤ Renewal Notification Postcard (it is possible to apply even without this)
- ⑥ If there was an unavoidable reason why you were unable to renew your license in time you'll need to state the reason and provide documentary evidence (medical certificate, passport, etc.)
- ⑦ Application fee

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## 5 Procedures for Changing Your Address, etc.

When you move or change your name etc., you are required to register these changes on your driver's license. Please do this as soon as possible at your nearest police station (excluding the Konosu Police Station) or the Driver's Licensing Center. Please bring the following documents with you:

- Driver's License
- A document that bears your name and shows your new address (Residence Record, Tax Notice, water or telephone bill, etc.)
- A document that certifies your status of residence such as a Residence Card, Special Permanent Resident Certificate, or passport
- When you change your permanent country of residence, name, or date of birth, please submit a copy of your certificate of residence which shows your nationality, status of residence, and period of stay (you do not need to provide your individual number)

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## 6 Buying and Registering a Car

When you buy or scrap a vehicle, or change the name or address registered, you must provide notification of this transaction/change to the relevant institutions below:

Type	Location
Regular sized vehicles, and motorcycles over 125cc	Kanto Transport Bureau's Saitama Transport Branch or each Vehicle Inspection and Registration Office
Small cars (660cc or less)	Association of Light Vehicle Inspection, Saitama Branch or other local branch offices
Motorcycles (125cc or less)	The tax division of your local municipal or ward offices

## A Guide to Living in Saitama

When you purchase and register ordinary vehicles, you need the following (in case of name change)

- Transfer certificate (with a registered seal of a former owner)
- Seals of both new and former owners (registered seals) or a letter of attorney (in the case of a representative acting for the new or former owner)
- Certification of the seals for both new and former owners (issued within the last 3 months)
- Parking space verification (issued within the past 40 days)

\*This document can be omitted if the addresses of new and former owners are the same.

- Vehicle inspection certificate (must be within the validity period)

\*When you change your car's license plate number, bring your car and the documents listed above.

\*If the address, name, etc., of the owner listed on the car inspection certificate are different from the seal registration certificate, a document such as a resident's card certifying the change is required.

When you move (change your address), you need following:

- Certificate of residence (issued within the last 3 months)
- \*An official copy of your certificate of residence showing your new and previous addresses.
- Parking space verification (issued within the past 40 days )
  - Seal of the vehicle owner (an unregistered seal is acceptable) or letter of attorney (in case of proxy application)

※ If the vehicle owner and vehicle user differ, the seal/letter from each person is necessary

- Vehicle inspection certificate

\*When you change your car's license plate number, bring your car and the documents listed above.

\*For details, refer to following points of contact:



### Consultation and Inquiries

Office	Telephone	Address	Hours
Saitama Transportation Branch, Kanto Transport Bureau	050-5540-2026 Service code 037	2154-2, Nakakugi, Nishi-ku, Saitama-shi	Mon - Fri (Excluding holidays and New Year's)

## A Guide to Living in Saitama

Office	Telephone	Address	Hours
Kumagaya Automobile Inspection & Registration Office	050-5540-2027 Service code 037	701-4, Miizugahara, Kumagaya-shi	holiday period) 8:45 - 11:45 13:00 - 16:00
Tokorozawa Automobile Inspection & Registration Office	050-5540-2029 Service code 037	688-1, Ushinuma, Tokorozawa-shi	
Kasukabe Automobile Inspection & Registration Office	050-5540-2028 Service code 037	723-1, Mashito, Kasukabe-shi	

Saitama Transport Branch Office website:

[https://www.tb.mlit.go.jp/kanto/s\\_saitama/index.html](https://www.tb.mlit.go.jp/kanto/s_saitama/index.html)

When registering a light vehicle (keijidosha), you need the following:

- Certificate of residence of the new user (issued within the last 3 months)
- Vehicle inspection certificate
- Written application (in case of proxy application)

\*In the case of a license plate number change, a license plate is required in addition to the above.

\*For details, refer to the following points of contact:



### Consultation and Inquiries

Office	Telephone	Address	Hours
Light Motor Vehicle Inspection Organization	050-3816-3110	505-1, Hirakata ryoryoke, Ageo-shi	Mon - Fri (Excluding Holidays and New Year's holiday period) 8:45 - 11:45 13:00 - 16:00
Tokorozawa Branch Office, Light Motor Vehicle Inspection Organization	050-3816-3111	360-3, Kita-Nagai Miyoshi-machi	
Kumagaya Branch Office, Light Motor Vehicle Inspection Organization	050-3816-3112	960-2, Niibori, Aza Kitahara, Kumagaya-shi	
Kasukabe Branch Office, Light Motor Vehicle Inspection Organization	050-3816-3113	115-1, Higashi-kochi, Shimo-oomashi-shinden, Kasukabe-shi	

When purchasing and registering a motorcycle (125cc or less), contact your local municipal office.

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## 7 Automobile Insurance

A combination of insurance plans is recommended to protect you and others in the event of a traffic accident.

### (1) Compulsory Insurance

When you purchase a vehicle or renew its inspection certificate, you must obtain compulsory liability insurance (*jibaiseki hoken*). You can obtain this insurance at the car insurance agency, car dealership, or mechanic's shop.

### (2) Private Insurance

Private insurance provides compensation for damage to the property of a third party, damage to your vehicle, or injuries etc. that are not covered by compulsory insurance. You can apply for this type of insurance at private insurance agencies.



## Consultation and Inquiries

Name	Telephone	Hours
The General Insurance Association of Japan General Insurance Counseling and ADR Center	NaviDial (charges apply) 0570-022808  (IP phone) 03-4332-5241	Mon - Fri (Except National Holidays, Holidays and December 30 to January 4) 9:15 - 17:00  * Consultation is provided in Japanese. * You cannot apply for car insurance through this phone consultation service. To apply for car insurance, please contact a non-life (general) insurance company. Link to inquiry counters of non-life (general) insurance companies: <a href="https://www.sonpo.or.jp/about/efforts/adr/index.html">https://www.sonpo.or.jp/about/efforts/adr/index.html</a>