



# South Carolina Driver's Manual



South Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles





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## DISCLAIMER:

**The state motor vehicle laws that are mentioned in this book are not reproduced in their entirety and the wording is not identical. Due to possible legislative changes in federal and state law and SCDMV Policy, the information in this manual may not always be current. SCDMV will make every effort to incorporate any changes as soon as possible.**

**For more information, please visit our website at:  
[www.scdmvonline.com](http://www.scdmvonline.com)**



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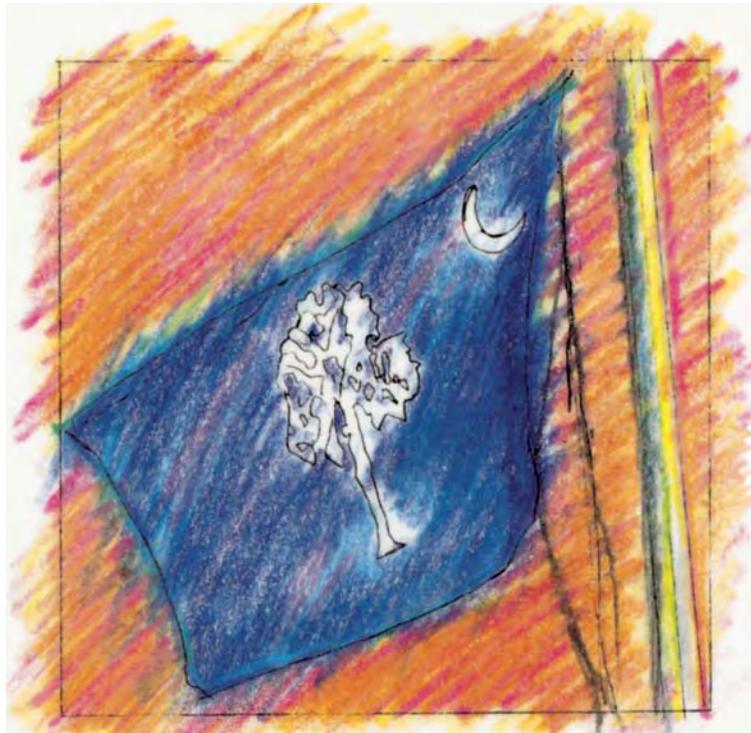
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# Introduction To Driver's License

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## The Rules of The Road

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This book is your guide to good driving. It explains the rules of the road and what the law expects of you as a driver.

The purpose is to help you learn traffic-control devices, signs and pavement markings, which you must know before you get on the highway.

## Classes of Licenses

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SC issues licenses as proof that you've been examined and are qualified to operate a particular type of vehicle. The class license you will need is based on the gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) or gross vehicle weight (GVW).

### Commercial Licenses

- **Class A:** Any combination of vehicles with a GCWR of 26,001 or more pounds provided the GVWR of the vehicle(s) being towed is in excess of 10,000 pounds.
- **Class B:** Any single vehicle with a GVWR of 26,001 or more pounds, or any such vehicle towing a vehicle not in excess of 10,000 pounds GVWR.
- **Class C:** Any single vehicle, or combination of vehicles, that does not meet the definitions of Class A or B, but either is designed to transport 16 or more passengers, including the driver, or is placarded for hazardous materials.

### Non-Commercial Licenses

- **Class D:** Allows you to drive non-commercial passenger vehicles, such as cars and trucks, which do not exceed 26,000 pounds gross vehicle weight. With a Class D driver's license, you may also operate a three-wheel vehicle (excluding a two-wheel motorcycle with a side car).
- **Class E:** Allows you to operate non-commercial, single unit vehicles that exceed 26,000 pounds gross vehicle weight. Examples of Class E vehicles include trucks and motor homes. With a Class E driver's license, you may also operate a three-wheel vehicle (excluding a two-wheel motorcycle with a side car).
- **Class F:** Allows you to drive non-commercial, combination vehicles that exceed 26,000 pounds gross vehicle weight. Examples of Class F vehicles include trucks and motor homes with a towed trailer or vehicle. With a Class F driver's license,



you may also operate a three-wheel vehicle (excluding a two-wheel motorcycle with a side car).

- **Class M:** Allows you to operate a two-wheel motorcycle, a two-wheel motorcycle with a detachable side car, or a three-wheel vehicle.
- **Class G:** Allows you to operate a moped. If you have a valid driver's license or permit in any of the other four classifications, you will not be required to obtain a license to drive a moped. (Minimum age 14)

Each qualified driver will have only one driver's license, endorsed for one or more of the classifications. It is illegal to have more than one valid driver's license. If you drive a motorcycle and another type of vehicle, your license will be endorsed for two classifications, after completion of driving tests for both types of vehicles. A moped Class G license requires a vision and knowledge test only.

When driving you must have a valid driver's license, vehicle registration and valid insurance card in your possession for the class of vehicle you are operating. If you do not, you may be subject to a fine.

## Identification Cards

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Identification cards are issued to residents who are at least five years of age. For United States citizens, the card expires five years after the issue date. For non-United States citizens, the card expires at the end of the applicant's authorized period of stay in the United States or the expiration date on the employment authorization document. The same documentation used when obtaining a first-time driver's license or beginner's permit is required when obtaining a first time I.D. card.

## Beginner's Permit

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To apply for a beginner's permit, you must be at least 15 years of age or older. You must provide a birth certificate, social security card or its equivalent, proof of residency, and must pass the vision and knowledge tests. If you are under 18 years of age, you must have a parent or legal guardian sign your application.

If you have a valid out-of-state beginner's permit, you may obtain a beginner's permit in this state. The time you held your out-of-state permit also counts toward the 180 day requirement. If your permit has expired, however, you must take the vision and knowledge tests to get a S.C. beginner's permit.



Regardless of your age, if you have never been licensed or do not have proof of past driving experience, you must hold your beginner's permit for 180 days before being eligible for a driver's license.

With a beginner's permit, you may:

- Operate a motor vehicle from 6 a.m. to midnight with a licensed driver who is at least 21 years old, who has at least one year of driving experience, and who is sitting in the front seat with you.
- Drive motorcycles, motor scooters or light motor driven cycles from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. (8 p.m. during daylight savings time). You may not operate a motorcycle, motor scooter or light motor driven cycle at any other time with a beginner's permit unless you are supervised by a Class M licensed parent or guardian. If you are operating a three-wheeled vehicle, the driver accompanying you must be directly behind you on a saddle-type seat or beside you on a bench type seat.
- Your driving privileges will be suspended for six months if you receive traffic violations totaling six or more points.  
For information concerning Commercial Beginner's Permit requirements, refer to the SC Commercial Driver's License Manual.

## Conditional License

To apply for a Conditional Driver's license, you must be at least 15 years of age and less than 16 years of age and have held your beginner's permit for at least 180 days. You must also bring your insurance information, your parent or guardian to sign your application, and Form PDLA that certifies you have:

- 1) Completed a driver's education course,
- 2) Had satisfactory school attendance,
- 3) Practiced driving with your parent or legal guardian for at least 40 hours, including 10 hours of driving practice at night.

Form PDLA allows you to submit all of these certifications and is available at your school and the SCDMV web site at [www.scdmsonline.com](http://www.scdmsonline.com). When you apply for your conditional license, you will also have to pass the vision and road test.

If you have a conditional driver's license, you may drive alone during daylight hours. In SC, daylight hours are defined as 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., or 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. during daylight savings time. You may drive after daylight hours until midnight while accompanied by a licensed driver that is at least 21 years of age or older. If you drive after midnight, you must be accompanied by a licensed parent or guardian.

With a conditional license, you cannot transport more than two passengers who are under the age of 21 unless you are accompanied by a licensed adult who is at least 21 years old. The only exception is if



you are transporting family members or students to and from school.

You may obtain full driving privileges when you are 16 if you have had your license for one year and have no traffic offenses or been involved in any at-fault accidents. Your driving privileges will be suspended for six months if you receive traffic violations totaling six or more points.

## **Special Restricted License**

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To apply for a Special Restricted Driver's license, you must be at least 16 years of age and less than 17 years of age and have held your beginner's permit for at least 180 days or have a conditional license. You must bring your insurance information and your parent or guardian to sign your application. You must also submit Form PDLA that certifies you have:

- 1) Completed a driver's education course,
- 2) Had satisfactory school attendance,
- 3) Practiced driving with your parent or legal guardian for at least 40 hours, including 10 hours of driving practice at night.

Form PDLA allows you to submit all of these certifications and is available at your school and the SCDMV web site at [www.scdmvonline.com](http://www.scdmvonline.com). When you apply for your special restricted license, you will also have to pass the vision and road test.

If you have a special restricted driver's license, you may drive alone during daylight hours. In SC, daylight hours are defined as 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., or 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. during daylight savings time. You may drive after daylight hours until midnight while accompanied by a licensed driver that is at least 21 years of age or older. If you drive after midnight, you must be accompanied by a licensed parent or guardian.

If the time limitations cause problems for you at your job or school, they may be waived. You must prove to the department that they interfere with your job, education or travel between home, school, vocational training or employment opportunities by submitting two statements:

1. A statement from your parent or legal guardian, and
2. A statement from your employer or school official.

Both statements must give the reason for the waiver. The waiver will not allow you to drive after midnight.

With a special restricted license, you cannot transport more than two passengers who are under the age of 21 unless you are accompanied by a licensed adult who is at least 21 years old. The only exception is if you are transporting family members or students to and from school.

You may obtain full driving privileges when you are 16 if you have had your license for one year and have no traffic offenses or been



involved in any at-fault accidents. Your driving privileges will be suspended for six months if you receive traffic violations totaling six or more points.

## **Regular Driver's License**

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If you are at least 17 years old and have held a beginner's permit for 180 days, you are eligible for a regular SC driver's license. The requirements are as follows:

- If you are under 18 years of age and have never been licensed, you must bring your parent or legal guardian with you to sign your application.
- If you are 18 years old or older, you do not need the signature of your parent or legal guardian.
- You must bring your insurance information.
- You must pass the vision and road tests.

## **Newcomers and Non-Residents**

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If you come into South Carolina from another state and establish a permanent residence, you must get a South Carolina driver's license, and also a vehicle license if you own a vehicle.

If you have a valid driver's license issued by the state from which you moved, you can use it for up to 90 days. **You may have only one valid driver's license at any time.** To obtain a SC driver's license, you must present your out-of-state driver's license, birth certificate, social security card, proof of residency and insurance information. If your name has changed from what is on your birth certificate, you must provide legal documentation of the change.

Nonresident drivers from other states, such as students and military personnel and their dependents living temporarily in South Carolina, may drive in South Carolina without obtaining a South Carolina driver's license by maintaining home state driver's license and license plates.

### **United States Citizens with Credentials from Other States**

If you are a new resident in South Carolina and you have a valid driver's license from another state, you may obtain a South Carolina driver's license by passing the vision test and surrendering your out-of-state driver's license. If you have lost your out-of-state beginner's permit, driver's license or identification card, you must also complete an affidavit of lost permit or license along with your South Carolina application. If your out-of-state driver's license has expired by nine

months or more, you must also successfully complete the knowledge and road or skills tests. You must also provide the following documents:

1. Birth Certificate or acceptable substitute\*
2. Social Security Card or acceptable substitute\*
3. Proof of Residency\*
4. Insurance Information

(\* See Documents You Will Need section of this manual.)

## **The Licensing Procedure**

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If you have studied and practiced carefully before attempting the road test, you should have no trouble passing the test.

Contact your local SCDMV office to check the hours for examinations. To ensure you allow enough time for testing, you should try to arrive at least one hour before the office closes. SCDMV offices do not offer road tests for any type of driver license during inclement weather. For example, rainy streets can make maneuvering a vehicle more difficult for new drivers and ice on the roads can be hazardous for all drivers.

When you are ready, you must take a licensed driver with you to the place of examination, since you cannot legally drive alone. SCDMV will not furnish a vehicle for the road test.

These are the basic requirements for passing the test:

- You must see well enough to drive.
- You must be physically and mentally able to drive.
- You must understand the meaning of traffic signs, signals and pavement markings.
- Your vehicle must be in safe operating condition.
- You must know how to drive safely on streets and highways.
- You must show that you respect the rights of other drivers, bicyclists, pedestrians, motorcyclists or others who share the roads.
- Knowledge and/or skill tests may be taken only once a day or at the return time set by the examiner.

## **Medical Conditions**

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Should you have a medical condition that could possibly affect your driving ability, SCDMV may require medical reports prior to renewing or issuing a driver's license or permit.



## License Expiration

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If you are a United States citizen and you visit a SCDMV field office to obtain an original or renewal license, you will receive a ten-year license unless you are over 65 years of age or under 17 years of age. Persons who are 65 years of age or older or under 17 years of age will be issued a five year license. If you apply for a renewal license online, you will be issued a five-year license.

### United States Citizens

If you have a driver's license issued for a period of five years, your license is good until your birthday five years from the year it was issued. If you have a ten-year license, your license is good until your birthday ten years from the year in which your license was issued. If your birthday passes and you have not renewed your license within nine months of the expiration dates, you will be required to take the knowledge and road tests again.

If it has not expired and you have not had more than five points assessed against your driving record during the preceding two years, you will be required to take only the vision test. But if you have had more than five points charged against your driving record for traffic violations in the preceding two years, you will have to take the vision test and the knowledge test.

### Military Personnel

South Carolina licensed military personnel must maintain a valid license at all times. When stationed outside the state, you may renew a noncommercial license one time by mail by first obtaining proper forms from the SCDMV before the expiration date of your license. You will have to take the knowledge and road tests if your license has expired nine months or more.

### Non-United States Citizens

The expiration date of your driver's license will be determined by your authorized period of stay in the United States or the expiration dates of your employment authorization document. If your license expiration date passes and you have not renewed your license within nine months, you will have to take the knowledge and road tests again.



## Documents You Will Need

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To get a beginner's permit, driver's license or identification card, you must provide proper identification. The documents you will need will vary based on whether or not you are a United States citizen. Documents will not be accepted if there is evidence that they have been altered. Photocopies of documents are not accepted.

**For the most up-to-date information about SCDMV requirements, please visit our website at [www.scdmvonline.com](http://www.scdmvonline.com) or call SCDMV at (803) 896-5000.**

### United States Citizens

If you are a United States citizen applying for a first time beginner's permit, driver's license or identification card, you must provide original documents showing proof of your U.S. citizenship, identity, social security number, SC residency and insurance information. The documents SCDMV accepts as proof are as follows:

- **Proof of U.S. Citizenship/Identity, Name and Date of Birth**
  - Birth certificate with birth/file number and registrar's signature issued by the county or Bureau of Vital Statistics
  - Birth certificate from U.S. territory (must be translated if not in English) which includes Puerto Rico, Guam, U.S. Virgin Islands, U.S. Samoa
  - Delayed Birth Certificate (If a birth certificate was not issued at the time of birth, the applicant can apply for a birth certificate from the Bureau of Vital Statistics)
  - U.S. Passport (current or expired not more than ten years)
  - Current U.S. Passport Card
  - Original Certificate of Naturalization USCIS form (N-550 or N-570)
  - U.S. government issued Consular Report of Birth Abroad
  - Certificate of United States Citizenship (N-560 or N-561)

If your original your birth certificate shows that you were not born in the United States, you must also provide an additional document from the above list. If the birth certificate is not in English, it must be translated. If your name has changed and the new name is not reflected on your identification document, you must also provide court documents, such as your marriage certificate or adoption records indicating your legal name change.



- **Proof of Social Security Number**

The name on your social security card or substitute document must match the name on your identity documents. The document you present must contain your social security number.

- Original Social Security Card
- Social Security Form SSA-1099, Survivor Benefit Form
- United States Military Photo Identification Card (active, retired or reservist military status DOD, ID, DD-214)
- Current military dependent ID card
- US Uniform Services Identification and Privilege Card (DD1173) that contains a photograph
- Letter from Social Security Administration (requires online verification)
- Medicare letter from the Social Security Administration (requires online verification)
- Medicare Card (requires online verification)
- Payroll stub with employer's name and applicant's name
- W-2 form with employer's name and address and applicant's name

- **Proof of South Carolina Residency**

To prove you are a resident of South Carolina, you must provide documentation that contains both your name and physical address. The following documents will be accepted:

- School Records must be from a SC school and for the current or prior school year.
  - Student ID
  - Report card
  - Letter or contract from Home Schooling Association
  - Official letter from individual's school or school district on school or district letterhead
  - Certified Transcript
  - Diploma from SC school (child has graduated within the last school year)
  - Out-of-state or in-state tuition bill with applicant's SC physical address
- Current Employment records (no more than 90 days old)  
Records must be from a SC employer or have a SC address for the applicant on records from an out of state employer.
  - Letter on employer letterhead
  - Pay stub showing SC withholdings
  - Intent to hire on employer letterhead



- Current utility bill (no more than 90 days old)  
A utility bill is a bill specific to services for your residence. Examples include electric, water, sewer and cable. Satellite and cell phone bills are not acceptable.
- SC Welfare/Social Services Card
- SC Medicaid cards
- Parolee Cards or letter from parole officer (no more than 90 days old)
- Home mortgage documents (no more than 90 days old)
- Current S.C. Weapons Permit
- County tax notice or property receipt for home or vehicle
- State or Federal Tax records
  - Income tax returns for current or prior year are acceptable including electronic tax file or W2.
  - If applicant is listed as a dependent on SC tax return presented as proof of residency, proof applies to the dependent also.
- Current Military Orders detailing active duty assignment in SC
- Current letter from Military Base with the Commander verifying duty station in SC
- SC Bank statement or a signed letter (must be on bank letterhead) showing name of applicant and SC physical address (no more than 90 days old)
- Original social security check showing name and SC physical address of applicant (no more than 90 days old)
- Insurance documentation (no more than 90 days old)
  - Letter from insurance company or agent licensed to do business in South Carolina stating the name of the applicant and indicating the SC address of the applicant
  - Insurance policy written by the insurance company or agent licensed to do business in SC, showing name of applicant and SC address
- Letter from director of a social welfare institution (homeless shelter, battered women's shelter, halfway house, group home, orphanage, etc.) stating applicant is a resident of the facility (no more than 90 days old)
- Vehicle Insurance Card (only if the SC address and applicant's name appear on card)
- Article of mail with official Post Office address change label





- **Insurance Information**

Before a license can be issued or renewed, you must provide current insurance information. You must provide the company name, policy number and telephone number of your automobile insurance company. If you or any relative in your household does not own a vehicle, you must indicate that fact on your application.

### **Applicants Under 18 Years of Age**

If you are under 18 years of age, you must have a parent or legal guardian sign your application to accept responsibility for you. If you are an emancipated minor, you must submit proof of emancipation with a court order, marriage certificate or active military orders. Only an original document or a certified copy will be accepted.

### **Applicants from Other Countries**

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All persons authorized by the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, or the U.S. Department of State to live, work or study in the United States on a temporary or permanent basis will be eligible to apply for a beginner's permit, driver's license or identification card. The expiration date of your driver's license will be determined by your authorized period of stay in the United States or the expiration date of your employment authorization document.

Applications for beginner's permits, driver's licenses and identification cards for international customers are accepted at designated SCDMV offices throughout the state. To find the office location nearest you that accepts international customer applications, see our website at [www.scdmvonline.com](http://www.scdmvonline.com).

If you are an international customer, you must provide the following to apply for a South Carolina credential:

- Proof of identity
- Proof of birthplace
- Proof of residency
- Social Security Card or Letter from the Social Security Administration stating that the applicant is not allowed to work in the United States
- Automobile insurance information (if applying for a license)

All applicants must provide proper documentation to prove that the US Department of Justice, US Department of State or the US Citizenship and Immigration Services authorizes them to live, work or study in the United States on a temporary or permanent basis, and that they are within their current authorized period of stay. For the most up-



to-date information for SCDMV requirements, please visit our website at [www.scdmvonline.com](http://www.scdmvonline.com) or call SCDMV at (803) 896-5000.

If you are applying for a driver's license, you must also submit a valid driver's license from your country of origin as proof of prior driving experience. If your out-of-country license has expired for more than nine months, you will have to take the knowledge and skills tests. The driver's license information must be translated into English or be accompanied by an International Driving Permit. If you cannot show proof of prior driving experience, you must first obtain a beginner's permit and hold it for 180 days before applying for a driver's license.

To renew or replace your South Carolina credential, you must submit documentation to prove your lawful status. Drivers from other countries may obtain a South Carolina driver's license without taking a test other than the vision test if South Carolina has reciprocity with their home country. Reciprocity can only provide proof of previous driving experience. Canada has reciprocity with South Carolina for both commercial and noncommercial vehicles. The following countries have reciprocity with South Carolina for noncommercial vehicles: France, Germany, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau for regular driver licenses only. Mexico has reciprocity only for commercial vehicles with a CDLIS connection.

Applicants from countries without reciprocity must take the complete test. Drivers will be allowed to keep the out-of-country license but the use of the out-of-country license may result in the South Carolina license being revoked. If the out-of-country license has expired, the applicant must successfully complete the vision, knowledge, and skills tests.

## **Change of Address or Name**

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Once you have obtained your driver's license or identification card, you will want to make certain that it is kept current. SCDMV must always be notified within 10 days of any name or address changes. There are a number of reasons SCDMV may need to contact you, including matters that affect your driver's license or registration. The fact that you did not change your address and did not receive a letter will not be a valid excuse for noncompliance with requirements. You may change your address at your local field office or at [www.scdmvonline.com](http://www.scdmvonline.com).

To change your name, you must visit a DMV office and present proper documentation such as a marriage certificate, divorce decree or court order. You cannot change your name by mail or online.



## Destroyed or Lost License

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If you lose your license or it is destroyed or becomes illegible, you may get a replacement for a fee at your local SCDMV office or by visiting the SCDMV Web site at [www.scdmvonline.com](http://www.scdmvonline.com). Here are some things you can do to protect yourself in case your license is lost or stolen:

1. Make a record of your driver's license number and your car registration number, and keep those records in a safe place away from your wallet or wherever you keep your license and other papers. A copy of these documents could prove quite valuable should your license be lost.
2. A stolen license should be reported to the local police. However, no action is taken by SCDMV when the driver's license is reported stolen unless we have reason to suspect fraudulent use of this license. Additional documentation, which can be found in the "Documents You Will Need" section of this manual, may be required to obtain a replacement license.



If your license is lost, destroyed or damaged so that it can not be read, you must get a replacement at your local field office or online at [www.scdmvonline.com](http://www.scdmvonline.com).



## **Motor Voter Law**

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If you are a United States citizens and 18 years of age or older, you may register to vote when you have a driver's license issued or renewed. Your registration application will be forwarded to the registrar in your county of residence. You must present acceptable proof of your social security number.

## **Fraudulent Documents**

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Anyone who obtains a beginner's permit, driver's license or an identification card using fraudulent information will be prosecuted and the documents they were issued will be canceled.



