

I Am Here: obtaining your identification and vital documents

South Africa

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National Identification Cards

What type of document can youth seek which will allow them to move around the country?

Yes, **South Africa has a national ID card** known as the **Smart ID Card**. It is issued by the [Department of Home Affairs \(DHA\)](#) and serves as the official form of identification for South African citizens and eligible permanent residents.

As of May 2025, the Smart ID Card is available to:

- South African citizens (by birth or naturalization)
- Lawful permanent residents from visa-exempt countries

This Smart ID Card is gradually replacing the older **green barcoded ID book**, which is being phased out due to security concerns. Applications can be made at DHA Live Capture Offices, participating bank branches, or online via the [eHomeAffairs portal](#).

What is the process for getting a National ID card?

If you are 16 years or older, you are eligible to apply for a Smart ID Card, which is South Africa's official national identification document. This ID is essential for accessing services such as registering for matric exams, applying for a driver's license, or opening a bank account.

- **Start Online (Optional but Recommended)**
You can begin your application through the Department of Home Affairs e-Services Portal. This allows you to:
 - Create a profile
 - Complete the application form
 - Upload supporting documents
 - Schedule an appointment at a participating office or bank branch
- **Book an Appointment**
The Department of Home Affairs has launched an online booking system for select offices. You can view the list of participating branches [here](#).
- **Visit a DHA Office or Bank Branch**
On the day of your appointment, bring your original documents (e.g., birth certificate, proof of residence). Your biometrics (photo, fingerprints, and signature) will be captured.

- **Processing and Collection**
Once your application is processed, you will be notified when your Smart ID Card is ready for collection at the same office or bank branch.

Additional information is available at:

- Department of Home Affairs (DHA) has launched an online booking system for some offices. To book an appointment, go to: <https://services.dha.gov.za/#/authenticate/identity>

Where can I find information online about getting a National ID?

You can find official and up-to-date information about obtaining a Smart ID Card on the website of the [Department of Home Affairs – Republic of South Africa](#).

What documents do I have to have to get a National ID? Is there any document that I must have to get an ID?

If you are applying for a Smart ID Card for the first time, you must submit the following documents to your nearest [Department of Home Affairs \(DHA\)](#) office (or a South African mission or consulate if applying from abroad):

For South African Citizens:

- Form BI-9, completed in black ink (this may be completed at the office)
- A certified copy of your birth certificate or reference book, or a copy of an old Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, or Ciskei homeland identity/travel document
- Two identical color photographs (only required for temporary IDs; Smart ID offices capture digital images)
- Fingerprints, which will be taken by a DHA official and imprinted on Form DHA-9

For Naturalized Citizens or Permanent Residents:

- Your naturalization certificate and a copy (certified by DHA)
- Your permanent residency certificate and a copy (certified by DHA)
- Your exemption certificate and a copy (certified by DHA)
- Form BI-1620, which must be completed at a DHA office

What if my documents do not have my correct name/address?

If your Smart ID Card contains incorrect personal information, the DHA will replace it **free of charge**. To request a correction, submit the following at any DHA office:

- Forms BI-9 and BI-309, completed with the correct information
- Proof of the correct information, such as a birth certificate
- Two identical color photographs (only required for temporary IDs; Smart ID offices capture digital images)

More details are available on the [DHA Identity Documents page](#).

What if I only have foreign documents?

Smart ID Cards are issued only to:

- South African citizens
- Permanent residence permit holders aged 16 or older
- Individuals working for the South African government or its statutory bodies abroad, and their spouses or children

Foreign documents alone are not sufficient to obtain a Smart ID Card unless you fall into one of the above categories.

What happens if my documents are not accepted to get a National ID card?

You should contact the DHA to discuss which of your documents are not accepted and why. You can either contact the Home Affairs Call Center at 0800 60 11 90 or send an email to hacc@dha.gov.za.

[Department of Home Affairs — Contact us \(dha.gov.za\)](#)

Do I have to be a resident of the country to get a National ID card?

No. You can apply for a Smart ID Card if you are:

- A South African citizen
- A permanent residence permit holder aged 16 or older
- A person working for the South African government or its statutory bodies abroad, or their spouse or child

Additional information is available at: [Department of Home Affairs — Identity documents \(dha.gov.za\)](#)

What does it mean to be a resident of this country? How do I prove residency?

In South Africa, permanent residency is granted to:

- Foreigners with valid work permits who have lived in the country for at least five years
- Spouses and dependents of South African citizens or permanent residents
- Individuals who qualify under other categories, such as refugees, investors, or those with exceptional skills

To apply for permanent residency, you must complete [Form BI-947](#) and submit it along with the required supporting documents. Applications are considered under Section 26 (Direct Residency Permits) and Section 27 (Residency-on-Other-Grounds Permits) of the Immigration Act, 2002.

You can find full details about eligibility, required documentation, and application procedures on the [Department of Home Affairs – Permanent Residency page](#).

What can I do if I do not have residency in this country?

If you are not a resident of South Africa, you are generally not eligible to receive a national ID card (Smart ID Card). According to the Department of Home Affairs, identity documents are issued only to:

- South African citizens
- Permanent residence permit holders aged 16 or older
- Individuals working for the South African government or its statutory bodies abroad, and their spouses or children

If you are living outside South Africa but fall into one of these categories, you may apply for an ID by submitting the required documents (see [Question 4](#)) to your nearest South African mission or consulate.

Additional information is available at:

- [Department of Home Affairs – Smart ID Cards](#)
This page provides detailed information about eligibility, required documents, and the application process for Smart ID Cards.
- [eHomeAffairs Portal](#)
Use this portal to apply for your Smart ID Card online, upload documents, make payments, and book appointments at participating bank branches or DHA offices.
- [DHA Branch Appointment Booking System \(BABS\)](#)
This system allows you to schedule an appointment at a DHA office for biometric capture and finalizing your application.

Will I need a mailing address? What can I do if I am homeless?

You do not need a mailing address to receive your Smart ID Card. Once your application is processed, you will collect your ID from the same DHA office or bank branch where you submitted your application.

More information is available on the [DHA Identity Documents page](#).

What is the application process? Can I complete it online?

Yes, you can begin the application process online. You can book an appointment online to initiate the application via this link: <https://services.dha.gov.za/#/authenticate/identity>. The steps to apply include:

- Create an account on the [eHomeAffairs Portal](#)
- Complete the application form
- Upload supporting documents
- Book an appointment at a DHA office or participating bank branch

More information is available on the [DHA Identity Documents page](#).

Is there an application fee? Is there a waiver option if I cannot afford to pay it?

- First-time applicants: No fee is charged
- Replacements or reissues: Fees apply

You can view the full list of applicable fees on the [DHA Tariffs page](#). There is no publicly available waiver option for those unable to pay.

How old do I have to be to apply for a National ID card by myself?

You must be 16 years old to apply for a Smart ID Card. However, as noted above, some DHA offices may require a parent or guardian to accompany you. It is best to confirm with your local office or contact DHA directly.

What can I do if I do not have a parent or guardian who can go with me (and the application says I have to have one)?

South African government websites have conflicting information regarding whether you need to have a parent or guardian with you: [Is it possible to apply for an ID for the first time without a parent? \(groundup.org.za\)](#)

If you do not have a parent or guardian to accompany you and the office you visit requires it, you should contact the DHA to discuss your situation. You can either contact the Home Affairs Call Center at 0800 60 11 90 or send an email to hacc@dha.gov.za.

[Department of Home Affairs — Contact us](#)

You can also contact one of the following organizations that have a lot of experience dealing with the DHA and ask them for assistance:

Legal Resources Centre
Email: info@lrc.org.za
Tel: Johannesburg: 011 836 9831

Lawyers for Human Rights
Johannesburg Office and law clinic
Tel: 011 339 1960

Are there any special provisions for foster youth (children in custody of the government)?

As of May 2025, the [Department of Home Affairs \(DHA\)](#) does not publicly list any specific provisions for foster youth applying for a Smart ID Card. The standard eligibility and documentation requirements apply to all applicants aged 16 and older, regardless of their custodial status.

If a foster youth does not have access to a parent or legal guardian, consider contacting the DHA directly to explain the situation and request guidance:

- **Call Centre:** 0800 60 11 90
- **Email:** hacc@dha.gov.za
- **Website:** www.dha.gov.za

Additional help may be available at: [Centre For Child Law — How to get documented \(centreforchildlaw.co.za\)](#)

Are there any special provisions for homeless youth?

No. There are no special provisions for homeless youth. The [Department of Home Affairs \(DHA\)](#) does not explicitly list special provisions for homeless youth applying for a Smart ID Card. However, a fixed residential or mailing address is not required to receive your ID. Once your application is processed, you are expected to collect your Smart ID Card in person from the same DHA office or bank branch where you submitted your application.

If you are homeless and unsure how to proceed, you may contact the DHA directly for guidance:

- **Call Centre:** 0800 60 11 90
- **Email:** hacc@dha.gov.za

- **Website:** www.dha.gov.za

Will I have to take a test?

No, you do not have to take any test. You only need to provide the required supporting documents.

More information is available on the [Department of Home Affairs – Identity Documents page](#).

If applicable, do I have to make an appointment to take the test?

Not applicable. Since no test is required to obtain a Smart ID Card, there is no need to schedule an appointment for one.

Driver's License

What organization issues a driver's license in this country?

Driver's licenses in South Africa are issued by the Department of Transport, specifically through the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) and local Driving Licence Testing Centres (DLTCs).

You can find official information on the Department of Transport website and the [South African Government Services Portal](#).

What is the process for getting a driver's license?

Step 1: Apply for a learner's license

- **About the learner's license:** This is a permit that proves your basic knowledge of motor vehicles and road rules. This is valid for 24 months.
- **Process:** Visit the nearest Driving Licence Testing Centre (DLTC) to book a test. You'll need your ID, two identical black-and-white ID photos, a booking fee and proof of residence.
- **Study:** Prepare for your test by studying road signs, vehicle controls and road rules.

Step 2: Gain driving experience

- Enroll in a reputable driving school to learn practical driving skills and the K53 road rules.

Step 3: Apply for a driving test (driver's license)

- **License categories:** Various licenses are issued based on the vehicle type, such as Code A for motorcycles, Code B for light motor vehicles and others for heavier vehicles or combinations.
- **Booking:** Schedule your driving test at a DLTC. Bring your learner's license, ID, four black-and-white photos, proof of residence and the booking fee.

Step 4: Pass the driving test

- **Test components:** The test includes a pre-trip inspection, a yard test and a road test to evaluate your driving skills in various situations.

Step 5: Get your driver's license

- **Issuance:** Upon passing, pay the issuing fee for a temporary driver's license, which you'll use while waiting for your official license card. The card should be ready within four to six weeks.

Useful links

- For a learner's license application: [South African government's website — Apply for a learner's license \(gov.za\)](#)
- For a driver's license application: [South African government's website — Apply for a driving license \(gov.za\)](#)

Where can I find information online about getting a driver's license?

You can find official information on the following government websites:

- Learner's License: [Apply for a learner's licence – South African Government](#)
- Driver's License: [Apply for a driving license – Department of Transport](#)

These pages provide step-by-step guidance on eligibility, required documents, booking procedures, and testing.

What documents do I have to have to get a driver's license? Is there any document that I must have to get a driver's license?

For a learner's license:

- **Identity document (ID):** You need an official identity document.
- **Photographs:** You need two identical black-and-white ID photographs. The exact number of photos may vary, so it's best to confirm with the DLTC beforehand.
- **Booking fee:** You need to pay a booking fee to schedule your driving test.
- **Proof of residence:** You must provide proof of your residential address, such as a utility bill. If the bill is not in your name, the owner of the bill must make an affidavit declaring that you live at that address. You must then attach the affidavit to the utility bill.
- **Application form:** Complete the form for a learner's license application (LL1), available at the DLTC.

For a driver's license:

- **Learner's license:** You must present your valid learner's license.
- **Identity Document (ID):** Bring your ID.

- **Photographs:** Four identical black-and-white photographs are needed, but confirm the number required with the DLTC.
- **Proof of residential address:** As with the learner's license application, you'll need proof of residence and possibly an affidavit if the utility bill is not in your name.
- **Booking fee:** You need to pay a booking fee to schedule your driving test.
- **Application form:** Complete the form for a driver's license application (DL1) at the DLTC.

[South African government's website — Apply for a learner's license \(gov.za\)](#)

[South African government's website — Apply for a driving license \(gov.za\)](#)

For a temporary driver's license:

You'll need a temporary license while waiting for your driver's license to be renewed or if you've lost your license. To apply for a temporary license, you need the following:

- Certified copy of ID or temporary ID
- Proof of postal and residential address
- Four identical black-and-white photographs
- The prescribed fee
- Completed DL1 and the notification of change of address or particulars of person or organization (NCP) form
- An eye test may be required at the DLTC, or you can submit one done by a qualified optometrist.

What if my documents do not have my correct name/address?

If your documents contain incorrect personal information, you must first correct those records before applying for a driver's license. This is done through the [Department of Home Affairs \(DHA\)](#), which manages identity documents and personal data in the National Population Register.

Name Corrections or Changes:

- If the error is due to a departmental mistake, the correction is made free of charge.
- If the error was made by the applicant, you must:
 - Complete Form BI-526
 - Submit proof of the correct information
 - Pay the prescribed fee

For individuals seeking to update their name and gender marker to reflect their affirmed gender identity, the [Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act, 2003](#) allows

individuals who have undergone gender reassignment or are intersex to apply for a name and gender change. This requires:

- Two medical reports (one from the treating practitioner and one from an independent examiner)
- Completion of Form BI-526 or a written request

More details are available on the [DHA Amendments page](#).

Address Corrections:

- You must provide proof of residential address, such as a utility bill.
- If the bill is not in your name, the bill holder must submit an affidavit confirming you live at that address.
- If you live in an informal settlement, bring a letter with an official date stamp from your ward councillor confirming your address.

What if I only have foreign documents?

If you are a foreign national with permanent residency in South Africa, you may convert your foreign driver's license into a South African one. You must do this within one year of receiving your permanent residence permit. The process is outlined on the [South African Government Services Portal](#).

Steps:

- Visit the Driving Licence Testing Centre (DLTC) in the province where you received permanent residence.
- Complete the DL1 form and the NCP (notification of change of address) form.
- Submit:
 - Valid foreign driver's license
 - Proof of permanent residency
 - Identification (e.g., ID, passport with residency permit)
 - Four black-and-white ID photos
 - Proof of address (or affidavit if the bill is not in your name)
 - If applicable, a translated version of your license and a letter of validity from your embassy

You will not need to take a driving test, but an eye test will be conducted on-site.

More info: [Convert foreign driving licence – gov.za](#)

What happens if my documents are not accepted to get a driver's license?

You should contact the DLTC where you submitted your documents to find out why your documents have not been accepted. You should then correct the documents and re-submit them.

The Department of Transport also has a helpdesk, which you can reach via the following:

- Tel: 012 309 3380 / 3774
- Email: info@dot.gov.za

[Department of Transport — Contact us \(transport.gov.za\)](#)

Do I have to be a resident of the country to get a driver's license?

Yes, you must either:

Hold permanent residency, or

Hold a diplomatic permit (in limited cases)

You must also apply for a Traffic Register Number (TRN) at your local vehicle registration office before converting your license.

More info: [Convert foreign driving licence – gov.za](#)

What does it mean to be a resident of this country? How do I prove residency?

To prove residency when applying for a driver's license, you must provide:

A utility bill in your name, or

An affidavit from the bill holder if the bill is not in your name, along with the bill

If you live in an informal settlement, a letter with an official date stamp from your ward councillor confirming your address

[South African government's website — Apply for a learner's license \(gov.za\)](#)

[South African government's website — Apply for a driving license \(gov.za\)](#)

What can I do if I do not have residency in this country?

Under Section 23 of the National Road Traffic Act, you can drive in South Africa using a foreign driver's license when you stay in or visit the country with a temporary residency visa, a study/exchange or visitor visa, provided that your license meets certain criteria.

However, if you are granted South African permanent residence, you must convert your foreign driver's license to a South African driver's license within a year of receiving your permanent residence permit. If you don't do that, your license will be regarded as invalid.

[South African government's website — Convert foreign driving license \(gov.za\)](#)

If you stay at an informal settlement, you must bring a letter with an official date stamp from the ward councillor confirming your residential address.

[South African government's website — Apply for a driving license \(gov.za\)](#)

Will I need a mailing address? What can I do if I am homeless?

You need a mailing address, and you will need to provide proof of residence. If you are unable to do so, you should contact the Department of Transport to discuss your options. It has a helpdesk that you can reach via the following:

- Tel: 012 309 3380 / 3774
- Email: info@dot.gov.za

[South African government's website — Apply for a learner's license \(gov.za\)](#)

[South African government's website — Apply for a driving license \(gov.za\)](#)

[Department of Transport — Contact us \(transport.gov.za\)](#)

What is the application process? Can I complete it online?

You cannot complete the full application online, but Gauteng residents can begin the process by booking appointments and submitting forms through the NaTIS online booking system. In other provinces, the process must be completed in person at a Driving Licence Testing Centre (DLTC).

Step-by-Step Application Process:

1. Book a Test Date
 - Visit your nearest DLTC to schedule your driving test.
 - Bring the following:
 - Your learner's license
 - Your ID
 - Four identical black-and-white photographs (confirm the number with the DLTC)
 - Proof of residential address (e.g., utility bill; if not in your name, include an affidavit from the bill holder)
 - If living in an informal settlement, bring a letter from your ward councillor with an official date stamp
 - Booking fee
2. Gauteng Residents
 - Use the NaTIS online portal to book your test and manage your application.
3. Complete the DL1 Form
 - Fill out the DL1 application form at the DLTC.

4. Keep Your Receipt
 - This serves as proof of payment and confirms your test date and time.
5. Take the Driving Test
 - Arrive at the DLTC on your scheduled date and time.
 - Your learner's license and receipt will be verified before the test.
6. Assessment
 - You will be assessed by a qualified examiner through a pre-trip inspection, yard test, and road test.
7. Eye Test and Fingerprints
 - If you pass, your fingerprints will be taken and you'll undergo an eye test at the DLTC (or submit results from a qualified optometrist).
8. Temporary License
 - Pay the issuing fee to receive a temporary driver's license while your official card is processed.
9. Collect Your License
 - You will be notified when your driver's license card is ready. It must be collected from the same DLTC where you applied.

More information is available on the [South African Government's driving license page](#).

Is there an application fee? Is there a waiver option if I cannot afford to pay it?

Yes, there is an application fee for both the learner's and driver's license processes. The exact amount may vary slightly depending on the Driving Licence Testing Centre (DLTC), but generally:

- Booking fee: Approximately ZAR 220 to ZAR 300
- Issuing fee for the driver's license card: Around ZAR 250

There is no waiver option currently available for individuals who cannot afford to pay these fees.

More information:

- [South African government's website — Apply for a driving license#Cost \(gov.za\)](#)
- [South African government's website — Apply for a learner's license \(gov.za\)](#)

How old do I have to be to apply for a state driver's license by myself?

The minimum age depends on the type of license:

- Code A1 (motorcycle ≤125cc): Minimum age is 17
- Code A (motorcycle >125cc): Minimum age is 18
- Code B (light motor vehicle ≤3,500 kg): Minimum age is 18
- Code C1 (vehicle 3,500–16,000 kg): Minimum age is 18
- Code EC1 and EC (heavy articulated vehicles): Minimum age is 18

For a learner's license, you must be:

- 16 years old for motorcycles up to 125cc
- 17 years old for light motor vehicles
- 18 years or older for heavier vehicles

More details:

- [Apply for a learner's licence – gov.za](#)
- [Apply for a driving licence – gov.za](#)

What can I do if I do not have a parent or guardian who can go with me (and the application says I have to have one)?

There is no requirement for a parent or guardian to accompany you when applying for a learner's or driver's license in South Africa, as long as you meet the minimum age requirement and have the necessary documents.

More details:

- [Apply for a learner's licence – gov.za](#)
- [Apply for a driving licence – gov.za](#)

Are there any special provisions for foster youth (children in custody of the government)?

No, there do not seem to be any special provisions for foster youth. There are no publicly listed special provisions for foster youth applying for a learner's or driver's license. All applicants must meet the same age and documentation requirements.

More details:

- [Apply for a learner's licence – gov.za](#)
- [Apply for a driving licence – gov.za](#)

Are there any special provisions for homeless youth?

No, there are no specific provisions for homeless youth. However, applicants who live in informal settlements can provide a letter from a ward councillor with an official date stamp confirming their residential address.

More details:

- [Apply for a learner's licence – gov.za](#)
- [Apply for a driving licence – gov.za](#)

Will I have to take a test?

Yes. To obtain a driver's license, you must pass:

- A learner's license test (theory-based)
- A driving test (practical), which includes a pre-trip inspection, yard test, and road test

More details:

- [Apply for a learner's licence – gov.za](#)
- [Apply for a driving licence – gov.za](#)

If applicable, do I have to make an appointment to take the test?

Yes. Go to your nearest DLTC to book a test date. Remember to take the supporting documents you need.

- [South African government's website — Apply for a learner's license \(gov.za\)](#)
- [South African government's website — Apply for a driving license \(gov.za\)](#)

Where can I take the driving test? What can I do if I cannot get to a testing location?

You can arrange to take the test at your nearest DLTC.

If you are having difficulties getting to a DLTC, you should contact the Department of Transport to discuss your options. It has a helpdesk that you can reach via the following:

- Tel: 012 309 3380 / 3774
- Email: info@dot.gov.za

[Department of Transport — Contact us \(transport.gov.za\)](#)

Do I need to get a permit or authorization to practice driving before I get my driver's license?

Yes, you need a learner's license.

A learner's license is a permit that proves that you have basic knowledge of a motor vehicle and the rules of the road. The learner's license is valid for 24 months **and cannot be extended**.

What you should do:

1. Go to the nearest DLTC to book a test date and confirm the booking.
2. Take the following with you:
 - an identity document (ID)
 - two identical black-and-white ID photographs (Confirm first with the DLTC how many photos they require.)
 - a booking fee
 - proof of postal and residential address, such as a utility account (If the utility bill is not in your name, the owner of the bill must make an affidavit declaring that you live at the address and the utility bill must be attached to the affidavit.)
 - a letter with an official date stamp from the ward councillor confirming your postal and residential address (if you stay at an informal settlement)
3. Complete the LL1, which is available at the DLTC.
4. You will take an eye test at the testing center, or you may have an eye test performed by a qualified optometrist and submit the results at the testing center.
5. Before you sit for the learner's license test, you must study road signs, motor vehicle controls and road rules to have a basic knowledge of a motor vehicle and road signs.
6. On the day of the test, you must submit the following:
 - the booking receipt
 - your ID

If you pass the test, you must pay the issuance fee. The learner's license will be issued on the same day.

[South African government's website — Apply for a learner's license \(gov.za\)](#)

Birth Certificate

What is the document detailing a person's birth called in this country?

In South Africa, the official document that records a person's birth is called a birth certificate. It is issued under the Births and Deaths Registration Act 51 of 1992, which requires that all births be registered within 30 days of the child's birth.

More information: [Department of Home Affairs – Birth Certificates](#)

I'm not sure I have a birth certificate, what can I do to find out if I have one and where to get it?

The DHA is responsible for issuing birth certificates.

You can go to your nearest DHA office to inquire, contact the Home Affairs Call Centre at 0800 60 11 90 or send an email to hacc@dha.gov.za.

[Department of Home Affairs — Contact us \(dha.gov.za\)](#)

All children born in South Africa must be registered within 30 days of their birth (under the Births Act).

A parent, both parents, a guardian or any other person legally responsible for the child must complete Form BI-24 (in black ink only), which must be submitted to the nearest DHA office if you are in South Africa, or the nearest South African embassy, mission or consulate if you are overseas.

Once the child's birth has been registered, an unabridged birth certificate is issued free of charge, usually a day or so after the registration application has been submitted.

The following individuals can request their birth certificates from the DHA (for those in in South Africa) or the nearest South African embassy, mission or consulate:

- South African citizens, whether they are in the republic or outside the republic
- Non-South African citizens who are staying permanently or temporarily in the republic, for whatever purpose
- Undocumented foreign nationals who were born in South Africa (the certificate is issued free of charge when their birth is registered)

[Department of Home Affairs — Birth certificates \(dha.gov.za\)](#)

How do I get a copy of my birth certificate?

You should go to your nearest DHA office, where you can request a copy of your birth certificate.

You will need to do the following:

- complete Form BI-154
- pay the application fee
- submit the form and the fee to your nearest DHA office (if you are in South Africa), or the nearest South African embassy, mission or consulate (if you are outside South Africa)

[Department of Home Affairs — Birth certificates \(dha.gov.za\)](#)

Can I order my birth certificate online?

No, you cannot order a birth certificate online. To request a copy, you must visit your nearest Department of Home Affairs (DHA) office if you are in South Africa, or the nearest South African embassy, mission, or consulate if you are overseas.

More information: [DHA – Birth Certificates](#)

What documents will I need to get my birth certificate?

To request a copy of your birth certificate, you must:

- Complete Form BI-154
- Pay the application fee (see the DHA fee schedule)
- Submit the form and payment at a DHA office or South African mission abroad

If the birth was not registered within 30 days, it is considered a late registration, which has additional requirements depending on the age of the person:

Late Registration Categories:

- 31 days to 1 year:
 - DHA 24/LRB (notice of birth)
 - DHA 24/PB (proof of birth from a health facility) or DHA 24PBA (affidavit for home birth)

- DHA 288/A (affidavit explaining the delay)
- Biometrics of the child
- Fingerprints and ID/passport of parents
- 1 year to 7 years:
 - All of the above, plus DHA 288 (additional affidavit)
- 7 years and older:
 - All of the above, with ID-size photo and fingerprint of the person being registered

More information: [DHA – Birth Certificates](#)

What happens if I don't have some or all of the documents that are required?

If you are unable to provide the required documents—such as in cases of abandonment, orphanhood, or lack of parental contact—you may be declared a child in need of care or protection under the Children's Act 38 of 2005.

In such cases:

- A social worker will conduct an investigation and may assist with the birth registration process.
- If a court places the child under supervision, the social worker must register the birth within 60 days of the court order.
- Required documents include:
 - The court order
 - Certified copies of the social worker's ID/passport
 - If available, certified copies of the parents' IDs or death certificates
 - The social worker's report submitted to the children's court

The unabridged birth certificate is issued free of charge, even if the registration is late.

How old do I have to be to get a copy of my birth certificate by myself?

There is no specific age restriction listed by the [Department of Home Affairs \(DHA\)](#) for requesting a copy of your own birth certificate. However, in practice, minors typically require the assistance of a parent, guardian, or social worker to complete the process—especially in cases involving late registration or missing documentation.

If you are under 18 and do not have a parent or guardian, you may be declared a "child in need of care or protection" under the Children's Act 38 of 2005. In such cases:

- A social worker will conduct an investigation into your background.

- If you are found to be abandoned or orphaned, the social worker will assist in obtaining the necessary documentation.
- A court order may be issued to authorize the registration of your birth.
- The social worker must then register your birth within 60 days of receiving the court order.

This process ensures that children without parental support—such as street children or those in foster care—can still obtain a birth certificate, although it may involve additional legal and administrative steps.

More information is available on the [DHA Birth Certificates page](#) and in the [Late Registration of Birth Mop-Up Campaign brochure](#).

What can I do if I do not have a parent or guardian who can go with me to get a birth certificate (and the application says I have to have one)?

If you do not have a parent or guardian to assist you, you can still apply for a birth certificate. According to the Department of Home Affairs (DHA), a social worker or any other person legally responsible for the child may assist with the application. This includes children who are orphaned, abandoned, or otherwise without parental care.

In such cases:

- A social worker may be assigned to investigate your circumstances.
- If you are declared a child in need of care or protection, the social worker will assist in registering your birth and obtaining the necessary documentation.
- The social worker may also submit a court order, their identity documents, and a report to the DHA to support your application.

This process is supported by the [Children's Act 38 of 2005](#) and the [Births and Deaths Registration Act](#), which allow for late registration of birth in cases where standard documentation is not available.

For additional support, organizations like the [Centre for Child Law](#) can provide guidance and legal assistance and see [Department of Home Affairs — Birth certificates \(dha.gov.za\)](#).

What is the cost to get a birth certificate?

- A birth certificate is issued free of charge when a child's birth is registered for the first time, including for undocumented foreign nationals born in South Africa.
- An unabridged birth certificate is also issued free of charge, even in cases of late registration.
- If you are applying for a replacement birth certificate, the fee is ZAR 20.

You can view the full list of fees on the [Department of Home Affairs Fees page](#) or consult the Notice of Fees Payable, Schedule 1(a) at <https://search.opengazettes.org.za/text/9872?dq=36054&page=28>

Is there a waiver if I cannot afford the fee?

A birth certificate is free in most cases. Fees apply for replacement birth registration documents. You can find a list of the current fees here: <https://www.dha.gov.za/index.php/fees>.

You can get a copy of your birth certificate by completing Form BI-154. Submit this to the nearest DHA office if you are in South Africa or the nearest South African embassy, mission or consulate if you are overseas, and pay the mandatory fee of ZAR 20 (equivalent to USD 1.05).

Notice of Fees Payable, Schedule 1(a) (Fees Notice) is available in English at <https://search.opengazettes.org.za/text/9872?dq=36054&page=28>

If you cannot afford the fee, you should contact the DHA to discuss your situation. You can go to your nearest DHA office to inquire, contact the Home Affairs Call Centre at 0800 60 11 90 or send an email to hacc@dha.gov.za.

[Department of Home Affairs — Contact us \(dha.gov.za\)](#)

Are there any special laws or provisions that can help get a birth certificate if I have been in the foster care system (children in custody of the government)?

Yes. The births of orphaned and abandoned children must be registered by a social worker assigned by the government or a designated authority. This is supported by the [Children's Act 38 of 2005](#) and the [Births and Deaths Registration Act 51 of 1992](#).

Social workers are responsible for:

- Investigating the child's background
- Obtaining a court order if necessary
- Submitting the required documentation to the DHA

For more guidance, the [Centre for Child Law](#) provides resources and legal support for children in state care.

Are there any special laws or provisions that can help get a birth certificate if I am homeless?

There are no specific laws in South Africa that provide a streamlined process for homeless youth to obtain a birth certificate. However, the [Department of Home Affairs \(DHA\)](#) does not require proof of address or a mailing address to apply for a birth certificate. This makes it legally possible for homeless individuals to apply.

If paternity needs to be established (e.g., when the mother is unavailable), the DHA may require DNA testing, which costs approximately ZAR 750 per person. If the father cannot afford this, he may apply to a children's court for:

- A paternity order under Section 26 of the [Children's Act 38 of 2005](#)
- An order recognizing parental rights and responsibilities under Section 21 of the same Act

For further guidance, the [Centre for Child Law](#) provides legal support and resources for undocumented and vulnerable children.

Where do I get my birth certificate if I was born in another country?

If you were born in another country, it's still possible for your birth to have been registered within the South African system. South African children must be registered within 30 days of their birth, and a parent, both parents, a guardian or any other person legally responsible for them can submit registration documents (including Form BI-24, completed in black ink) to the nearest South African embassy, mission or consulate if they are overseas.

[South African government's website — Register birth \(gov.za\)](#)

Otherwise, you should check the process for applying for a birth certificate in your country of birth.

[Department of Home Affairs — Birth certificates \(dha.gov.za\)](#)

Is there a way to get my birth certificate without going somewhere in person?

No. To order copies of a birth certificate, you must go to your nearest DHA office (if you are in South Africa), or the nearest South African embassy, mission or consulate (if you are overseas).

[Department of Home Affairs — Birth certificates \(dha.gov.za\)](#)

Where can I find information online about getting a birth certificate?

You can find official information on the [Department of Home Affairs – Birth Certificates page](#), which includes details on:

- First-time registration
- Late registration
- Required forms and documents
- Fees and contact information

Making Changes to Government ID Documents

What vital doc should I start with to change my name? Is the process easier for one of the IDs?

In South Africa, you should begin the name change process with your identity card and birth certificate, as both are foundational documents managed by the [Department of Home Affairs \(DHA\)](#).

To apply for a name change:

- Complete Form BI-85 (Application for the Alteration of Forename(s))
- Submit the form to your nearest DHA office
- Include your identity number, date of birth, and place of birth
- If you are under 18, the application must be submitted by your parent or legal guardian

The request will be reviewed and must be approved by the DHA. Once approved, the change will be reflected in both your birth certificate and national ID.

Additional information is available at:

- [Department of Home Affairs — Amendments | Assuming a different surname \(dha.gov.za\)](#)
- You can access the form here: <https://www.southafrica-usa.net/homeaffairs/forms/bi85.pdf>

How do I change my name on my birth certificate?

To change your forename(s) on your birth certificate, you must:

1. Complete Form BI-85 (Application for the Alteration of Forename(s))
2. Submit the form to your nearest [Department of Home Affairs \(DHA\)](#) office
3. Pay the applicable fee (see the [DHA fee schedule](#))

If you are under 18, your parent or legal guardian must submit the application on your behalf.

The request will be reviewed and must be approved by the DHA before the change is reflected in the birth register.

Additional information is available at:

- [Department of Home Affairs — Amendments | Assuming a different surname \(dha.gov.za\)](#)
- [Doc Assist — Can you change your Name on a birth certificate in South Africa? \(docassist.co.za\)](#)
- This link provides a helpful summary of the complete process: [Legal Gender Recognition Guide — A step-by-step guide to applying to applying to alter gender markers and forenames in terms of South African law \(triangle.org.za\)](#)

How do I change my name on my National ID?

The process for changing your name on your **national ID** is the same as for your **birth certificate**. You must:

1. Complete **Form BI-85** (Application for the Alteration of Forename(s))
2. Submit the form to your nearest [Department of Home Affairs \(DHA\)](#) office
3. Pay the applicable fee (see the [DHA fee schedule](#))

If you are **under 18**, your **parent or guardian** must submit the application on your behalf.

The request must be **reviewed and approved by the DHA** before the change is reflected in your national ID.

For a detailed overview of the process, review the [Legal Gender Recognition Guide — A step-by-step guide to applying to applying to alter gender markers and forenames in terms of South African law \(triangle.org.za\)](#)

How do I change my name on my driver's license?

To change your name on your driver's license, you must first update your birth certificate and national ID through the [Department of Home Affairs \(DHA\)](#). Once your name change is approved and reflected in your ID, you can proceed with updating your driver's license.

Steps to update your driver's license:

1. Visit your nearest Driving Licence Testing Centre (DLTC) with:
 - Your updated ID or passport
 - Your current driver's license card
 - Four black-and-white ID photographs (confirm the number with the DLTC)
 - Proof of residential address (e.g., utility bill or affidavit)

- If living in an informal settlement, a letter from your ward councillor
 - The prescribed application fee
2. Complete the DL1 form (available at the DLTC) and the NCP form (notification of change of particulars).
 3. Undergo an eye test at the DLTC or submit results from a qualified optometrist.
 4. Submit a confirmation letter from the DHA verifying your name change.
 5. Apply online (if in Gauteng) via the NaTIS portal to book your appointment.

Your updated driver's license will be ready in approximately **4 to 6 weeks**.

More information:

- [NaTIS – National Traffic Information System](#)
- You can review all the steps you need to complete to renew your driver's license here: [South African government's website — About renewing your driver's license \(gov.za\)](#)
- [Legal Gender Recognition Guide — A step-by-step guide to applying to applying to alter gender markers and forenames in terms of South African law \(triangle.org.za\)](#)

At what age can I change my name by myself?

You must be 18 years or older to apply for a name change independently in South Africa. This is the age of majority, as defined in Section 17 of the [Children's Act of 38 of 2005 \(justice.gov.za\)](#).

What can I do if I do not have a parent or guardian with me to change my gender marker and do not have anyone else who can help me?

- If you are 18 or older, you do not need a parent or guardian to apply for a name change.
- If you are under 18 and do not have a parent or guardian, the court may appoint a legal guardian to assist you, based on your best interests, as provided for in the [Children's Act](#).
- Under the Births and Deaths Registration Act, only one parent is required to assist a minor with a name change application. If no parent or guardian is available, it is advisable to contact the [Department of Home Affairs \(DHA\)](#) for further guidance.

What vital doc should I start with to change my gender marker? Is the process easier for one of the IDs?

In South Africa, you should begin the process of changing your gender marker with your identity card and birth certificate, as both are managed by the [Department of Home Affairs \(DHA\)](#).

This process is governed by the [Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act, 2003 \(Act No. 49 of 2003\)](#). Under this law, individuals who have undergone gender-affirming medical treatment or who are intersex may apply to have their sex description changed in the National Population Register.

Requirements:

- Two medical reports:
 - One from the medical practitioner who performed or oversaw the treatment
 - One from an independent medical practitioner who has examined the applicant
- Your identity document and birth certificate
- Completion of Form DHA-526 (also known as BI-526), available at your nearest DHA office

When completing the form, you must clearly state that you are applying to change your gender marker.

For a step-by-step guide, see the [Legal Gender Recognition Guide by Triangle Project](#).

How do I change my gender marker on my birth certificate?

To change your gender marker, you must apply through the [Department of Home Affairs \(DHA\)](#) under the [Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act, 2003 \(Act No. 49 of 2003\)](#). You must fall into one of the following categories:

1. Gender Reassignment

You must have undergone gender-affirming medical treatment. You will need:

- A medical report from the practitioner who performed or oversaw the treatment
- A second, independent medical report confirming your gender identity

2. Intersex Persons

You must submit:

- A medical report confirming intersex status
- A report from a psychologist or social worker confirming that you have lived in your affirmed gender for at least two years

Application Process:

- Complete Form DHA-526 (BI-526), available at your nearest DHA office
- Submit the form along with your ID, birth certificate, and the two required reports
- Clearly state that you are applying to change your gender marker

Once approved, you can apply for updated versions of your ID, birth certificate, and passport.

Additional Notes:

- Surgery is not required; hormone therapy is sufficient
- No age limit is specified in the law, but minors require parental or guardian consent
- Non-binary gender markers are not currently available
- A draft National Identification and Registration Bill (2023) proposes gender-neutral ID numbers, but it has not yet been enacted

For a detailed guide, see the [Legal Gender Recognition Guide by Triangle Project](#).

How do I change my gender marker on my National ID?

To change your gender marker, you must fall into one of the following two categories:

Gender reassignment

You must have undergone gender reassignment. You need to provide two medical reports to prove this:

- a report by the medical practitioner who performed the procedure or medical treatment or by a medical practitioner who has experience in such procedures or treatments
- a report by a second medical practitioner who has independently examined the application to establish your gender

Intersex persons

You must submit the following:

- a report by a medical practitioner corroborating that you are intersex
- a report by a qualified psychologist or social worker corroborating that you are living and have lived stably and satisfactorily, for an unbroken period of at least two years, in the gender corresponding to the sex description under which you want to be registered

In both cases, you should complete Form BI-526 and submit it together with the medical reports applicable to your category to your nearest DHA office.

[Department of Home Affairs — Amendments \(dha.gov.za\)](#)

This link provides a helpful summary of the complete process: [Legal Gender Recognition Guide — A step-by-step guide to applying to applying to alter gender markers and forenames in terms of South African law \(triangle.org.za\)](#)

Gender Marker Change: Possible. The Births, Marriages and Deaths Registration Amendment Act ([Act No. 51](#)) (1974) inserted section 7B into the Births, Marriages and Deaths Registration Act (1963). The section stated that any person who has "undergone a change in sex" (genital surgery) could apply to have their gender marker amended at the discretion of the Secretary for Health. This legislation remained out of reach to many in practice, but when it was repealed and replaced by the Births and Deaths Registration Act ([Act No. 51](#)) (1992), no legal provision for gender marker change existed in the country at all until the passage of the Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act ([Act No. 49](#)) (2003). Section 2(1) of the Act allows for "any person whose sexual characteristics have been altered by surgical or medical treatment, or by evolution through natural development resulting in gender reassignment, or who is intersexed" may apply to amend their gender marker. This provision is widely interpreted as permitting hormone replacement therapy in lieu of surgery for applicants to be considered eligible.

In April 2023, the DHA published a draft [National Identification and Registration Bill](#) (2023) for public comment. The bill seeks, among other things, to "empower the Director-General to issue a gender-neutral identity number to [a] non-binary person," and to issue non-gender specific identity numbers to newborns whose sex "status" could not be determined. Some local activists have criticized the bill for retaining the medical and procedural requirements of Act No. 49 (2003) and expressed concern that a national biometric database proposed by the bill could risk the safety and privacy of trans and gender-diverse citizens.

Breakdown of requirements:

Self-ID: Not required.

Diagnosis: Not required. Doctors themselves are not legally required to ensure a medical diagnosis before prescribing hormones or performing surgery.

Hormone treatment: Required.

Surgery: Not required. Under Act 49 (2003), an applicant does not need to have undergone gender reassignment surgery. Hormonal treatment is sufficient.

Forced sterilization: Not required.

Real life test: Not required.

Expert testimony: Required. Under Sections 2(2)(b) and 2(2)(c) of Act 49 (2003), an application must include a medical report by the doctors who carried out the surgical or alternative treatment, plus a second report by a medical practitioner not involved in the procedure.

Witnesses: Not required.

Forced divorce: Not required. As heterosexual and same-sex marriages are maintained under separate legislation without a unified national marriage registry, the DHA reportedly divorced multiple couples where one partner had applied to change their gender marker, often without the knowledge or consent of the couple. This was ruled illegal by local courts in 2017.

No children: Not required.

LGR available for children: Available. There is no legislation outlining the minimum age at which an individual is eligible to change their gender marker, though minors require parental consent and supervision for most dealings with the DHA.

Nonbinary gender marker: Not available. In 2021, the DHA opened a call for public consultations on a wide range of amendments to the Births Act. One of these amendments proposed a third option for gender markers on legal documents outside of male and female.

[ILGA World Database: Legal gender recognition — South Africa \(database.ilga.org\)](https://database.ilga.org/)

Additionally, a 2020 guide previously published by the Legal Resources Centre in South Africa provides more information on the procedural steps that prospective applicants can take. This guide is available here: [Legal Gender Recognition Guide — A step-by-step guide to applying to altering gender markers and forenames in terms of South African law \(triangle.org.za\)](https://triangle.org.za/)

Once the prospective applicant has submitted the relevant forms to the DHA and received notification that their forename/forenames has/have been amended, they can apply for a new ID, birth certificate and passport (as applicable) reflecting their correct personal details.

How do I change my gender marker on my driver's license?

To change your gender marker on your National ID in South Africa, you must apply through the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) under the Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act, 2003 (Act No. 49 of 2003).

Application Requirements:

You must fall into one of the following categories:

1. Gender Reassignment
 - You must have undergone gender-affirming medical treatment.
 - Submit:
 - A medical report from the practitioner who performed or oversaw the treatment
 - A second, independent medical report confirming your gender identity
2. Intersex Persons
 - Submit:
 - A medical report confirming intersex status
 - A report from a psychologist or social worker confirming that you have lived in your affirmed gender for at least two years

Application Process:

- Complete Form BI-526 (DHA-526) — this form is only available at your nearest DHA office

- Submit the form along with:
 - Your ID
 - Your birth certificate
 - The two required medical reports

Once approved, you can apply for updated versions of your National ID, birth certificate, and passport reflecting your affirmed gender.

For more details, visit the [DHA Amendments page](#) or consult the Legal Gender Recognition Guide by Triangle Project.

At what age can I change my gender marker by myself?

There is no minimum age specified in the [Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act, 2003 \(Act No. 49 of 2003\)](#) for applying to change your gender marker. The law applies equally to minors and adults, and does not require parental consent for minors to apply.

However, in practice, minors may still need assistance from a parent, guardian, or social worker when dealing with the [Department of Home Affairs \(DHA\)](#), especially for submitting documentation and navigating the process.

[ILGA World Database: Legal gender recognition — South Africa \(database.ilga.org\)](https://database.ilga.org/)

What can I do if I do not have a parent or guardian with me to change my gender marker and do not have anyone else who can help me?

There is no requirement under the law that a minor seek a parent or guardian's consent to change one's gender marker. [Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act](#). However, although there is no legislation outlining the minimum age at which an individual is eligible to change their gender marker, minors require parental consent and supervision for most other dealings with the DHA.

Additional information and guidance is available at: [Legal Gender Recognition Guide — A step-by-step guide to applying to altering gender markers and forenames in terms of South African law \(triangle.org.za\)](https://triangle.org.za/)

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