STATE LIQUOR LICENSE APPLICATION CHECKLIST

For liquor stores, wine shops and beer stores applying for an off-premises retail alcohol license, plus what to confirm before you sell online or offer delivery.

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

Every state runs its own licensing process through its alcohol beverage control (ABC) agency, and many cities and counties add their own approvals. Use this list to gather documents and track steps, then confirm the exact forms, fees and order of steps with your state ABC agency and local licensing office. Items marked **WHERE REQUIRED** apply only in some states or localities.

YOUR LICENSING CONTACTS

STATE ABC AGENCY AND WEBSITE _____

LOCAL LICENSING OFFICE (CITY OR COUNTY) _____

LICENSE CLASS YOU ARE APPLYING FOR _____

APPLICATION FILED ON _____

EXPECTED DECISION DATE _____

LICENSE RENEWAL DATE _____

1 RESEARCH BEFORE YOU APPLY

Know which license you need and whether your location qualifies before you sign a lease or pay fees.

- [ ] Identify your state ABC agency and the license class for off-premises retail sales (beer only, beer and wine, or spirits).
- [ ] Check whether your state limits the number of licenses available, or controls spirits sales through state-run or agency stores.
- [ ] Confirm your city or county allows alcohol sales at all (wet/dry rules) and for which beverages.
- [ ] Confirm with your local zoning office that a package store is a permitted use at the address.
- [ ] Check minimum distance rules from schools, places of worship, playgrounds or other licensed stores. WHERE REQUIRED
- [ ] List every fee (state application, license, local and background check fees) and the expected review timeline.

2 SET UP YOUR BUSINESS

Most applications ask for proof that the business itself is registered and in good standing.

- [ ] Register your business entity (LLC, corporation or partnership) with your Secretary of State, and any trade name (DBA).
- [ ] Get an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the IRS.
- [ ] Register with your state tax agency for a sales tax or seller's permit.
- [ ] Complete a tax clearance or tax-check authorization form. WHERE REQUIRED
- [ ] Open a business bank account to document the source of funds for the purchase or startup.

3 OWNERSHIP AND BACKGROUND

Licensing agencies review everyone with an ownership or financial interest in the business.

- [ ] List all owners, officers, partners, members and anyone with a financial interest, with ownership percentages.
- [ ] Complete background check consent forms and fingerprinting for each person the agency requires.
- [ ] Prepare personal financial statements and documents showing the source of investment funds. WHERE REQUIRED
- [ ] Disclose any prior alcohol licenses held, denied, suspended or revoked.
- [ ] Name a store manager or agent responsible for the licensed premises. WHERE REQUIRED

4 PREMISES DOCUMENTS

Your license is generally issued for a specific location, so expect detailed questions about the store.

- [ ] Lease, deed or purchase agreement for the store location.
- [ ] Floor plan or diagram of the licensed area, including where alcohol is displayed and stored.
- [ ] Site plan or exterior diagram, including distance measurements to nearby schools or other sensitive locations. WHERE REQUIRED
- [ ] Photos of the premises, inside and out. WHERE REQUIRED
- [ ] Certificate of occupancy, building approval or fire inspection report. WHERE REQUIRED

5 FILE AND GIVE PUBLIC NOTICE

Many states require the community to be told about a new license before it is granted.

- [ ] Complete every application form for each license type you are requesting, signed where required.
- [ ] Pay all state and local application fees, and keep receipts.
- [ ] Post the required notice at the store and/or publish it in a local newspaper, then file proof of posting. WHERE REQUIRED
- [ ] Notify nearby property owners or residents. WHERE REQUIRED
- [ ] Attend the local hearing or council meeting and respond to any objections. WHERE REQUIRED

6 BEFORE YOU OPEN

Approval often comes with a few final steps before you can make your first sale.

- [ ] Schedule and pass the premises inspection. WHERE REQUIRED
- [ ] Get the certificate of liability insurance your license requires. WHERE REQUIRED
- [ ] Complete responsible beverage seller training for the manager and staff. WHERE REQUIRED
- [ ] Register as a retail alcohol dealer with the federal TTB (Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau) before you start selling, for each location.
- [ ] Display your license where your state requires, and set a reminder for renewal.

7 IF YOU PLAN TO SELL ONLINE OR DELIVER

Online orders run on your retail license. Check what it covers before you take your first online order.

- [ ] Confirm your license allows off-premises delivery, and for which beverages (beer, wine, spirits).
- [ ] Apply for any delivery permit, endorsement or certificate your state requires. WHERE REQUIRED
- [ ] Confirm whether a third-party delivery service can deliver on your behalf in your state, county and city.
- [ ] Check local wet/dry county rules for where you can deliver to and from.
- [ ] Set up age verification at checkout and an ID check at the door, and refuse orders to anyone who appears intoxicated.
- [ ] Shipping out of state? Check direct shipper permit rules for each destination state.
- [ ] Confirm your state's rules on alcohol discounts and promotions before running offers.

READY TO OFFER SAME-DAY ALCOHOL DELIVERY?

Once you're licensed, DoorDash can help you reach nearby customers through the DoorDash app. Our team verifies your retail alcohol permit at sign-up, and Dashers complete a 3-step ID and compliance check at every alcohol delivery. Availability varies by location.

merchants.doordash.com/en-us/business/alcohol

SCAN TO GET STARTED

This checklist is for general informational purposes only and is not legal advice. Alcohol licensing requirements, forms and fees vary by state, county and city and can change. Confirm current requirements with your state ABC agency and local licensing authority, or consult a licensed attorney. Must be 21+ to order alcohol. Drink responsibly.