

# GREEN LIGHT

**A USEFUL GUIDE FOR  
NEW DRIVERS IN THE UAE**





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# I GETTING STARTED



The purpose of this booklet is to familiarise and inform you of the general norms and customs of the UAE, as well as to provide you with relevant facts and figures that will serve as a ready reckoner to help you cope better with routine matters.

Settling down in a new city or country can sometimes leave the best of us feeling a little lost. This period of adjustment and adaptation to a new place is also a time when many new tasks need to get done. Where, how, what and when are words

most frequently used at this stage, and there is a general air of uncertainty about where to look for answers.

We have focused a little more directly on issues especially pertinent to drivers and you will find helpful hints covering driving licence procedures and legal processes among others.

We are sure that having this publication at hand will prove useful time and again, a ready reference that you could pass on to benefit friends and colleagues.

# II GROUND REALITIES

Unfamiliar surroundings in a new location can leave you with an understandable feeling of imbalance. This initial sensation of being out of one's comfort zone can easily be remedied.

Familiarise yourself thoroughly, location-wise, via the internet, which should tell you precisely where you are - geographically speaking. Follow this up with a study of the local maps - there are several for each Emirate, which feature parks, prominent buildings and other major landmarks. The UAE is a relatively young country with an exceptional transport infrastructure.

All road signs and municipality directional aids are bilingual (Arabic/English) and once you begin to get comfortable, getting around will only get easier.

The UAE is a federation of seven Emirates (member states), that comprise Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm Al Quwain. Abu Dhabi is the capital city and is host to all the major federal governmental departments.

The widespread availability of GPS devices should make it even easier to get to where you need to go. If you are using one however, check that your data is up-to-date. Road construction in the UAE is continuing apace (more so after Dubai's successful bid for the World Expo 2020) adding many new connections to the transport grid.

And if you still feel a little lost, there's always the option of personal contact. Pull over safely and ask for directions.





# KNOW YOUR OPTIONS



## Drive anywhere, anytime

Getting around the UAE is seldom a problem. All of the Emirates, to a greater or lesser extent, have invested heavily in public transportation. Dubai's new Metro Rail system is complete and has proved immensely popular. Buses travel all the major routes and interconnect the Emirates with scheduled services. Taxis are inexpensive, easy to find, and may be hailed from the street or ordered via a call centre. Cycling and walking however, while pleasant in winter, are not an option during the hot summer months.

Roads across the Emirates are uniformly excellent and driving remains in most cases the best way to get around. You can buy, rent or lease a car, depending on your circumstances.

Buying a car is always an option, if you have acquired residential status or plan on an extended stay. This would entail interaction with banks for a car loan (if necessary), deciding on suitable workshops for servicing, maintenance and repairs, dealing with local authorities for registration, insurance, incidental penalties or fines, as well as the

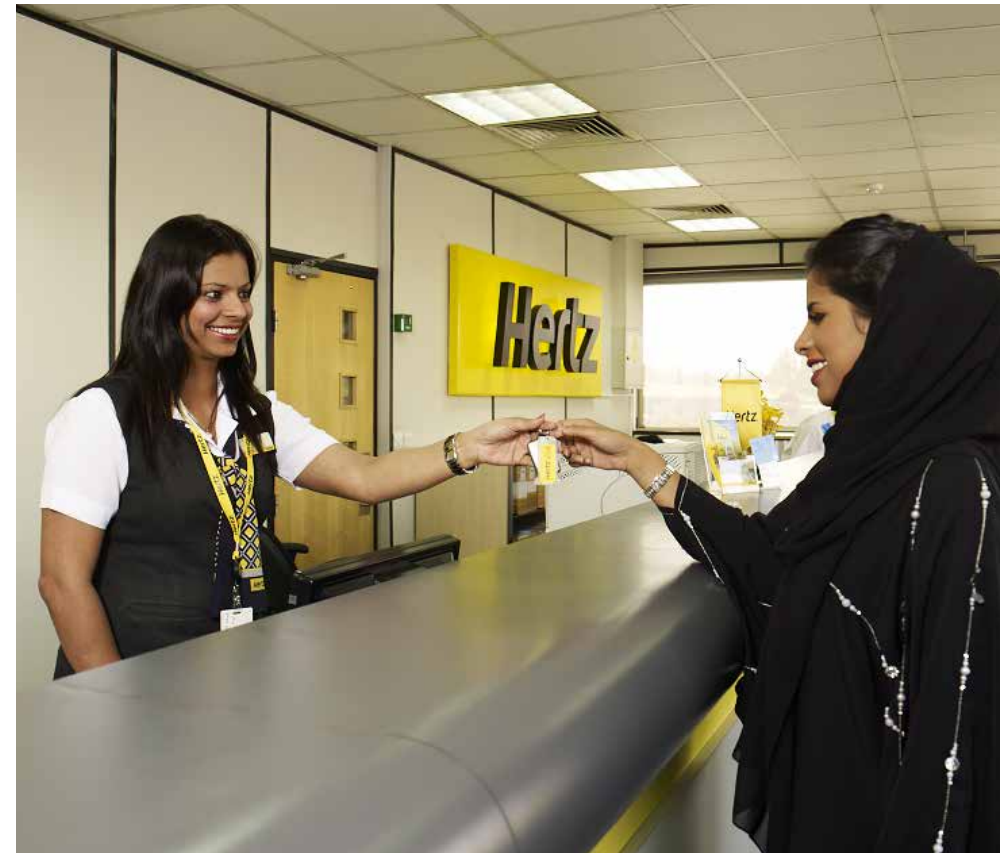
occasionally prolonged process of selling the vehicle prior to buying a new one or leaving the country.

If any or all of these recurring tasks are unpleasant to you, the answer lies in renting or leasing a car.

Hiring a car for a short or long term offers you just about the same freedom of choice in vehicle type as when you buy one. The rewards, however, lie in the time and effort saved.

Hertz can help with your car rental requirements. All you need do is choose your vehicle, run through a quick administration process and drive away.

Just remember to carry the following with you: valid Emirates ID Card and copy of your passport data and visa page as proof of identification.



# IV LICENSED TO DRIVE

## How to make it happen

The Driving Licence you obtain is valid throughout the UAE, but procedures in obtaining it vary from emirate to emirate. Applicants for a Driving Licence fall into any one of the following three categories.

### Category 1

First-time drivers

### Category 2

Drivers with a home country Driving Licence that IS NOT transferrable to a UAE Driving Licence

### Category 3

Drivers with a home country Driving Licence that IS transferrable to a UAE Driving Licence

Applicants across all three categories are required to open a driving licence file.

## The Licensing Process - Categories 1 & 2

If you have never driven before or have a driving licence that is not on the list of countries approved for transfer by the UAE, you must undergo training at an authorised driving school.

You will require the following documents:

- Passport (original and copy) with valid residence visa stamp
- No-objection Certificate from employer
- 8 photographs (in prescribed size)

Here is a selection of Authorised Driving Schools across the UAE:

- Abu Dhabi Driving Company (The only authorised body for Driving Licence theory & practical training)
- Al Ahli Driving School
- Belhasa Driving School
- Dubai Driving Center

- Emirates Driving Institute
- Galadari Driving School
- Sharjah Motor Driving School
- Fareeda Motor Driving School
- Ras Al Khaimah Motor Driving School
- Fujairah National Driving Institute (other institutes may be accessed through business directories or via the internet)

## Taking the first few steps

1. Take a certified eye test by visiting an optician or through your driving school
2. The driving school will process all paper-work with the RTA. Some schools may even have a dedicated RTA counter in-house
3. Collect your Temporary Driving Licence and ensure that you carry it with you in your training car
4. After you have passed all of the preliminary tests (i.e. garage parking etc.), your school will apply for your theory test followed by the all-important road test

## Taking the Theory Test

The theory test is conducted only at five authorised driving schools. When appearing for the test, remember to carry your relevant ID, your driving licence file, two photographs and the RTA theory test fee of AED 200\*.

A total of 35 questions covering road signals, hazards and guidelines on safe-driving will be asked in either English, Arabic or Urdu, (more languages are expected to be added later). Candidates who cannot read the touch-screen or are not computer literate can take the examination orally. There are two segments to the Theory Test and the first

segment consists of 17 questions focused on general traffic situations. Candidates will need to answer a minimum of 11 questions correctly in order to pass. The second segment covers 18 questions relating to the specific driving licence the candidate has applied for. A minimum of 12 correct answers are required for candidates hoping to qualify for the road test.

## And finally, the Road Test

Report to the RTA Licence Section (as advised by your driving school) on the date assigned, well in time. Ensure that you have carried with you your passport, driving licence file, and two photographs. Fill up the relevant application form and submit it along with the appropriate test fee (approx. AED 200\*). Wait for your name to be called before you proceed, along with three other candidates, to the RTA inspector and the designated car. You will be given just a few minutes at the wheel to demonstrate your driving and anticipatory skills.

If you fail, you must register with your driving school for a minimum of seven more classes to qualify for a new road-test date.

If you pass, collect the approval paper from your inspector and go to the Pass Counter submitting it along with relevant ID and AED 100\*. Collect your test file and submit it to the Control Counter. After your file has been processed, pay the requisite fee and proceed to the photograph area. When your name is called, have your photo taken. Congratulations. You will receive your Driving Licence in a few minutes and be eligible to drive in the UAE.

## One caveat!

If you have been driving with your home country licence while on a visit or tourist visa, once your residence visa has been issued, it is illegal to drive until you have obtained a valid UAE driving licence.



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## The Licensing Process - Category 3

If you are a citizen of one of the countries listed below\*, with current resident status in the UAE, you are eligible to transfer your existing home country driving licence, without having to take a driving test or going to a driving school.

- Australia
- Austria
- Bahrain
- Belgium
- Canada (additional requirements)
- Czech Republic
- Cyprus
- Denmark
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece (additional requirements)
- Iceland
- Iran
- Ireland
- Italy
- Japan (additional requirements)
- Kuwait
- Luxembourg
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Norway
- Oman
- Poland (additional requirements)
- Portugal
- Qatar
- Romania
- Saudi Arabia
- Singapore
- Slovakia
- South Korea (additional requirements)
- South Africa
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Turkey (additional requirements)
- United Kingdom
- United States

\*The Roads & Transport Authority (RTA),

provides updates for any changes to this list on 8009090 (toll free number).

### Additional requirements

Driving licence holders of some countries in the above list will require translations or consulate letters. These countries include:

- Canada: A letter from the Canadian Consulate in Dubai to verify that the licence is genuine is required, before transferring your licence.
- Driving licence holders from Greece, Canada, Cyprus, Poland, Turkey, Japan and South Korea will require a translation of their driving licence from their respective consulates.

### Fees and documents required

- Passport with residence visa copy
- Current driving licence (original and copy)
- Translation of driving licence (for some countries)\*
- Consulate letter (for Canadians)\*\*
- 1 passport photograph
- Eye test certificate
- AED 360\*, as fees for transfer as well as the opening of your driving licence file
- No-objection letter from your sponsor

### Easy steps towards obtaining your UAE Driving Licence

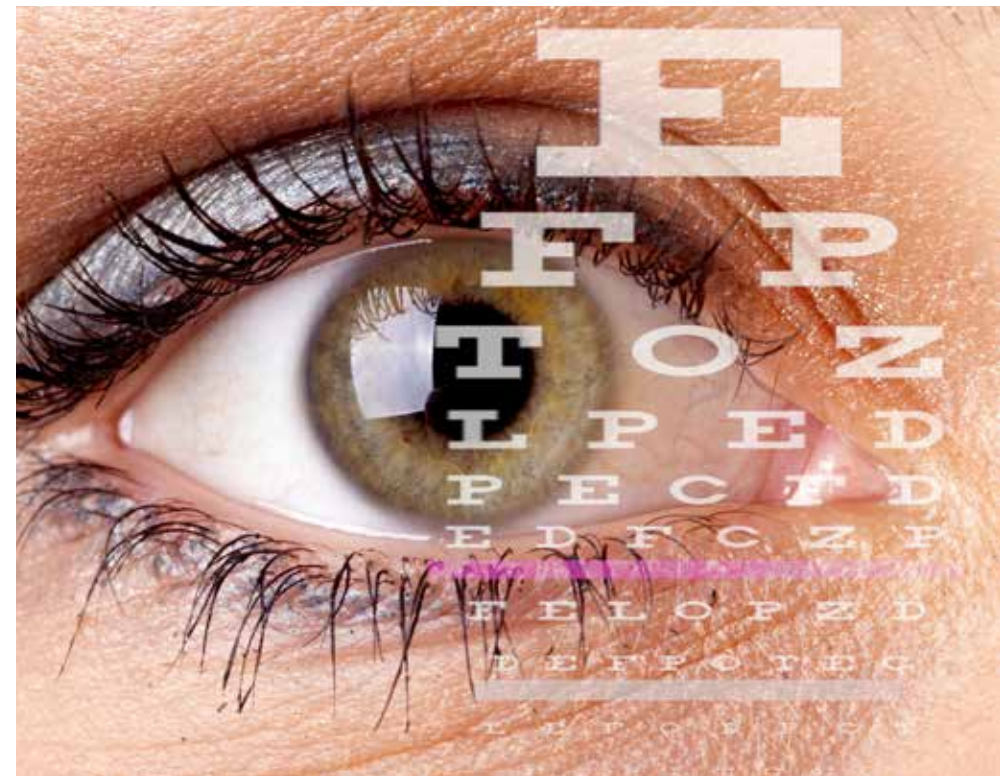
1. Get an eye test done by visiting any hospital, clinic or optician. Hand in 2 passport-sized photographs and specify that you are applying for a driving licence. There may be applicable charges.
2. Carry all of the documents mentioned above and go to the Traffic Department Driving Licence Section. The process is quicker for ladies if the department has a Ladies Section.

3. Fill up the application form and submit it along with all the other documents to the officer.
4. Take back your signed documents from the officer and pay AED 360\* to the cashier.
5. Submit all these documents at the Data Entry Counter.
6. Wait for your name to be called and have your photograph taken.
7. You will receive your licence in a few minutes.

To keep track of updated changes to procedures, visit the police website of the respective emirate in which you reside:

[www.adpolice.gov.ae](http://www.adpolice.gov.ae)  
[www.dubai.police.gov.ae](http://www.dubai.police.gov.ae)  
[www.shjpolice.gov.ae](http://www.shjpolice.gov.ae)  
[www.ajmanpolice.gov.ae](http://www.ajmanpolice.gov.ae)  
[www.rakpolice.gov.ae](http://www.rakpolice.gov.ae)  
[www.uaqpolice.gov.ae](http://www.uaqpolice.gov.ae)  
[www.fujairahpolice.gov.ae](http://www.fujairahpolice.gov.ae)

We recommend that you be continually aware of the UAE's zero-tolerance policy towards drinking and driving. Officers in plain clothes and unmarked vehicles are authorised to stop you at any time for a spot check, and this trend is increasing. Remember to buckle your seatbelt and drive safely at all times.



# V

## UAE ROAD LEGISLATION

GOVERNED BY THE ABU DHABI ROAD CODE



Being unaware of traffic rules and regulations, as well as of the associated penalties is no longer a valid excuse, following the widespread distribution of the Abu Dhabi Road Code 2011 by the General Directorate of Abu Dhabi Police.

### The law dictates:

- High beam lights may only be used on roads which do not have overhead lighting, and only when needed to improve the view ahead
- Do not drive if you have consumed alcohol, drugs or prescription medication (check for side-effects with your doctor or pharmacist if you do take such medication). There is a zero-tolerance policy on the use of alcohol and drugs while driving
- You must wear a seat belt if you are the driver or a front-seat passenger. Children are not allowed to ride in the front seat of a vehicle until they have reached 10 years of age
- You must adjust your speed as appropriate to the current road conditions. The speed limit displayed represents the absolute maximum allowed. This does not mean that it is safe to drive at such speeds, irrespective of road conditions. Driving at a speed too fast for road and traffic conditions is always dangerous
- Do not change lanes when you have actually arrived at a roundabout. Move into the right lane before you enter the roundabout
- Do not overtake if there is any doubt about the safety of the manoeuvre, especially when you cannot see far enough ahead to be sure it is safe
- Using a mobile phone while driving on the UAE's roads is illegal
- You must use headlights during the day when visibility is poor

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# VI

## GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT

In general, the levels of proficiency and standards of driving in the UAE are a reflection of the diversity of the UAE population. Due to the fact that drivers in the UAE come from all over the world with different learning patterns on how to drive, different 'road cultures' and different traffic environments, some inconsistencies must be anticipated in the interest of safety.

If you are new to the UAE and are concerned about getting behind the wheel, many expatriate drivers recommend practising driving on Friday mornings, when even the roads that are generally busy are practically clear.

The tips and rules listed below can be beneficial, even to the most experienced of drivers.

### Beware of Bad Driving Habits

- Enthusiastic hand gestures may be misinterpreted - use them sparingly and only when absolutely necessary
- Tailgating (driving too close to the car in front) leads to increased tension for the driver in the car ahead, who may then abruptly change lanes or slow down dramatically, causing an accident
- Jumping the 'queue' during traffic jams or cutting in front of slow moving vehicles only gains discourteous drivers a few metres. It aggravates a lot of other drivers, however, who react irrationally as a result
- Blaring horns and flashing lights are other intimidatory practices employed by impatient drivers with no consideration for other road users
- Indicators aren't always used - so be attentive
- Drivers commonly use their hazard lights - and sometimes flash their

headlights - to alert the drivers ahead of them to give way

- Drivers occasionally overtake other vehicles from both sides - left and right, so be keenly aware of traffic on both sides

### Weather Worries

- Electronic gadgets may malfunction, and food left in the car will spoil in the the hot climate, especially during the summer
- Do not leave your engine running if you anticipate a long wait. Cars can occasionally catch fire due to the extreme heat. Others may be stolen if left unattended
- As a rule, it is best not to leave animals or children in the car. If you must for a short period, be sure to turn the air-conditioning on
- Dense fog is common during the winter months and even though drivers are warned of the dangers of this practice, they continue to use hazard lights instead of fog lights
- In the winter months, even a small amount of rainfall tends to cause floods. During rains, avoid high speeds, keep a greater-than-usual distance from vehicles ahead, turn your headlights on, and make sure your wipers are in good condition

### Legislation

- Driving after consuming alcohol is against the law. The UAE has a zero tolerance policy in this respect. (It would help to remember that traces of alcohol may still be detected several hours after consumption)
- Using your mobile phone when driving is illegal
- If someone other than you drives your car, make sure that she/he has a valid UAE driving licence

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- The legal driving age in the UAE is 18
- The UAE driving licence is valid for 10 years after the age of 21. For those younger than 21, the licence needs to be renewed annually
- Women are allowed to drive in the UAE
- Driving on the beach is generally not permitted
- Car windows may only be tinted to a maximum of 30% (ie. 70% light transparent) except for vehicles belonging to car rental companies
- You can find the latest data on Traffic Violations and Fines on [www.dubaipolice.gov.ae](http://www.dubaipolice.gov.ae) - Service Guide - Traffic Services & Procedures - Traffic Violations and Fines

## Road systems

- Traffic light signals in the UAE are subtly different to other countries' lights. Green means go; Flashing Green means slow down, the lights are about

to change; Amber means you should not be passing through the intersection and Red means stop.

The RTA has implemented a higher tech system in Dubai where traffic lights turn green, then flash green three times before turning to amber and finally to red. The idea behind the flashing green lights is to give motorists advance warning that the light is about to change. This allows motorists enough time to make a complete stop at the approaching intersection and helps avoid accidents, due to the possibility of running a red light

- Roundabouts are commonly found throughout Dubai. When turning left, move early into the left lane to avoid confusing other drivers, and always stay alert
- If you miss your exit on major roads, you will need to drive to the next exit or interchange to re-route your journey

## Useful information

- Speeds are calculated in kilometres and not miles
- General speed limits are 40km on narrow suburban streets, 60km-80km on main roads and 100km-120km on highways (these limitations may differ from emirate to emirate)
- There is an operating road toll system in Dubai called Salik. Enable your vehicle for this system by purchasing a pre-paid Salik card, and ensuring that the enclosed Salik tag is affixed securely to your windscreen. You will periodically need to top-up your Salik account. Discover more on [www.salik.ae](http://www.salik.ae)
- In addition to the speed cameras on the side and centre of many roads, police often park cars in discreet areas to check on road violations
- Self-service at petrol stations is not commonly allowed. A station attendant is always available to fill up your tank. You can pay for your fuel in cash or with a fuel card. Credit and debit cards are currently not accepted, although there are plans to accept such payment methods soon
- Always keep fresh water in your car in case of an accident or breakdown.

Drinking water left in a hot car is not recommended, especially when stored in a PET or plastic bottle or container

## Accident & Emergency

- If you have an accident, dial 999 or 112 (if calling from a mobile)
- Do not leave the scene of an accident without collecting an official slip from the police (a green slip indicates that the accident was not your fault; a red slip generally means that it was - depending on the policeman's interpretation and notes). This is the only way to proceed with an insurance claim

The tips, advice and information listed above are only a few from an extensive list. This list keeps growing and being modified, as driving in Dubai is a constantly changing endeavour.

Take the time to familiarise yourself with the laws enforced by the Police and the Road & Transport Authority before you begin to drive.

Always ensure that your mobile phone is fully charged before any journey, in case of an emergency or even just to avoid getting lost.





# VII TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

There is no disputing the importance of seatbelts, but the actual considerations while using them may not be entirely obvious to everyone. Buckle Up In The Back wants to make a difference in the UAE and get everyone to Buckle Up. The aim of the campaign is to educate children and their parents on the need to use seatbelts.

**There is a great deal of choice when looking at car seats but just a few points to remember:**

**Rear facing:** From birth to 12 months (0 - 13 kg)

**Forward facing:** The 3-in-1 car seat from 9 months - 12 years old (9 - 36 kg)

**Booster seat:** Optimum side impact protect in booster from 4 - 12 years (15 - 36 kg) or under 145cm in height

The lap belt should be across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits on the shoulder and lies across the chest.

**Always make sure that...**

... the seatbelt is not under your child's arm. If a seatbelt is sitting uncomfortably on the child's neck then they should have a booster seat to ensure the seatbelt fits properly.

... your child doesn't unbuckle his/her seatbelt during a journey. If this does happen, stop the car and re-buckle. You may need to do this a number of times but the child will eventually learn the correct behavior.

... everybody is buckled up in the car, even if it is only a short journey.

Email: [info@buckleupintheback.com](mailto:info@buckleupintheback.com)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/BuckleUpInTheBack](https://www.facebook.com/BuckleUpInTheBack)  
Website - [www.buckleupintheback.com](http://www.buckleupintheback.com)



# VIII JUST SO YOU KNOW....



## Other useful information

### Local currency

The dirham is the currency of the United Arab Emirates. The ISO 4217 code (currency abbreviation) for the United Arab Emirates dirham is AED. Unofficial abbreviations include DH or Dhs. The dirham is subdivided into 100 fils.

Coins: 25 and 50 fils, 1 dirham;  
Banknotes: 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500, 1000.

### Emirates ID Card

Everyone in the UAE that possesses a UAE residency status and is over 15 years of age must have an Emirates Identification Card (EID). The Emirates ID card costs on average of AED 270\* per person. You will need to proceed to the nearest Emirates ID typing centre to process your application, following which you will receive an SMS instructing you to go to the nearest Emirates ID office to complete the fingerprinting and eye scanning procedure. You can find more information on 'how to apply' by logging onto the EID website, [www.emiratesid.gov.ae](http://www.emiratesid.gov.ae).

## Real Estate Regulatory Agency (RERA)

Supported by the Dubai Land Department, RERA plays a key and executive role in the regulation of Dubai's real estate scene. An arm of the Dubai Land Department, RERA is responsible for regulating the real estate sector, helping in formulating the sector's strategies, and regulating the activities of companies that manage residential compounds and the activities of real estate brokers and Owners' Associations. The Agency issues the rules and regulations that qualify activities of brokerage, lease contract registration and certification, as well as issuing licences for real estate development entities.

### Accommodation

Company accommodation or accommodation allowances are generally provided for employees. If you wish to rent a property, you can check the websites listed below.

[www.propertyfinder.ae](http://www.propertyfinder.ae)  
[www.bayut.com](http://www.bayut.com)  
[www.bhomes.com](http://www.bhomes.com)  
[www.dubizzle.com](http://www.dubizzle.com)

## Utilities Authorities

- Abu Dhabi - ADWEA ([www.adwea.ae](http://www.adwea.ae))
- Dubai - DEWA ([www.dewa.ae](http://www.dewa.ae))
- Sharjah - SEWA ([www.sewa.ae](http://www.sewa.ae))
- Federal, including Ajman, Fujairah, Umm Al Quwain, Ras Al Khaimah - FEWA ([www.fewa.ae](http://www.fewa.ae))

The above comprise all the electricity and water companies in the UAE. In general, you will need to put down a deposit when opening an account, and this amount varies between AED 2000 and AED 5000\*. Reimbursement of the amount is effected upon closing the account, if you have cleared all prior bill payments.

## Telephone and internet

There are two telecom service providers in the UAE, Etisalat and Du. To procure a mobile or landline service (or other telecom-related services), you will have to pay a deposit, hand over a copy of your passport including the relevant residence visa page, and your tenancy contract to

register for any services. Specific forms will have to be filled in and submitted as appropriate.

Further details are available on the providers' websites: [www.etisalat.ae](http://www.etisalat.ae) and [www.du.ae](http://www.du.ae)

## Government information centres

The Abu Dhabi Government Contact Centre provides citizens, residents, tourists, business customers and government employees easy access to government-related information - anytime, anywhere. The website is [www.abudhabi.ae](http://www.abudhabi.ae).

For issues or questions relating to Dubai Smart Government, you can contact the Ask Dubai service via [www.askdubai.ae](http://www.askdubai.ae) which is not just limited to Dubai Smart Government but covers services for many other Dubai government departments as well. This unified contact centre eliminates the need for you to remember many contact numbers, and ensures that one contact centre can serve all your needs.



## References / Sources

[www.dubai.ae](http://www.dubai.ae)  
[www.dubaipolice.gov.ae](http://www.dubaipolice.gov.ae)  
[www.adpolice.gov.ae](http://www.adpolice.gov.ae)  
[www.expatechodubai.com](http://www.expatechodubai.com)  
[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)  
Al Futtaim Induction Document

\* The prices mentioned throughout this document are indicative and for assistance only. It is advised that the reader inquire about prices directly to get an accurate estimate of costs involved.

