

Frequently Asked Questions

Passport - General

Q:How much does a U.S. passport cost?

a:The cost of your U.S. passport will depend on the type of passport you request and how quickly you need it. See [Passport Fees](#) for more information on the cost of a U.S. passport book or a U.S. passport card and all associated services.

Q:I have a life or death emergency overseas and need a passport. What should I do?

a:Life or Death Emergencies involve serious illness, injury, or death in your immediate family that require you to travel within 24-48 hours to a country that requires a passport. Customers must appear in person at a passport agency for emergency service and documentation of the emergency may be requested.

Please call the National Passport Information Center at 1-877-487-2778 (TTY/TDD 1-888-874-7793) to schedule an appointment at the nearest Passport Agency. Our automated appointment system is accessible every day, 24 hours a day.

If an appointment that will meet your needs is not available and you are calling from 8:00 a.m. to 10 p.m., EST, Monday-Friday, except federal holidays, please stay on the line and follow instructions to speak to a Customer Service Representative (CSR). The CSR will give you guidance on what to do.

If an appointment that will meet your needs is not available and you are calling on a federal holiday or during hours the CSRs are not available, please call 202-647-4000 and explain your situation to the operator.

Q:I am preparing for official travel. How do I obtain my diplomatic, official or regular no-fee passport?

a:The Special Issuance Agency, located in Washington, D.C., issues no-fee passports to citizens traveling abroad for the U.S. Government, their dependents (if permitted to accompany them), and certain others who are exempt by law from payment of the passport fee.

For information see [Diplomatic, Official, and Regular No-Fee Passports](#).

Q:Help! My passport has already been issued and mailed to me, but I have not received it. What do I do?

a:Contact the [National Passport Information Center](#). A Customer Service Representative will confirm the date your passport mailed to you, the address to which it was mailed and, if necessary, help you to report the non-receipt of your passport.

You have 90 days from the date your passport was issued to report that you have not yet received it in the mail. If you do not report the non-receipt of your passport within 90 days of the issue date, you will be **required to reapply and submit the full passport fee.**

Q:What is an E-Passport?

a:An Electronic Passport is the same as a traditional passport with the addition of a small integrated circuit (or chip) embedded in the back cover. The chip stores:

- The same data visually displayed on the data page of the passport;
- A biometric identifier in the form of a digital image of the passport photograph, which will facilitate the use of face recognition technology at ports-of-entry;
- The unique chip identification number; and
- A digital signature to protect the stored data from alteration.

For more information see the [U.S. Electronic Passport](#).

Q:I am traveling very soon. How do I get a passport in a hurry?

a:See [How to Get Your Passport in a Hurry](#).

Q:How long does it take to get a passport?

a:Processing times can vary depending on workload and occasional unforeseen circumstances such as natural disasters. During busier times, such as the summer travel season, we encourage customers to expedite their applications if traveling in less than 10 weeks. See [Application Processing Times](#) for more information.

Q:Who should maintain a valid U.S. passport?

a:Passport Services recommends that the following U.S. citizens maintain valid U.S. passports. Those:

- with family living or traveling abroad
- thinking about a vacation abroad, or
- with a job that could require international travel.

In the event of an emergency involving a family member abroad, a short-notice airfare bargain, or an unexpected business trip, already having a valid U.S. passport will save time, money and stress.

Q:Where are the instructions for filling out the passport forms?

a:Form instructions can be found on each form or the following Form pages:

- [Form DS-11: Application for a U.S. Passport](#)
- [Form DS-82: Application for a U.S. Passport by Mail \(Renewals only\)](#)
- [Form DS-4085: Application for Additional Visa Pages](#)

- [Form DS-5504: Application for a U.S. Passport - Name Change, Data Correction, and Limited Passport Replacement](#)
- [Form DS-64: Statement Regarding Lost or Stolen Passport](#)
- [Form DS-3053: Statement of Consent - Issuing a Passport to a Minor Under Age 16](#)

Q:How many blank visa pages do I need to travel?

a:Some countries require your passport have two (2) to four (4) blank visa/stamp pages. Some airlines will not allow you to board if this requirement is not met. See [Add Extra Pages](#) for how to request more visa pages.

Q:How long is a passport valid and when should I renew my passport?

a:If you were **over age 16** when your passport was issued, your passport is valid for **10 years**.

If you were **age 15 or younger** when your passport was issued, your passport is valid for **5 years**.

The *Issue Date* of your passport can be found on the data page of your Passport Book or on the front of your Passport Card.

If possible, you should renew your passport approximately nine (9) months before it expires. Some countries require that your passport be valid at least six (6) months beyond the dates of your trip. Some airlines will not allow you to board if this requirement is not met.

If your passport has already expired, you may still be able to renew your passport by mail. See [How to Renew Your U.S. Passport](#).

Q:I'm renewing my passport. Do I get the old one back?

a:Yes, we return the old, cancelled passport to you although it may be sent separately from your new passport. It is a good idea to keep it in a safe place as it is considered proof of your U.S. citizenship.

Q:I was recently married/divorced. How do I change my name on my passport?

a:You will need to complete [Form DS-5504: Application for a U.S. Passport: Name Change, Data Correction, and Limited Passport Book Replacement](#), within one year of the issuance date of your current valid passport and submit along with the following:

- The same data visually displayed on the data page of the passport;
- The passport to be replaced
- Certified documentation of your name change (e.g., marriage certificate, divorce decree with your new name); and
- One recent passport photo.

After one year of the issuance date you must submit [Form DS-82: Application for Passport by Mail](#), your current passport, certified documentation of your name change, one recent passport photo, and pay all applicable fees.

See [How to Change Your Name in Your Valid Passport](#).

Q:Do I have to provide my Social Security Number?

a:Failure to provide your Social Security Number may result in significant processing delays and/or the denial of your application.

Section 6039E of the Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C. 6039E) requires you to provide your Social Security Number (SSN), if you have one, when you apply for a U.S. passport or renewal of a U.S. passport. If you have not been issued a SSN, enter zeros in box #5 of the passport application form you are completing. Contact the Social Security Administration to request a Number. If you are residing abroad, you must also provide the name of the foreign country in which you are residing. The U.S. Department of State must provide your SSN and foreign residence information to the Department of Treasury. If you fail to provide the information, you are subject to a \$500 penalty enforced by the IRS. All questions on this matter should be directed to the nearest IRS office.

Q:How do I order applications in bulk?

a:Bulk quantities of passport Form DS-11 (Application for Passport) and Form DS-82 (Application for Passport by Mail) are now available from the U.S. Government Printing Office.

For more information on how to order applications in bulk see [How to Obtain Bulk Quantities of Passport Applications](#).

Q:I found someone's lost passport, what should I do with it?

a:Please mail found passport, using a sturdy envelope, to:

U.S. Department of State
Passport Services
Consular Lost/Stolen Passport Section
1111 19th Street, NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20036

Q:My passport has been damaged. Can I continue to use this passport?

a:**If your passport has been significantly damaged**, especially the book cover or the page displaying your personal data and photo, you will need to apply for a new passport. You will need to submit the following in person (See [Where to Apply](#)):

- The damaged passport

- [Form DS-11](#)
- All documents required by [Form DS-11](#), including citizenship documentation (i.e. birth certificate)

Water damage, a significant tear, unofficial markings on the data page, missing visa pages (torn out), a hole punch and other injuries may constitute "damage" requiring use of Form DS-11.

Normal wear of a U.S. passport is understandable and likely does not constitute "damage". For instance, the expected bend of a passport after being carried in your back pocket or fanning of the visa pages after extensive opening and closing. In most cases of normal wear, you may renew your passport by mail using [Form DS-82](#).

Please remember, if you try to renew a **significantly damaged** passport using Form DS-82, you may be asked by the Passport Agency to apply again using Form DS-11 and incur additional fees.

Q: Will I receive my passport and the citizenship documents I submitted with my application back in the same envelope?

a: **If You Applied for a Passport Book Only:** You may receive your newly issued book and your returned citizenship evidence in two separate mailings. If you do not receive a second mailing within 10 business days of receiving the first, please contact [NPIC](#).

If You Applied for a Passport Card Only: You will receive your newly issued passport card and your returned citizenship evidence in two separate mailings. If you do not receive a second mailing within 10 business days of receiving the first, please contact [NPIC](#).

If You Applied for a Passport Book and Card: You may receive three separate mailings; one with your returned citizenship evidence, one with your newly issued passport book, and one with your newly issued passport card. If you do not receive the second or third mailing within 10 business days of the previous mailing, please contact [NPIC](#).

Passport - Passport Card

Q: Why a Passport Card?

a: The Department of State has developed a [Passport Card](#) as a more portable and less expensive alternative to the traditional passport book. The passport card is a basic component of the PASS (People Access Security Service) system announced by Secretaries Rice and Chertoff in January 2006, and will meet the specific requirements of the [Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative \(WHTI\)](#) to secure and expedite travel. WHTI is the Administration's plan to implement a provision of the Intelligence Reform Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, which requires citizens of the United States, Canada, and Bermuda to have a passport or other designated document that establishes the bearer's identity and

nationality to enter or re-enter the United States from Mexico, Canada, the Caribbean, and Bermuda. According to the [Department of Homeland Security](#), other documents such as registered traveler cards ([NEXUS](#), [SENTRI](#) and [FAST](#) cards) will be acceptable under WHTI.

Q: Why is there an execution fee for the Passport and Passport Card?

a: The [execution fee](#) applies to first-time applicants, children and those replacing a lost, stolen or damaged passport who must appear in person before an agent authorized by the Secretary of State to give oaths to verify passport applications. In order to offer American citizens convenient locations to apply for a passport, the Department of State authorizes Passport Acceptance Agents to accept passport applications on its behalf. The execution fee is to reimburse the acceptance facility for the cost of the service provided to the customer and to serve as an incentive for participation in the Passport Application Acceptance Program.

When applying for both the passport book and card on the same application, you pay only **one** execution fee. The execution fee does not apply to adult passport book or card renewals when submitting Form DS-82

Q: Why can't I use the passport card to fly to Canada and Mexico?

a: The passport card is designed for the specific needs of border resident communities and is not a globally interoperable travel document as is the traditional passport book. The passport book is the appropriate travel document for most international travel.

Q: How secure is the card?

a: Because the wallet-sized Passport Card does not offer as many opportunities to embed security features as a passport book, the Department has decided to use laser engraving and will include state-of-the-art security features to mitigate against the possibility of counterfeiting and forgery. We are taking every care to ensure that this Passport Card is as secure as current technology permits. There will be no personal information written to the RFID chip.

Q: What is RFID Technology?

a: Radio Frequency Identification technology (RFID) has been used successfully along our land borders with Canada and Mexico since 1995 in the Department of Homeland Security's trusted traveler programs, such as [NEXUS](#), [SENTRI](#) and [FAST](#). U.S. border officials are able to expedite legitimate cross-border travel and trade of those trusted travelers who carry membership cards with vicinity read RFID chips that link to government databases. Membership in these programs currently exceeds 400,000.

RFID technology has been commercially available in one form or another since the 1970s. It can be found in car keys, highway toll tags, bank cards and security access cards. The Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers, who staff the ports of entry, anticipate that the speed of vicinity RFID will allow CBP officers, in advance of the traveler's arrival at the inspection booth, to quickly access information on the traveler from secure government databases, and allow for automated terrorist watch list checks without impeding traffic flow. In addition, they foresee that multiple cards can

be read at a distance and simultaneously, allowing an entire car of people to be processed at once.

The RFID technology embedded in documents will not include any personally identifying information; only a unique number that can be associated with a record stored in a secure government database will be transmitted.

Q:Has the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) certified the Card Architecture as required by law?

a:As required by legislation (Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2007, Sect. 546), NIST has reviewed the card architecture of the proposed passport card to be developed by the Department of State in response to the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI). On May 1, 2007, NIST informed the Departments of State and Homeland Security (DHS) that the proposed card architecture meets or exceeds the relevant international security standards and best practices for the technology that will be included in the card. To accommodate the Department of Homeland Security's operational needs at the ports of entry, the Department of State passport card will include Generation 2 RFID vicinity read technology. NIST notified Congress on May 3, 2007, that it had certified the security of the card architecture.

Q:Is there a threat from skimming personal information or tracking American citizens?

a:The RFID technology used in the passport card will enable the card to be read at a distance by an authorized CBP reader mounted alongside the traffic lane. The chip contains no biographic data as is the case with the e-passport. The chip will have a unique number linking the card to a secure database maintained by DHS and State. However, to address concerns that passport card bearers can be tracked by this technology, we are requiring that the vendor provide a sleeve that will prevent the card from being read while inside it.

Passport - Minors

Q:My child is too young to sign his/her own passport. How do I sign my child's passport?

a:In the space provided for the signature, the mother or father must print the child's name and sign their own name. Then, in parenthesis by the parent's name, write the word (mother) or (father) so we know who signed for the child.

Q:How do I get information about my child's passport, or, prevent passport issuance to my child?

a:Parents involved in international custody disputes may receive information about the United States passport of a minor from the Department of State, Passport Services.

For passport assistance for parents and information on International Child Abduction see [Passport Assistance - International Child Abduction](#).

Q:It is true that passport applications for minors under 16 require the consent of both parents and legal guardians?

a:Effective February 1, 2008, Public Law 106-113, Section 236 requires that U.S. passport applications for children under the age of 16 require both parents' or legal guardians' consent. Read additional information on the [Two-Parent Consent Requirement](#).

Q:What is the Children's Passport Issuance Alert Program (CPIAP)?

a:Separate from the Two-Parent Consent requirement for U.S. passport issuance for minors under the age of 14, parents may also request that their children's names be entered in the U.S. passport name-check system. The Children's Passport Issuance Alert Program provides:

- Notification to parents of passport applications made on behalf of minor children, and
- Denial of passport issuance if appropriate court orders are on file with CPIAP.

For more information, contact the [Office of Children's Issues](#) at 1-888-407-4747 or by email at ChildrensPassports@state.gov.

Passport - Birth Documentation & Copies of Passport Records

Q:How do I get a certified copy of my U.S. birth certificate?

a:Contact the [Vital Statistics office](#) in the state where you were born.

Q:What do I do if there is no birth record for me on file anywhere?

a:If you were born in the U.S. and there is no birth record on file, you will need several different documents to substantiate your citizenship. You will need:

- A letter of no record issued from the Vital Statistics office of the state of your birth with your name and what years were searched for your birth record.
- Early public records to prove your birth in the U.S. [Learn More](#)

If you were born outside the U.S. and your U.S. parent(s) did not register your birth at the U.S. embassy or consulate, you may apply for a U.S. passport. You will need:

- Your foreign birth certificate showing both of your parents' names
- Evidence of your parent(s) U.S. citizenship and
- Your parents' marriage certificate [Learn More](#)

Q:I was born abroad. How do I get one or more copies of my birth record?

a:Request a [Certification of Report of Birth](#) or learn more about [birth records for U.S. citizens and nationals born abroad](#).

If you were born in the [Panama Canal Zone](#), learn how to request multiple copies of your PCZ Birth Certificate.

As of December 31, 2010, the Department of State no longer issues the Certification of Report of Birth (DS-1350). All previously issued DS-1350s **are still valid** as proof of identity and citizenship.

Q:How do I replace my lost or damaged Consular Report of Birth Abroad (FS-240)?

a:If your Consular Report of Birth Abroad (FS-240) is lost or damaged, learn how to [Request a Replacement](#).

Q:How do I amend my Consular Report of Birth Abroad (FS-240)?

a:To change a name or update your Consular Report of Birth Abroad (FS-240), learn how to [Request an Amendment](#).

Q:Why did the Department of State create a new Consular Report of Birth Abroad (FS-240)

a:The Department introduced a redesigned Consular Report of Birth Abroad (FS-240) in January 2011. The new design has state-of-the-art security features to help prevent fraud and identity theft. The FS-240 is an official record confirming that a child born abroad to a U.S. citizen parent or parents acquired U.S. citizenship at birth and serves as proof of citizenship.

You may now [request multiple copies](#) of your Consular Report of Birth Abroad (FS-240).

As of December 2010, the Certification of Report of Birth (DS-1350) is no longer issued. All previously issued FS-240 or DS-1350 documents are still valid as proof of identity, citizenship and for other legal purposes.

Q:How to I obtain copies of my Certification of Report of Birth (DS-1350)?

a:As of December 2010, the Certification of Report of Birth (DS-1350) is no longer issued. Instead, you may [request multiple copies](#) of your Consular Report of Birth Abroad (FS-240). All previously issued DS-1350s are still valid as proof of identity, citizenship and for other legal purposes.

Q:I was married overseas. How do I get one or more copies of my marriage certificate?

a:Request one or more copies of your [Certificate of Witness to Marriage \(Abroad\)](#).

Q:I lost a loved one overseas. How do I get one or more copies of the death certificate?

a:Request one or more copies of a [Consular Report of Death of a U.S. Citizen Abroad](#).

Q:How do I obtain copies of a previous passport application?

a:For information on how to obtain copies of your passport records see [Obtain Copies of Passport Records](#).