



U.S. Passport Requirements

A client-friendly guide for adults, children, and families traveling internationally

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Why passport planning matters

Most travel-document issues can be avoided with early review.

A valid passport is required for international air travel.

Some destinations require 6 months of validity beyond travel dates.

Children's passports expire faster than adult passports.

Airlines and foreign border officials may deny boarding or entry if documents are not correct.



Passport book vs. passport card

Know the difference before choosing which document to request.

Passport Book

Best choice for most travelers

- ✓ Valid for international air travel
- ✓ Accepted broadly for cruises, tours, and resorts
- ✓ Recommended by Wildcat Travel Group

Passport Card

Limited-use document

- ✓ Land and sea only
- ✓ Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, Caribbean
- ✗ Not valid for international air travel

First-time adult passport applications

Adults applying for the first time generally use Form DS-11 and apply in person.

Completed Form DS-11

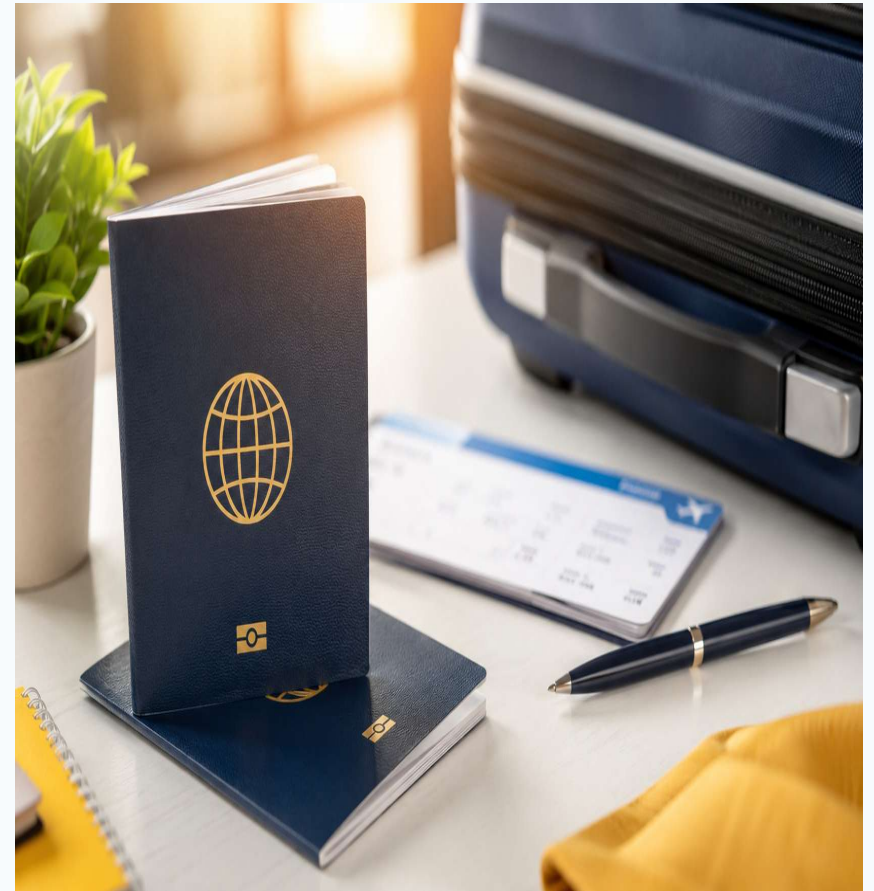
Proof of U.S. citizenship

Government-issued photo ID

Passport photo that meets requirements

Payment for application and execution fees

In-person application at an acceptance facility



Renewals and name changes

Many adults can renew by mail or online when eligible.

Check eligibility before assuming renewal is possible.

Use the correct renewal path for your situation.

Name changes may require certified documentation.

Damaged, lost, stolen, or older passports may require in-person application.

Children under 16 cannot renew by mail.



Passport photo basics

Photo problems are one of the easiest ways to delay an application.

A compliant photo should be:

2 x 2 inches with a plain white or off-white background

Taken within the last 6 months

Full face visible; eyes open

No sunglasses or hats unless allowed for medical or religious reasons

No filters, heavy shadows, or cropped faces



2" x 2"

Processing times and timing strategy

Current processing times change, so always verify before applying.

Routine

4–6 weeks



Expedited

2–3 weeks

Urgent Travel

Appointment

Use when traveling within 14 calendar days and appointment availability exists.

Children under 16: key rules

Children have extra identity and parental-consent requirements.

Child must apply in person.

Both parents or legal guardians generally must consent.

Child's passport is valid for 5 years.

Child passports cannot be renewed; a new application is required.

Bring proof of the child's U.S. citizenship and proof of parental relationship.



What parents or guardians should bring

Prepare documents before the appointment.

The child applying for the passport

Form DS-11

Proof of U.S. citizenship

Evidence of parental relationship

Parents' or guardians' valid IDs and photocopies

Passport photo and fees



Do both parents need to appear?

For children under 16, two-parent consent is the default expectation.

Usually, yes.

Both parents or guardians should go with the child to apply in person whenever possible.

This helps prove identity, relationship, and consent.

It can reduce appointment problems and follow-up requests.

If one parent cannot appear, additional paperwork is needed.



If one parent cannot attend the passport appointment

Use the right consent process for the absent parent.

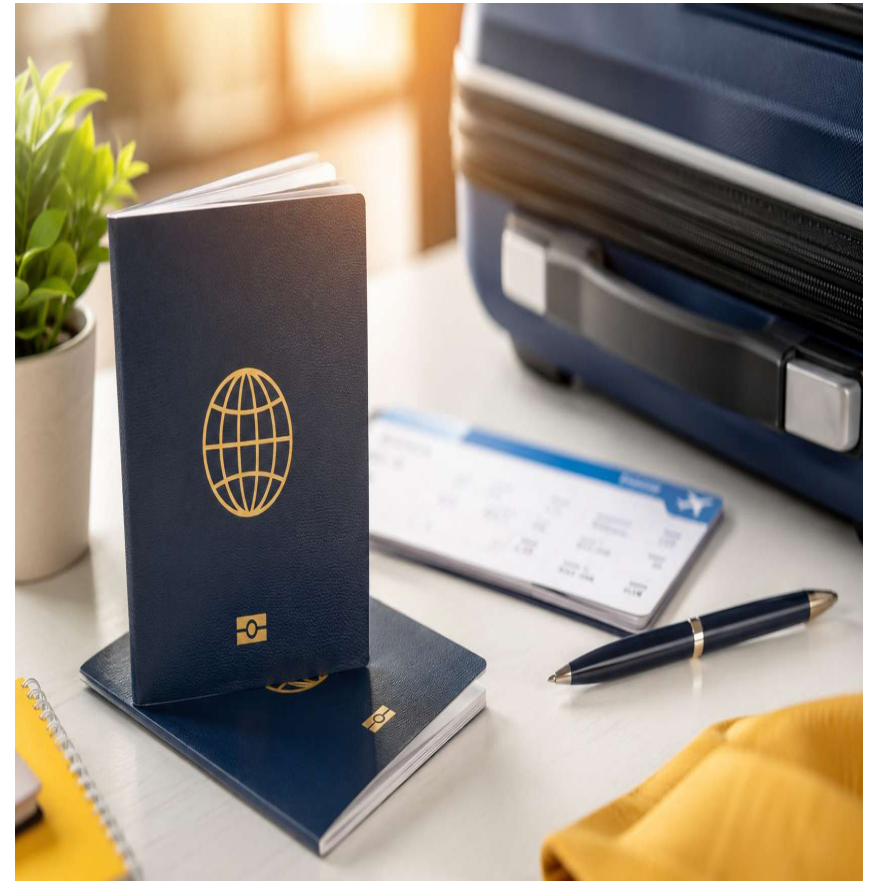
The absent parent generally completes Form DS-3053.

The signature must be notarized.

Provide a photocopy of the ID presented to the notary.

The attending parent brings the child and all required documents.

The form must be current and properly completed.



Sole custody or special family situations

Bring legal proof when one parent has authority to apply.

Court order showing sole legal custody

Court order specifically allowing passport application or travel

Adoption decree listing one parent

Death certificate of the non-applying parent

Other qualifying legal documentation



Ages 16–17: not quite the same as adults

Teen applicants have fewer restrictions than young children, but parent awareness may still be required.

Use Form DS-11 and apply in person.

Passport is generally valid for 10 years.

A parent or guardian should appear with the teen when possible.

If the teen has their own ID, they may apply without a parent, but parental awareness may be requested.

Bring documentation that matches the teen's current legal name.



One parent traveling alone with children

Carry extra documentation even when it is not always required by the United States.

Recommended carry documents:

Child's passport

Copy of birth certificate

Notarized travel consent letter from non-traveling parent

Proof of sole custody, if applicable

Emergency and medical contact information

What should a travel consent letter include?

A simple notarized letter can reduce delays at check-in or immigration.

Child's full legal name and date of birth

Traveling parent or adult's full name

Non-traveling parent or guardian's name and contact information

Destination, travel dates, and general itinerary

Permission to travel internationally

Notary signature and seal

Sample heading

Minor Child Travel Consent

I authorize my child to travel internationally
with [Name] from [Date] to [Date] to
[Destination].

Signature / Notary

Children traveling without a parent

Extra documentation is strongly recommended.

Applies to grandparents, relatives, school groups, teams, or friends.

Carry a notarized permission letter from parent(s) or legal guardian(s).

Include emergency contacts and itinerary details.

Consider a medical authorization letter.

Verify airline, cruise line, and destination-specific rules.



Destination-specific rules can change

Passport validity, visas, blank pages, and child-consent rules vary by country.

Check passport validity requirements before booking.

Many countries require 6 months of validity beyond travel dates.

Some countries require blank passport pages for entry stamps.

Some destinations require notarized consent when one parent travels with a child.

Visa, ETA, or vaccination rules may apply.

Common mistakes that cause delays

Most issues are avoidable with a document review.

Waiting until the last minute

Booking travel before checking passport expiration

Using a passport card for a flight

Names not matching tickets exactly

Missing child consent documents

Damaged passports or missing pages

Not checking visa or entry requirements



Wildcat Travel Group document strategy

What we encourage every client to do before international travel.

Check passport validity before deposits or airfare.

Renew early—do not wait for the exact expiration date.

Review every traveler's name and date of birth.

Keep paper and digital copies of key documents.

Carry child consent documentation when applicable.

Confirm destination entry rules and travel protection.



Final pre-trip passport checklist

Use this before every international trip.

- ✓ Passport book for each traveler
- ✓ At least 6 months validity when required
- ✓ Visa / ETA / entry forms checked
- ✓ Child consent letter, if applicable
- ✓ Copies stored separately
- ✓ Emergency contacts and insurance info

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Trusted resources

Use official sources and verify requirements close to departure.



Travel.State.Gov: passport applications, renewals, fees, and processing times

State Department Country Information Pages: destination entry, exit, visa, and passport validity rules

Airline and cruise line websites: carrier-specific document rules

Foreign embassies and consulates: country-specific minor travel rules

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Sources used for this deck:

travel.state.gov/passports
travel.state.gov/international-travel
travel.state.gov/minors
travel.state.gov/country-information

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