

Obtaining Passports for Children Under 16



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Passports are essential identity documents that prove citizenship and are required for international travel. Children under 16 can apply for passports when both parents take them to apply in person at a passport acceptance agency like the post office. However, what happens if one of the parents is unable to go to the post office or if a parent doesn't want the child to have a passport? Use this guide to help navigate the passport application process for children under 16.

Legal Key has also created [a guide specifically for Massachusetts residents](#).

General Process

How to Apply

- Visit [Travel.State.Gov](https://travel.state.gov) for application and instructions for adults and children.
- Use the [passport acceptance facility locator tool](#) to find the closest place to submit the application.
- Bring an **unsigned** application, supporting documents, and payment for fees.

Document Checklist

- Form DS-11. Use the US Department of State's [Form Filler Tool](#), and print out the completed form. **Do not sign the form yet!**
- Child's original birth certificate (or other evidence of child's US citizenship).
- Proof of parents' relationship to the child e.g., birth certificate or adoption decree.
- ID for both parents/legal guardians.

Attending the passport appointment: Who needs to be present?

Generally, both parents and the child must be present. However, there are times when this is not possible. Below are common situations a family may encounter. Families in other circumstances should consult with a lawyer.

- If both parents agree their child should have a passport, but only one can take the child to the passport application appointment, the parent who cannot go to the appointment can sign [Form DS-3053](#) Statement of Consent, have it notarized, attach a copy of a government issued photo ID, and give it to the parent going to the appointment with the child.
- If only one parent is listed on the birth certificate, then that parent can appear at the appointment with the child. If both parents are on the birth certificate but one has died, the parent should include a copy of the death certificate.
- If parents disagree about whether the child should have a passport, either party can go to family court to seek a court order regarding the passport application. Note: Family court proceedings are lengthy and costly. They can also address additional issues beyond what brought the parties to court (like the passport application). People should consult with a lawyer prior to going to family court.
- If one parent is in jail, there is domestic violence, or the second parent is unreachable, the parent applying for the passport can use [Form DS-5525](#) to explain the situation. Include a copy of the restraining order, incarceration order or other documents verifying the situation.
- If neither parent can bring the child to the passport application appointment, they can each give permission to a third party (like a grandparent) to bring the child to the appointment with signed and notarized [Form DS-3053](#) (one for each parent). Remember to attach a copy of the parent's government issued photo ID to each form.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I can't find my child's birth certificate. How do I replace it?

Birth certificates are available from the city or town hall where the child was born, or the state vital records department. [VitalCheck](#) is a company that has birth certificates from many states (you will need to know the city or town where the child was born).

My child already has a passport, but it will expire soon. Do I still need to have the other parent sign the renewal application?

Yes. Passports for children under 16 years old only last 5 years. When they expire, new passports are issued, not renewed like adult passports.

How much does a passport cost?

U.S passport fees vary based on whether you are getting a book or a card, and if you are a first-time applicant or renewing. Cards are less expensive but not valid for international travel by air. Additional fees will be required for expedited processing or to add on a passport card. Fees are [listed here](#).

Can noncitizens apply for a passport for their US citizen children?

Yes. The passport application does not ask for the citizenship status of the parents.

My US citizen child has a passport from another country. Do they need a US passport?

While a birth certificate establishes US citizenship, it can still be very helpful to have US passport to prove citizenship and for ease of international travel.

Traveling outside the United States

When traveling with a child across international borders with only one parent, it is important to bring evidence that the other parent gives permission (a letter), or that there is only one parent with custody (birth certificate, court order). The United States Department of State has [helpful information](#), including what a letter of permission should say.

Obtaining or renewing passports from other countries

Some US Citizen children may be eligible for dual citizenship through their parents. In addition, people of all ages who are citizens of another country may need to obtain or renew a passport. These are consular functions, and people should contact the [nearest consulate](#) for their country for instructions.