Homeland Security

Visa Waiver Program: Passport Requirements Timeline

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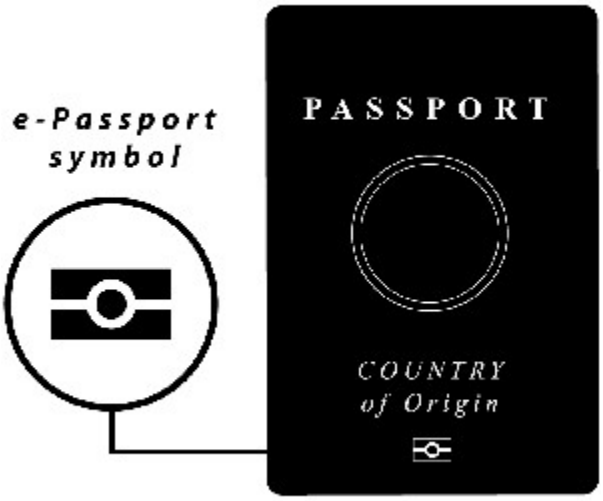
- Passports issued on or after October 26, 2006: *e-Passports*
- Passports issued October 26, 2005 - October 25, 2006: *Digital Photographs*
- Passports issued before October 26, 2005: *Machine-Readable Zones*
- Visa Waiver Program Countries

The Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) is a new fully automated, electronic system for screening passengers before they begin travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program. Voluntary ESTA applications may be submitted at any time prior to travel to the United States, and Visa Waiver Program travelers are encouraged to apply for authorization as soon as they begin to plan a trip to the United States.

Beginning January 12, 2009, eligible citizens or nationals from all Visa Waiver Program countries must obtain approval through ESTA prior to traveling to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program.

As of October 26, 2006, any passport issued on or after this date by a Visa Waiver Program (VWP) country must be an e-Passport for VWP travelers to be eligible to enter the United States without a visa.

Outlined below are important changes in passport and e-Passport requirements for travelers from VWP countries applying for admission to the United States. Please check with the passport issuing agency in your country if you have specific questions.



Depiction of e-Passport symbol on front of passport

Passports issued on or after October 26, 2006: *e-Passports*

New passports issued by Visa Waiver Program countries must be e-Passports, which include an integrated computer chip capable of storing biographic information from the data page, as well as other biometric information, such as the required digital photograph of the holder. You can identify an e-Passport by the symbol

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(see image at right).

If your passport does not have this feature, you can still travel without a visa if it is a valid passport issued:

- **Before October 26, 2005**, and includes a machine-readable zone, or
- **Between October 26, 2005, and October 25, 2006**, and includes a digital photograph.

If you were issued a passport **on or after October 26, 2006**, and it is not an e-Passport, you will need to obtain a visa. Please see “Getting a Visa” below.

A digital photo is printed on the page, not glued or laminated onto the passport.

Depiction of passport with Digital Image

Passports issued October 26, 2005 - October 25, 2006: *Digital Photographs*

Older, but still valid passports issued or renewed/extended by Visa Waiver Program countries between **October 26, 2005, and October 25, 2006**, must include a digital photo printed on the data page, or the traveler will be required to obtain a visa. A digital photo is one that is printed on the page, not a photo that is glued or laminated into the passport. It looks like the image at the right.

If your passport does not have this feature, you can still travel without a visa if you:

- Were issued a valid passport **before October 26, 2005**, with a machine-readable zone, or
- You have “e-Passport,” which includes an integrated computer chip capable of storing biographic information from the data page, a digitized photograph, and other biometric information.

If you are issued a passport **on or after October 26, 2005**, and it does not meet the requirements in either Sections A or B, you will need to obtain a visa. Please see “Getting a Visa."

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— **MACHINE-READABLE ZONE**

A machine-readable passport has two lines of text as letters, numbers and chevrons (<<<) at the bottom of the personal information page, along with your picture.

Machine Readable Passport Sample

Passports issued before October 26, 2005: *Machine-Readable Zones*

Older, but still valid passports issued by Visa Waiver Program countries before October 26, 2005, must have a machine-readable zone. A machine-readable passport has two lines of text as letters, numbers and chevrons (<<<) at the bottom of the personal information page, along with the bearer's picture. It looks like the image at right.

If your passport does not have this feature, you have two options:

- Get a qualifying, new passport if your country of nationality is producing one, or
- Get a visa. Please see "Getting a Visa" below.

Please contact your passport-issuing agency or your local embassy if you have questions about your country's production of a qualifying e-Passport.

Visa Waiver Program Countries

There are currently 34 countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program:

- Andorra
- Australia
- Austria
- Belgium
- Brunei
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Ireland
- Italy
- Japan
- Korea, Republic of
- Latvia
- Liechtenstein
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Monaco
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Norway
- Portugal
- San Marino
- Singapore
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- United Kingdom

For more information on the Visa Waiver Program please visit the State Department's Travel Web site.

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