

# Documentary Requirements for United States Citizens and Foreign Visitors Entering the United States from Canada and Mexico.

## Inspections Process at U.S. Ports of Entry

Everyone seeking entry into the United States -- whether U.S. citizen, U.S. lawful permanent residents and other immigrants, or visitors -- must be inspected at the point of entry. For general information on the inspections process to enter the United States, please see our document [How Do I Get Legally Admitted to the United States? \(How Will I Be Inspected When I Come to a U.S. Port-of-Entry?\)](#). This "How Do I ...?" also has information on the documents needed by each prospective entrant.

## U.S. Citizens Returning from Canada and Mexico

U.S. citizens returning from abroad must present a valid passport for entry into the United States unless returning from an adjacent country, territory, or island (excluding Cuba) such as Canada and Mexico. [See 22 CFR 53.2](#). Due to heightened security it is strongly recommended that US citizens also present their passports even when returning from travel only to Canada or Mexico.

[Getting a passport](#) from the Department of State is not too difficult nor time-consuming (expedited service can be requested for an additional fee). If you do not have a U.S. passport, a US citizen may be required to *prove citizenship* by presenting:

1. a U.S. state or federal government-issued birth certificate or record (note: hospital-issued birth certificates are not acceptable) or baptismal record, [Certificate of Citizenship](#), or Certificate of Naturalization [note: notarized photocopies or notarized fax copies of such certificates are acceptable, but affidavits of citizenship and voter registrations are not), *and*
2. a photo identification document, like an unexpired driver's license or military ID.

## Visitors to the United States in General:

In general, a nonimmigrant visitor must have a valid nonimmigrant visa and a passport that is valid for a minimum of six months beyond the initial period of stay in the United States. Even though certain individuals (see below) may be exempt the visa and passport requirement (see below), the burden of proof is on the applicant to establish eligibility to enter the United States. "Burden of proof" is discussed in the Immigration and Nationality Act section 291. Under current heightened security measures in effect at all United States ports-of-entry, including those at land border crossing points, each person wishing to enter the U.S. is responsible for having sufficient documentation to establish identity and citizenship as set forth below. NOTE: This heightened security now requires that each person present identification that has a photograph attached.

## Entry into the U.S. Under the Visa Waiver Program

The [Visa Waiver Program \(VWP\)](#) allows citizens of 27 countries to apply for entry to the United States without a nonimmigrant visa if they are seeking entry for 90 days or less as a visitor for business or pleasure. Applicants under the VWP must have a valid, unexpired passport. Countries designated under this program are: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and The United Kingdom.

## Entry of Citizens of Canada

Citizens of Canada are exempt from the visa and passport requirement of Immigration and Nationality Act section 212(a)(7). To enter the United States, a Canadian citizen must be able to establish both identity and citizenship. Documents that may establish citizenship are: birth certificate, citizenship certificate, and passport. Although the Immigration Inspector may accept an oral declaration of citizenship, it is recommended that a Canadian citizen carry a document that establishes citizenship. Under current procedures, all travelers may be required to present photo-identification. NOTE: A Canadian citizen arriving from outside the Western Hemisphere is required to present a passport. Canadian citizens classified as Treaty Trader, Treaty Investor, or Fiancé(e) require a visa.

#### **Entry of Aliens Resident in Canada or Bermuda**

Until March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003, aliens resident in Canada or Bermuda having a common nationality with nationals of Canada or with British Overseas Territory Citizens in Bermuda (see [list of Commonwealth Countries](#)) are not required to present a passport except when coming from outside the Western Hemisphere. A visa is not required.

Effective March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003, citizens of Ireland and nationals of British Commonwealth countries resident in Canada or Bermuda will be required to present a valid non-immigrant visa for entry to the U.S., unless they are a national of a country designated eligible to enter under the Visa Waiver Program (see entry requirements above).

Information in obtaining a visa while in Canada is available on the website of the [U.S. Embassy in Ottawa, Canada](#).

#### **Entry of Citizens of Mexico**

In general, a citizen of Mexico must have a passport and nonimmigrant visa or Form DSP-150 (also known as a "Laser Visa"). Form DSP-150 is a biometric, machine readable, B1-B2 visa/Border Crossing Card that may be used to enter the U.S. from within the Western Hemisphere. If coming from outside the Western Hemisphere, a passport is required.

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