

How to Expedite Your U.S. Passport Application

By Ramsey Qubein Aug 2, 2021 Passport applications can take anywhere from a few weeks to two months—but there are ways to speed up the process. Product Coordinator.

There are several situations that might require a quick passport turnaround, from emergency travel to visiting countries with specific visa requirements.

Whether it's last-minute travel plans or a big international trip that's here before you know it, it's not uncommon for travelers to have to expedite their U.S. passport applications. Rush services always cost a bit more but are sometimes very necessary. The process (for both [renewing](#) and getting a new passport) is fairly similar to the [regular application](#), which can take anywhere from a few weeks to four or five months. That lack of certainty is why many travelers are willing to pay for an expedited book.

Several other situations might require [a new or renewed passport in a hurry](#). For example, some countries don't permit entry if your passport has less than six months of validity. Others, like South Africa, require that you have two consecutive blank pages. It's best to check the State Department's website for each country or contact your airline (or travel agency) before you hit the road to see what passport requirements there might be.

If you pay extra for quicker service, you'll be able to keep an eye on [the status of your application online](#), but these days, even expedited services are seeing a slowdown. You can also rush the application of a [second U.S. passport if you qualify for one](#), but don't expect the same effort to move things along since staffing shortages are causing substantial backlogs.

Here's what you need to know to get a passport in your hands quickly—depending on how much time you have—in today's delayed application process.

How long does it take to get an expedited passport?

If you apply for an expedited passport directly through the U.S. State Department, it can take up to 18 weeks at the moment. For a faster turnaround, an expeditor like [RushMyPassport.com](#) can take six to seven business days for confirmed travel within two weeks, but it only has a limited number of spots for that fast service.

If you need it within 18 weeks, you can still do it yourself

Mail delays coupled with a rush of people looking to renew passports that expired during COVID have led to [several changes in the passport process](#).

Article continues below advertisement

To start: The 6-week window for expediting has grown to 18 weeks. To apply for a rushed passport, begin at the [State Department's website](#), where a handy checklist will keep you from making a mistake that could slow down the process. The \$60 expedited fee (plus overnight shipping) is not refundable, so it helps to have someone double-check the application. This fee is in addition to the standard \$110 application fee and \$35 execution fee. No proof of travel is needed for the basic rush process, but when something takes between 12 to 18 weeks that is hardly a rushed service.

You can expedite your passport by applying in person at a [passport agency](#) or by sending it via overnight mail. If you choose to apply in person, you must use form DS-11, while applications by mail require form DS-82 ([download these forms here](#)). Submitted forms must be single-sided and printed clearly. Complete the application online before printing it out or by hand in black or blue ink; remember to write "Expedited" on the envelope and include two recently taken photos that meet the [passport photo specifications](#). If applying by mail, you must include a check; if applying in person, ask to learn what methods of payment are allowed at your specific acceptance facility.

Remember that if you have lost your passport or have special family circumstances, such as a child who needs to apply for a passport without a guardian present, [different forms](#) must be completed.

How to Renew Your U.S. Passport

If you need it quicker, it's best to seek help from an expeditor

To avoid any delays, it's often smarter to use an expediting agency, which rushes passport applications on a daily basis. It charges an additional fee (on top of the standard passport application fee and expedited passport service fee), but it knows the ins and outs of the expedited passport process to help you submit documentation correctly the first time around.

Services like [RushMyPassport.com](https://www.rushmypassport.com) double-check your application before it gets submitted and catch any errors or snags that might slow down the process. **A 24-hour business day turnaround is not available currently, and no expeditor is able to offer such a service for now.** The fastest turnaround time RushMyPassport.com offers is one week for \$799 or a two-week option for \$599. Even these have very limited availability since expeditors also rely on a subset of appointments being available. RushMyPassport.com representatives say that things can change quickly, and the company hopes to be able to offer quicker processing times soon.

Why You May Need a Second Passport

Children under the age of 16, all first-time applicants, and applicants who have lost their passport or had their passport stolen must apply in person. You can make a free appointment ahead of time, but know that spaces are extremely limited right now. To make an appointment, people must call the [National Passport Information Center](#). The online system was temporarily disabled after an underground market developed; third parties using bots would secure urgent appointments and then sell them to travelers in a bind. Unfortunately, scammers are taking advantage of the situation. Many of these are not even legitimate appointments.

These limited appointments are limited to those with “life-or-death emergencies,” which can be turned around in three business days. Unfortunately, the passport agency does not guarantee that service, even in an emergency.

A small number of appointments is also available for those with urgent and imminent travel within three business days. These can also be handled in-person with an appointment, but walk-in visits are not allowed at the moment.

Contact your [local facility or acceptance center](#)—it could be a post office, library, or local government office—to confirm it’s open for applications. Agencies (official passport centers, not acceptance centers) used to allow walk-in visits, but given the increase in demand, it’s much more difficult to find a center that will allow that. Always call ahead.

You will need proof of travel if you pay for an expedited application and can secure one of the limited appointments available within three business days of travel. Remember that if you are missing any documentation, your application won’t be processed, which is why an expeditor can prove valuable.



Photo by Africa Studio/Shutterstock

Don't wait until you're at the airport to find out your passport isn't travel ready.

If you need it within 24 to 72 hours, try going to an agency in person

If it's a [life-or-death emergency](#), such as illnesses and injuries or a death in your immediate family, getting an emergency appointment at an agency in person is the only option. Instead of wasting a day with overnight shipping, you can save valuable time (even if you have to fly to a passport agency in the departure city of your international flight). In these circumstances, it can take anywhere between 24 and 72 hours depending upon where you apply and if you can provide

documentation, such as a death certificate or signed documentation from medical personnel.

You may want to pay extra for an expediting agency in this situation, because it can take care of the legwork during a stressful time.

At the moment, even an expeditor cannot guarantee a passport within 24 hours given the processing delays.

One final tip: The best thing you can do to avoid paying extra for expediting your passport is to set a calendar reminder for nine months before the expiration date. At that point, you can look ahead at your travels and figure out the best 18-week period to apply—one where, ideally, you know you won't be heading abroad. Let's hope that staffing level increases soon, so we can say goodbye to lengthy delays and hello once again to overseas travel.

This article was originally published in 2019. It was updated August 2, 2021, with COVID-related information