



DHS.gov

[Answers](#) [Ask a Question](#) [My Stuff](#)
[Login](#) [Help](#)

 Search by Keyword (Please do not use dashes, commas or colons) Or by: [Search Tips](#)

Search by Topic

Search by Category

Search By

Powered by

Answer ID

572

Date Created

03/21/2003 03:51 PM

Last Updated

02/06/2008 10:06 AM


[Print Answer](#)

[Email Answer](#)

What documents does a foreign national or green card holder need to enter the U.S.?

Question

What travel documents and identification are required for a foreign national or green card holder to enter the U.S.?

Answer

- **ALL persons* traveling by air** between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Bermuda are required to present a valid passport or Air NEXUS card.
- Oral declarations are no longer accepted from U.S., Canadian or Bermudian travelers seeking to enter the U.S. by sea and/or land.
- **As Late as Spring 2009** - Date to be determined by the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of State. ALL persons* traveling between the U.S. and Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and Bermuda by land or sea (including ferries), may be required to present a valid passport, Nexus, Fast card or other documents as determined by the Department of Homeland Security. While recent legislative changes permit a later deadline, the Departments of State and Homeland Security are working to meet all requirements as soon as possible. Ample advance notice will be provided to enable the public to obtain passports or passport cards for land/sea entries.

*Lawful permanent residents (LPRs), refugees, and asylees (of the United States) will continue to be able to use their Alien Registration Card (Form I-551), issued by DHS, or the Travel Document issued to those with refugee or asylee status to apply for entry to the United States.

A foreign national or alien entering the U.S. is generally required to present a passport and valid visa issued by a U.S. Consular Official, unless they are coming from a country eligible for the Visa Waiver Program, or are a lawful permanent resident of the U.S. or a citizen of Canada. The Visa Waiver Program allows foreign nationals from certain countries to be admitted to the U.S. under limited conditions and for a limited time without obtaining a visa. The foreign national must be coming from an eligible country, staying no more than 90 days, for pleasure/medical purposes, and able to prove they are not inadmissible. The foreign national is still required to have a passport. To obtain a list of countries eligible for the Visa Waiver Program, please reference the Department of State [web site](#).

Foreign nationals that are lawful permanent residents of the U.S. must present a Permanent Resident Card ("Green Card", INS Form I-551), a [Reentry Permit](#) (if gone for more than 1 year), or a Returning Resident Visa (if gone for 2 years or more), and their passport to reenter the United States if traveling from outside the Western Hemisphere. If traveling to Canada or Mexico, the Permanent Resident Card is sufficient, although, carrying a passport as well could help facilitate your reentry. (LPRs that are out of the U.S. for more than 180 days are subject to new immigrant inspection procedures as per 8 USC 1101.)

Foreign nationals that have applied for permanent residency or a change of status [may need to be approved for advance parole](#) in order to be readmitted to the U.S. after traveling abroad. Canadian citizens generally are not required to have a visa or a passport (See new WHTI requirements above) and may visit the U.S. for up to 6 months. However, Canadians must be able to prove their identity and citizenship to enter the United States. CBP will accept either a birth certificate, citizenship certificate or passport as proof of citizenship. If the Canadian citizen does not have any of these because they were lost or stolen, we emphasize that the burden of proof is on the traveler to prove that they are Canadian citizens. Copies of correspondence requesting a replacement of documents, etc. might be accepted, but it is up to the CBP officer to determine whether or not such paperwork meets that burden of proof.

Canadians coming as a Treaty Trader, classification E are required to have a visa to enter the U.S.

A visa and passport are not required of a Mexican national who is in possession of a Form DSP-150, B-1/B-2 Visa and Border Crossing Card, containing a machine-readable biometric identifier, issued by the Department of State and is applying for admission as a temporary visitor for business or pleasure from contiguous territory. If the traveler is not coming from the Western Hemisphere, a passport is required.

Continuing students who are going to travel outside of the United States must see their foreign student advisor and obtain an endorsement from the DSO or RO. The endorsement will be made on page 3 of the SEVIS Form I-20 or page 1 of the DS-2019. When returning to the United States, a continuing student/exchange visitor must present a valid SEVIS Form I-20 or DS-2019 with the DSO or RO signature showing that the student is active and in good standing with the school or program.

If you are traveling with children, you should also see our Q&A titled: Traveling with children, documents, paperwork, identification. To obtain a nonimmigrant visa, contact the Department of State at [www.state.gov](#). Be aware, the Department of State can authorize travel to the U.S. However, a visa does not guarantee that you will be allowed to enter the U.S. CBP has the authority to grant or deny your admission to the United States. The Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services determines how long you may stay in the United States and whether or not you may [extend](#) your stay. You may contact them at 1-800-375-5283.

How well did this answer your question?

 100% 75% 50% 25% 0%

Users who viewed this answer have also viewed

- [What documents/paperwork does a U.S. citizen or permanent resident \(adult/child\) need for International travel?](#)
- [Can a U.S. lawful permanent residents of the U.S. leave multiple times and return?](#)
- [What can I take to another country? What ID do I need to travel abroad?](#)
- [I am here on a Visa. Can I leave and come back into the United States?](#)
- [Documents required by Canadian Citizens/Residents/Landed Immigrant to enter the U.S. and how long can they stay?](#)

[Back to Search Results](#)

NOTE: The answers provided in this forum are for general information purposes only. Utilizing this forum does not constitute Reasonable Care under Informed Compliance guidelines.

Customs & Border Protection | 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, D.C. 20229 | 877-CBP -5511

