

October 21, 2015

When should I renew my U.S. passport?

Q. *When should I renew my U.S. passport? Does it matter if I am renewing my child's passport instead of my own?*

A. It's always a good idea to renew your passport well in advance as you never know when you will need to have a valid passport ready for urgent travel. Many countries won't let you enter if you have less than six months of validity on your passport; you can check the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs website at <http://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en.html> for specific countries' entry requirements. There is no extra fee for renewing a U.S. passport early and even if the passport has many months of validity left, only the standard fee applies. Fees can be paid at the U.S. Embassy when you apply.

In recent months, the U.S. Embassy has experienced unexpected delays in processing passport applications. If you also factor in potential delays in gathering the necessary documentation and submitting an application, it is a very good idea to renew your passport quite a few months before your passport's expiration. Remember also that minors' passports are only valid for five years, unlike adult passports.

For all these reasons, some travelers like to take care of renewals a year or more in advance of a trip. Information on passport applications, including how to schedule an appointment for passport services, is available on the Embassy's website at: <http://kingston.usembassy.gov/service.html>

Children under the age of 16 will need to have consent from both parents and any parents present in Jamaica must appear in person. If a parent is overseas and cannot appear in person, they must provide the Statement of Consent, form DS-3053, along with a photocopy of their ID to the person that accompanies the minor. For detailed information on how to renew the passports of minor children, please see our webpage on this topic at: http://kingston.usembassy.gov/http/travel/passport/get/outside/outside_5463.html

In order to apply for a U.S. passport you will need to establish both your identity and your citizenship. As a reminder, it is not possible to travel on a naturalization certificate. If you are a naturalized U.S. citizen, you cannot travel back to the United States on your certificate and will need a valid U.S. passport in order to return to the United States. If you travel to Jamaica without a valid U.S. passport you will have to apply for one at the Embassy in Kingston and wait for it to be processed, which could cause an unwanted delay in your travel.

You can find more information about how to travel to the U.S. on our website, www.kingston.usembassy.gov and the website of our authorized service provider at www.usvisa-info.com. Keep on top of Embassy news on our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/pages/US-Embassy-Jamaica and by following @USEmbassyJA on Twitter. We also answer general visa questions on our Facebook and Twitter pages.

Remember: your appointment time is your arrival time. Please don't come earlier.