



Passport Photos in the Digital Age



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If you are thinking about that long overdue cruise or European vacation, you will need a valid passport. And when you apply for a new, replacement, or renewal passport, you will need to submit a current photo. With no disrespect intended for your mad selfie skills, coming up with a photo that meets all the requirements to be considered "valid" may not be as easy as you might otherwise think.

According to the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs, passport photos must be taken within 6 months of the application being submitted, in color, and printed on either matte or glossy photo-quality paper. For people who wish to take the photo them-

selves, there are some technical parameters that need to be followed. While digital cameras may be used, webcams and mobile phones usually do not provide sufficient image quality. Images that have been copied, digital scans of official documents such as a driver's license, and full-length photos will also not be accepted. The background on passport photos must be white or off-white without additional details, objects, or patterns. You must have a neutral expression and be facing the camera directly with both eyes open. Photos with filters will not be accepted and neither will selfies. The photo must also be exactly 2 x 2 inches with a minimum of 600 x 600 pixels and a maximum of 1200 x 1200 pixels.

If you submit a passport photo that does not meet the photo requirements, you will receive a letter or email from the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs stating they need more information before they can continue processing your application. If you do not want to take the passport photo yourself, there are many retail locations with photo centers offering to take passport photos; the cost is around \$15.

Passport photos of infant and toddler children can be a little trickier than others. The U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs states that parents and/or guardians may not appear in the photo of their child, even if it is to hold or support the child during the photograph. The Department recommends laying babies and toddlers on their back on a plain white or off-white sheet, as this provides a plain background but still supports the child's head. A plain white or off-white sheet can also be placed over a car seat for the purpose of the photo; however, pacifiers, toys, stuffed animals, and other items may not be included in the image. It is also important to make sure there are no shadows on the baby's face, especially if the picture is taken from above with the child on its back. It is okay if an infant does not have both eyes open. Retail locations that offer passport photos should be able to take a passport photo of your pride and joy.

The attire for passport photos includes the clothing one would normally wear on a

daily basis. However, glasses are no longer permitted, even if they are worn regularly. This includes prescription glasses, tinted glasses, and sunglasses. Hats or head coverings are also not permitted, as well as uniforms, clothing that looks like a uniform, and camouflage attire.

If there is a medical or religious reason for the attire, then you must submit a signed note from your physician or submit a signed statement that verifies that the head covering, or uniform is part of recognized traditional religious attire. If head coverings or hats are permitted due to these special circumstances, the individual's entire face must still be visible, and the covering may not obscure the hairline or cast facial shadows. Also, despite COVID precautions, face masks cannot be worn for the passport photo. The guidelines and a few helpful examples are available online on the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs' website (<https://travel.state.gov>).

Make sure your passport photo will meet the requirements by using the Photo Tool on the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs website (<https://travel.state.gov>) today!

