

Your questions answered

What are biometrics?

Biometric technology makes use of the unique biological features we each have. Examples of biometric identifiers include facial measurements and characteristics, fingerprints and iris patterns.

Why is the UK introducing biometrics in its passports?

The UK is introducing biometric passports to:

- help fight passport fraud and forgery;
- help the public and the UK to fight identity fraud;
- ensure the British Passport stays one of the most secure and respected in the world;
- facilitate more robust border controls and in time, automated immigration checks;
- meet international standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO);
- ensure British citizens can continue to benefit from visa-free travel to the USA; and
- avoid disadvantaging British Passport holders as other countries switch to the more secure biometric passports.

Why choose facial biometrics?

Facial biometrics was chosen by ICAO as the most appropriate primary biometric for passports after a study lasting almost two years.

How will facial biometrics work?

Facial biometrics can be taken from a passport photo that meets our photo guidance standards. Facial biometrics involves measuring the distance between key points on the face. The UKPS will digitally encode the passport photo and store it securely on a chip held in the passport book.

How will you obtain my facial biometrics?

The UKPS will be able to use good quality passport photos to record facial biometrics. This is why we have specific photo guidance in each application pack. The guidance is based on internationally agreed standards and explains very clearly what kind of photos are and

are not acceptable. We ask passport applicants to follow the guidance carefully as passport applications may be delayed if the submitted photos do not meet our standards.

When will the biometric passport be available?

We are planning to introduce the biometric passport gradually over a period of six to nine months in 2006. We will start by producing small volumes of the new biometric passport. During the early stages of transition, some people will receive a new biometric passport, but most customers will receive an existing digital passport. We will switch over completely to biometric passports once we are confident it is safe to do so. Both types of passport will be valid travel documents.

What information will be stored on the chip?

The chip will store the passport holder's photo and the personal details printed on the last page in the passport. Once information has been placed on the chip, it cannot be amended.

Is there a risk of unauthorised people reading the data on the chip?

The data on the chip (your photo and personal information as printed on the last page of the passport) will be protected against eavesdropping (or 'skimming') by an advanced digital encryption technique.

Will you introduce fingerprints in the future?

In line with recently established European Union standards, we are also considering the inclusion of fingerprints in the next generation of biometric passports.

Do I need to upgrade my current passport?

Your current passport will remain valid until its expiry date. You will not need to exchange your passport for a biometric passport, but should apply for a new passport in good time as and when your current passport expires. It is best to allow 4–6 weeks for a passport application.

Contact details

Passport Adviceline

0870 521 0410*

Textphone service

0870 240 8090*

UKPS website

www.passport.gov.uk

UKPS email address

info@passport.gov.uk

Other leaflets available from the UKPS

- *A guide for customers with special needs*
- *Passports for children*
- *Passports for newly weds*
- *UKPS services and standards*
- *What to do if your passport is lost or stolen*

All these leaflets are available in Welsh, audiotape, Braille and large print formats.

* Calls are charged at national rate.



Awarded for excellence



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Printed September 2005

Coming
in 2006...

Biometric Passports



UK
PASSPORT SERVICE

UK Passport Service

British Passports will become biometric

In 2006, the UK Passport Service (UKPS) will start to introduce biometric passports. Biometric technology makes use of the unique features we each have. The first generation biometric passports will have many new security features, including a chip with the facial biometrics taken from a passport photo.

The UK is introducing biometric passports to:

- help fight passport fraud and forgery;
- help the public and the UK to fight identity fraud;
- ensure the British Passport stays one of the most secure and respected in the world;
- facilitate more robust border controls and, in time, automated immigration checks;
- meet international standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO);
- ensure British citizens can continue to benefit from visa-free travel to the USA; and
- avoid disadvantaging British Passport holders as other countries switch to the more secure biometric passports.

Fighting fraud and forgery

The new biometric passport will help fight fraud and forgery on several different fronts. Facial recognition technology will help the UKPS to detect fraudulent applications. The biometric measurements derived from a passport photo can be used to verify applications against images held on record.

Externally, the new biometric passport will appear very similar to the current one, although it will feature a logo indicating that there is a chip inside. However, internally there will be many new security features and the pages will have intricate designs and a new complex watermark. The last page of the passport will hold a chip as

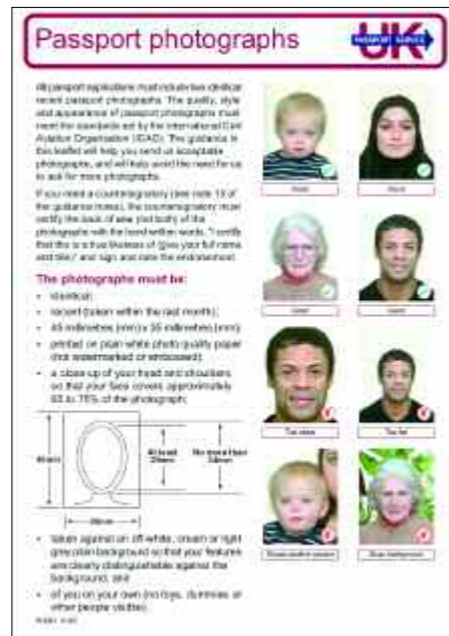


well as the holder's photo and personal details. The information on the chip will be secured by advanced digital encryption techniques. Information on the chip cannot be amended. Any change to the printed data will be apparent when compared with the data on the chip.

The new passport will also facilitate more robust border controls. Biometrics can help confirm that a passport holder is indeed its rightful owner. In time, the new biometric passport could facilitate automatic border controls and help to make passing through international borders a quicker and easier experience for the bona fide traveller.

Giving your facial biometric

When you apply for a passport, the UKPS will be able to use your passport photo to record your facial biometrics. Facial biometrics involves measuring the distance between key points on the face. The UKPS will digitally encode the passport photo and store it on a chip held in the passport book.



This is why we have specific photo guidance in each application pack. The guidance is based on internationally agreed standards and explains very clearly what kind of photos are and are not acceptable. We ask passport applicants to follow the guidance carefully as passport applications may be delayed if the submitted photos do not meet our standards.

Changeover to biometric passports

The UKPS has been issuing the current digital passport since 1998. To ensure a smooth transition from digital passports, the biometric passport will be introduced gradually over a period of six to nine months in 2006. We will start by producing small volumes of the new biometric passport. During the early stages of transition, some people will receive a new biometric passport, but most customers will receive an existing digital passport. We will switch over completely to biometric passports once we are confident it is safe to do so. Whether you receive a digital or a biometric passport in this transition period will not affect your travel arrangements as both types will be recognised internationally.

You will apply for a new passport in the same way as you would make an application today. Passport application packs will continue to be available at selected Post Office® branches, Worldchoice travel agents, and from the UKPS. You can then post your application directly to us, use the Check & Send service offered by selected Post Office® branches and Worldchoice travel agents, or apply online at www.passport.gov.uk.

Your current passport will remain valid until its expiry date. You will not need to exchange your passport for a biometric passport, but should apply for a new passport in good time as and when your current passport expires. It is best to allow 4–6 weeks for a passport application.

Travel tips

When applying:

- Avoid delays – follow the instructions in your application pack carefully. Your application may be delayed if you submit photos that do not meet our guidance, or if you do not enclose the necessary documents or fee.
- Prevent disappointment – we will need to ask you for new passport photos if the photos you submitted did not meet our standards, which are based on international requirements.
- Plan ahead – it is best to allow 4–6 weeks for your passport application.



When travelling:

- Keep a note of your passport number.
- Check the entry rules of the country you are visiting before booking your trip.
- Look after your passport – it is your responsibility to ensure your passport does not get damaged, lost or stolen.
- If your passport is lost or stolen, report this immediately to:
 1. the local police; and
 2. the UKPS;
 - (if you are abroad)
 3. the nearest British Consular post.