

# Travelling with Children

Parents of children from infants to teens know that travelling can involve a huge amount of paraphernalia. Everything from teddy bears and diaper bags to ipads and smart phones must be lugged along. But most parents who travel with children may not be aware of the legal requirements they must meet if they travel without the child's other parent or guardian. So, did you know.....

1. Children need their own passports to travel, even newborns and infants. Children cannot travel on their parent's passport.
2. All children, even newborns and infants must have a photograph in their passport. For a child under 16, a passport is valid for only 5 years, in order that the photo of the child more accurately reflects their appearance. As with all passport applications, there must be two identical photographs submitted; one certified by a guarantor.
3. A child under the age of 16 and adults obtaining a passport for the first time will receive an "ePassport", as will adults when they renew their existing passports. These are passports that contain a microchip, on which a digital photograph of the passport holder is recorded, along with their name, nationality, date of birth, sex and passport number. Adults can obtain a passport that is valid for 10 years but children under the age of 16 cannot. The passport of a child who turns 16 remains valid until it reaches its expiry date.
4. A passport application for a child under the age of 16 must include proof of parentage. This can be:
  - A detailed (long-form) birth certificate issued by a Canadian provincial or territorial vital statistics office that indicates the names of the parent(s);
  - A court-issued adoption order indicating the name) of the adoptive parent(s);
  - A foreign birth certificate that indicates the name of the parent(s). All documents submitted in a language other than English or French must be accompanied by a translation from a certified translator.
5. Parents must never sign the passport of a child. Children under the age of 11 cannot sign their passports; the signature box must be left blank. Children over the age of 11 must sign their passports in ink in the signature block on page three but only if they have signed their passports on page 2.
6. Parents and guardians should fill out the emergency contact person on the child's passport. It should be a person who is unlikely to be travelling with the child. Passport Canada advises that if the emergency contact person or their address changes, you should write the new information in the space above.

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Never use whiteout fluid on a passport. If there is no room left, write out the emergency contact information on a separate piece of paper and insert it into your child's passport.

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7. Parents, legal guardians and a divorced parent with legal custody may apply for passports for children. Both parents, and both guardians, if there is more than one should fill out the application for a new passport. Applicants must provide documentation of their status: for example, a long form birth certificate, an adoption order or proof of guardianship.
8. When the same parent or legal guardian who applied for a child's previous passport now applies to renew the child's passport, then proof of parentage is not necessary, but proof of citizenship must be provided. This can be a short-form or wallet-sized birth certificate.

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9. If the child's parents are divorced, then only the parent with legal custody of the child can apply for that child's passport. All documents that refer to the custody, access or mobility of the child must be provided, along with a copy of the divorce judgment. If the divorced parents have joint custody, either parent may apply.
10. Parents and guardians travelling alone with children should ideally take three documents with them:
  - the child's passport;
  - the child's long-form birth certificate;
  - a letter of consent from the non-accompanying parent or guardian.
11. The Government of Canada recommends that you contact the embassy or consulate of all the countries a child will be visiting to inquire about entry requirements. Check out Canada's "Country Travel Advice and Advisories" at: <http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>
12. You should take a consent letter with you to take your child out of the country by yourself, even if your child has a valid passport. A consent letter is not a legal requirement but it can simplify travel for Canadian children because it may be requested by border authorities when entering or leaving a foreign country or by Canadian officials when re-entering Canada.
13. A consent letter should say that the other parent or guardian consents to the child travelling with you. The letter does not need to be witnessed. However, it is a good idea to have it witnessed by an official such as a notary public or a commissioner for oaths so that it is more likely to be accepted as authentic. If you don't have a consent letter, you run the risk that you might be delayed or not allowed to enter or leave different countries. The details of what should be in a consent letter can be found on the Government of Canada's website: <http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/children/consent-letter>
14. If the non-accompanying parent or guardian refuses to consent to your travel outside the country with a child, you may apply to the court for an order that says you have permission to travel with the child. You will need to provide an itinerary and the judge will consider if the travel is in the best interests of the child.
15. If the non-accompanying parent is deceased, it is a good idea to take a copy of that person's death certificate with you to show to a border guard. Any court orders, such as an adoption order or an order permitting travel without the non-accompanying parent's consent should be taken along as well.
16. The Government of Canada recommends that a parent travelling alone with a child should take a copy of the child's long-form birth certificate along. Because a child's passport does not state the parents' names but the long-form birth certificate does, it shows the relationship between the child, the parent and the non-accompanying parent. This paper trail can be useful at border crossings if there is any confusion or doubt.
17. If you are the non-accompanying parent or guardian and you are fearful that the other person will not return to Canada with your child, you can apply to a court to have your child's passport taken away from the parent or guardian. In an emergency, you can make this application *ex parte*, which means without notice to the other side.
18. If you are worried about the possibility of a child international abduction, you should consult a lawyer without delay. The Government of Canada has an excellent website with important information called International Child Abduction: a Handbook for left-behind parents at: <http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/publications/international-child-abductions>

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