

Selfie Denial: Proper Photo is Paramount to Obtain Passport

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by Kelly Potts

Besides giving you the ability to travel the world, a passport is the ultimate ID to possess. Yet the passport photo is often what people can't seem to get right. Last year, more than 200,000 passport customers submitted poor quality photos that the State Department couldn't accept. The main reason: issues with eyeglasses. Beginning November 1, 2016 travelers must remove their eyeglasses for U.S. passport photos. The State Department recently changed its policy to enhance the security of the application process and to verify travelers' identities faster. Travelers who already have photos where they are wearing eyeglasses in existing passports will not be required to obtain new passports.

A bad photo can delay processing of a passport by weeks. Being that the State Department issued 14 million passports in 2014, even a minor delay can get compounded. AAA recommends that travelers renew their passports as far in advance as possible for an international trip to avoid delays. Keep in mind that many countries require up to six months validity of a passport in order to use it. As a travel resource, AAA offers eight tips to ensure your passport photo won't be returned:

Vision quest: Eyeglasses may cause glare on the lens, create shadows on faces or block a portion of the eyes. A passport photo without eyeglasses will help travelers move faster through U.S. ports of entry, especially when passports are verified electronically.

Glasses ceiling: Travelers only may wear glasses if they have a medical issue, such as a recent surgery requiring eyeglasses to protect their eyes. If travelers must wear eyeglasses for a medical reason, they'll need to obtain and submit a signed statement with their application from a medical professional.

No selfies: Each passport photo must measure 2 inches by 2 inches, with the head measuring between 1 and 1.375 inches. The State Department also states that "hand-held self portraits are not acceptable."

Neutral territory: You must face the camera and maintain a neutral expression. No big smiles are permitted.

Hats off: You may wear a head covering if you wear it daily for religious purposes. Your full face must be visible and your covering cannot obscure your hairline or cast shadows on your face.

Uniform dismissal: Uniforms, clothing that looks like a uniform, and camouflage cannot be worn except in the case of religious attire that is worn daily.

Current event: The photo must have been taken within six months of your application date and must reflect your current appearance.

Biggest loser: If you've greatly fluctuated in weight, undergone "significant facial surgery or trauma" or added or removed large facial tattoos or piercings, you'll need to apply for a new passport.

To further expedite travel, AAA recommends that frequent travelers enroll in trusted traveler programs such as [TSA PreCheck](#) and [Global Entry](#). AAA is the largest leisure travel agency in North America, for more info visit aaa.com/travel.