



I Am a U.S. Citizen...

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How Do I...Get Proof of My U.S. Citizenship?



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

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If you were born in the United States (U.S.), you were a U.S. citizen at birth¹. You do not need to apply to USCIS for any evidence of citizenship. Your birth certificate issued by the U.S. State where you were born is proof of your citizenship.

If you were born outside the U.S., but one or both your parents were U.S. citizens when you were born, you may still be a U.S. citizen. This is called citizenship through derivation. There are usually additional specific requirements, and sometimes citizenship can be through a combination of a parent and grandparent. See the next page for more information about derivative citizenship.

What documents are usually accepted as proof of U.S. citizenship?

The most common documents that establish U.S. citizenship are:

- **Birth Certificate**, issued by a U.S. State (if the person was born in the U.S.), or by the U.S. Department of State (if the person was born overseas and the parents registered the child's birth and U.S. citizenship at birth with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate).
- **U.S. Passport**, issued by the U.S. Department of State.
- **Certificate of Citizenship**, issued to a person born outside the U.S. who was still a U.S. citizen at birth, or to a person who later automatically became a U.S. citizen.
- **Naturalization Certificate**, issued to a person who became a U.S. citizen after birth through the naturalization process.

I was born in the U.S. Where can I get a copy of my birth certificate?

Check with the Bureau of Vital Statistics in the U.S. State in which you were born. For more information, please visit the National Center for Health Statistics web page at www.cdc.gov/nchs/births.htm.

¹There is an exception to this rule. If your parents were here as foreign diplomats when you were born, you were not a U.S. citizen at birth, but you may be a permanent resident.

I am a U.S. citizen. My child will be born abroad, or recently was born abroad. How do I register his or her birth and U.S. citizenship?

Please contact the U.S. State Department or the U.S. Embassy/Consulate in the country where your child will be born for more information about eligibility requirements and how to register your child's U.S. citizenship.

I was born overseas. My birth and U.S. citizenship were registered with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. I need a copy of the evidence of my citizenship. Whom should I contact?

Contact the U.S. State Department. For more information, please see their website at www.state.gov.

I was born overseas. I believe I was a U.S. citizen at birth because one or both my parents were U.S. citizens when I was born. But my birth and citizenship were not registered with the U.S. Embassy when I was born. Can I apply to have my citizenship recognized?

Yes, but please note—whether or not someone born outside the U.S. to a U.S. citizen parent is a U.S. citizen depends on the law in effect when the person was born. These laws have changed over the years, but usually require a combination of the parent being a U.S. citizen when the child was born, and having lived in the U.S. or its possessions for a period of time. The table on the next page gives some examples of recent requirements. Derivative citizenship can be quite complex and may require careful legal analysis.



Derivative citizenship through birth to a U.S. citizen parent or parents	
Child born abroad to two U.S. citizen parents	
Born on or after December 24, 1952	Requirements: One parent must have resided in the U.S. and its possessions before the child was born.
Child born abroad – one parent a U.S. citizen when the child was born; the other not a U.S. citizen	
Born on or after November 14, 1986	Requirements: Before the child was born, the U.S. citizen parent must have been physically present in the U.S. or its possessions for at least 5 years, 2 of which must have been after the parent turned 14.
Born between December 24, 1952 and November 13, 1986	Requirements: Before the child was born, the U.S. citizen parent must have been physically present in the U.S. and its possessions for at least 10 years, 5 of which must have been after the parent turned 14. Military or government service abroad can count as U.S. presence.

For example: For a child born on or after November 14, 1986, with one parent a U.S. citizen when the child was born, the child 'derived' U.S. citizenship at birth *if*, before he/she was born, that parent lived in the U.S. for at least 5 years, 2 of which were after he/she turned 14.

Requirements differ somewhat for children born out of wedlock to a U.S. citizen mother or father. For more information, please check our website, or the State Department website at www.state.gov.

I was born overseas. One of my parents was a U.S. citizen but never lived in the U.S. One of my grandparents was also a U.S. citizen. Could I have derived U.S. citizenship?

If your parent was a U.S. citizen when you were born but had not lived in the U.S. for the required amount of time before your birth, but one of your grandparents was also a U.S. citizen and had already met the residence requirements, then you may still have derived U.S. citizenship. For more information, please check our website, or the State Department website at www.state.gov.

I was born overseas. After I was born, my parent(s) became naturalized U.S. citizens. Could I have derived U.S. citizenship?

If one of your parents naturalized after February 27, 2001, and you were a permanent resident and under 18 at the time, then you may have automatically acquired U.S. citizenship. Before that date, you may have automatically acquired U.S. citizenship if you were a permanent resident and under 18 when both parents naturalized, or if you had only one parent when that parent naturalized.

However, if your parent(s) naturalized after you were 18, then you will need to apply for naturalization on your own after you have been a permanent resident for at least 5 years.

How do I apply to have my citizenship recognized?

You have two options:

- You can apply to the U.S. Department of State for a U.S. passport. A passport is evidence of citizenship and also serves as a travel document if you need to travel. For information about applying for a U.S. passport, see the U.S. Department of State website at www.state.gov.
- If you are already in the U.S., you also have the option of applying to us using **Form N-600**, *Application for Certificate of Citizenship*. However, you may find applying for a passport to be more convenient because it also serves as a travel document and is often a faster process.

How do I replace a lost, stolen, or destroyed naturalization certificate or certificate of citizenship?

To apply to replace your naturalization certificate or certificate of citizenship issued by us or by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, file a **Form N-565**, *Application for Replacement Naturalization Citizenship Document*. The N-565 application is available on our website.

Key Information

Key forms referenced in this Fact Sheet	Form #
Application for Certificate of Citizenship	N-600
Application for Replacement Naturalization Citizenship Document	N-565

USCIS

• On the Internet at: uscis.gov

For more copies of this Fact Sheet, or information about other citizenship and immigration services, visit our website. You can also download forms, e-file some applications, check the status of an application, and more. It's a great place to start! If you don't have Internet access at home or work, try your library. If you can't find what you need, call customer service.

• Customer Service: **1-800-375-5283**

- Hearing Impaired TDD Customer Service: 1-800-767-1833

Disclaimer: This Fact Sheet is a basic guide to help you become generally familiar with our rules and procedures. For more information, or the law and regulations, see our website. Immigration law can be complex, and it is impossible to describe every aspect of every process. You may wish to be represented by a licensed attorney or by a nonprofit agency accredited by the Board of Immigration Appeals.

Other U.S. Government Services—click or call

In general	www.firstgov.gov	1-800-333-4636
U.S. Department of State	www.state.gov	1-202-647-6575
National Center for Health Statistics	www.cdc.gov	1-800-311-3435

