



Home Office

Specimen passports

Version 5.0

This guidance explains what a specimen passport is and how His Majesty's Passport Office deals with requests for specimen passports

Contents

Contents.....	2
About: Specimen passports	3
Contacts	3
Publication	3
Changes from last version of this guidance	3
Specimen passports.....	4
Who receives and authorises requests for specimen passports.....	4
Specimen passports for entertainment purposes	5
Confirming the decision to issue a specimen passport.....	5
Processing an application for a specimen passport.....	6
Issuing and printing the specimen passport	6
Maintaining a record of specimen passports	7
Returning specimen passports to HM Passport Office	7
If the production company does not return the specimen passport	7

About: Specimen passports

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff about specimen passports and who can get one. It also tells staff working in the Specimen Passport team how we process specimen passports used in film and theatre for entertainment purposes.

Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you or you think that the guidance has factual errors then email Guidance & Quality, Operating Standards.

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance then you can email the Guidance & Quality, Operating Standards.

Publication

Below is information on when this version of the guidance was published:

- version **5.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **4 April 2023**

Changes from last version of this guidance

This guidance has been updated with minor formatting changes.

Related content

[Contents](#)

Specimen passports

This page tells HM Passport Office staff what a specimen passport is, who can get one and who authorises the request for a specimen passport.

A specimen passport is a passport issued to:

- other UK government departments
- foreign governments (foreign governments request it through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office)
- entertainment production companies

Government departments use specimen passports for training or for fraud detection. Entertainment production companies use specimen passports as props during theatre or filming.

Who receives and authorises requests for specimen passports

All requests for specimen passports (for any purpose) must be emailed to the Reputation Management team at props@hmpo.gov.uk

When an emailed request for a specimen passport is received the Reputation Management team will:

- forward requests from UK government departments and foreign governments to the Document Technology team to consider and authorise if appropriate (if authorised the passport will be supplied by the Document Technology team free of charge)
- consider requests for specimen passports for entertainment purposes (if the Reputation Management team agrees to the request, they will ask the Document Technology team for authorisation to issue the passport)

Related content

[Contents](#)

Specimen passports for entertainment purposes

This section explains how HM Passport Office will process a request for a specimen passport for entertainment purposes.

If a customer asks for a specimen passport for entertainment purposes, the Reputation Management team will email the customer and ask them to complete a specimen passport form.

The production company must complete the specimen passport form and agree that the passport:

- must be securely stored when not in use and only removed from the secure area and given to the relevant people during the production
- number and machine readable zone (the code at the bottom of the photo and personal details page) must not be shown at any time (for example this can be covered by a finger during filming)
- must be returned to the Specimen Passport team at HM Passport Office for secure destruction after the production ends

When the production company emails the completed form, the Reputation Management team must check if the:

1. Production company is a legitimate, reputable company (for example, if issuing the passport would damage the reputation of HM Passport Office).
2. Royal crest image on the front cover of the passport will be seen by the public during the performance.
3. Document technology team will authorise the request.

If the royal crest image can be seen, HM Passport Office must get permission from National Archives who owns the image copyright.

Confirming the decision to issue a specimen passport

The Reputation Management team will email the production company and confirm if their request has been approved.

If the request for a specimen passport is approved, we will ask the production company to:

- complete a paper passport application in a fictitious name
- sign the application on behalf of the character
- provide passport photos of the character
- pay the correct fee

- send a signed, hardcopy of the specimen passport form to the Specimen Passport team to confirm:
 - where to deliver the passport
 - what pages will be used during filming
 - when the passport will be returned to HM Passport Office
- send the application to a specified address

Processing an application for a specimen passport

The Reputation Management team will email the Specimen Passport team to confirm:

- that permission for a specimen passport was granted
- the name of the production company
- the name of the fictional character

The Specimen Passport team will:

- process any application for a specimen passport used for entertainment purposes
- maintain a record of all specimen passports issued for entertainment purposes
- securely destroy all returned specimen passports

Issuing and printing the specimen passport

The production company must send the paper passport application and a signed hardcopy of the specimen form to the Specimen Passport team. The team must:

- check that the signature on the passport application form matches the signature on the specimen form
- process the application as a first time application using the Fast Track or Fast Track collect service (you must not send the customer for an identity interview)
- add a mandatory case note stating, “authorised media application submitted by [company name]. Passport to be cancelled after printing”
- confirm in case notes which visa pages must be stamped “Cancelled”
- scan the specimen passport form onto the application as a supporting document
- make sure the passport is printed in the local print room
- tell the local print room to return the new passport to the Specimen Passport team

Once we have printed the passport, the local print room staff member must return it to the Specimen Passport team. The Specimen Passport team must:

- cancel the passport on the system and update the Main Index (MI) record to ‘revoke’
- add a passport note to MI which states ‘Specimen passport issued to [company name]’

- ink stamp the word “Cancelled” on any visa pages not needed for filming
- post the passport to the address provided or contact the person asking for the passport and arrange for them to collect it at the public counter in London

Maintaining a record of specimen passports

The Specimen Passport team must maintain a record of all specimen passports issued by HM Passport Office. The record must be held for rolling 1 year period and must show the:

- date we granted permission
- name of the person granting permission
- name of the production company
- name of the person requesting the passport
- name of the fictional character
- passport number
- date we issued the passport
- date the passport must be returned to HM Passport Office
- date we sent reminder letters to the production company
- date of destruction
- name of the person witnessing the destruction of the passport
- reason why the production company did not return the passport to us (if we know why it was not returned)

Returning specimen passports to HM Passport Office

The production company must return the passport to the issuing department when they no longer need the passport.

When the passport is returned to us the Specimen Passport team must:

1. Securely destroy the specimen passport.
2. Update the specimen passport record log with the date the passport was returned.
3. Make 2 passport notes on MI confirming that the passport was returned to HM Passport Office and securely destroyed. The passport notes must be made by the person destroying the passport and a second person who witnessed the destruction.
4. Email the Reputation Management team to tell them the specimen passport has been returned to us.

The Reputation Management team must send a letter (by email) to the production company confirming that we have received the passport and have destroyed it.

If the production company does not return the specimen passport

If the production company does not reply to HM Passport Office or return the specimen passport to us, within 1 month of the agreed return date, we may refuse any future requests for a specimen passport.

The Specimen Passport team must email the Reputation Management team if the production company does not return the passport by the agreed date. The Reputation Management team must send a letter by email to the production company to remind them to return the specimen passport to us.

If the production company does not return the passport 1 month after the Reputation Management team has sent the reminder letter, the Specimen Passport team must:

1. Email the Reputation Management team to tell them that the production company has not returned the passport. This includes if they have reported the passport lost or stolen.
2. Complete a lost and stolen (LS) record if the production company says the passport was lost or stolen.
3. Make a passport note on MI to record that the passport was not returned as agreed.
4. Update the record log.

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[Contents](#)