



Home Office

Digital Customer Services: how a customer applies online

Version 9.0

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff how customers apply for a passport online using Digital Customer Services.

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About: Digital Customer Services: how a customer applies online

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office operational staff about Digital Customer Services (DCS) and explains:

- what services are available online
- who can apply online, and how they apply and what information they must give us
- what documents the customer must send us and how we will return them
- when the customer must supply a digital referee

Some customers may apply online through DCS at a Post Office. The Post Office will provide a Check & Send service for these applications, see Digital Check & Send (tablet): how a customer applies guidance.

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, email the Guidance team.

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, email the Guidance team.

Publication

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

- version **9.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **17 July 2023**

Changes from last version of this guidance

This guidance has been updated to say Digital Customer Service will now ask overseas and UK renewal customers (with no change of personal details) to send us a full colour photocopy of any foreign passport they hold or the physical foreign passport.

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Digital Customer Services: who can apply

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff, about the Digital Customer Services (DCS) online application and it explains who can apply and how. It also explains how the customer can track their online application.

All passport applications completed by customers online using Digital Customer Services are automatically uploaded to the Digital Application Processing (DAP) platform. Some applications will be dealt with in DAP; others will be transferred by the Document Management Service or examiners to the Application Management System (AMS).

Who can apply online using DCS

Customers can apply online for any HM Passport Office service using Digital Customer Services (DCS), except customers who:

- need a faster service (for example a Premium or Fast Track service)
- live in a country where the online service is not provided
- want to apply in Welsh (as they must apply by post)
- want to apply for a collective passport
- want to apply for a Diplomatic or Official passport
- are applying as part of a group of forces applications
- are applying from the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man

DCS application process

Customers wanting to apply for the DCS service, must apply online at [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk), and must:

- complete and submit their passport application online using DCS
- upload a digital photo
- pay the correct fee

DCS will tell the customer:

- what documents to send
- where to send their documents
- how and when we will return their documents

How the service type is chosen

DCS will ask the customer questions, so that it can make sure:

- the product they want is available online
- the customer gives us the right information, including correct documents for their service type

If you are processing on AMS, you, the examiner, must change the service type (and case note the change) if the customer's documents and information show they have selected the wrong service type. For example, you must change the service type to replacement if AMS shows the application as a renewal, but the customer's passport is damaged beyond normal wear and tear.

If you are processing on DAP, you cannot change the service type, but you will not need to on most applications. If you do need to change the service type you must transfer the application to AMS (see DAP: service type guidance).

How the customer tracks their online application

The customer can track the progress of their online application once they submit it by logging onto their application tracking page. The customer logs onto the tracking page by typing in their application number and date of birth.

On the customer's tracking page the customer can see:

1. When they submitted their application.
2. When they asked someone to confirm their identity.
3. When we emailed the digital referee.
4. If we accepted the digital referee.
5. If we rejected the digital referee.

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Digital Customer Service: how the application is created

This section tells HM Passport Office staff how customers complete a passport application using the online Digital Customer Service (DCS), and how we will display customer information on the passport issuing system for staff.

As the customer completes their online application, the DCS system will ask for the next piece of information it requires depending on the customer's response. For example, if a customer applies for a renewal of their adult passport the system will not ask for their parents' details.

HM Passport Office can change the order of questions on DCS, to improve the customer journey and help the customer to send the correct information.

DCS will allow the customer to provide additional information which will appear as a case note in the additional information field on the Application Management System (AMS) or as a task on the Digital Application Processing (DAP) system.

Customer's personal details

DCS will always ask the customer for their personal details. The customer must provide their:

- full name
- previous names (if they have any)
- date of birth
- place of birth
- country of birth
- gender (the sex marker shown on the passport)

AMS will add:

- information on the 'Additional Information' tab if the customer's previous names are over 47 characters long
- a case note if the customer's current name is over 28 characters long

Customer's contact details

Customers must give us their home address. DCS provides a drop-down list of countries and the customer must select where they live.

If they live in the UK they can either type in their postcode to search for their address, or type in their full address. DCS uses an Experian address database to abbreviate the address, regardless of how long it is (for example, 'Road' will become

'Rd') so it can fit on to the passport issuing system. If the customer lives outside of the UK, they must type in their full address.

DCS does not ask the customer if they want to give us an alternative address.

DCS will ask the customer to provide contact details and select if and how they want to receive notifications about their application. They must give us their:

- email address
- home address
- contact phone number

How the customer's address will appear for examiners

If the address has more than 30 characters on address line 1 and 2, AMS will:

1. Show the first 27 characters and add an ellipsis (a set of dots) to show some of the address is missing).
2. Automatically add the full address, in a case note.

Digital Application Processing (DAP) will accept up to 40 characters per line. DCS will not let the customer add any more than 40 characters per line.

You, the examiner must use the alternative address field if some of the customer's address is missing on the Application Management System.

How the customer gives us their photo

Customers must upload a digital photo as part of their application.

If the customer holds multiple passports (British and foreign)

DCS asks customers to tell us about any British or foreign passports they hold.

If the customer is applying from the UK, and it's not a renewal application (with no change of personal details), DCS tells them to send us any uncancelled current or expired British and foreign passports.

If the customer is applying from overseas (all application types) or from the UK with a renewal application with no changes (adult or child), DCS tells the customer to send us:

- any uncancelled current or expired British passports
- a full colour copy of any uncancelled current or expired foreign passports (including any blank pages) or the physical passport

If the customer's old passport is lost or stolen

DCS will ask the customer if their passport is lost or stolen, if it is lost, DCS will:

- ask the customer if they have reported it lost or stolen
- tell the customer to [report it](#) (if they have not already done it)
- ask the customer to type their passport number and expiry date (if they do not have this information, they can leave it blank)

If the customer's old passport is damaged

DCS will ask the customer if their passport is damaged. If the customer tells us their passport is damaged, DCS will ask them to:

- confirm their personal details in the new passport will exactly match the same details shown on their old passport
- explain in a free text box, why there is damage (DCS will add the information to the application, as additional information)

If the customers parents' or grandparents' details are needed

How the customer gives us their parents' details

DCS will ask the customer for details of their parents, when the customer tells us their application is for:

- a first time adult
- a renewal or replacement of an Old Blue (hardback style) passport or a passport issued on the Passport Issuing Management Information System (PIMIS)
- any child application

AMS and DAP will show you, the examiner, the customer's parents' details. If the customer does not know their parents' details, DCS will ask them to explain why and record this in an AMS case note or on the DAP **Application** tab.

How customers give us their grandparents' details

DCS will ask the customer for information about their grandparents if we need the details to confirm their nationality.

AMS will show any information the customer has entered for their grandparents' details, as a case note. DAP will show the details on the **Application** tab.

If the customer does not know their grandparents' details, DCS will ask the customer why and record it as an AMS case note or on the DAP **Application** tab.

If the customer has a naturalisation or registration certificate

DCS will ask the customer if they have naturalised or registered. If they have, DCS will tell the customer to provide their naturalisation or registration certificate number and the issue date.

If the customer is applying for their first passport, DCS will tell the customer to send us their naturalisation or registration certificate.

How we capture signatures

DCS does not capture signatures for any application. Customers sign their passport when they receive it, we do not print the customer's signature in the passport.

DCS will ask the customer if they are able to sign their passport, if they cannot DCS will ask the customer why. DCS will record the customer's reply in the additional notes tab in AMS or on the DAP **Application** tab.

Digital referees

We call online countersignatories digital referees. Digital referees are people who help confirm the customer's identity. We will ask the customer for a digital referee if the application is for a:

- first time adult
- first time child
- child aged 0 – 11 years old
- renewal or replacement of an Old Blue (hard back style) or machine readable passport issued before 1994 (DCS will treat these as a first time application)
- customer renewing their British national (overseas) (BN(O)) passport that was issued on (or before) 31 December 2003 (see BN(O) guidance)

We will not ask the customer to provide a digital referee for a child's application if they are aged 12-15 and have already held a British passport.

How the customer nominates a digital referee

DCS will tell the customer their application is on hold until they provide a digital referee. It tells the customer not to send their documents until we have accepted their digital referee.

DCS tells the customer who can be a digital referee and how to nominate a person as a digital referee. It tells the customer we will send the digital referee an email link to their online application and the digital referee will need to look at a photo and answer a few questions.

To nominate someone as a referee DCS tells the customer they must:

1. Contact the person they want to verify their application and tell them:
 - the date of birth (of the intended passport holder)
 - the current address (of the intended passport holder)
2. Enter the digital referee's email and name.
3. Confirm they have told the digital referee about the application.

DCS will tell the customer and their digital referee if the referee does not meet the criteria and send reminders to the customer if the digital referee has not replied. If the digital referee is rejected DCS will tell the customer they need to nominate a new digital referee.

DCS gives the customer the option to:

- nominate someone else to be a digital referee if the digital referee has not replied
- ask someone else to verify their application using a paper form

Customers who must supply a digital referee will get automatic reminders to remind their referee to complete their part of the application.

How the customer gives us additional information

DCS allows customers to provide information in free text fields, when they answer certain questions. For example, customers may tell us why:

- they want their photo accepting
- they are unable to sign their passport

How additional information is shown on DAP applications

DAP will show additional information as part of a task. DAP examiners must read the additional information and decide what action is needed as they process the task.

How additional information is shown on AMS applications

If the customer has given extra information, AMS will add this to the application. AMS will either:

- add a tab called additional information in the applications details screen
 - (this tab will not be highlighted)
 - (this tab will not appear if there is no additional information)
- take the examiner direct to the additional information screen when they scan the application on to AMS

AMS will not copy information from the additional information field, on to Main Index. If the additional information tab appears on AMS you, the examiner, must:

- read the additional information recorded

If you use any information from the additional information tab in your decision making) you must:

- copy and paste the additional information, in to a case note for future reference
- case note the actions you have taken to action this information

How the customer confirms the information is correct

The customer must confirm the information they have given us is correct and complete a declaration. DCS will show the customer a declaration page and ask them to confirm:

- the information they have given on the application is correct
- they agree:
 - to the [terms and conditions](#)
 - that HM Passport Office can record, store, use and share their data, in accordance with [our privacy policy](#)

DCS tells the customer we may prosecute them, if they give untrue or misleading information.

How customers send in their application

When the customer has paid the fee online, DCS will ask them if they are ready to submit their application.

If the customer agrees to submit their application DCS will:

- virtually store and hold the application until the customer sends their documents
- send the customer reminders if the customer must send documents
- send the application automatically to an application processing centre (APC) for examination if we do not need any documents

When DCS tells the customer what documents to send and where

When the customer completes their online application DCS will show them a document list to tell them what documents they need to send us. If the customer needs a digital referee, DCS will tell them not to send any documents until we accept the referee.

When we want the customer to send us their documents DCS will tell the customer and give them the correct address.

How we return the customers documents

We will return the customer's documents to them when we have completed all our checks.

If the customer lives in the UK, we will return their documents by Royal Mail second class post unless they pay an additional fee. We will charge the customer extra to return their documents by secure delivery using our UK or overseas secure delivery provider.

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How a digital referee completes an application

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff, about Digital Customer Services (DCS), it explains how the digital referee logs on to the application, information the digital referee must provide, and how we record this information.

After the customer has nominated a digital referee DCS will send the digital referee an email asking them to verify the customer's application. The digital referee must

1. Click on the hyperlink on the email.
2. Enter the application reference number and the intended passport holder's date of birth.

DCS will run checks to make sure the reference number and date of birth are correct. If the referee inputs the wrong details DCS will prompt them to recheck and try again. There is no limit to the amount of times a digital referee can attempt to log on to verify the customer's details.

How the digital referee completes the application

DCS will complete automatic checks as the digital referee completes the application and [verifies the customer's identity](#); if any of the automatic checks are unsuccessful DCS will reject the digital referee. We will tell the customer and the digital referee they have been rejected but we will not tell them why.

The digital referee must:

1. Tell us:
 - their name
 - their current British passport number or the number of their Irish, US, or EU or Commonwealth country passport
 - their UK or overseas home address
 - their professional details
 - whether they are retired
 - their work address
 - their telephone number
2. Confirm:
 - how long they have known the person applying for the passport
 - how they know them (for example as a friend or colleague)
 - the intended passport holder's identity (they are shown the customer's photo)
 - the intended passport holder's home address
3. Confirm on a child's application:
 - the full name and year of birth for parent 1 and 2
 - the child's place of birth

- whether the person applying has parental responsibility

To see the information the digital referee provides you must:

- check the case notes if the application is on the Application Management System (AMS)
- click on **Digital referee – Accept or reject** if the application is being processed in Digital Application Processing (DAP)

Additional information from the digital referee

DCS allows digital referees to provide additional information in free text fields, when they answer certain questions. For example, a digital referee may need to explain why they cannot confirm the photo is a true likeness of the customer.

If the digital referee provides additional information:

- AMS will add it as a case note or into the additional information tab
- DAP will add it as a task, for the examiner to review

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