



Home Office

# Sign after receipt

Version 1.0

This guidance tells HM Passport office staff about sign after receipt passports, including what sign after receipt passports are, which customers must sign their passport, how customers must sign their passport and what customers must do if they make a mistake when signing their passport.

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# About: Sign after receipt

This guidance tells HM Passport office staff about sign after receipt passports, including:

- what sign after receipt passports are
- which customers must sign their passports after receipt
- how customers must sign their passports
- what customers must do if they make a mistake when signing their passport

## 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 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 then you can email the Guidance team.

## Publication

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

- version **1.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **5 February 2025**

## Changes from last version of this guidance

This is new guidance

### Related content

#### [Contents](#)

Signatures for 12 to 15 year olds

Customers who are unable to sign their passport

Customer turns 12 during the examination process

### Related external links

GOV.UK: [Signing your new passport](#)

# Signing a passport after receipt

This page tells HM Passport office staff about signing a passport after receipt, including what sign after receipt passports are, and which customers must sign their passports after receipt.

A signature is one of the features used on a passport to confirm a customer's identity. All passports issued before 1998 had handwritten signatures. In 1998, HM Passport Office started issuing passports with a digital copy of the holder's signature printed on the personal details page. This required customers to send in a signed paper form as part of their application.

To improve the online application service and remove the need for customers to send signed paper forms, sign after receipt passport books were reintroduced. Since January 2017, all customers who are [not exempt from signing](#) must sign their passport after the document has been issued to them.

Passports with handwritten signatures meet international standards and have the same level of security as those with digitally printed signatures.

## Sign after receipt passports: validity

A sign after receipt passport is not a valid travel document until the holder has signed it. HM Passport office tells customers to [sign their new passport as soon as they get it](#).

A passport may not be valid for travel if a customer has [made a mistake](#) when signing (for example, they have signed the wrong name).

Passports that were issued with a digitally printed signature remain valid until their expiry date.

## Sign after receipt: customers who must sign their passport

Customers must sign their passport if they are able to do so, and are:

- children aged 12 to 15 (see also Signatures for 12 to 15 year olds)
- adults aged 16 and over

If you, the examiner, are working on an application for a child who turns 12 during the application process, you must follow Customer turns 12 during the examination process.

## Sign after receipt: customers not required to sign

A customer is not required to sign their passport if they are:

- aged 11 and under
- aged 12 and over and [unable to sign](#)

When a passport has been issued to a customer who is not required to sign, a note on the personal details page will state: 'The holder is not required to sign'.

## Sign after receipt: customers who are unable to sign

If you, the examiner, receive an application for a customer who is aged 12 and over and information with the application suggests they are unable to sign, you must follow: Customers who are unable to sign their passport.

If a customer is unable to sign their passport for a temporary reason, such as an injury, you must follow: Customer unable to sign passport: temporary reason.

We also ask customers 16 years old and over to complete their own application declaration. If a customer is unable to complete their own application declaration, you must follow the Authorisation and consent guidance.

### Related content

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# Sign after receipt: how a customer must sign their passport

This page tells HM Passport office staff about signing a passport after receipt, including how customers must sign their passports, and what customers must do if they make a mistake when signing their passport.

The [Signing your new passport](#) page on GOV.UK tells customers how to sign their passport. Customers who are [required to sign](#) their passport must:

- use a black ball point pen
- sign above the 'holder's signature' line on the 'observations' page (the page directly opposite the personal details page on a blue e-passport)
- sign their usual signature or mark

If a customer signs their passport incorrectly, it may cause issues when using their passport to travel and, in some cases, make the passport invalid. For example, customers must not:

- sign in pencil or coloured ink
- rub out a signature made in pencil as this may damage the page
- sign a name that is not their usual signature or mark
- include the date, or any other information that is not part of their usual signature or mark, with their signature
- sign using a finger or thumb print (see also Customers who are unable to sign their passport)
- cross through, alter or use correction fluid to correct a mistake on their signature

## Sign after receipt: customers who have changed their name

Customers must sign their passport in their usual signature or mark.

If a customer's signature has changed due to a change of name, they should use the signature that aligns with the new name shown on the passport.

If a customer is changing their name due to a future marriage or civil partnership ceremony and has been issued with a post-dated passport, they must sign the name that applies from the date of the ceremony.

If a passport is issued with an observation to show 'the holder is also known as' another name, the customer must sign the passport in their usual signature or mark, which should be the holder's signature or mark.

## Sign after receipt: mistakes when signing

If a customer makes a mistake when signing, the passport may not be valid for travel and HM Passport Office cannot guarantee the error will not cause issues when using their passport, such as delays or questioning by Border Officials.

If a customer needs to replace their passport due to a mistake when signing, they must apply again and pay the correct fee for the replacement passport.

If you, the examiner, receive an application to replace a passport where the customer made a mistake while signing, you must follow: Damaged British passports.

## Sign after receipt: mistakes that do not affect validity

If a customer makes a mistake when signing but the signature can still be used to confirm their identity, the validity of the passport will not be affected. Mistakes that do not affect the validity of a passport include where:

- the customer has signed in the 'holder's signature' area but not directly on the printed signature line
- part of the signature crosses the signature line or extends over printed text, provided the printed text is still readable
- the customer has signed more than once, provided the signatures are the same and the customer has not crossed through or written over one of the signatures
- the customer signs in coloured ink, provided the signature is otherwise acceptable

## Sign after receipt: mistakes that may affect validity or cause issues while travelling

Some mistakes may limit how effectively the signature can be used to confirm identity and may cause issues for customers while travelling. These include where:

- the customer has crossed through, written over, or smudged their signature
- the customer has included information in addition to their usual signature, such as the date
- the customer has changed their name but signed the passport in their old name
- the signature is upside-down, as this is not a true representation of the holder's signature

## Sign after receipt: mistakes that invalidate a passport

Some mistakes will mean the signature cannot be used to confirm the customer's identity and the passport will not be valid for travel. Mistakes that invalidate a passport include where:

- the signature is not the holder's usual signature or mark
- someone other than the holder signed the passport (for example, a parent signing on behalf of a child)
- the customer has used correction fluid on their signature to correct a mistake

**Related content**

[Contents](#)

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**Related external links**

GOV.UK: [Signing your new passport](#)