



Home Office

# Customers who are unable to sign their passport

Version 12.0

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff how to deal with applications from customers who cannot sign their passports when they receive it.

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# About: Customers who are unable to sign their passport

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff how to deal with applications from customers who cannot sign their passport but can consent to their passport application.

You must follow this guidance if the customer cannot sign their passport and, follow Authorisation and consent guidance, if a customer is not making the declaration for themselves.

If a child becomes 12 years old during the examination process (and is therefore required to sign their passport) you must:

- follow the DAP: applicant's age moved to under or over 12 guidance if you are processing the application on DAP (Digital Application Processing) and:
  - [Updating the passport when there is no unable to sign task](#), if the child is unable to sign 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 **12.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **5 June 2025**

## Changes from last version of this guidance

This guidance has been updated to:

- tell DAP (Digital Application Processing) examiners how to update a passport when there is no **unable to sign** task shown on DAP. The guidance has also been updated with minor formatting changes
- make minor terminology changes
- remove references to Application Management System (AMS)

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# Customers who cannot sign their passport

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff what to do if a customer tells us they cannot sign their passport and the evidence we need to progress their application.

We ask customers 12 years old and over to sign their passport when they receive it, as some:

- organisations (for example, banks) may use it to check identity
- countries may not accept it for travel purposes, when it does not include a signature

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

You may have reason to believe a customer is unable to sign their passport, for example:

- section 9 on a paper application is blank
- a third-party signs section 9
- the customer has told us when they applied online

## Why customers may not be able to sign their passport

Customers may not be able to sign their name on their passport because they:

- have a mental or physical disability
- have a learning difficulty
- have a temporary reason (for example, a broken arm or other medical condition)
- cannot read or write

If you have concerns (for example, someone is trying to fraudulently obtain a passport) you must discuss the application with your operational team leader (OTL) and if they agree, complete additional checks.

## If a customer is unable to sign: online application

Customers who cannot physically provide a wet signature on a passport may be able to complete their own application online (for example, they can use assistive technology to help them).

If a customer applies online, we:

- do not ask for a signature when they make their application
- ask them to sign their passport when they get it
- ask them to confirm they are making the application for themselves (they must tick a box to confirm their declaration)

If a customer tells us they cannot sign their new passport, the Digital Customer Services (DCS) system will tell the customer to explain the reasons why in a free text box.

You must use this guidance and the Authorisation and consent guidance if the online application declaration has not been completed by the customer.

## If a customer is unable to sign: paper application

If a customer applies using a paper form, we ask:

- for a signature when they make their application (section 9)
- them to sign their passport when they get it

## Evidence that a customer cannot sign their passport

When a customer is unable to sign their passport, we ask them (or the person completing the application on their behalf) to:

- explain why they cannot sign their name:
  - in section 8 of the paper application
  - using the free text field on DCS
- give us evidence to confirm this

The customer must send us [evidence from a third party or medical professional](#) that they cannot sign their passport. The evidence must have a wet signature, a wet signature is when a person who writes the letter physically marks it with their signature. This means we cannot accept these letters by email. You (the examiner) must not accept a letter that is not signed or dated, you must ask for a new one.

You must be aware:

- the customer may have included the evidence with their application
- we may already have the evidence we need as part of a [previous application](#)

The evidence needed for us to confirm a person is unable to sign their passport or they are unable to consent to the application may be similar, but they are two different requirements. You must make sure you have suitable evidence depending on the scenario.

## Evidence for renewal and replacement applications

If a customer is applying for a renewal or replacement passport, you may not need evidence they are unable to sign, as we may already have it on our passport records.

You do not need to ask for more evidence if you have checked passport records and it shows all the following:

- we issued a previous passport with a note in the signature strip confirming the holder does not need to sign
- a case note confirming the customer cannot sign their passport and their reason is a permanent one
- we have the evidence confirming the customer cannot sign recorded on passport application records, for example:
  - on a previous application form
  - on a document image

You must ask for extra evidence, if:

- the evidence from our passport and application records does not still apply for example:
  - a court order is out of date
  - there have been changes to a customer's care arrangements
- passport and application records show no evidence to explain why:
  - we issued the previous passport with a note in the signature strip confirming the holder does not need to sign
  - the customer has included a letter to tell us they cannot sign their name
  - the customer leaves the signature box empty or marks it with an X (paper applications only)
  - a third party has signed the application

## Evidence from parents, third parties and medical professionals

You must ask the customer to send us evidence they are unable to sign their passport from a medical professional or another third party.

### Customer unable to sign: evidence from medical professionals

Customer must send a letter from a medical professional if they cannot sign their name in their passport, because they have a:

medical condition (for example, a condition that requires medical care or they need their passport to travel for treatment)

a [temporary medical condition](#) (for example, a broken arm)

The letter must:

- be from a medical professional, such as a:
  - doctor
  - health care worker
- include the:
  - medical reason the customer cannot sign their name
  - medical professional's [wet signature](#)

When we get the letter, we [will verify the person](#) who sent it.

## Customer unable to sign: parental or third party evidence

We will accept a letter from a parent or third party if a customer cannot sign their name in their passport. For example, if they:

- cannot read or write
- have a mental or physical disability that does not involve medical care (for example, cerebral palsy)
- have a learning difficulty

The third party may be a spouse, relative, social worker, community group or a personal friend. Depending on the customer's circumstances, the third party may need authority or evidence to provide this letter.

The third party may also be a parent when the intended passport holder is 16 years or over.

We will also accept a letter (or declaration made online) from a parent when the intended passport holder is 12 to 15 years, if they have consented to their child's application.

## Deciding if you need extra information

You must decide if you need extra evidence from a third party. You must ask for extra information, if:

- a medical professional has confirmed a child's parent is unable to provide consent for the child's change of name
- a child is unable to sign as they have a mental disability (we may need to check this information if the child applies for an adult passport)
- we previously issued a passport with an observation, as the customer could not sign for a temporary reason
  - we must make sure we have the most up to date information, as to why the customer is unable to sign

The letter must include:

- the reason the customer cannot sign their name
- the third party's [wet signature](#)

When we get the letter, we will [verify the person](#) who sent it.

## **If you are satisfied the customer cannot sign their name**

If we are satisfied the customer cannot sign their passport, we will issue the passport with a note showing, 'THE HOLDER IS NOT REQUIRED TO SIGN'.

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# Customer unable to sign passport: temporary reason

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff what to do if a customer tells us they cannot sign their passport for a temporary reason (for example, a broken arm).

If the customer tells us they are unable to sign their passport for a temporary reason (for example, a broken arm), you will need to follow different processes if the customer has applied:

- online, and [cannot sign their passport](#)
- [using a paper form and has signed their paper form, but now cannot sign their passport](#)
- [using a paper form, and cannot sign the paper form declaration or their passport](#)

## Customer unable to sign passport: temporary reason

If a customer tells us they are unable to sign their passport for a temporary reason, and they have applied online or using a paper form which they have signed, you must:

1. Check they have made the declaration themselves (they may be able to do this, even if they temporarily cannot sign their passport). If someone else has provided consent, follow authorisation and consent guidance.
2. Check the reason why they cannot sign their name (you may need to contact the customer if they did not tell us on the application).
3. Decide to:
  - issue their passport (in line with current guidance) if they can wait until they are able to sign their name
  - [issue a restricted validity passport](#) if the customer tells us they are unable to wait until they can sign their name in the passport, or need to travel urgently
4. Add a case note to show the actions and decisions you made.

The customer will get automatic notifications telling them to sign their passport, which they can do as soon as they are able to.

## Customer unable to sign paper form and passport: temporary reason

If a customer cannot sign their paper application form declaration and their passport because of a temporary reason, you, the examiner, must:

- check the reason why they cannot sign their name (you may need to contact the customer if they did not tell us on the application)

- contact the customer to see if they can sign their declaration in the next 7 weeks

If you do not accept the reason given or the customer tells you they can sign their name, you must ask them to complete and sign a new paper application.

## Temporary reason: customer can sign paper form in next 7 weeks

If a customer applied with a paper application and tells us they will be able to sign their name in the next 7 weeks, you must discuss with the customer whether they can wait until they are able to sign their declaration and their passport. If the customer can wait, you must:

1. Electronically store their application for 5 weeks using the on hold function in DAP.
2. Contact the customer to check they can now sign their name.
3. Tell the customer (if they can now sign their name):
  - you will send them a new paper application form which they must complete and sign; and,
  - they must sign their passport when they receive it
4. Add a case note to show the actions and decisions you made.
5. Issue their passport when you get a new application form and you have confirmed their nationality, identity, and entitlement to the passport.

If they cannot wait, you must decide whether to issue the customer with a restricted validity passport (RVP), see [Unable to sign: when to issue a restricted validity passport](#).

## Temporary reason: customer cannot sign paper form in next 7 weeks

If a customer applied with a paper application and tells you they cannot sign their name in the next 7 weeks, you must discuss with the customer whether they can wait until they are able to sign their declaration and their passport. If the customer can wait, you must:

1. Tell the customer you will need to withdraw their application and we will refund the fee.
2. Ask the customer to confirm they agree to their application being withdrawn, (either by phone or email instead of a signed statement):
  - we will accept this because the customer is unable to fulfil the requirement for a signed letter of withdrawal, because they cannot sign their name due to a short-term incapacity
3. Add a case note to explain why you are withdrawing their application and that we've spoken to the customer about this.
4. Refund their fee (see fees refund guidance):
  - the customer will need to pay the fee when they re-apply and can sign their name

5. Withdraw their application.

If they cannot wait, you must decide whether to issue the customer with a restricted validity passport (RVP), see [Unable to sign: when to issue a restricted validity passport](#).

## Unable to sign: when to issue a restricted validity passport

You must consider issuing a customer a restricted validity passport (RVP), if:

- the customer has a temporary reason they are unable to sign their passport
- you have no concerns with their application
- you have consent to issue the passport from the customer (for example, if they applied online) or authorisation or consent from a third party
- the customer tells you they cannot wait until they are able to sign their name in their passport
- the customer needs to travel urgently

If you decide the customer can have an RVP, you must tell them they must replace the RVP (at their own cost) as soon as they are able to sign their passport.

You may issue an RVP passport by following restricted validity passport guidance. It will tell you:

- how to process an RVP application
- what observations are needed (for example, Not required to sign)
- what authorisations are needed
- what you must case note and document scan

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# How to check evidence: customer unable to sign their passport

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff how to check evidence when the customer is unable to sign their name.

You, the examiner, must check:

- there are no vulnerability indicators (for example, a court order with the application) in particular:
  - section 8 (for paper applications)
  - the free text field (for online applications)
- the letter that came with the application explaining why the customer cannot sign their name, this may be from a:
  - non-professional person (for example, a parent, spouse, relative or personal friend)
  - professional person (for example, a doctor, social worker or community group)

If a customer is renewing and replacing their passport you must check:

- passport records (to see if we have a case note or passport note explaining why the customer cannot sign)
- a scanned image of the supporting documents that confirm this, as we may not need extra evidence the customer is unable to sign

## Evidence from a non-professional person

If the evidence is from a non-professional person, you must:

- check that the letter explains why the customer is unable to sign and if we can accept the reason
- check the letter confirms the customer:
  - cannot sign their name (and the reason)
  - is unable to sign and not unable to consent to their application
  - includes the date and a wet signature

If the non-professional person has given us their passport number, you must:

- view the passport details on our passport records
- check the non-professional person's name and signature on the letter matches the details we hold on our passport and application records
- refer the application to your operational team leader (OTL) if the details do not match
- case note the actions and decisions you have made

You may not always be able to compare the non-professional person's signature, as we may not always have a signature image on our passport and application records. If this happens, you must confirm the signature is genuine. If the details do not match you must refer the application to your operational team leader (OTL) for further instruction. You must case note the actions and decisions you have made.

If you have concerns a letter is not genuine or has been tampered with (for example, there are alterations on the letter), you must (if you can) do external checks on the person who completed the letter.

You must contact the customer by phone:

- to check they consented to the application - if you still have concerns after completing these checks, you must refer the application to your OTL
  - you must case note the checks you made and the outcome
- to confirm the information on the letter (for example, if you need to check the reason, they cannot sign their name)
  - you must case note the checks you made and the outcome

## Evidence from a professional person

If the evidence is from a professional person, you must:

1. Check the letter:
  - confirms the customer is unable to sign, the reason the customer is unable to sign, and if we can accept their reason
  - confirms the customer is unable to sign but can consent to their application
  - includes the date and a wet signature
2. Check external reference sources (for example, Google) to make sure the person who sent the letter is genuine, for example:
  - using search engines to see if the doctor is employed at the medical practice stated on the letter

If you are concerned that the letter is not genuine, you must contact the organisation to check they have given their authorisation.

If you need to confirm the information on the letter or need more information, you must contact the customer. For example, if you want to check the customer consented to their application.

You must case note the checks you made and the outcome.

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# Digital Application Process: customer cannot sign their passport

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff how to deal with Digital Application Processing (DAP) applications from customers who cannot sign their name.

If a customer tells us they cannot sign when they apply online, Digital Application Processing (DAP) will generate an **Unable to Sign** task. It will show the reason the customer has given for why they cannot sign their passport.

To clear the task, you, the DAP examiner, must:

- review the reason and decide if you can accept it
- click on the **documents tab** to review the evidence the customer has sent to support their application

If the application is for a renewal and the customer has not given us enough evidence, you must check their previous passport record to confirm the customer is unable to sign.

If the customer tells us they can or cannot sign their passport after they have applied, or you are processing a paper application, you can manually update whether the customer can sign their passport on DAP, if there is no **Unable to sign** task.

## Unable to sign task: evidence the customer is unable to sign

If a customer has given you enough evidence, you must clear the **Unable to Sign** task by clicking **Yes**. This will automatically add, 'THE HOLDER IS NOT REQUIRED TO SIGN' to the passport book instead of the signature line.

If a customer has not given you evidence (or you cannot accept it), you must contact them and ask for evidence.

## Unable to sign task: evidence the customer can sign despite claiming they cannot

If you cannot accept the reason the customer has given for not being able to sign and you have case noted it, you must clear the **Unable to Sign** task.

You must do this by clicking the, **No, they can sign** option. This will automatically add the signature block to the passport book.

## Updating the passport when there is no unable to sign task

You can manually update whether a customer can or cannot sign their passport while you are processing their application (for example, if the customer tells you they are unable to sign their passport after they have applied).

To update whether the customer can or cannot sign their passport you must:

1. Select the **Application details** tab.
2. Select **New passport details – Able to sign**.
3. Select **Change**.
4. Select:
  - **Yes** for **Can they sign their passport?**, if the customer can sign their passport
  - **No** for **Can they sign their passport?**, if the customer cannot sign their passport
5. Add a case note to explain why you are making the change.
6. Review the changes you have made and select **Save changes**.

When you have saved the changes, these will be recorded under **New passport details** and on the application timeline.

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