Photo standards

Version 51.0

Photo standards and instructions for His Majesty's Passport Office examiners dealing with customer photos during examination

Contents

About: Photo standards

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office examiners working on Digital Application Processing about:

- photo standards and exceptions for adults and children
- automatic photo checks for paper and digital photos
- manual examination of photos, including when and how to accept or reject photos

For guidance about the checks you must complete to confirm a customer's identity see:

- Confirming identity
- Facial Matching
- Confirming ID: referees

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 HM Passport Office's 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 **51.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **19 January 2026**

Changes from last version of this guidance

This guidance has been updated in the Bars in photos section, to tell examiners they must email Quality and Examination Support team (QuESt) to record the details of a photo error, when

- an application is received on DAP; and,
- no photo task is generated; and,
- there is a white, grey or black bar on the photo

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Photo standards

This section tells HM Passport Office examiners why we have photo standards and about the automated checks the system does.

All passport photos for adults and children must:

- meet the standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO)
- be a true likeness of the intended passport holder
- be recent

These standards will make sure photos are captured by facial recognition software accepted in the United Kingdom and by international border control.

Customers must provide His Majesty's Passport Office with recent photos to help us confirm their identity by:

- automatic (system) checks, for example facial matching
- manual checks, for example, examiners comparing images on the system

Children's photos must meet the same standards as adults but may also meet one or more exceptions. See exceptions to photo standards for children.

Paper photos

Customers send us a paper photo if they apply using a paper form for example, when they apply:

- using the postal channel
- using the Post Office Check & Send service

Customers must follow the guidance for paper photos included in the paper application pack, or on GOV.UK, and send their paper photo to us with their paper application form.

Some customers who submit an application using Digital Customer Service (DCS), may also send us paper photos if they cannot submit a new digital photo online.

Digital photos

If a customer applies online, they will submit their photo using DCS. In DCS customers can:

- upload a digital photo that they have either taken at home, or got from a photo shop

- enter a photo code to retrieve their photo which they have got from a photo shop or booth

DCS advises customers that photos taken in a shop or booth are more likely to meet the photo rules.

Customers can also submit a digital photo if they apply using the Digital Check & Send service. Their photo is still submitted using the DCS service.

Digital photo customer guidance

DCS provides detailed adult and children guidance on how to take a digital photo. This includes good and bad examples of photos to show how to meet the photo rules.

The online customer guidance tells the customer to:

- use a plain light-coloured background (see Background and background colour for examples of colours we can accept)
- use even lighting with no shadows or reflections
- stand in the right position
- have a plain expression and face in full view
- not wear headwear
- show eyes fully visible

Digital photo online check

The system completes an automated technical check and then shows the customer the photo for them to review.

If there are no errors the customer can:

- continue and submit the photo
- choose to take another photo

If there are errors, the online check will show the customer the reason for the result and tips on how to correct any errors. The customer can:

- use the photo if they think the reason for the result is not correct
- use the photo if they cannot meet the rules because of a religious or medical reason
- choose to use another photo

Submitting the digital photo

Before they can submit the photo, customers must confirm that their photo meets the rules.

If there are errors with the photo, the customer is asked to explain (in a mandatory drop-down box) why they want to use it. They must tell us:

- why they think the photo meets the rules
- if there is a [religious](#) or [medical reason](#) why they cannot meet the rules

Automated photo checks

DCS will automatically check the customer's application and the standard of their photo, when the customer submits it online.

Examiner photo checks

You, the examiner, must make the decision to accept or reject a photo when dealing with a photo quality task on Digital Application Processing (DAP).

Because of the automated photo checks, the manual checks that you must complete are based on whether the customer has sent us a paper or digital photo (see DAP: examining paper and digital photos).

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Standards for paper and digital photos

This section tells HM Passport Office examiners about the standards for paper and digital photos.

You must read this section together with DAP: examining paper and digital photos guidance.

You can find examples of acceptable and unacceptable photos here.

All photos must be in sharp focus, showing a strong definition and contrast between face and background. We will not accept photos that do not show a clear image of the customer (for example photos are blurry, too dark or too light).

Customers must:

- squarely face the camera, with a straight head
- make sure chin and top of head are clearly visible (if hair on the top of head has been cropped from a photo, we may still accept it)

We will reject any photo where a customer's face or head is:

- hidden
- tilted backward, forward or to the side
- turned to one shoulder or at an angle
- facing left or right

Background and background colour

HM Passport Office will accept:

- digital or paper photos taken against any plain background that is any light colour (for example different shades of white (cream, ivory or vanilla) and light grey)

We will accept textured backgrounds (for example woodchip or painted brick walls) if the background:

- is plain
- is any light colour
- will not show any visible marks

You, the examiner, must check the photo and consider if any visible marks will show when the photo is printed in the passport.

You must remember that the photo you see on the system may be larger than the photo printed in the passport. This may enhance marks which may not show when the photo is printed in the passport.

We will not accept patterned backgrounds (for example patterned wallpaper) if the background marks will be visible when the photo is printed in the passport.

We will accept the photo if the background tone or shade is not consistent across the photo, for example, if it is lighter or darker in places, as long as the customer's face and features are clear.

We will accept photos lightened by the scanning process but showing no other negative effects.

Face

Nothing can cover the face. HM Passport Office will accept:

- beards
- moustaches
- a bindi (a single coloured dot on the forehead)
- permanent tattoo

We will not accept a temporary celebratory bindi created with a jewel or sticker.

Multiple facial piercings make it difficult for the system to capture the outline of the customer's eyes, mouth, nose, chin and cheekbones. We advise customers to remove their piercings (if possible) before taking a photo, as we will reject photos where piercings cause reflection. We may accept body piercings, such as:

- lip rings
- eyebrow piercings
- nose rings

Eyes

To capture a true likeness of the customer, both their eyes must be open and clearly visible. The system will have problems finding correct eye positions, unless the customer's eyes are in the top 40% to 70% of the photo (vertical eye band).

Customers must not:

- wear sunglasses
- wear any type of tinted glasses (visually impaired and blind customers must remove their tinted glasses)
- have hair across one or both eyes

Eyes: looking at the camera

We will not accept photos if the customer is not looking at the camera.

When a customer takes a digital photo, their eyes may appear to be looking slightly away from the camera. Digital Customer Services (DCS) will complete an automatic check on the customer's photo, to see if their eyes are looking towards the camera.

If DCS has:

- found the customer's eyes, the digital photo will pass the automatic check
- not found the customer's eyes, it will display an error message to tell the customer their photo may not be acceptable

Where DCS has displayed an error message, the customer can either:

- retake the photo again; or,
- override the message and submit their application using the photo

Where the customer has chosen to override the message, you, the examiner, must still reject the photo if it does not meet our standards.

Glasses

If the customer wears glasses, both eyes must be clearly visible. Glasses frames may be over the eye socket or eyelids but must not hide the eyes in any way (the white and pupil of the eye).

Glasses can cause glare or reflection (in particular, strong lenses). Customers must remove their glasses, if they cause glare or reflection that covers the eye, as this may prevent the system from locating the correct eye positions.

Glasses can cause distortion, for example through the lens at the side of the customer's face. If the photo has passed the automatic checks (on DCS) you can accept the photo, as the system has identified the eye positions. If the photo has failed the automatic check, you must:

- accept the photo if there is no visible distortion or glare; or,
- reject the photo if there is visible distortion or glare (and case note the reason)

Red-eye

Red-eye shows as a red circle or a crescent shape covering the eye. You, the examiner, must reject the photo if red-eye shows on the paper photos or on screen.

Ears

You must reject the photo if the customer is wearing earphones, air buds or over the head headphones. You must not reject the photo if the customer is wearing visible hearing aids on their ears.

Recent photos

Customers must send photos taken in the last month. If you, the examiner, suspects a customer's photos are older than a month (for example, the photo has a date stamp) you must reject them.

If HM Passport Office has delayed an application due to application checks (for example, due to high passport demands or a customer needs to attend an international interview), you must use your discretion to accept the photos they sent us at the beginning of the application process.

You can accept photos that have been with us:

- for 12 months, if the intended passport holder is an adult (over 16 years)
- for 6 months, if the intended passport holder is a child (under 16 years)
- for 12 months (6 months for a child), if the passport is needed for any travel for urgent compassionate grounds or urgent government business

Photos must always show a true likeness of the customer, you will need to ask for new ones if the photos have been with us too long. Not having a recent photo in their passport may have a negative impact on the customer at border crossings and if they use their passport for identity purposes.

Where a new photo is needed

Where you are unable to accept a photo because it has been with us for longer than 6 months (for a child application) or 12 months (for an adult application), you must check to see if there is a **Photo standards** task showing.

If there is a **Photo standards** task on the application, you must:

1. Select the **Photo standards** task.
2. Select **No, ask for new photo**.
3. Select **Photo not from last month**.
4. Select **Save**.

DAP (Digital Application Processing) will ask the customer to provide a new photo.

If there is not a **Photo standards** task showing on the application and you need one to request a new photo, you must:

1. Select **I can't do this application**.
2. Select **Give a reason why I cannot do this in DAP**.
3. Select **Photo cleared checks but does not meet guidance rules** from the **Choose a reason** menu.

4. Add a case note to the application confirming you have requested a **Photo standards** task is added to the application, to enable an examiner to ask the customer to provide a new photo as the original is more than 6 or 12 months old.
5. Select **Send**.

DAP will transfer the application to the Exceptions Handling team (EHT) and create a **Photo cleared checks but does not meet guidance rules** task.

When the EHT have completed this task, the application will be returned to the DAP national queue with a **Photo standards** task showing. You, the national queue examiner, must complete the photo standards task to request a new photo from the customer.

Clothing and uniforms

HM Passport Office considers bare shoulders and military or school uniforms acceptable and a personal choice for the customer. You must reject any clothing that hides the facial features (for example, a high scarf which covers the chin).

If the customer's clothing is pulled up to ear level (for example the hood of a jumper or a coat collar) and the facial features are clearly visible, you must accept the photo.

Customers posing on their own

Passport photos must be of the customer on their own, without other people or objects in the picture.

You must not accept a photo if a parent's hand or arm can be seen supporting or holding a baby or young child.

Headwear and head coverings

Customers must not wear hats or head coverings in their passport photos. You must not accept headwear that:

- casts a shadow on or around the face if the shadows hide the customer's face
- hides parts of the customer's face
- distorts or alters the customer's face (for example, very tight scarves)
- causes contrast problems between the customer's head and the background (for example, head coverings that are white or light in colour)

We must consider accepting a photo if the customer tells us their headwear or head covering is for religious or medical reasons.

We must not accept a photo if the customer is wearing a head covering for cultural reasons (for example a Fez, Keffiyeh, headdress or a cowboy hat).

If you are unsure if the customer is wearing the headwear for cultural reasons, you must ask QuESt for their help.

If you are unsure why a customer is wearing a head covering (for example medical, religious or cultural reasons), you must ask the customer to write to HM Passport Office, to explain:

- why they are wearing the head covering and,
- if they can remove the head covering for the passport photo

Hair accessories

A customer may wear different types of hair accessories that are either decorative (for example a fashion accessory) or functional (for example clips, pins, bobbles and headbands to keep hair off their face).

You must accept any head accessories (for example a hair band or hair clip) if the customer's facial features are clearly visible and there is contrast between the head and the background.

You must ask for another photo if the customer wears a hair accessory:

- that changes the shape of the customer's head (for example a headband with an attached large bow)

Mirror images

HM Passport Office will not accept mirror images (when the photo is flipped from right to left or left to right) as it may cause problems at border control for the customer.

Examiners must challenge mirror images when comparing them with previous photos of the customer (for example, if there is a distinguishing mark on one side of their face).

If there is a Photo task in Digital Application Processing (DAP), you must:

1. Phone the customer to tell them:
   - o the photo will be rejected as it appears to show a mirror image
   - o this may cause problems for them at border control when travelling
2. Ask the customer to:
   - o verbally confirm if the photo is a true likeness of them; or,
   - o send a new photo if they cannot do this
3. Add a case note to record details of the call and any decisions made (if you are asking the customer to provide a new photo)..

If the customer tells you the photo is a true likeness of them, you must accept the photo and continue with examination process.

If the customer tells you they will send a new photo, you must:

1. Add a case note to record the details of the call.
2. Ask the customer to send another photo in the task **Do you accept this photo?** by selecting:
    o **No ask for new photo**
    o **Photo quality**
    o **Edited photos**

If you cannot contact the customer by phone, you must:

1. Reject the photo.
2. Ask the customer to send another photo in the task **Do you accept this photo?** by selecting:
    o **No ask for new photo**
    o **Photo quality**
    o **Edited photos**

If there is no photo task in DAP, you must:

1. Phone the customer to tell them the photo may cause problems for them at border control when travelling.
2. Ask the customer to:
3. verbally confirm if the photo is a true likeness of them; or,
4. send a new photo if they cannot do this
5. Accept the photo and continue with examination process, if the customer tells you the photo is a true likeness of them.
6. Add a case note to record details of the call and any decisions made, if you are asking the customer to provide a new photo.

If the customer tells you they will send a new photo, you must:

1. Add a case note to record the details of the customer will send a new photo.
2. Transfer the application to the Exception Handling team (see DAP examiner: no photo standards task).

Mouth closed

You must reject any photo where the customer's mouth is open if this changes the shape of the customer's face.

You must accept the photo when:

- the customer's mouth is relaxed and:
    o their teeth are visible or
    o lips are slightly open
    o their facial features are not distorted
- it is clear the customer cannot close their mouth (for example, due to a medical condition)

Neutral expression

You must reject photos if the customer's expression changes the shape of their face, for example if they are:

- smiling widely
- pouting
- frowning

A customer's expression which changes the shape of the face can stop the system from capturing accurate biometric information.

You must accept a photo if the customer's expression does not change the shape of their face.

Shadows

You must reject photos with shadows on or around the face if the shadows hide the customer's face.

We may accept small shadows on the face, under the chin, or in the background (for example, beneath the ears or behind the head) when the:

- customer's face or facial features are not hidden
- digital photo has passed the automatic checks

Self-portraits (selfies)

Customers may send us a digital photo that they have taken themselves, for example with their phone held at arm's length (a selfie). You can accept these photos if they meet the other photo standards.

Photo editing

You can accept a photo that has been digitally edited if this does not affect the image of the customer (as we must be able to capture a true likeness of the customer). For example, you can accept a photo if the background has been edited to remove shadows or marks.

Digital photo enhancements

You must reject any photos if the customer has digitally enhanced their facial image, for example, altering the hairline, removing blemishes or making facial features larger or smaller. We will not be able to capture an accurate facial image if the customer's features have been enhanced.

Filters

You can accept a customer's photo where filters have been used if the photo:

- is a true likeness of the customer
- meets all other photo standards

You must accept filters that change the:

- brightness of a photo
- contrast of a photo

You must not accept filters that:

- add any textures or special effects to photo
- make the customer look younger or older

Black and white photos

HM Passport Office will not accept black and white digital or paper photos. They make it difficult to tell a customer's skin tone, eye colour and true likeness.

Bars on photos

You, the examiner, may notice a white, grey or black bar showing on a customer's photo, when you are dealing with their application. These will show on digital photos only, and this will be visible on the outside edge, either at the top, side or bottom of the image.

Before 8 December 2025, we could accept a photo with a white bar showing across the bottom of the photo on a child's application, on the condition that it did not cover the child's facial features. However, from 8 December 2025 we can no longer accept these photos.

If you are dealing with an application where there is a white, grey or black bar showing on the customer's photo, you must check if there is a **Photo standards** task on the application.

Where DAP has created a **Photo standards** task, you must reject the photo and ask the customer to provide a new one. Where DAP has not created a **Photo standards** task, you must:

1. Access ITnow.
2. Select **My Orders**.
3. Select **Order Something**.
4. Select the **HMPO** category.
5. Select **Digital Application Processing (DAP)**.
6. Select the **DAP – Service Requests** option.

7. Select **Generate a photo standards task** from the **What do you want to do?** drop down menu.
8. Complete the service request form, including the:
    o application reference number
    o name of the examiner
    o authorising username (must be an operational team leader (OTL) or above)
    o application type (from the **Service Level** menu)
    o reason for the new photo (from the **Reason for new photo** menu)
9. Submit the service request form.
10. Add a case note to record your decision.
11. Put the application on hold on DAP, using the **I'm waiting for checks outside of DAP** reason.

ITnow will process the service request and send a notification to the DAP Business Change team.

The DAP Business Change team will notify you the service request has been actioned, and you must use the **Photo standards** task generated to reject the customer's photo and request a new one.

Quality and Examination Support team (QuESt) are collating evidence of these photo errors to share with our business partner to support identification and resolution of the issue.

You, the examiner, must send an email to your local QuESt, with the application number for any photos that meet all the criteria below:

- application is received on DAP
- no photo task is generated
- there is a white, grey or black bar on the photo

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Additional standards for paper photos

This section tells HM Passport Office examiners about the extra standards paper photos must meet.

In addition to the standards for [paper and digital photos](#), the following standards apply only to paper photos.

Home printing

Photos printed at home must be of a similar, high quality to photos printed at booths and studios. Examiners will only accept home printed photos if they meet the standards.

Photo paper

Photos must be printed on good quality photo paper and free of creases, serrated edges, ink marks and other visible damage, including staples and paper clip marks, so that the customer's image can be captured clearly. HM Passport Office will not accept glossy or textured paper, as it may cause haze and glare and distort the image on screen. We will reject photos with watermarks that show up on the screen when scanned.

Photo size

Passport photos must be 45 millimetres (mm) high x 35mm wide. If a photo is too small, white gaps will show around the edges of the scanned image. If the photo is too large, the head size may not be correct when we cut it down to size. A customer's photo must measure between 29 mm and 34mm from the crown (top) of head to the bottom of chin.

Two photos

Customers must send 2 paper photos that meet the standards. If only one photo is needed (for example, as part of a renewal application) and no paper referee (countersignature) is needed, you must not ask for a second photo.

Writing on photo (paper referee (countersignature))

If the customer needs a countersignature, only one of their photos must be signed on the back. The other must remain blank. You must reject any photo that has writing or printing that shows up on screen when scanned.

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Exceptions to photo standards

This section tells HM Passport Office examiners when we accept photos that do not meet photo standards.

There are some exceptions to when we can accept photos, that do not meet our photo standards.

Disabilities

Customers with a physical or mental disability that prevents them from meeting the photo standards may be exempt if either:

- it is clear from the photo or application that they have such a disability
- their application is supported by a written statement from the customer or their parent, carer or doctor

You, the examiner, may waive some or all the following standards:

- eyes looking at the camera
- eyes in correct position (vertical eye band)
- mouth closed
- neutral expression
- full face toward the camera
- background (for example where the background is otherwise correct but medical aids, such as a wheelchair, are visible)

You must make sure that:

- the photo captures the face of the customer
- you deal with the issue sensitively

If you decide to waive some or all the above standards, you must either:

- add a case note to confirm your decision (if there are Digital Application Processing (DAP) tasks available to be able to do this); or,
- tell your operational team leader (OTL) or higher executive officer (HEO) why you have decided to waive the standards (so they can make a note of this when they complete a local print request)

If you decide not to waive the photo standards, you must add a case note to confirm your decision.

Customers applying online through DCS, have the option to override a photo warning. They must then add the reason why they have overridden the warning in the free text field. You, the examiner, must use this information to decide if you can accept their photo.

If you decide to accept the customer's photo, you must:

1. Continue to deal with the application in line with guidance.
2. Change the print location to local print, in line with the How to choose a passport print location guidance (the print location should be set to your office location).
3. Post the new passport to the customer, when it has been printed.

Visual impairment

If a visually impaired or blind person has their eyes shut, HM Passport Office may accept the photo. We may also accept permanent or long-term eye patches, but not temporary eye patches. Customers must remove tinted glasses.

Temporary injuries

You must not accept photos of the customer with temporary injuries (for example, black eyes).

Head coverings

We may accept head coverings worn for religious reasons, as long as they do not cover the face. We may also accept head coverings worn for medical surgery or illness (for example, scarves or bandages for head wounds or hair loss) as long as they do not hide the face.

If you, the examiner, have doubts about whether a head covering is worn for religious or medical reasons, you must ask the customer to write to HM Passport Office, stating their head covering is:

- worn for either religious or medical reasons and,
- a normal part of their daily attire

If you are unsure if the customer is wearing the head covering for either religious or medical reasons, you must ask QuESt for their help.

Urgent travel

If a customer needs to travel urgently and meets the criteria for Tiered Application Service or urgent government business, HM Passport Office may issue them with a Restricted Validity Passport, even if their photos do not meet the standards.

The examiner must tell the customer that they must apply for a new passport (at their own cost) as soon as possible.

Exceptions to photo standards for children

Children over the age of 6 years must meet the standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

While photos of children must be a true likeness, examiners may waive the following for children under 6 years old:

- both eyes are not open (for example, if the child is less than one year old)
- child wears permanent or long-term eye patches (for example, to correct a squint)
- child does not have a neutral expression
- child does not have mouth closed
- child not looking directly at the camera

If you are not fully satisfied, you must ask the customer for 2 new, recent photos. For more examples, see the GOV.UK guide showing acceptable images.

For applications which have been delayed by HM Passport Office or there is an urgent or compassionate need for the passport, you can use your discretion to accept a child's photo (children up to the age of 16 years) submitted or taken up to 6 months ago. See Recent photos.

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DAP: examining paper and digital photos

This section tells HM Passport Office examiners, how to check that paper and digital photos meet the photo standards on Digital Application Processing (DAP).

When you, the examiner, are checking a photo, you must consider how the photo will appear when it is printed on the passport. For example:

- the photo on the passport may be much smaller than the photo you view on a Digital Application Processing (DAP) screen
- background marks or shadows visible on screen may not be visible when the passport is printed

You must also deal with any system notifications (for example, any warnings or matches).

DAP DIT queue: associating paper photos that we receive together

The Application Receive Domain (ARD) will generate a **Match orphaned documents with applications task** if the customer sends us paper photos for more than 1 customer in a single envelope.

To deal with the orphan documents task, you the DIT (Document Intervention Task) team member, must refer to the Orphan documents guidance.

DAP examiner: processing a digital or paper photo

DCS (Digital Customer Service) will complete automatic checks on both digital and paper photos for applications on DAP, for example:

- the size of the photo
- the customer's distance from the camera
- the customer's eye position and any head tilt
- contrast, focus and brightness

If a customer's digital photo fails the checks online, they must override the photo rejection and tell us why. If a customer decides to override their rejected digital photo:

- DAP will generate a photo standards task
- the customer's free text note will appear in the photo review screen on DAP

For paper photos, ARD (Application Receive Domain) will send the scan of the paper photo to the DCS photo service, where DCS will:

- complete the automatic checks
- send a cropped and centred version back to the ARD

ARD will then upload the cropped and centred paper photo to the DAP application.

DAP examiner: processing a photo standards task

You must only check a photo meets the standards on applications that have a **photo standards task**.

If you are dealing with a **photo standards task**. you must decide if a customer's photo meets our photo standards. You must consider:

- if the photo has passed the online photo checks
- information the customer had given
- the declaration the customer has made (for example, their confirmation the photo is recent)
- if there have been any basic scanning issues with a paper photo, that may affect the customer's photo (for example, if the image has been scanned upside down)

You do not need to manually repeat the automatic photo checks (if the photo has passed these checks) as these will have been done by DAP, see DAP examiner: processing a digital photo.

There are some checks the online photo check cannot complete. If you are processing a **photo standards task**, you must make sure all the other photo standards are met, including:

- glasses and frames do not cover the customer's eyes
- hair does not cover the customer's eyes
- customer's eyes are not looking away
- there is no red-eye
- shadows do not cover the customer's face or facial features

If you decide the customer's photo meets the standards, you must select the **yes** button on DAP.

If you decide the customer's photo does not meet the standards, you must ask them for a new photo.

DAP examiner: photos that meet exceptions

If a customer fits a photo standard exception, you must accept it, by selecting the **yes** button on DAP.

DAP examiner: asking for a new photo

If you decide the customer's photo is not acceptable, you must ask the customer for a new photo. To ask for a new photo you must:

1. Select the **no ask for a new photo** button and select an appropriate reason from the list on DAP.
2. Refer to Post Office Check & Send service applications guidance (if DAP indicates the application was submitted through the Post Office).

There are extra rejection reasons available on DAP that you must only use for paper photos sent with a paper application (for example 'staple holes' or 'serrated edges'). These extra reasons cannot be used for paper photos sent for a digital application and are not available to select. If you need to reject a paper photo on a digital application because of a paper specific reason (for example, staple holes) you must select the next most appropriate option, for example 'poor photo quality'.

Customers who apply using a paper photo and paper application can only submit a new paper photo. There is no facility to upload a digital photo for a paper application.

You must phone the customer to explain the problem before asking for another photo if you know they have sent more than 2 photos that have not met our standards.

DAP examiner: need more information about their photo

You must decide if you need to ask the customer for more information about their photo. For example, if the customer has not provided information about why their photo does not meet the standards.

You must contact the customer by phone to resolve your query. You can put the application on hold if you are unable to contact them and need to call them later.

DAP examiner: paper application to change a photo

DAP will automatically create a **Change of photo** task if the customer has selected the 'New photo' option on section 1 of their paper application form.

The customer may choose this option if, for example, they are applying to renew their passport solely to change their photo.

When you receive an application containing a **Change of photo** task, you must:

1. Check the application type is correct, based on the documents and information received from the customer, and change the application type if necessary.
2. Consider if the application meets any risk indicators due to the change of photo.

3. Clear the **Change of photo** task.
4. Case note your actions.
5. Complete any other DAP tasks in line with guidance and continue processing the application.

DAP examiner: resolving a basic photo scanning issue

You may need to resolve a basic photo scanning issue on an application if the customer has provided a paper photo and, for example, the photo has:

- been scanned upside down
- not been fully cut out before it has been sent to us (for example, if the photo has been printed at a photo booth)
- a strong border around the outside edge

Where the photo meets the criteria above, you must use the photo cropping tool when dealing with the **Photo standards** task, to edit the customer's photo.

To access the photo cropping tool, you must:

1. Select the **Crop and rotate photo** link in the **Photo standards** task on DAP.
2. Select the photo of the customer you are going to use, from the list of photos scanned onto the application (for example, a photo may have been scanned multiple times, or multiple photos have been scanned onto the application from other connected applications sent in the same envelope).
3. Decide if you need to:
   o crop the photo, by drawing a box around the area of the photo you want to use, using your left mouse button (you can use the zoom function to make this easier)
   o rotate the photo, by selecting the rotate arrow
4. Select **Check photo**.
5. Select either:
   o **Use this photo**, if the new photo is acceptable
   o **Cancel changes**, if the new photo is not acceptable, and repeat the steps above until the customer's photo is aceptable

Where the new photo is acceptable, you must select **Submit**. DAP will update the **Photo standards** task with the cropped photo. You must complete this task in line with [the Photo Standards guidance](#) to confirm the new photo is acceptable.

Adding a photo to an application

You may receive an application where a paper photo has been scanned and associated on ARD, but it is either:

- not showing as the passport image on the application; or,
- it is showing as the passport image on the application, but it is not suitable and there is an alternative suitable image in the document store on ARD

Where the photo is showing as an **Applicants paper photo** on ARD, the photo cropping tool can be used to apply it from the document store to the passport image section of the application.

Where the photo is showing as any other document type on ARD, you must re-categorise the document to **Applicants paper photo** so it can be applied to the application.

You must not request a rescan of the photo in either of these scenarios.

To apply the photo to the application, you must:

1. Select the **Crop and rotate photo** link in the **Photo standards** task on DAP, to access the photo cropping tool.
2. Select the photo of the customer that you want to use, from the documents list.
3. Draw a box around the area of the photo, using the left mouse button (you can also rotate the photo if needed, by selecting the rotate arrow).
4. Select **Check photo**.
5. Select either:
   o **Use this photo**, of the new photo is acceptable
   o **Cancel changes**, if the new photo is not acceptable, and repeat the steps above until the customer's photo is acceptable

Where the new photo is acceptable, you must select **Submit**. DAP will update the **Photo standards** task with the cropped photo. You must complete this task in line with the Photo standards guidance to confirm the new photo is acceptable.

DAP examiner: no photo standards task

The automated process checks the customer's photo is acceptable. You do not need to request a new photo if there is no photo standards task. This is unless the photo provided could be reputationally damaging to HM Passport Office or causes issues at the border, for these reasons:

- image of the customer is upside down
- customer is wearing a face mask
- customer is wearing items with offensive messages or images that would be visible on the photo in the passport
- photo is clearly a mirror image
- photo is clearly not the intended passport holder (for example it is a child photo on an adult application or is a sibling)
- photo has clearly not been taken in the last month (for example, where a customer has submitted a foreign or British passport issued a year ago, showing the same photo used on their current application)
- parent's arm or hand can be seen on a child's photo

If you think a photo could be reputationally damaging and is not covered by these seven reasons, you must ask your operational team leader (OTL) or Quality, Examination Support team (QuESt) for advice.

If the photo is covered by the reasons above, you will be unable to request the new photo on DAP immediately because there is no photo standards task. You must:

1. Add a case note to show the reason for rejecting the photo.
2. Refer the application to your OTL to review the decision to ask for a new photo.

If your OTL agrees with the decision to ask the customer for a new photo, you must transfer the application to the Exception Handling team (EHT), by:

1. Selecting **I cannot do this application**, then **Give a reason why I cannot do this in DAP**.
2. Select **Photo cleared checks but does not meet guidance rules**.
3. Add a case note to explain why the photo is not acceptable.

DAP: Photo cleared checks but does not meet guidance rules task

If an examiner selects **Photo cleared checks but does not meet guidance rules**, DAP will transfer the application to the Exception Handling team (EHT) and create a **Photo cleared checks but does not meet guidance rules** task.

You, the EHT examiner, must check the examiner's case note and the customer's photo to decide if the photo is acceptable or not. If you believe the photo is acceptable, you must ask your OTL to approve your decision by adding a request for them to review it, in the EHT Service Requests Workaround Teams channel.

If your OTL decides the photo is acceptable, you must:

1. Accept the photo and clear the task.
2. Add a case note to record your decision.

If you decide the photo is not acceptable, you must:

1. Access ITnow.
2. Select **My Orders**.
3. Select **Order Something**.
4. Select the **HMPO** category.
5. Select **Digital Application Processing (DAP)**.
6. Select the **DAP – Service Requests** option.
7. Select **Generate a photo standards task** from the **What do you want to do?** drop down menu.
8. Complete the service request form, including the:
   - application reference number
   - name of examiner
   - authorising username (must be an operational team leader (OTL) or above)
   - application type (from the **Service Level** menu)
   - reason for new photo (from the **Reason for new photo** menu)

9. Submit the service request form.
10. Add a case note to record your decision.
11. Put the application on hold in DAP using the **I'm waiting for checks outside of DAP** reason.

ITnow will process the service request and send a notification to the DAP Business Change team.

The DAP Business Change team will notify you that the service request has been actioned, and you must:

1. Clear the **Photo cleared checks but does not meet guidance rules** task.
2. Click **Submit**.

DAP will create a **Photo Standards** task, once the task is completed by the service requests team, the application will go back to the EHT examiner.

You, the EHT examiner, must request a new photo from the customer and when the customer sends a new photo the application will rejoin the national queue.

DAP examiner: photo not received or could not be checked

DAP will create a:

- **Applicant photo not received** task, if the customer has not sent a paper photo (paper applications only)
- **Applicant photo could not be checked** task, if the customer's photo fails checks or cannot be scanned by the DHU (Document Handling Unit)

If the customer has sent a photo, you, the DAP examiner, can [request a paper photo](#) rescan if you think the photo may be suitable for use.

If the photo cannot be used or we have not received a photo, you must contact the customer and request a new photo, using the **Paper application photo issues** template on Comms Builder.

When you send this template, you must select the appropriate option if the customer needs their current referee to sign the back of the photo. If the customer needs a new referee you must wait for the photo to be received and scanned onto the application, and then request the new referee (because the new photo will then be included in the referee request).

When the photo is received and scanned, DAP will automatically run checks and create any extra tasks required.

DAP examiner: new paper photo received

If a customer sends a paper photo to the Document Handling Unit (DHU), the DHU will either:

- replace the customer's photo, if the application is in 'Awaiting Photo' state (this will create a photo standards task)
- record the paper photo as a 'non-scan item' and keep it with the customers documents if the application is not in a state of 'Awaiting Photo', and will not:
  - replace the customer's photo (so there will be no photo standards task)
  - scan the photo (so there will be no image of the photo in the **Documents** tab)

If the DHU replace the customers photo, it will generate a photo standards task for you to deal with. When this happens, you must refer to [DAP examiner: processing a photo.](#)

If the customer sent photos of more than 1 person to the [DHU, you must refer to DAP DIT queue: associating paper photos that we receive together](#).

DAP examiner: asking the DHU to rescan a customer's paper photo

You can ask the Document Handling Unit (DHU) to rescan a customer's paper photo, for example if the:

- quality of the scan of the paper photo is not good enough
- DHU has scanned the wrong photo onto the application (for example, when the customers are twins)
- paper photo is shown as a document but not scanned on the DAP application

If the DHU has scanned the wrong photo onto the application, you must not complete the Photo QA task as the 'awaiting rescan' state will allow the DHU to replace the customer's photo. You must:

1. Go to the Application Receive Domain, and:
   - disassociate the photo on the application you are dealing with and associate it to the correct application
   - associate the correct photo to the application you are dealing with
2. Add a case note to record your actions.
3. Request a rescan of the customer's photo (see: ARD: request rescan guidance).
4. Place the application on hold, using the reason **Waiting for document rescan or revalidation**.

When the rescan is completed, DAP will generate:

- a different task to bring the application you are dealing with out of holding
- a **Rescanned photo not added to application details** task, if the DHU have not been able to rescan the photo, because you did not have the application in an 'awaiting photo' state (for example, you placed the application on hold using a different option).

You must repeat the steps above making sure you put the application in **Waiting for document rescan or revalidation** state if DAP generates the **Rescanned photo not added to application details** task.

If you request a rescan 3 times and the photo is still not acceptable, you must [request a new photo](#) from the customer.

If you had 2 applications with the wrong photos scanned (and did the association in step 2 above), DAP will generate a **Documents received** task on the other application for the DAP examiner to deal with. This means they will also need to request a rescan of the customer's photo.

Related content
[Contents](#)

Photo errors: during or after examination

This section tells HM Passport Office examiners how to deal with photo errors during the examination process and after we issue the customer a passport.

You, the examiner, may find out about a photo error, either:

- during the examination process; or,
- after we issue the passport

If we have issued a passport with the wrong photo, either due to HM Passport Office or customer error, you must refer to How to correct errors on passports.

Related content
[Contents](#)

Refunds and returning photos

This section tells HM Passport Office staff how we deal with refunds (after we reject a photo) and when we will return the customer's photo.

If HM Passport Office has rejected a customer's photo and the customer refuses to send another photo, we will not issue them a passport. We will consider any requests for refunds in line with the refunds guidance.

Returning photos

HM Passport Office will not normally return customer paper photos, as they are part of our official records.

However, if a customer asks us to return their paper photos and their application is still live, we may return their unused, uncertified paper photos, unless there's evidence of fraud.

To do this, you must update the document handing instructions in Application Receive Domain (ARD), to return the photo to the customer.

Related content
[Contents](#)