A Guide to Selected U.S. Travel and Identity Documents

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This guide has been prepared to assist those tasked with examining travel and employment authorization documents. The guide contains color photographs of the most commonly used documents **but it is not comprehensive.** There are earlier valid revisions of the illustrated documents and other less common documents that are not included.

Because the attachments are reproductions, the exact size and color may deviate from the original. Do not make identifications based on size and/or color alone.

If you have any questions concerning the authenticity of one of these documents, you are encouraged to contact your local INS office.

GENERAL INFORMATION CONCERNING ALIEN STATUS

In accordance with the 14th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, any person born in and subject to the jurisdiction of the United States is a citizen of the U.S. at birth. U.S. citizenship may also be acquired through **DERIVATION** from a U.S. citizen parent when children are born abroad or through **NATURALIZATION** after meeting the necessary residency requirements. All persons not citizens or nationals of the U.S. are aliens, which generally are classified as **PERMANENT RESIDENTS** ("Immigrants"), **NON-IMMIGRANTS**, or **UNDOCUMENTED ALIENS.**

PERMANENT RESIDENT ALIENS enjoy almost all of the same rights as U.S. citizens. This status may be obtained through a number of different procedures and, unless taken away administratively, is granted for life. Aliens with permanent residency must carry evidence of their status. The INS no longer requires permanent residents to report their address annually.

NON-IMMIGRANT ALIENS are admitted to the U.S. for a temporary period of time and for a specific purpose, most often as a tourist. There are different categories of non-immigrants, and they are identified through letter/number symbols (e.g. B-2). Non-immigrants are also required to present evidence of their lawful status in the U.S. to officers of the INS. This will usually consist of a passport containing a visa and an Arrival/Departure Record (INS Form I-94).

UNDOCUMENTED ALIENS are those who may have crossed the border illegally and/or been smuggled into the interior of the U.S., or those who have violated their non-immigrant status by accepting unauthorized employment, remaining longer than permitted, or committing some other violation. Some of these aliens purchase counterfeit documents or assume another person's identity by using fraudulently obtained genuine documents.

UNITED STATES PASSPORT

A **UNITED STATES PASSPORT** is a document that is issued by the State Department to persons who have established that they are citizens of the United States by birth, naturalization, or derivation of citizenship. The primary purpose of the passport is to facilitate travel to foreign countries by establishing U.S. citizenship and acting as a vehicle to display any appropriate visas and/or entry/exit stamps that may be necessary.

Passports are also very reliable documents which may be used within the United States to establish citizenship, identity, and employment authorization.

NOTE: There are approximately fifteen different versions of the U.S. passport that are presently valid and vary from the 1998 version illustrated above

Although there have been many different revisions of the **CERTIFICATE OF NATURALIZATION**, there are two common versions. The present version has a gold embossed Great Seal of the United States in the top center portion. Earlier versions had gray or beige background designs and did not contain the embossed seal. Regardless, **all** certificates of naturalization are printed on watermarked paper. The watermark design of the Department of Justice seal and the letters "USA" becomes visible when the document is held up to a strong light.

(Watermark)

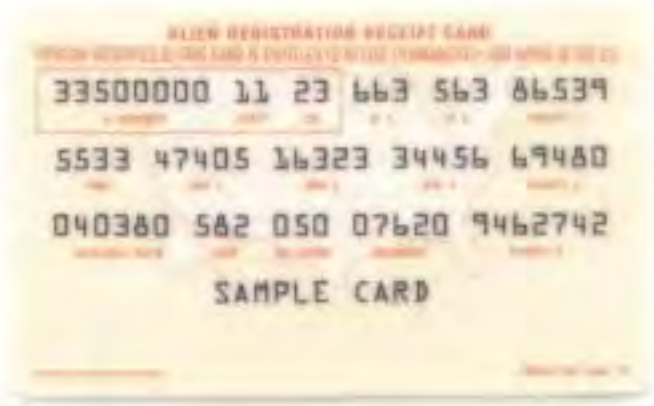
ALIEN REGISTRATION RECEIPT CARDS

INS Forms I-151 and I-551 are issued to aliens who have been granted permanent resident status in the United States. They retain this status while in this country. The bearer is required to have this card in his/her possession at all times.

The first **ALIEN REGISTRATION RECEIPT CARD**, Form I-151, was introduced in 1946. Through 18 years of various revisions, it remained primarily green in color, causing it to become known as a "Green Card". This term is still used commonly, although the cards have not been green since 1959. These cards contained no expiration date and were only required to be renewed if the recipient was under the age of 14 at the time of issuance, or if the card was lost or stolen.

NOTE: As of March 20, 1996, the Form I-151 is no longer acceptable as evidence of permanent residence.

The **RESIDENT ALIEN CARD**, Form I-551, was introduced in January 1977 and phased in over a period of time. In addition to the photograph, the I-551 contains the bearer's signature and fingerprint.



Form I-551

The **RESIDENT ALIEN CARD**, Form I-551, was revised in August 1989. This version was the first Alien Registration Card to contain an expiration date on every card. Usually, it is valid for ten years from the date of issue. The expiration date indicates when the card expires and must be renewed. It does **NOT** indicate that the alien's status has expired. The card was modified in January 1992 when a white box was added behind the fingerprint.

Form I-551 (August 1989)

Form I-551 (January 1992)

Reverse

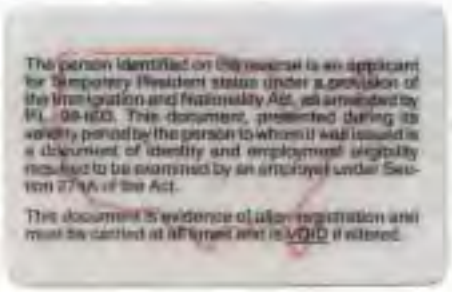
The **PERMANENT RESIDENT CARD,** Form I-551, was introduced in December 1997. Noticeable differences on the front of the card include: Change of card title from RESIDENT ALIEN CARD to PERMANENT RESIDENT CARD, a three line machine readable zone and a hologram.

PHOTO SIDE

REVERSE

The Optical Memory Stripe contains encoded cardholder information as well as a personalized etching which depicts the bearer's photo, name, signature, date of birth, alien registration number, card expiration date and card number.

The **EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION CARD**, Form I-688A, is the first card issued to aliens who qualified under the "Amnesty Program" of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. It was produced with a Polaroid identification camera and covered with a special secure plastic laminate. The expiration date is found on the front of the card while the authorized use is explained on the reverse of the card.



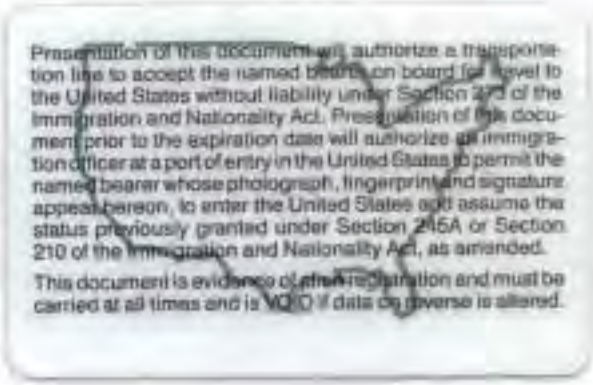
Form I-688A

The expiration date may be extended by placing a small sticker on the reverse side. There are two different types of extension stickers which have been used. One extends the expiration date for 90 days and the other for 1 year. Multiple stickers may be used for further extensions.

INS Valid for 90 Days from Expiration Date

INS Valid for One (1) Year from Expiration Date

The **TEMPORARY RESIDENT CARD**, Form I-688, is the second document issued to aliens who further qualify under the "Amnesty Program". It is produced in the same manner as the I-688A and contains the same security features. The text statement on the reverse side is different and explains the additional privileges granted to the bearer.



Presentation of this document will authorize a transportation line to accept the named bearer on board for travel to the United States without liability under Section 273 of the Immigration and Nationality Act. Presentation of this document prior to the expiration date will authorize an immigration officer at a port of entry in the United States to permit the named bearer whose photograph, fingerprint and signature appear hereon, to enter the United States and assume the status previously granted under Section 245A or Section 210 of the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended.

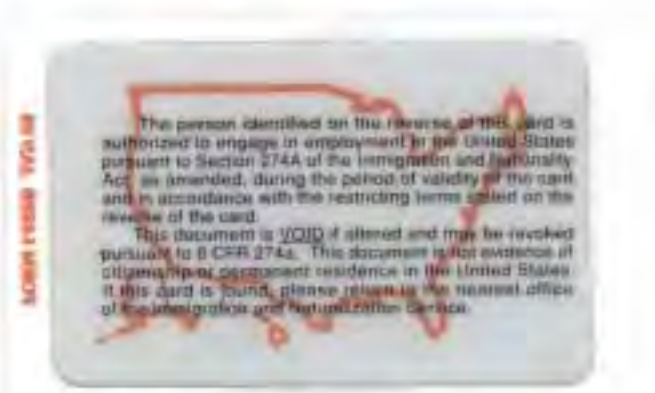
This document is evidence of alien registration and must be carried at all times and is VOID if data on reverse is altered.

Form I-688

The I-688 may be extended by placing a sticker on the reverse. Again, multiple stickers may be used for further extensions

Once the bearer becomes a permanent resident, a larger sticker is placed on the reverse which explains the new status of the bearer. With this endorsement, the bearer has the same privileges as a permanent resident.

This **EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION DOCUMENT**, Form I-688B, is issued to aliens who are not permanent residents but have been granted permission to be employed in the U.S. for a specific period of time. The card was produced originally with a Polaroid process similar to the I-688 and I-688A, but has the added feature of interlocking gold lines across the front.



Form I-688B

In May 1995, some INS offices began issuing a modified I-688B. The most significant change was to the card stock which was changed from the Polaroid process to a synthetic material called Teslin on which the biometric and biographic data of the bearer are printed. Note that, on this version, the bearer's name is printed on two lines.

Form I-688B (May 1995)

In August 1995, changes were made to the software which prints the I-688Bs and the name reverted to the one line format similar to that of the original card.

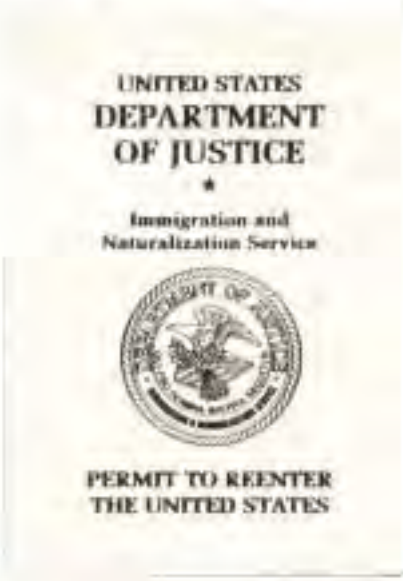
Form I-688B (August 1995)

In January 1997, INS began issuing a new **EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION CARD**, Form I-766. The new card is a credit card-type of document. The front of the card contains a photo, fingerprint, and signature of the rightful holder. The reverse contains a standard bar code, magnetic strip, and a two-dimensional bar code which will contain unique card, biographic, and biometric data.

Form I-766 (January 1997)

A **REENTRY PERMIT**, Form I-327, is issued to a permanent resident alien in lieu of a passport. The reentry permit guarantees him/her permission to reenter the U.S. and is valid for a period of 2 years. It is not renewable.

The reentry permit contains a digitized photograph and many of the security features of a passport. Visas and entry/exit stamps may be applied to the blank pages.



Form I-327

A **REFUGEE TRAVEL DOCUMENT**, Form I-571, is similar to the reentry permit, but it is used by aliens who have been classified as refugees or asylees. The security features and period of validity are also the same as the REENTRY PERMIT.

Form I-571

There are three types of **NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS.** The non-machine readable visa is printed with a multicolored ribbon while the machine readable visas are stickers which are applied to the passport page. Visas are used for entry purposes and must be valid on the date of entry into the U.S. It is not necessary for the visa to be valid **after** entry.

When an alien has been granted admission into the U.S. by an Immigration Inspector at an authorized Port of Entry, he/she is issued an **ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE RECORD**, Form I-94, the bottom portion of which is stapled to a page in the Alien's passport. This document explains how long the bearer may remain in the U.S. and the terms of admission.

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Immigration and Naturalization Service

I-94
Departure Record

SEP 13 1991

B-2

MARCH 16, 1992

Family Name
DOE

First (Given) Name
JOHN

Birth Date (day, mo., yr.)
01.01.91

Country of Citizenship
ENGLAND

See Other Side

STAPLE HERE

Important - Retain this portion in your possession; you must surrender it when you leave the U.S. Failure to do so may delay your entry into the U.S. in the future.

You are authorized to stay in the U.S. only until the date written on this form. To remain past this date, without permission from immigration authorities, is a violation of the law.

Surrender this portion when you leave the U.S.:
- By sea or air, to the transportation line;
- Across the Canadian border, to a Canadian Official;
- Across the Mexican border, to a U.S. Official.

Students planning to resume the U.S. within 30 days to return to the same school see "Arrival-Departure" on page 2 of Form I-20 prior to surrendering this permit.

Record of Changes

Port:

Departure Record

Date:

Carrier:

Flight #/Ship Name:

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office Washington, D.C. 20402

Form I-94

The **BORDER CROSSER CARD**, Form I-586, is issued to Mexican nationals who reside in Mexico and frequently cross into the U.S. for visits, shopping, or to conduct commerce. The status granted to the bearer is B-1/B-2, a visitor for business or pleasure. The bearer of this card is **not entitled to work** in the U.S., is restricted to stays of no more than 72 hours, and may only travel within 25 miles of the border. This card is similar in design to the I-551 Resident Alien Card, except for the color.

Form I-586

The **BORDER CROSSER CARD,** Form I-586, was revised in November 1990. The most noticeable difference between the original I-586 and the revised card is the color. The front of the revised card has a peach colored background and the color of the heading at the top of the card is teal.

Form I-586

The U.S. Department of State introduced a new **BORDER CROSSER CARD**, Form DSP-150 in May 1998. The front of the card has a three line machine readable zone and a hologram. Bearers of this card are **not** entitled to work in the U.S..

FRONT

REVERSE

The Optical Memory Stripe contains encoded cardholder information as well as a personalized etching which depicts the bearer's photo, name, date of birth, and card expiration date.

SOCIAL SECURITY CARDS

Although **SOCIAL SECURITY CARDS** are not immigration documents, they are mentioned here because they are often used as identification and to establish employment authorization.

Social Security cards have been issued since 1936 and have been revised more than 20 times. Originally, the seal on the Social Security card read "Department of Health, Education, and Welfare". In May 1980, it was changed to the "Department of Health and Human Services". In April 1995 it was changed again to read "Social Security Administration". Some counterfeiters have failed to notice these changes.

In October 1983, security features were added to the card. All Social Security Cards issued since October 1983 have been printed with raised (intaglio) printing and the signature line consists of microline printing of the words "**SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION**" in a repeating pattern.

Do not laminate this card.

This card is invalid if not signed by the number holder unless health or age prevents signature.

Improper use of this card and/or number by the number holder or any other person is punishable by fine, imprisonment or both.

This card is the property of the Social Security Administration and must be returned upon request. If found, return to:
SSA-ATTN: FOUND SSN CARD
P.O. Box 17087 Baltimore Md. 21203
Contact your local Social Security office for any other matter regarding this card.

Department of Health and Human Services
Social Security Administration
Form OA-702 (1-88)

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