

Important information about Passports and Visas, and the **New ESTA** for travelling to the USA

This information is correct as at **1st January 2009** but I would urge you to check the following official website for any changes, although we will endeavour to keep this info up to date.

http://www.usembassy.org.uk/cons_new/visa/niv/vwp.html

In order to travel to the United States you will require certain documentation. Please refer to the following table to confirm which you need to have and then read the more detailed information relating to each area

	Visa Required	ESTA Required
If your passport is machine readable, is issued by one of the specified countries and also states that you are a CITIZEN (see below for more details on criteria)	NO	YES
If your passport is machine readable, is issued by one of the specified countries and DOES NOT state that you are a CITIZEN (see below for more details)	YES	NO
If your passport is NOT machine readable	YES	NO

Do you need a Visa?

Under the **Visa Waiver program** you do not require a visitors Visa if you are a ****CITIZEN**** of any of the following countries

- Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium Brunei, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, **Ireland**, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the **United Kingdom**
(Citizens of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and the Republic of Korea must be in possession of an e-passport - see below)

VERY Important note ref: ****CITIZEN****

You WILL still need a Visa if your passport says that you are anything other than a **CITIZEN of the country of issue on the photograph page**

e.g. A passport indicating that the bearer is a **British Subject**, British Dependent Territories Citizen, British Overseas Citizen, British National (Overseas) Citizen, or British Protected Person **does not** qualify for travel without a visa. A passport which states holder has Right of Abode or indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom does not qualify for visa free travel.

This is particularly important for **Irish born** British passport holders. You should double check the page with your photo as you are very likely to have a **British Subject** passport rather than a **British Citizen** passport. (see special notes about Visas below)

What you need to do if you are 14 or over

You will need to have completed the Visa application form **DS-156** in advance.

This is an electronic form and can be found at <http://evisaforms.state.gov/>

If you are a male aged between **16 & 45** you will also need to complete the additional form **DS-157** at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/79964.pdf>

(note other people may also be asked to complete this, so it might be worth doing so just in case)

In certain circumstances you may be required to produce other information, which can add up to 6 weeks to the process!

You will also need to produce evidence of your trip – e.g. booking confirmation

You will need your current passport, which must have at least 6 months left to run **AFTER** you return to your home country

You will need a passport style photograph

And the fees!

Note you may be denied access to the US if you have a Criminal record

Irish Born British Subjects – Passport or Visa?

Anyone born on the island of Ireland on or before 31 December 2004 has the right to a full Irish Citizens passport. You will almost certainly find it quicker, and easier, to apply for one. You will then have no need for a Visa, and have the benefit of a second passport. Note that many other countries will now not allow entry without a VISA if you are a British Subject only, so you might use the Irish Passport more often than you might think!

For full information visit <http://www.dfa.ie/home/index.aspx?id=253>

The citizenship entitlement of every person born on the island of Ireland on or after 1st January 2005 is governed by the citizenship of the person's parents at the time of the person's birth or the residency history of one of the parents prior to the birth.

I am eligible for the VISA WAIVER so what is ESTA?

ESTA is the **Electronic System for Travel Authorisation** which is compulsory for all travellers who have qualified for the VISA WAIVER Program only, travelling on or after **12th January 2009** so this certainly applies to the Worlds!

The scheme does NOT apply to travellers who have applied for a VISA

Note this also includes children and infants who travel on a passport under the Visa Waiver Program and each person must complete the online ESTA application. It is acceptable for parents to complete applications on behalf of the children.

WARNING Beware of searching for ESTA on Google etc. as there are several official looking sites who are charging \$40/50 for the info and application form which is available for free on the official US Government site <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta/>

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When you complete the application you will be notified **INSTANTLY** if travel has been approved. If your application for a Travel Authorization is denied, you must apply for a B-1 Visitor Visa or B-2 Tourist Visa which can take weeks or months. You will not be allowed into the USA if you do not have either ESTA approval or a VISA. If you travel to the United States but are denied entry, you will never be able to enter the United States on the Visa Waiver Program again.

The good news is that you can complete the ESTA application **at any time** before travelling, and I recommend that you do so immediately.

Even if you do not yet have flight details, or accommodation details, the forms are still acceptable. All you need to do is give approximate dates of travel, and put **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania** as your destination. You can update the details at any time online, so as long as you do so before you go there'll be no problem when you arrive.,

Assuming I have sorted my entry papers what else do I need on arrival?

- Your current passport, which must have **at least** 6 months left to run AFTER you return to your home country – Note ALL children will need their own passport
- You will also need to produce evidence of your trip being a genuine visit – your booking confirmation and tickets will suffice.
- I'd suggest bringing a copy of your ESTA approval
- You may also complete a form on board the plane. Please make sure it is fully completed otherwise you will be sent back to the end of the line.
- Also make sure you have some cash, as evidence that you can support yourself! If they don't believe that you can they may refuse entry.
- If a child is travelling with only one parent you may need some kind of declaration that the other parent is aware and consents to the travel

Hopefully that covers most of the important information that needs to be known in advance although there is one other matter that I thought I'd mention. I have found this reference to padlocked suitcases that you might find worth noting, particularly the last sentence.

Baggage Security Checks

Screening of passenger's baggage includes opening luggage on departure from the USA after they are checked in and therefore leaving bags unlocked will avoid the potential need for them to be opened **forcibly**. However travellers may be provided with free, padlock-like seals that screeners can snip open if a search is necessary but, if unavailable, travellers are advised to use **cable or zip ties** as an alternative to baggage locks. If a checked bag is searched, a statement to that effect will be inserted in the bag to notify the owner and the bag will be re-sealed. ***Travellers are advised to check with their baggage insurance provider to ensure that such measures do not affect their policy.***

***If you can get through all that without any problems then we'll
See you all in Philadelphia!***