Introduction

All United States citizens – including children - crossing into Canada and returning to the United States through land, sea or air ports of entry are required to have documents that comply with the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI). Accepted documents are a U.S. passport, a passport card, a trusted traveler card such as NEXUS or SENTRI, an enhanced driver's license or state ID card.

The regulations for children vary depending on age and circumstance. Please continue to read important information.

Entry Into Canada

Entry into Canada is solely determined by Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) officials in accordance with Canadian law. Canadian law requires that all persons entering Canada carry both proof of citizenship and proof of identity. A valid U.S. passport, passport card, Trusted Traveler card, enhanced driver’s license or enhanced state ID card satisfies these requirements for U.S. citizens. For temporary visits of less than 180 days, a visa is not required.

Note: Anyone with a criminal record (including misdemeanors) may not be able to enter Canada without obtaining a special waiver in advance. A DWI conviction is considered a felony in Canada. If you have been convicted within the past 5 years, you may be considered inadmissible. To determine admissibility and, if necessary, seek a waiver of exclusion, please visit http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/index.asp.

Entry Into The United States

Entry into the United States is solely determined by US Customs and Border Protection Agency in accordance with United States law. When entering the United States from Canada, U.S. citizens must present a valid Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative compliant document. A U.S. passport, passport card, Trusted Traveler card, enhanced driver’s license or enhanced state ID card satisfies these requirements.
Who Needs What?

Bottom Line:

- U.S. citizens under age 16 are allowed to cross the U.S. – Canadian border at land entry points with certified copies of their birth certificates or other proof of citizenship, rather than a passport. No photo ID is required.

- U.S. citizens age 16 and older must present one of the approved documents listed below. No exceptions!

Important details regarding international travel with children

Children under age 16 without both parents

If you are:
- Traveling with your own child but not the other parent OR
- An adult traveling with a child not your own

You must have written consent from the other parent or parents/guardians authorizing the trip. The letter should include addresses and telephone numbers where the parents/guardians can be reached and the dates of the trip.

If you are:
- Divorced – you should carry a copy of legal custody documents.

If one parent is deceased:
- It is a good idea to carry a copy of the death certificate.

Approved Documents

All U.S. citizens age 16 and older must present one of the following documents to enter Canada and return to the United States.

1. U.S. Passport – This is an internationally recognized travel document that verifies a person’s identity and nationality. Accepted for travel by air, land and sea.

   * NOTE: As of March 30, 2012, processing time for new AND renewed passports is 4-6 weeks. Expedited service for both is currently 2-3 weeks.

2. U.S. Passport Card – This is a limited-use travel document that fits in your wallet and costs less than a U.S. Passport. It is only valid for travel by land and sea.

   * NOTE: As of March 30, 2012, processing time for new AND renewed passports is 4-6 weeks. Expedited service for both is currently 2-3 weeks.
3. Enhanced Driver’s License (EDL) or Enhanced State ID (ESID) Card – Cost-effective and convenient, federally accepted documents that meet driving, identification and border-crossing needs. Accepted for travel by land or sea from Canada, Mexico, Bermuda and the Caribbean.

As these cards are the fastest and least expensive accepted documents, we’re including the following details.

Applying for a EDL / ESID - to upgrade a valid Michigan driver’s license or State ID to the enhanced versions, or apply first the first time, follow these steps:

1. Eligibility:
   - You must be a U.S. citizen and a Michigan resident
   - You can have no violations, suspensions, revocations or denials on your driving record that would prevent you from legally operating a motor vehicle

2. To apply:
   a. Visit any Secretary of State office. Make sure you bring documentation of:
      - A valid Social Security number (Social Security card)
      - U.S. citizenship (a certified copy of a birth certificate or Certificate of U.S. Naturalization)
      - Identity (a current Michigan license or ID card, if you have one)
      - Residency (a current Michigan license or ID card, if you have one)
   b. Have a new photograph taken (Social Security office will do)
   c. Pay the fee. (See below)

3. Cost:
   **First License or ID Card**
   - Enhanced Driver's License $45
   - Enhanced State ID Card $30
   - Enhanced State ID Card (Blind or 65+) $20

   **Renewal**
   - Enhanced Driver's License $38
   - Enhanced State ID Card $30
   - Enhanced State ID Card (Blind or 65+) $20

All documentation is subject to Department of State approval. In some cases, approval may not occur the same day and may require an additional visit.

Once you complete the enhanced license application process, you will be issued a Temporary Permit to drive. The permit does not qualify as a secure document for border-crossing purposes.

Both the enhanced license and enhanced ID are valid for four years and should arrive in the mail in 2-3 weeks.
4. Trusted Traveler Program Cards (TTP) – Issued only to pre-approved, low-risk frequent border crossing travelers.

* NOTE: While NEXUS was designed for northern border crossings and SENTRI for southern border crossings, either of the cards can be used at all U.S. land and sea ports of entry.
TIPS

Before You Go

1. Make sure you have:
   - A U.S. Passport or other recommended ID for U.S. citizens (Carry it - do NOT pack it)
   - Only the medication that is needed for the trip, in the original container
   
   If necessary:
   - A letter for minors traveling with only 1 parent/guardian
   - A permission letter for minors traveling without parent/legal guardian
   - Legal documents showing custody in the case of divorce

2. Take off your sunglasses, turn off the radio and all cell phones - don't wait to start doing these tasks once you've arrived at the booth.

3. It is illegal to take radar detectors into Ontario, regardless of whether they are used or not. Police may confiscate detectors and impose substantial fines.

4. Download and read the "Know Before You Go" brochure [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov)

Inspections

Understand that United States and Canadian Border Protection agencies have the legal authority to inspect you, your car and your belongings without a warrant.

- Everyone undergoes an inspection, to varying degrees, upon request to enter Canada and return to the United States. As part of your inspection, you may be asked questions regarding:
  - Your citizenship
  - The nature of your trip
  - Anything you are bringing into the country

- Your baggage, including any electronic equipment (cell phone, laptop, camera, etc) may be examined. If your baggage is checked, you will be asked to place it on an exam station, open it and step back. After the check is complete, you will be asked to repack and close the baggage.

- Children old enough to speak for themselves may be encouraged to do so by the customs officer. Be prepared to let children answer questions directed to them.

 Declarations

As a visitor, you can bring items into Canada for your own personal use. Personal use includes clothing, sports equipment, cameras, laptops, etc. These are items you would normally and reasonably use during a routine day.

You must declare "personal use goods" when you arrive at the port of entry. Border officers do conduct examinations to verify declarations. As long as you declare goods when you arrive and take them with you when you leave, you will probably not have to pay any duty or taxes.

Re-entering the United States you must declare any items purchased in Canada that you are bringing home. Keep your receipts.
Q&A

Q: What is the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative?

A: The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), is the federal plan to implement post 9/11 recommendations and Congressional mandates that require all travelers present documentation that establishes identity and nationality to enter or re-enter the United States.

Q: Why does Canada require all these extra letters just because I’m a single parent or because my spouse isn’t going on the trip?

A: Children under the age of 18 are classified as minors in both the US and Canada. Border officers are always on alert for children who need protection, especially when leaving/entering another country.

Q: What is an enhanced driver's license or enhanced state ID card?

A: They are dual-purpose documents that verify your identity and citizenship and are designed for convenience. In addition to serving as a typical driver's license or ID card, they may be used to re-enter the U.S., by land or sea only, when returning from Canada, Mexico, Bermuda or the Caribbean. Enhanced driver's licenses and enhanced state ID cards are among the federally approved border-crossing documents when entering the U.S.

Q: How do I apply for an enhanced license or state ID card?

A: To obtain an enhanced license or ID, you must be a U.S. citizen. If you are applying for an enhanced license, you must also have no violations, suspensions, revocations or denials on your driving record that would prevent you from legally operating a motor vehicle.

To apply:
1. Visit any Secretary of State office. Make sure you bring documentation of:
   a) A valid Social Security number (Social Security card)
   b) U.S. citizenship ((a certified copy of a birth certificate or Certificate of U.S. Naturalization)
   c) Identity (a current Michigan photo license or ID card, if you have one)
   d) Residency (a current Michigan photo license or ID card, if you have one)
2. Have a new photograph taken.
3. Pay the enhanced license or state ID card fee. (See below)

Q: How long will it take to get my enhanced driver's license or state ID card?

A: Approximately two to three weeks after submitting your application.
Q: How does the enhanced driver's license or state ID card differ from a standard driver's license or ID card?

A: Specific features of the enhanced license or ID include:

1. A radio frequency identification (RFID) chip to speed border crossings. The RFID chip does not contain any personally identifying information.
2. A machine-readable area on the back of the card to serve as a backup if RFID equipment is unavailable.
3. A security sleeve to protect the RFID chip when the card is not being used.
5. The word "Enhanced" on the front.

Q: Which Secretary of State offices issue the enhanced license or state ID card?

A: All Secretary of State offices issue the enhanced driver's license and state ID card.

Q: What are the fees associated with an enhanced driver's license or state ID card?

A:  

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Q: Do I need an enhanced driver's license or state ID card if I am younger than 18?

A: U.S. citizens **under the age of 16** must present their birth certificate (original or a photocopy) or other proof of U.S. citizenship such as a naturalization certificate or citizenship card.

U.S. citizens **age 16 or older** must present one of the following: an enhanced driver’s license, enhanced state ID card, passport, passport card or Trusted Traveler card.