

Template last updated on February 14, 2018

[DATE]

To Whom It May Concern:

I, or my dependent minor, wish to wear my Dastaar (turban) in a United States passport photograph. As a member of the Sikh faith, I, or my dependent minor, wear a Dastaar for religious purposes. The Dastaar is part of recognized, traditional religious attire that is required to be worn continuously in public.

The United States Department of State allows persons of faith to wear religious headdress worn continuously in public in United States passport or visa photographs. In this regard, please review the State Department guidance attached to this letter.¹ On the topic of religious head covering in United States passport or visa photos, the State Department states:

“You may wear a hat or head covering, but you must submit a signed statement that verifies that the hat or head covering is part of recognized, traditional religious attire that is **customarily or required to be worn continuously in public** [emphasis added] or a signed doctor's statement verifying the item is used daily for medical purposes.”

This document constitutes mine or my dependent minor's signed statement that the turban is part of recognized, traditional religious attire that is required to be worn continuously in public.

For your information Sikhs wear an external uniform to unify and bind them to the beliefs of the religion and to remind them of their commitment to Sikh teachings at all times. These articles of faith distinguish a Sikh and have deep spiritual significance. They signify an individual's commitment to the Sikh faith and to the highest ideals of love and service to humanity. Unlike some other faiths where only the clergy are in uniform, all initiated Sikhs are required to wear external articles of faith. The Sikh Code of Conduct, called the *Rehat Maryada*, outlines the requirements for practicing the Sikh way of life, including wearing the articles of faith. The *Rehat Maryada* explicitly instructs that a Sikh must wear a turban. See Ch. 10, Art.16(t), translated by W. H. McLeod: *Textual Sources For the Study of Sikhism*, Manchester University Press, 1984.

Unlike a hat, a turban must always cover a Sikh's head. Sikhs consider the turban to be a precious gift from their prophet and many wash their hands before they begin to tie it. The turban reminds a Sikh of his or her duty to maintain and uphold the core beliefs of

¹ This information is also available on the U.S. Department of State website at: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports/requirements/photos.html>, <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/photos.html>, and <https://photos.state.gov/libraries/switzerland/231771/PDFs/Photo%20Guidance%20Brochure%20-%20Layout%201%20Version%202017.pdf>.

the Sikh faith, which include working hard and honestly, sharing with the needy, and promoting the equality of all humankind. When a Sikh ties a turban, the turban ceases to be just a piece of cloth and becomes one and the same with the Sikh's head. It is a religious commitment without which the believer ceases to be a Sikh.

I thank you in advance for your cooperation in complying with United States Department of State rules, and allowing me or my dependent minor to wear a religious turban required to be worn continuously in public in a passport or visa photograph.

Sincerely,

[NAME AND SIGNATURE]

For more information, please visit <https://www.sikhcoalition.org/>.

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Passport Photos

You must provide one photo with your passport application.

- Your head must face the camera directly with full face in view.
- You must have a neutral facial expression or a natural smile, with both eyes open.
- Taken in clothing normally worn on a daily basis
- Taken in the last 6 months
- Use a plain white or off-white background
- Be sized correctly
 - 2 x 2 inches (51 x 51 mm)
 - Head must be between 1 -1 3/8 inches (25 - 35 mm) from the bottom of the chin to the top of the head
- Printed on matte or glossy photo quality paper
- Printed in color
- You cannot wear glasses.
 - If you cannot remove your glasses for medical reasons, please include a signed note from your doctor with application.
- You cannot wear a hat or head covering.
 - If you wear a hat or head covering for religious purposes, submit a signed statement that verifies that the hat or head covering in your photo is part of recognized, traditional religious attire that is customarily or required to be worn continuously in public.
 - If you wear a hat or head covering for medical purposes, submit a signed doctor's statement verifying the hat or head covering in your photo is used daily for medical purposes.
 - Your full face must be visible and your hat or head covering cannot obscure your hairline or cast shadows on your face.
- You cannot wear headphones or wireless hands-free devices.

Photo Examples

Shadows and Lighting

Glasses

Size and Position

Resolution, Print Size, and Quality

Digital Alterations and Retouching

Pose and Expression



Acceptable— Photo is clear and in color, reproduces skin tones

Already have a photo?



Crop your photo to the right size using our [Photo Tool](#).

Helpful Links for Passport Photos

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[Applicants 16 and 17](#)

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Country[Travel.State.Gov](#) > [U.S. Visas](#) > Photo Requirements

Photo Requirements

Starting November 1, 2016, eye glasses will no longer be allowed in visa photos.

Your photo is a vital part of your visa application. To learn more, review the information below on how to provide a suitable photo. Digital images are required for some visa categories, while photos are required for other visa categories. The acceptance of your digital image or photo is at the discretion of the U.S. embassy or consulate where you apply.

We recommend you use a professional visa photo service to ensure your photo meets all the requirements.

Your photos or digital images must be:

- In color
- Sized such that the head is between 1 inch and 1 3/8 inches (22 mm and 35 mm) or 50% and 69% of the image's total height from the bottom of the chin to the top of the head. View the [Photo Composition Template](#) for more size requirement details.
- Taken within the last 6 months to reflect your current appearance
- Taken in front of a plain white or off-white background
- Taken in full-face view directly facing the camera
- With a neutral facial expression and both eyes open
- Taken in clothing that you normally wear on a daily basis
- Uniforms should not be worn in your photo, except religious clothing that is worn daily.
- **Do not wear a hat or head covering that obscures the hair or hairline, unless worn daily for a religious purpose. Your full face must be visible, and the head covering must not cast any shadows on your face.**
- Headphones, wireless hands-free devices, or similar items are not acceptable in your photo.
- Effective November 1, 2016, eyeglasses are no longer allowed in new visa photos, except in rare circumstances when eyeglasses cannot be removed for medical reasons; e.g., the applicant has recently had ocular surgery and the eyeglasses are necessary to protect the applicant's eyes. A medical statement signed by a medical professional/health practitioner must be provided in these cases. If the eyeglasses are accepted for medical reasons:
 - The frames of the eyeglasses must not cover the eye(s).
 - There must not be glare on eyeglasses that obscures the eye(s).
 - There must not be shadows or refraction from the eyeglasses that obscures the eye(s).

[Español](#)

Already have a photo?



Crop your photo to the right size using our [Photo Tool](#).

Color, contrast, and brightness

- Photo must be in color and should reproduce skin tones accurately
- Photo should not be over- or under-exposed
- Facial features should be clearly evident

Correct contrast and color
Proper exposure



Contrast too high



Incorrect color



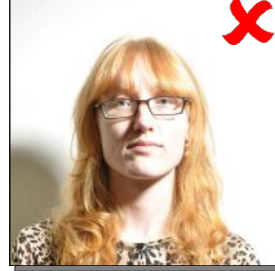
Underexposed



Not in color



Overexposed



Lighting

- Illumination should be uniform
- Photo should not contain any shadows on face or background
- Photo should not contain any shine or "hot spots"

Uniform lighting
No shadows or "hot spots"



Shine or "hot spots" on face



Shadows on face and background



Glare on glasses



Shadow on background



Too dim lighting



U.S. Passport Photograph Acceptance Guide



U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Consular Affairs
Passport Services
Washington, DC

U.S. Passport Photograph Acceptance Guide

Guidelines for Accepting High Quality Photographs for U.S. Passports

Technological advances have changed the way passport photos may be taken *and* the way that the U.S. Department of State processes the photos. This brochure is meant to help Passport Acceptance Facilities staff ensure that:

- Customers are accurately represented and
- Photos are free of common defects that cause delays

The photograph you accept as part of the passport application is a key part in determining the identity of the passport customer. Remember to carefully review the customer's photograph based on the guidelines here and in the Passport Agent's Reference Guide (PARG). Photographs that are not acceptable could potentially delay the customer's passport application process.

For more information about photos and applications for children, please see the U.S. Department of State brochure entitled *U.S. Passport Photograph's Acceptance Guide – Children's Photos Addendum*.

This brochure is designed to unfold into a small, wall-mountable poster, useful as a practical reference. Please take the time to become familiar with the information provided. With your help accepting good quality photos for U.S. passports, the Department of State can process the applications efficiently. As a result, we will both



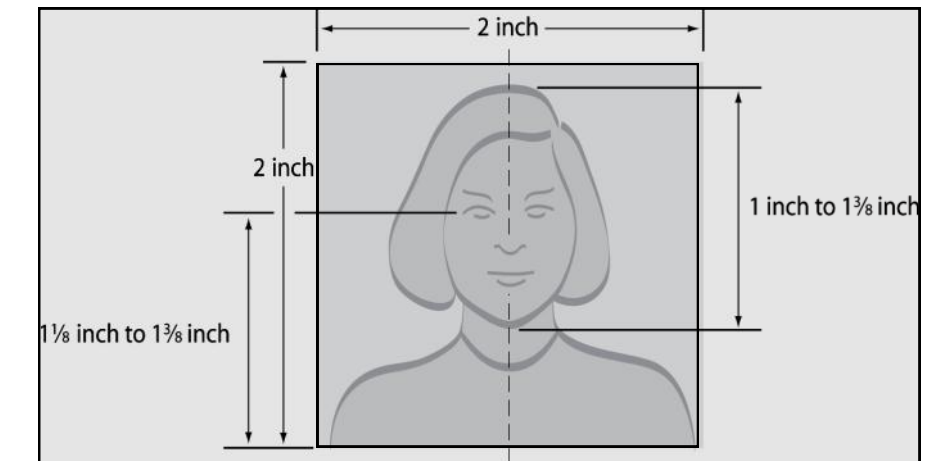
- ✓ Indicates that this example photo should be accepted as part of an application for a U.S. passport.
- ✗ Indicates that this example photo should not be accepted as part of an application for a U.S. passport and a new acceptable photo would need to be submitted.

Quality and composition

Only one (1) passport photograph should be submitted with a passport application.

The passport photo must be:

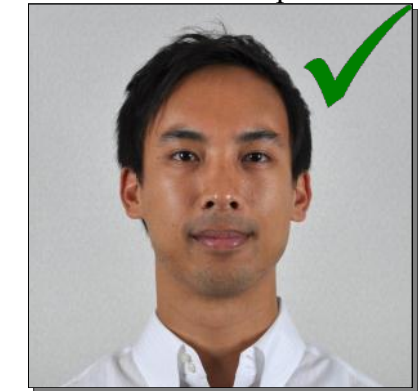
- In color; printed on photo quality paper; 2" x 2" (50 x 50 mm) in size
- Sized such that the head is between 1" and 1 3/8" (between 25 and 35 mm) from the bottom of the chin to the top of the head; see template below
- Taken within the last 6 months to reflect current appearance
- Taken in front of a plain white or off-white background
- Taken in full-face view directly facing the camera
- With a neutral facial expression and both eyes open
- Taken in clothing normally worn on a daily basis



Head size and position

- Must meet Quality and Composition requirements
- Shoulders should be square to camera; head should be facing forward
- Picture should not be taken too close or too far away from the subject and meet size requirements

Correct size and position



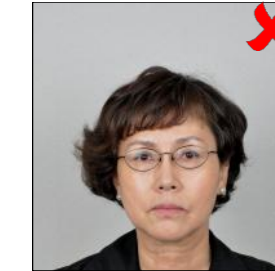
Not centered



Too small



Too low



Too large



Fisheye distortion
Camera too close



Glasses

- Clear lens glasses should be free of glare or reflections
- Tinted/dark lenses may not be worn (unless for a medical condition)
- Pupils and irises must be clearly visible; glasses should not cast any shadows on the face and their frames should not obscure the pupils or irises of the eyes.
- Slight upward or downward tilt of glasses may remove glare
- Removing glasses will correct problems caused by glare

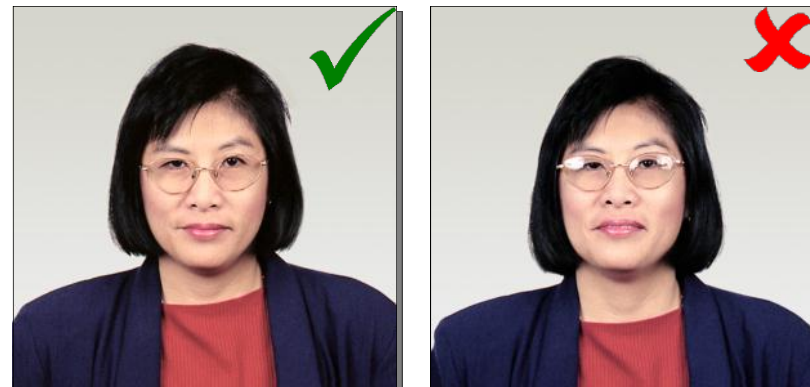
Clear lens glasses with no glare.
Subject's pupils and irises are clearly visible



Taking a photo of a subject wearing glasses that does not produce glare and/or shadows may be difficult. Even when glasses are worn every day, it is acceptable to remove glasses for a passport photo.



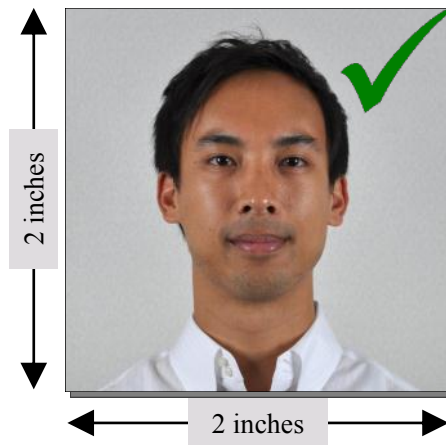
Glare on this example disappears by tilting the head or the glasses slightly



Resolution and photo size

- Photo should be sharp without visible pixels or printer dots
- Photo should be in focus
- Photo should be 2 inches by 2 inches (50 mm by 50 mm) in size

Clear image with plain background



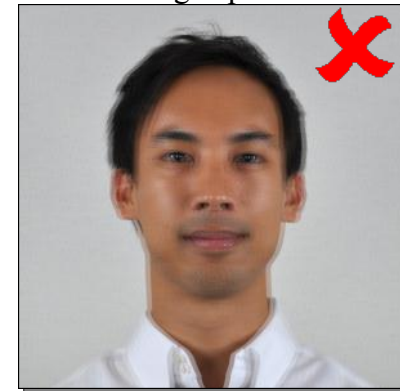
Visible pixels



Out of focus



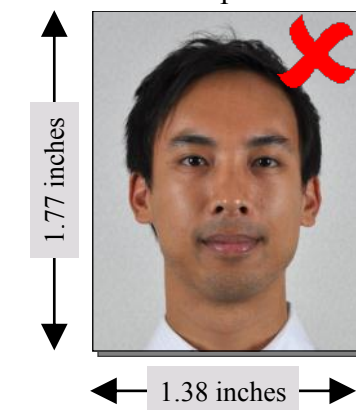
Blurry: Camera moved during exposure



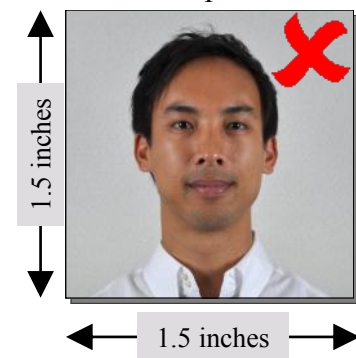
Visible printer dot pattern



Incorrect photo size



Incorrect photo size



Pose and expression

- Neutral facial expression is preferred; natural smile is also acceptable
- Both eyes must be open and clearly visible
- Customer should be facing the camera and looking straight ahead

Neutral (non-smiling) expression is preferred

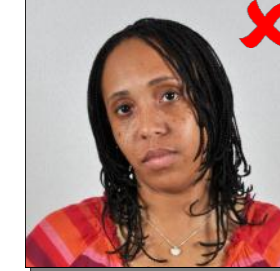
Only a non-exaggerated expression is acceptable



Natural smile is acceptable



Head is tilted



Head is tilted forward



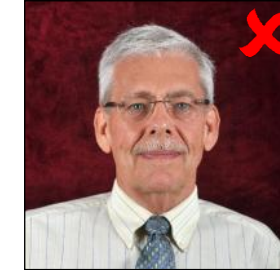
Head is turned



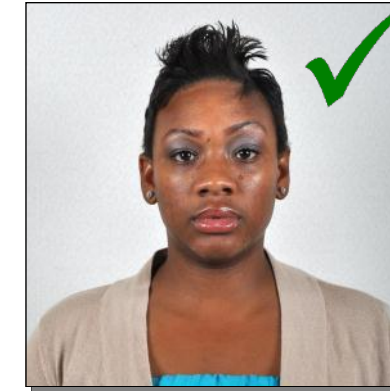
Background

- Background should be uniform
- Background should be plain and white or off-white
- Background should be free of shadow
- No other person should appear in the photo

Non-white background



Plain background with no shadows



Background is not plain



Background is not plain



Shadows on the background



Another person is in the photo



Obscuring the face

- Pupils and irises must be clearly visible
- Full face must be visible and free of shadows
- Hair, hats, or clothing must not obscure the face

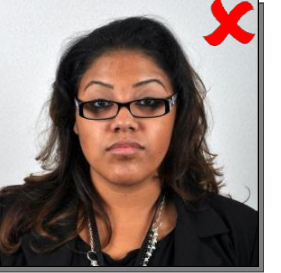
Full face is visible
No shadows



Hair obscures face



Pupils and irises not clearly visible



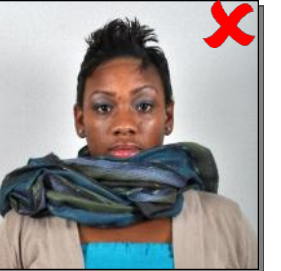
Pupils and irises not clearly visible



Shadows on face



Scarf covers portion of face



Attire

- Uniforms should not be worn, except religious clothing worn daily
- **No hats or head coverings, except for religious purposes (signed statement regarding religious headgear may be requested)**
- Full face must be visible – no shadows or clothing should obscure the face

Scarf worn for religious reasons
Full face oval is visible



Headscarf covers and shadows the face



Scarf covers a portion of the face



Hat on head



Headscarf covers a portion of the face



Non-religious head covering

