

Why You Might Need a Reentry Permit

A reentry permit is a legal document issued by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) that allows certain noncitizens to travel to other countries and still return to the U.S. legally.

How a Reentry Permit Helps

A reentry permit permits lawful permanent residents (LPRs) to travel outside the U.S. without jeopardizing your LPR status or having difficulty returning to the U.S. Getting a reentry permit can be critical if you are an LPR who plans to be absent from the U.S. for one year or more. After one year, your Permanent Resident Card becomes invalid for reentry into the U.S. As a result, you would be unable to reenter the U.S., and you might have a hearing in immigration court to determine whether you have abandoned your LPR status. A reentry permit generally is valid for two years, so you can travel abroad for up to two years without getting a returning visitor visa.

Likewise, immigration officials may consider you to have abandoned your LPR status if you take up residence in another country, even if you are absent from the U.S. for less than one year. A reentry permit allows you to maintain your LPR status in this situation and reenter the U.S.

Depending on what country you are traveling to, you also may be able to use a reentry permit as your main traveling document instead of a passport, if you can't or don't want to get a passport from your home country. Many countries use the reentry permit like a passport, but you'll want to double-check with the countries you intend to visit to make sure that your reentry permit is all you need to travel there.

How to Get a Reentry Permit

You can get a reentry permit by filing [Form I-131, Application for Travel Document](#), with USCIS. You should apply for a reentry permit at least 60 days before the date of your planned travels to another country.

You can only apply for a reentry permit while you are in the U.S.; once you are outside the U.S., you can no longer apply for a reentry permit. However, if you apply for a reentry permit while you are in the U.S. and then leave the country, USCIS still will process your application as long as it has your biometrics, including fingerprints and a photograph, already on file. In this situation, you can ask USCIS to send your reentry permit to a U.S. consulate, embassy, or Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in another country.

You will have to get a new reentry permit if yours has expired, as you cannot extend reentry permits. However, if you still have a valid reentry permit, but you have lost it, or it has been stolen, then you need to indicate that fact on your reentry permit application.