

DECODING NIGERIAN PASSPORTS:

A TRAVELLER'S ESSENTIAL HANDBOOK



Introduction

Passports are fundamental travel documents that play a crucial role in international mobility, serving as proof of identity and nationality. Whether for leisure, business, or official purposes, a passport is essential for any traveller crossing international borders. However, each passport serves a distinct purpose, offering different levels of access and privileges. Many individuals apply for passports without understanding the various types, their distinct characteristics, and the specific purposes each one serves.

To address this need for clarity, this article provides guidance on the different types of passports available in Nigeria exploring their unique characteristics, purposes, and the specific needs they address. The guide also aims to assist in making informed decisions about which passport to apply for, ultimately facilitating smoother and more efficient international travel experiences.

From the standard passport to the special passports, we delve into the diverse world of these indispensable travel documents.

What is a passport?

A passport is an essential travel document issued by the government of a country to her citizens for international travel. It also serves as a veritable means of identification as it verifies the holder's identity and nationality.

All citizens of Nigeria either by Birth, Descent, Adoption, Registration or Naturalization are eligible for a Nigerian Passport, provided they satisfy all conditions prescribed by law.

Types Of Passports In Nigeria

We have different passport types in Nigeria which include: Standard, Diplomatic, and Official Passports.

1. Standard

This passport type is such which is available to the general public and regular travellers, including but not limited to tourists, students, and business executives.

Only individuals who are citizens by birth, naturalization or registration are eligible and can apply for a standard passport in Nigeria. An application for a standard passport can either fall within the "fresh" or a "re-issue" category.

A. Fresh:

i. The application requirements for Citizens by Birth are as follows:

Adult (18 years and above)

- Certificate of local government origin.
- National identity card.
- Completed passport application form.
- Marriage certificate, where applicable.
- Birth certificate (certificate issued by the National Population Commission shall be required from applicants whose date of birth is with effect from December 1992) or age declaration attached with one (1) passport-sized photograph and duly endorsed by a Commissioner for Oaths.

Acknowledgement slip and evidence of payment.

Minor (under 18 years of age)

- Completed passport application form attached with one (1) passport-sized photograph of the minor to be endorsed on the reverse side by the consenting parent(s).
- Evidence of Nigerian citizenship of parent(s).
- Birth certificate (certificate must be issued by the National Population Commission for minors born within Nigeria).
- Certificate of local government origin.
- National identity card.
- Letter of consent from parent (usually the father).
- Acknowledgement slip and evidence of payment.
- Court order and letter of approval from the State Ministry of Women and Child Development (This Requirement is strictly for adopted children).

ii. Nigerian citizens by Naturalisation or Registration are to visit the Nigeria Immigration Service Headquarters, Abuja with original copies of relevant documents to commence the application process for this category of passports.

The application requirements for Citizens by Registration and Naturalisation are as follows:

- Certificate of registration and naturalisation as duly issued by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (the "President").
- Completed passport application form.
- Marriage certificate, where applicable.
- Data page of previous passport in case of reissue.
- Acknowledgement slip and evidence of payment.
- National identity card.
- Evidence of means of livelihood (letter of employment, company documents etc).
- Tax clearance certificate.
- Residence permit/birth certificate, where place of birth is in Nigeria.

- First five (5) pages of international passport including the data page.
- Recommendation from two (2) guarantors/sponsors/referees with two (2) passport photographs, curriculum vitae, ID Card (Driver's License/International Passport/National ID Card) and evidence of socio-economic contribution.
- Evidence of Socio-Economic Contributions.

Please note that the list above varies dependent on the type of citizen and requirements at the point of registration

B. Re-Issue:

An application for a re-issue may be made upon the following grounds:

- i. Lost passports.
- ii. Damaged passports.
- iii. Renewal of passport.
- iv. Exhausted visa pages.
- v. Change of name due to change in marital status.
- vi. Change of data due to error or other valid reasons (backed with relevant documents).

2. Diplomatic Passports

This type of passport is issued to government protocol officers and ambassadors for special assignments. It may also be issued to Nigerian diplomats and other top government officials as may be approved by the President.

Some of the application requirements include:

- Letter of application / introduction from the Applicant's Organization.
- Two (2) passport photographs.
- Last promotion letter or Letter of Appointment.
- Photocopy of valid official identity card.
- National Identity Card.
- Evidence of Age.
- Certificate of return from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) **(in the case of eligible Political Office holders)**.

Note: Eligibility is subject to review from time to time.

3. Official Passports

This passport type is usually issued to only Government officials as listed below:

- Commissioners (members of the State Executive Council), Special Assistants and Special Advisors.

- Senior Government Officials in the rank of Deputy Directors and above in the Federal Civil Service.
 - Senior Government Officials from the rank of Directors and above in the State Civil Service.
 - Deputy General Managers and above in Federal and State Parastatals.
 - Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Secretaries of Local Government Councils.
 - Staff from the rank of Deputy Director and above in CBN and their equivalent in Federal owned Banks and allied institutions.
 - Colonel and above in the Army and their equivalent in the Navy and Air force.
 - ACP and above (NPF), ACSIO in DSS.
 - AC and above in paramilitary Services.
 - Vice and Deputy Vice Chancellors of Federal and State Universities and their equivalents in the Polytechnics and Colleges of Education.
 - Immigration, Military and Police Officers on Peace keeping Missions.
 - 1st Class Traditional Rulers / Chiefs.
- Senior Government Officials i.e., GL.08-14 on Official assignment abroad provided there is an SGF / SSG approval for such official trips.

Note: Eligibility for this category of passport is subject to review every two years.

The application requirements for this type of passport include:

- Letter of application / introduction from the Applicant's Organization.
- Two (2) passport photographs.
- Last promotion letter or Letter of Appointment.
- Photocopy of valid official identity card.
- Evidence of Age.
- National Identity Card.

The Enhanced E-Passport

The Nigeria Immigration Service recently introduced the enhanced polycarbonate e-passport. The passport consists of the following features:

- Polycarbonate back cover which has enhanced its durability.
- Different variants/validity for the comfort of Nigerians. These include:
 - (a) 64 pages; 10 years validity.
 - (b) 32 pages; 5 years validity.

- The passport also has enhanced security features. This makes it difficult, if not impossible to forge or counterfeit.

The process of applying for the e-Passport has also been fully automated. This implies that applicants can apply for passports and track the status of their applications from the comfort of their homes. The feature also enables applicants to book appointments for their capturing at any date and passport office convenient for them.

Applications can be made via: portal.immigration.gov.ng passport

Conclusion

In a world where international travel is increasingly common, understanding the various types of passports available is essential for any traveller to receive visas and to serve as a means of identification. In Nigeria, the diversity of passport types reflects the varied needs of its populace.

Each type of passport serves a unique purpose, ensuring that travellers are appropriately documented for their specific journey. Whether you are a frequent flyer or embarking on your first international trip, knowing the right passport to obtain is the first step towards a hassle-free journey.

Should you require further assistance or clarification on the above, please feel free to contact pamilerin.akabunwa@famsvillesolicitors.com or rachael.olayemi@famsvillesolicitors.com.

AUTHORS



Pamilerin Akabunwa

Managing Associate

pamilerin.akabunwa@famsvillesolicitors.com



Rachael Olayemi

Associate

rachael.olayemi@famsvillesolicitors.com