

Fingerprint checks at the border

This page explains how fingerprint checks have been introduced at the border for passengers with biometric UK visas, entry clearances and identity cards for foreign nationals (ICFN).

From 30 November 2009, the UK Border Agency is introducing fingerprint checks at the border for passengers with biometric UK visas, entry clearances and identity cards for foreign nationals (ICFNs). This is being introduced incrementally at ports across the United Kingdom by March 2010.

The purpose of these checks is to verify that the individual entering the United Kingdom is the same person who applied for their visa, entry clearance or ICFN. Using fingerprints enables us to do this with greater certainty.

On arrival in the United Kingdom, trained Officers will scan two fingerprints on an electronic fingerprint reader at border control. In the majority of cases we will use the right hand thumb and first finger. These will then be checked against the fingerprints captured and stored as part of the application process for the visa, entry clearance or ICFN.

The fingerprint checks should take no longer than previous processing times for holders of visas, entry clearances and ICFNs. It may take additional time if there are difficulties scanning the fingerprints. There is no ink or mess involved in the process; passengers are simply required to place their fingers one at a time on the glass plate of the fingerprint reader.

Children age 6 and over are required to provide their fingerprints for checks however a responsible adult must be present when fingerprints are captured from children under the age of 16. There are certain exemptions from the fingerprint check process, please see below.

The fingerprint checks are an additional tool to verify identity; passengers will still be asked standard immigration related questions on arrival in the United Kingdom as normal. If the fingerprint check reveals any queries around identity, these matters may be resolved through an interview, but this will not routinely be required.

If a passenger refuses to provide their fingerprints for checking they will be subject to further investigations and this may result in a delay to their journey while a decision on admission is made.

Passengers will have to provide their fingerprints each time they travel to the United Kingdom with a visa, entry clearance or ICFN. Fingerprints will be held for a maximum of 48 hours, after which time they will be destroyed.

There is no charge for fingerprint checks.

Fingerprint Checks at the Border - Exemptions

The following passengers are exempt from fingerprint checks at the border:

- Passengers who are exempt from immigration control under section 8 of the Immigration act 1971 and who have therefore qualified for an 'exempt' endorsement will not have had their biometrics captured as part of the application process. These are:
 - Serving Government Ministers of State (or their equivalents) recognised by Her Majesty's Government and travelling to the United Kingdom on the official business of their Government;
 - Diplomats accredited to the United Kingdom; and
 - Diplomats transiting to or from a place where they are accredited.
- Passengers who are not exempt from immigration control, but are not required to provide their biometric data:
 - Diplomats visiting the United Kingdom on the official business of their Government; and
 - Diplomatic couriers.
- Children aged under 6.
- Amputees - persons with less than two digits are exempt from the requirement to provide fingerprints as biometrics will not have been captured as part of the application process.

- Holders of right of abode - person holding a certificate of entitlement is not a person subject to the entry clearance requirement and biometrics will not have been captured as part of the application process.
- Passengers who will hold visas issued before the introduction of biometric visas. Biometrics will not have been captured as part of the application process.

- _____

- _____
