

# Green Card Renewal

If you are a lawful permanent resident, you should always keep your green card valid. Renewing a green card is not complicated, but like anything else with immigration, there are some things you have to watch out for. Some green cards have no expiration date and you do not have to renew them. However, if your green card picture is so old that it no longer looks like you, it might be difficult to use as an identity document.

## Before You Apply

### If You've Had Contact with the Police

If you have had any contact with the police, you must speak to a competent immigration attorney to discuss ALL of your police contact or convictions before you send in the application to renew your green card. Immigration will fingerprint you as a part of the green card renewal process, so if you have been convicted of a crime that makes you deportable you will not be able to hide it from them. Your fingerprints go to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and even expunged records or convictions will show up on your report. **A good immigration attorney can help you determine your best options, but it is important that you are honest with them.**

### If You've Spent Time Outside the United States

If you have been outside of the United States for more than one year, speak to a good immigration attorney before renewing your green card. Your extended time outside of the United States may cause Immigration to assume you have abandoned your residency. However, you can still provide evidence to Immigration that you did not abandon your residency. Acceptable evidence includes: maintaining a bank account, filing your income taxes, and keeping both a home and your job in the United States.

# Application Process

## Mailing in Your Application

After Immigration receives your application with either the payment or fee waiver, they will send you a receipt. If you asked for a fee waiver, you usually have to wait a little longer for your receipt. Next, you will get an appointment to go to your local Application Support Center (ASC) to have your fingerprints taken and a digital scan of your face created. For more information, read our [Biometrics Appointment](#) article.

Green card processing times vary, but you can check your case status using your receipt number at [USCIS.gov](https://uscis.gov). You can also use [this site](#) to check the average processing times.

### IF YOU CHANGE ADDRESSES

If you move, it is very important to let Immigration know as soon as possible. **The post office will not forward a green card to a new mailing address.** The fastest way to update your address is to use Immigration's [online tool](#).

## Seek the Help of a Good Lawyer

### We Can't Stress This Enough

**These pages are intended as a guide. Please do not complete any of these applications without help.** Immigration law is detailed and complicated, and we urge you to rely on a well-trained attorney for help. A lawyer can help you prepare for every step along the way. Learn more in our [How To Hire An Immigration Lawyer](#) article.

## Frequently Asked Questions

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If my green card expires, does that mean I am in the United States unlawfully?

Your status does not expire when your ten-year green card expires. Although you should have a current card, don't panic. Just renew it. **However, if you have a two year conditional card, your status will expire when your card expires.** At which point, you will be here illegally. You will have to figure out a way to get a new immigrant visa and a new green card.

How do I qualify for a fee waiver to renew my green card?

You can receive a fee waiver from Immigration in one of two ways. The first way is to show that your family's income is at or below 150% of the [Federal Poverty Guidelines](#). The second way is to show that you have financial hardship. For example, you could have medical bills or you could have lost your job and as a result, your family is really struggling financially.

If my green card expires, can I still apply for citizenship?

You no longer need a valid green card to apply for United States citizenship. If your green card has expired, please either renew it or consider applying for citizenship. You can get an ADIT stamp if you applied for citizenship at least 6 months ago and your card has expired while you are waiting for your citizenship process to finish. The stamp will serve as temporary evidence that you are a lawful permanent resident and will also allow you to travel and verify employment.

What if I lose my green card?

If you lose the physical copy of your card, you can apply for a new green card. As soon as you get the filing receipts for the replacement card, you can also get an ADIT stamp in your passport. The ADIT stamp serves as temporary evidence that you are a lawful permanent resident; it will allow you to travel and verify employment.

How do I correct mistakes on my green card?

If the mistakes on your green card are Immigration's fault, then they will issue a new card free of charge.

However, if the mistakes are your fault, you will either have to apply for a new card and either pay again or get another fee waiver.

How long can I keep renewing my child's green card?

Once your child is 14 years old, they have to apply for a new green card because they are required to go to a "biometrics" appointment. During the biometrics appointment Immigration will take your child's fingerprints and a digital scan of your child's face. Look closely at the filing fees. If you are filing because you have reached your 14th birthday, but your existing card does not expire until after your 16th birthday, you do not have to pay as much; you pay only the biometrics fees. Also, once your child turns 14, your child has to sign his or her own immigration forms; you cannot sign any longer as the parent.

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