

Getting a copy of your birth certificate

Easy · 20 min to order; delivery time varies by state · Set by your birth state, per copy

Only the vital records office in the state or territory where you were born can issue a certified copy; the federal government doesn't. Find the office through the CDC's state list, order online, by mail or in person, and have the city and county of your birth ready. You'll need it as proof of citizenship for a first passport, and it's one way to prove your name, birth date and status for a REAL ID. Lost all your ID? Most states have another way to verify you.

YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ The city and county where you were born
- ☐ A photo ID, if you have one
- ☐ Your parents' names as they'd appear on the certificate
- ☐ A payment card for the state's fee

WHAT TO KNOW

- 1 **Find the right office.** Pick the state or territory where you were born on the CDC's Where to Write for Vital Records list. New York City has its own office, separate from the rest of New York.
- 2 **Check that office's rules: how to order online, by mail or in person, how to get a copy fast, and the cost of each certified copy.**
- 3 **Have the city and county where you were born ready.**
- 4 **Order a certified copy.** For a passport, you must send original proof of citizenship.
- 5 **Order through the state office or a vendor it links to.** The federal government doesn't distribute birth certificates.
- 6 **Store it flat, dry and safe with your Social Security card and passport, not in your wallet.**

Watch out Start from the CDC's list, which links straight to each state's official office, rather than a search result. The federal government doesn't sell birth certificates, so a site claiming to be the federal source isn't.

DAD NOTE *Order two and keep one somewhere you'll never lose it.*

Full lesson: aptkeys.com/legal/important-documents/getting-a-copy-of-your-birth-certificate/

Checked October 2, 2026. Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; USA.gov; U.S. Department of Homeland Security.