



How to Prepare for a USCIS Biometrics Appointment

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If you're going through the green card or naturalization process, US Citizenship and Immigration Services will require you to attend a biometrics appointment.

But what are biometrics and why does USCIS need them? How do you get ready for a biometrics appointment?

What Are Biometrics?

The term "biometrics" refers to the processes used to identify people based on physical traits. Immigrant applicants need to participate in biometrics appointments for the purpose of [criminal background checks](#).

At a USCIS biometrics appointment, your fingerprints will be taken to be analyzed and put on file.

Filing USCIS green card or naturalization forms like the [I-485](#) and the [N-400](#) will require an additional biometrics gathering fee at the time of filing. Once USCIS officers start processing your application, you will receive a biometrics appointment notice.

Getting Ready for Your Biometrics Appointment

The USCIS biometrics appointment notice will have the date and time of your appointment as well as the address of the USCIS office to go to. It is normally the office closest to your home, but many larger cities have many offices that process biometrics and you may have to visit an office that is further away, but that can make an appointment for you sooner. It is absolutely mandatory that you have your appointment notice with you when you go to your appointment.

If additional personal documents are required, then the USCIS biometrics appointment letter will specify the documents that you need to take with you. Keep in mind that personal documents in a language other than English must have [certified translations](#). You will also need a photo identification document such as a passport or driver's license.

What to Expect at the USCIS Biometrics Appointment

After you reach the USCIS biometrics center with your USCIS appointment notice, be sure to leave your cell phone or any digital camera in the car or with a friend. Cameras and phones are not allowed in the USCIS offices.

Once your appointment gets underway, you will be asked to fill out a form. The form will ask for some personal information, and you will also need to indicate what form you filed that requires the biometrics.

Then your fingerprints will be taken. Most USCIS offices use ink to take fingerprints — however, more offices are switching to electronic fingerprinting.

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After the USCIS Biometrics Appointment

Fingerprints will then be analyzed by the FBI within a month's time. If you get an additional biometrics appointment notice within the next few weeks, don't panic — it's common for the prints to be smudged, and fingerprints will need to be retaken for a proper background check. USCIS will not charge an additional fee for any additional fingerprinting work.

If the FBI flags or rejects your biometrics, you will be required to present police clearance reports from every state or country you've lived in proving that you do not have an extensive criminal record.

USCIS biometrics are valid for 15 months. If your application is not processed within 15 months, USCIS will most likely send another notice for a biometrics appointment.

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