



EWMT

Insurance Advisers and Agents Ltd

UK nationals visiting the UK must travel using a UK passport New rules start on 25th February 2026.

Must a UK citizen travelling to the UK use a UK passport?

There is no specific legal requirement that a British citizen travel on a British passport. However, primary legislation is clear that evidence of right of abode in the UK can only be demonstrated at the UK border by producing either a British passport or a passport endorsed with a certificate of entitlement to the right of abode (CoE).

Lord Hanson of Flint (Home Office) 25/06/2025.

The introduction of the Electronic Travel Authority (ETA) does not change the legal requirements for dual British citizens. The requirement dates back to the Immigration Act 1971. There is no legal requirement for British citizens to travel on a British passport, but in practice, pre-departure checks for UK-bound travellers make it difficult to travel to the UK without one.

Stricter UK border enforcement from 25 February 2026

From 25 February 2026, the UK Border Force will fully apply the ETA requirement. British dual citizens must ensure they have a valid UK or Irish passport, or a certificate of entitlement, if they will be travelling on or after that date. If they don't, they may not be able to board their transport to the UK.

How do British citizens show they have the right to enter the UK?

Most British citizens use a British passport to travel to and from the UK. They are expected to do this by showing a current British passport

Does a UK citizen need an ETA?

No.

Does a dual national UK and another country citizen need an ETA?

No, because you will travel into and out of the UK using a UK passport.

Can a UK dual national apply for an ETA and travel on their non-UK passport instead?

It is not possible to apply for an ETA if you are a dual UK citizen. It is not possible to apply for an ETA if you hold a passport from another country. This is because the ETA application form does not allow UK citizens to apply.

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I have an EU passport. Can I use that instead?

Not if you have a current, valid UK passport. But, yes, if you do not have a valid UK passport. You can apply for a Certificate of Entitlement to the right of abode in the UK. It is an official document, but it isn't possible to have both a certificate of entitlement and a current British passport. It is issued as a sticker affixed to the holder's foreign passport, but it will soon be issued in digital format. It currently costs £589 to apply for a certificate of entitlement, more than the cost of a British passport.

Changes to certificates of entitlement to the right of abode

From 26 February 2026, people approved for a certificate of entitlement will receive it in a digital format instead of as a physical document.

I am a British citizen. Why should I travel using my British passport?

The "universal permission to travel scheme" requires each traveller to have permission to travel to the UK, unless they are exempt from that requirement. It is not possible to apply for an ETA if you are a UK citizen. People who can't provide satisfactory evidence of their eligibility, such as a UK Passport or a certificate of eligibility to come to the UK may be denied boarding, due to transport operators' concerns about being fined for bringing inadequately documented passengers to the UK, and the way the UK's advance screening of travellers operates.

What about non UK citizens?

People who are not British citizens are expected to demonstrate their permission to travel by using:

Their passport and

- their digital UK immigration permission (eVisa), if they are resident in the UK;
- their physical vignette sticker or digital eVisa, if they have a visitor or certain other type of visa; or
- their electronic travel authorisation (ETA), if they are visiting the UK and are from a non-visa national country (for example, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, USA or an EU country).

What about Irish citizens?

Irish citizens are also exempt from the permission to travel requirement. They are expected to use a valid Irish passport to show they can travel to the UK. They don't need an ETA.

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What can people do if they have an urgent need to travel?

British nationals abroad might be able to apply for an emergency travel document if they have an urgent need to travel and can't renew or replace their British passport in time. It might be more difficult to get an emergency travel document if the person hasn't had a UK passport for many years.

Why can't people prove their right of abode in other ways?

Can UK nationals use an alternative document, such as an expired British passport? Unfortunately, carriers are unlikely to deviate from the guidance because they could be penalised for transporting inadequately documented passengers into the UK.

Updated February 2026

Source UK Government Home Office