

Customs Rules for Returning Residents

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Customs Rules for Returning Residents

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

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Your Declaration

You must declare all articles acquired abroad and in your possession at the time of your return. This includes:

- * Articles that you purchased.
- * Gifts presented to you while abroad, such as wedding or

birthday presents.

- * Articles purchased in duty-free shops.
- * Repairs or alterations made to any articles taken abroad and returned, whether or not repairs or alterations were free of charge.
- * Items you have been requested to bring home for another person.
- * Any articles you intend to sell or use in your business. In addition, you must declare any articles acquired in the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, or Guam and not accompanying you at the time of your return.

The price actually paid for each article must be stated on your declaration in U.S. currency or its equivalent in country of acquisition. If the article was not purchased, obtain an estimate of its fair retail value in the country in which it was acquired.

Note: The wearing or use of any article acquired abroad does not exempt it from duty. It must be declared at the price you paid for it. The Customs officer will make an appropriate reduction in its value for significant wear and use.

Oral Declaration

Customs declaration forms are distributed on vessels and planes and should be prepared in advance of arrival for presentation to the Immigration and Customs inspectors. Fill out the identification portion of the declaration form. You may declare orally to the Customs inspector the articles you acquired abroad if the articles are accompanying you and you have not exceeded the duty-free exemption allowed (see pages 5-7). A Customs officer may, however, ask you to prepare a written list if it is necessary.

Written Declaration

A written declaration will be necessary when:

- * The total fair retail value of articles acquired abroad exceeds your personal exemption (see pages 5-7).

- * More than one liter (33.8 fl. oz.) of alcoholic beverages, 200 cigarettes (one carton), or 100 cigars are included.
- * Some of the items are not intended for your personal or household use, such as commercial samples, items for sale or use in your business, or articles you are bringing home for another person.
- * Articles acquired in the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, or Guam are being sent to the U.S.
- * A customs duty or internal revenue tax is collectible on any article in your possession.
- * A Customs officer requests a written list.
- * If you have used your exemption in the last 30 days.

Family Declaration

The head of a family may make a joint declaration for all members residing in the same household and returning together to the United States. Family members making a joint declaration may combine their personal exemptions (see pages 5-7), even if the articles acquired by one member of the family exceeds the personal exemption allowed.

Infants and children returning to the United States are entitled to the same exemptions as adults (except for alcoholic beverages). Children born abroad, who have never resided in the United States, are entitled to the customs exemptions granted nonresidents.

Visitors to the United States should obtain the leaflet Customs Hints for Visitors (Nonresidents).

Military and civilian personnel of the U.S. Government should obtain the leaflet Customs Highlights for Government Personnel for information about their customs exemptions when returning from an extended duty assignment abroad.

WARNING!

If you understate the value of an article declare, or if

you otherwise misrepresent an article in your declaration, you may have to pay a penalty in addition to payment of duty. Under certain circumstances, the article could be seized and forfeited if the penalty is not paid.

It is well known that some merchants abroad offer travelers invoices or bills of sale showing false or understated values. This practice not only delays your customs examination, but can prove very costly.

If you fail to declare an article acquired abroad, not only is the article subject to seizure and forfeiture, but you will be liable for a personal penalty in an amount equal to the value of the article the United States. In addition, you may also be liable to criminal prosecution.

Don't rely on advice given by persons outside the Customs Service. It may be bad advice which could lead you to violate the customs laws and incur costly penalties.

If in doubt about whether an article should be declared, always declare it first and then direct your question to the Customs inspector. If in doubt about the value of an article, declare the article at the actual price paid (transaction value).

Customs inspectors handle tourist items day after day and become acquainted with the normal foreign values. Moreover, current commercial prices of foreign items are available at all times and the-spot comparisons of these values can be made.

Play it safe--avoid customs penalties

Your Exemptions

In clearing U.S. Customs, a traveler is considered either a "returning resident of the United States" or a "nonresident."

Generally speaking, if you leave the United States for purposes of traveling, working or studying abroad and return to resume residency in the United States, you are considered a returning resident by Customs.

However, U.S. residents living abroad temporarily are entitled to be classified as nonresidents, and thus receive more liberal Customs exemptions, on short visits to the United States, provided they export any foreign-acquired items at the

completion of their visit.

Residents of American Samoa, Guam, or the U.S. Virgin Islands, who are American citizens, are also considered as returning U.S. residents.

Articles acquired abroad and brought into the United States are subject to applicable duty and internal revenue tax, but as a returning resident you are allowed certain exemptions from paying duty on items obtained while abroad.

\$400 Exemption

Articles totaling \$400 (based on the fair retail value of each item in the country where acquired) may be entered free of duty, subject to the limitations on liquors, cigarettes, and cigars, if:

- * Articles were acquired as an incident of your trip for your personal or household use.
- * You bring the articles with you at the time of your return to the United States and they are properly declared to Customs. Articles purchased and left for alterations or other reasons cannot be applied to your \$400 exemption when shipped to follow at a later date. The 10% flat rate of duty does not apply to mailed articles (See pages 24-26.) Duty is assessed when received.
- * You are returning from a stay abroad of at least 48 hours. Example: A resident who leaves United States territory at 1:30 p.m. on June 1st would complete the required 48-hour period at 1:30 p.m. on June 3rd. This time limitation does not apply if you are returning from Mexico or the Virgin Islands of the U.S.
- * You have not used this \$400 exemption, or any part of it, within the preceding 30-day period. Also, your exemption is not cumulative. If you use a portion of your exemption on entering the United States, then you must wait for 30 days before you are entitled to another exemption other than a \$25 exemption. (See page 7.)
- * Articles are not prohibited or restricted. See page 15.

Cigars and Cigarettes: Not more than 100 cigars and 200 cigarettes (one carton) may be included in your exemption.

Products of Cuban tobacco may be included if purchased in Cuba, see page 20. This exemption is available to each person regardless of age. Your cigarettes, however, may be subject to a tax imposed by state and local authorities.

Liquor: One liter (33.8 fl. oz.) of alcoholic beverages may be included in this exemption if:

- * You are 21 years of age or older.
- * It is for your own use or for use as a gift.
- * It is not in violation of the laws of the state in which you arrive.

Note: Most states restrict the quantity of alcoholic beverages you may import, and you must meet state alcoholic beverage laws in addition to federal ones. If the state in which you arrive permits less liquor than you have legally brought into the United States, that state's laws prevail.

Information about state restrictions and taxes should be obtained from the state government as laws vary from state to state.

Alcoholic beverages in excess of the one-liter limitation are subject to duty and internal revenue tax.

Shipping of alcoholic beverages by mail is prohibited by United States postal laws. Alcoholic beverages include wine and beer as well as distilled spirits.

\$600 and \$1200 Exemptions

If you return directly or indirectly from a U.S. insular possession--American Samoa, Guam, or the U.S. Virgin Islands--you may receive a customs exemption of \$1200 (based upon the transaction value of the articles in the country where acquired). You may also bring in 1,000 cigarettes, but only 200 of them may have been acquired elsewhere.

If you are returning from any of the following 24 beneficiary countries, your customs exemption is \$600, based upon fair market value:

Antigua and Barbuda Grenada Panama
Aruba Guatemala Saint Christopher/Kitts

Bahamas	Guyana	and Nevis
Barbados	Haiti	Saint Lucia
Belize	Honduras	Saint Vincent and
Costa Rica	Jamaica	the Grenadines
Dominica	Montserrat	Trinidad and Tobago
Dominican Republic	Netherlands	Virgin Islands,
El Salvador	Antilles	British
	Nicaragua	

In the case of the \$1200 exemption, up to \$600 worth of the merchandise may have been obtained in any of the beneficiary countries listed above, or up to \$400 in any other country. For example, if you traveled to the U.S. Virgin Islands and Jamaica and then returned home, you would be entitled to bring in \$1200 worth of merchandise duty-free. Of this amount, \$600 worth may have been acquired in Jamaica.

In the case of the \$600 exemption, up to \$400 worth of merchandise may have been acquired in other foreign countries. For instance, if you travel to England and the Bahamas, and then return home, your exemption is \$600, \$400 of which may have been acquired in England.

\$25 Exemption

If you cannot claim the \$400, \$600, or \$1200 exemptions, because of the 30-day or 48-hour minimum limitations, you may bring in free of duty and tax articles acquired abroad for your personal or household use if the total fair retail value does not exceed \$25. This is an individual exemption and may not be grouped with other members of a family on one customs declaration.

You may include any of the following: 50 cigarettes, 10 cigars, 150 milliliters (4 fl. oz.) of alcoholic beverages, or 150 milliliters (4 fl. oz.) of alcoholic perfume. Cuban tobacco products brought directly from Cuba may be included.

Alcoholic beverages cannot be mailed into the United States. Customs enforces the liquor laws of the state in which you arrive. Because state laws vary greatly as to the quantity of alcoholic beverages which can be brought in, we suggest you consult the appropriate state authorities.

If any article brought with you is subject to duty or tax, or if the total value of all dutiable articles exceeds \$25, no article may be exempted from duty or tax.

Gifts

Bona fide gifts of not more than \$50 in fair retail value where shipped can be received by friends and relations in the United States free of duty and tax, if the same person does not receive more than \$50 in gift shipments in one day. The "day" in reference is the day in which the parcel(s) are received for customs processing. This amount is increased to \$100 if shipped from the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, or Guam. These gifts are not declared by you upon your return to the States.

Gifts accompanying you are considered to be for your personal use and may be included within your exemption. This includes gifts given to you by others while abroad and those you intend to give to others after you return. Gifts intended for business, promotional or other commercial purposes may not be included.

Perfume containing alcohol valued at more than \$5 retail, tobacco products, and alcoholic beverages are excluded from the gift provision.

Gifts intended for more than one person may be consolidated in the same package provided they are individually wrapped and labeled with the name of the recipient.

Be sure that the outer wrapping of the package is marked 1) unsolicited gift, 2) nature of the gift, and 3) its fair retail value. In addition, a consolidated gift parcel should be marked as such on the outside with the names of the recipients listed and the value of each gift. This will facilitate customs clearance of your package.

If any article imported in the gift parcel is subject to duty and tax, or if the total value of all articles exceeds the bona fide gift allowance, no article may be exempt from duty or tax.

If a parcel is subject to duty, the United States Postal Service will collect the duty plus a handling charge in the form of "Postage Due" stamps. Duty cannot be prepaid.

You, as a traveler, cannot send a "gift" parcel to yourself nor can persons traveling together send "gifts" to each other. Gifts ordered by mail from the United States do not qualify under this duty-free gift provision and are subject to

duty:

Other Articles: free of duty or dutiable

Duty preferences are granted to certain developing countries under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). Some products from these countries have been exempted from duty which would otherwise be collected if imported from any other country. For details, obtain the leaflet GSP & The Traveler from your nearest Customs office. Many products of certain Caribbean countries are also exempt from duty under the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI). Most products of Israel may enter the United States either free of duty or at a reduced duty rate. Check with Customs.

The U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement was implemented on January 1, 1989. U.S. returning residents arriving directly or indirectly from Canada are eligible for free or reduced duty rates as applicable, on goods originating in Canada as defined in the Agreement.

Personal belongings of United States origin are entitled to entry free of duty. Personal belongings taken abroad, such as worn clothing, etc., may be sent home by mail before you return and receive free entry provided they have not been altered or repaired while abroad. These packages should be marked "American Goods Returned." When a claim of United States origin is made, marking on the article to so indicate facilitates customs processing.

Foreign-made personal articles taken abroad are dutiable each time they are brought into our country unless you have acceptable proof of prior possession. Documents which fully describe the article, such as a bill of sale, insurance policy, jeweler's appraisal, or receipt for purchase, may be considered reasonable proof of prior possession.

Items such as watches, cameras, tape recorders, or other articles which may be readily identified by serial number or permanently affixed markings, may be taken to the Customs office nearest you and registered before your departure. The Certificate of Registration provided will expedite free entry of these items when you return. Keep the certificate as it is valid for any future trips as long as the information on it remains legible.

Registration cannot be accomplished by telephone nor can

blank registration forms be given or mailed to you to be filled out at a later time.

Automobiles, boats, planes, etc., or other vehicles taken abroad for noncommercial use may be returned duty free by proving to the Customs officer that you took them out of the United States. This proof may be the state registration card for an automobile, the Federal Aviation Administration certificate for an aircraft, a yacht license or motorboat identification certificate for a pleasure boat, or a customs certificate of registration obtained before departure.

Dutiable repairs or accessories acquired abroad for articles taken out of the United States must be declared on your return.

Warning: Catalytic-equipped vehicles (1976 or later model years) driven outside the United States, Canada, or Mexico will not, in most cases, meet EPA standards when brought back to the U.S. As unleaded fuel generally is not available in other countries, the catalytic converter will become inoperative and must be replaced. Contact Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, D.C. 20460, for details and exceptions. (See page 16.)

Your local Customs office has the following leaflets which will be of interest--Importing a Car and Pleasure Boats. You may purchase Customs Guide for Private Flyers from your local Government Printing Office bookstore. Consult your local telephone book under "U.S. Government."

Household effects and tools of trade or occupation which you take out of the United States are duty free at the time you return if properly declared and entered.

All furniture, carpets, paintings, tableware, linens, and similar household furnishings acquired abroad may be imported free of duty, if:

- * They are not imported for another person or for sale.
- * They have been used abroad by you for not less than one year or were available for use in a household in which you were resident member for one year. This privilege does not include articles placed in storage outside the home. The year of use need not be continuous nor does it need to be the year immediately preceding the date of importation. Shipping time may not be included in the computation of the one year. in use. For information on freight

shipments, see page 25.

Items such as wearing apparel, jewelry, photograph equipment, tape recorders, stereo components, and vehicles are considered as personal articles and cannot be passed free of duty as household effects.

Articles imported in excess of your customs exemption will be subject to duty unless the items are entitled to free entry or prohibited.

The inspector will place the items having the highest rate of duty under your exemption, and duty will be assessed on the lower-rated items.

After deducting your exemptions and the value of any articles duty free, a flat 10 percent rate of duty will be applied to the next \$1,000 worth (fair retail value) of merchandise. Any dollar amount of an article or articles over \$1,000 will be dutiable at the various rates of duty applicable to the articles.

Articles to which the flat rate of duty is applied must be for your personal use or for use as gifts and you cannot receive this flat rate provision more than once every 30 days, excluding the day of your last arrival.

The flat rate of duty is 5% for articles purchased in the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, or Guam, whether the articles accompany you or are shipped.

Example: You acquire goods valued at \$ 2,500 from:

U.S. insular possessions:

Personal exemption (free of duty)	up to \$1,200
Flat duty rate at 5%	next \$1,000
Various rates of duty	remaining \$300

Total	\$ 2,500

Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act countries:

Personal exemption (free of duty)	up to \$600
Flat duty rate at 10%	next \$1,000
Various rates of duty	remaining \$900

Total	\$ 2,500

Other countries or locations:

Personal exemption (free of duty)	up to \$400
Flat duty rate at 10%	next \$1,000
Various rates of duty	remaining \$1,100

Total	\$ 2,500

The flat rate of duty will apply to any articles which are dutiable and cannot be included in your personal exemption, even if you have not exceeded the dollar amount of your exemption. Example: you are returning from Europe with \$200 worth of articles which includes 2 liters of liquor. One liter will be free of duty under your exemption, the other dutiable at 10%, plus any internal revenue tax.

Members of a family residing in one household traveling together on their return to the U.S. will group articles for application of the fiat duty rate without regard as to which member of the family may be the owner of the articles.

Payment of duty, required at the time of your arrival on articles accompanying you, may be made by any of the following ways:

- * U.S. currency (foreign currency is not acceptable).
- * Personal check in the exact amount of duty, drawn on a national or state bank or trust company of the United States, made payable to the "U.S. Customs Service."
- * Government check, money orders or traveler's checks are acceptable if they do not exceed the amount of the duty by more than \$50. [Second endorsements are not acceptable, Identification must be presented; e.g. traveler's passport or driver's license].
- * In some locations you may pay duty with credit cards from Discover, Mastercard and VISA.

Goods covered by an ATA Carnet: Residents returning to the U.S. with goods covered by an ATA carnet are reminded to report to a Customs Inspector upon their arrival. The inspector will examine the covered goods against the carnet and certify the appropriate reimportation counterfoil and voucher. The carnet will serve as the customs control registration document and no

entry or payment of duty will be necessary as long as the goods qualify as U.S. goods returned and are being brought back into the United States within the validity period of the carnet.

Rates of Duty

Various rates of duty for some of the more popular items imported by tourists are provided for use as an advisory guide only. If you have dutiable articles not subject to a fiat rate of duty, the Customs officer examining your baggage will determine the rates of duty.

Rates of duty on imported goods are provided for in the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States. There are two duty rates for each item, known as "column 1" and "column 2." Column 1 rates are those applicable to most favored nations. Column 2 rates are higher and apply to products from the following countries.

Afghanistan	Kampuchea	North Korea*
Albania	Laos	Rumania
Bulgaria	Latvia	Union of Soviet
Cuba*	Lithuania	Socialist Republics
Estonia	Mongolia	Vietnam *

NOTE: The tariff duty status accorded to these countries is subject to change. Please check with Customs for updated information.

Products of the above listed column 2 countries are dutiable at the column 2 rates of duty, even if purchased in or sent from another country. Example: A crystal vase made in Rumania and purchased in Switzerland would be dutiable at the column 2 rate. If the article accompanies you, however, it may be entered under your duty-free personal exemption or the flat rate of duty allowance.

* Goods from, or products of, these countries are subject to foreign assets controls, see page 20.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

(Subject to federal excise taxes, which greatly exceed Customs duties. These taxes vary from approximately 15 cents per liter for beer to more than \$3.50 per proof liter for

distilled spirits, liquors, and cordials.)

Distilled Spirits

per proof liter

Brandy	10.6% to 89.8%
Gin	13.2%
Liqueurs	13.2%
Rum	37%
Tequila	33% to 60 %
Vodka	13.2% to 67.6%
Scotch	5.3%
Other whiskeys	6.6%

Wine per liter

(33.814 fluid ounces)

Sparkling	30.9%
Still	8.3% to 26.4%
Beer	1.6%

ANTIQUES produced prior to 100 years before date of entry are admitted duty-free. Have proof of antiquity obtained from seller. Free

AUTOMOBILES

Passenger	2.5%
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BAGS

Hand, leather	5.3% to 10%
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BEADS

Glass beads	8%
Imitation precious and semi-precious stone (not glass)	6%
Ivory*	4.7%

BINOCULARS (PRISM), OPERA AND FIELD GLASSES Free

BOOKS Free

CAMERAS

Motion picture	4.5%
Still, over \$10 each	3.0%
Cases**, leather	8%
Lenses, mounted	6.6%

CANDY

Sweetened chocolate bars	5.0%
Other	7.0%

CHESS SETS 4.64%

CHINA, other than tableware

Bone	6.6%
Non-bone	2.5% to 9%

CHINA TABLEWARE

Bone	8%
Non-bone, valued not over \$56 per set	26%
Non-bone, valued over \$56 per set	8%

CIGARETTE LIGHTERS

Pocket	7.2% to 10%
Table	4.8%

CLOCKS

Valued over \$5 each	45% + 6.4%
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CRYSTAL 6% to 20%

DOLLS

Stuffed	Check with Customs
Other	12%

DRAWINGS

Done-by-hand	Free
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FIGURINES, china	9%
(By professional sculptor)	3.1%

FILM

Unexposed	3.7%
Exposed	Free

** Cases imported with camera are classifiable with the camera.

* Ivory beads made from elephant ivory are prohibited. See page 22.

FUR*

Wearing apparel	5.8%
Other	3.4%

FURNITURE

Wood chairs	3.4% to 5.3%
Wood furniture other than chairs	2.5%
Bentwood	6.6%

GOLF BALLS	2.4%
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GLOVES

Fur	5.8%
Horsehide or cowhide	14%

HANDKERCHIEFS,

linen, hemmed	10.7%
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IVORY, manufactured	4.2%
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Note: May be prohibited as endangered species.
See page 22.

JADE

Cut, but not set, suitable for jewelry	2.1%
Other articles of jade	21%

JEWELRY, precious metal

Silver chief value, valued not over \$18 a doz.	27.5%
Other	6.5%

LEATHER

Flatgoods, wallets	4.7% to 8%
Other manufactures of	Free to 5.6%

MUSIC BOXES	3.2%
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PAINTINGS, done entirely by hand	Free
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PEARLS

Loose or temporarily strung without clasp:	
Natural	Free
Cultured	2.1%
Imitation	8%
Permanently strung or temporarily strung, with clasp attached or separate	6.5% to 11%

PERFUME**	5%
POSTAGE STAMPS	Free
PRINTED MATTER	Free to 5.3%
RADIOS, solid state radio receivers	6%
RECORDS (PHONOGRAPH)	3.7%
* May be prohibited. See p. 22, Wildlife and Fish.	
** Subject to federal excise tax of \$3.566322 per liter.	
SHAVERS, ELECTRIC	4.4%
SHELL ARTICLES*	3.4%
SHOES, Leather	2.5% to 20%
SKIS AND SKI EQUIPMENT	3.5% to 5.5%
SOUND RECORDINGS	Free
STONES, Cut but not set	
Diamonds	Free
Others	Free to 2.1%
SWEATERS--wool	7.5% to 17%
TAPE RECORDERS	3.9%
TOYS	7%

WATCHES

Mechanical type	(depending on jewels) plus
Gold case	6.25 %
Gold bracelet	14%
Digital type	3.9 %

WEARING APPAREL

Cotton, not knit	3% to 32%
Cotton, knit	7.9% to 21%
Linen, not knit	3% to 12%
Manmade fiber, knit	16.2% to 34.6%
Manmade fiber, not knit	7.6% to 52.9% /Kg. + 21%
Silk, not knit	3% to 7.5%
Wool, knit	6% to 77.2% /Kg. + 20%
Wool, not knit	9.8% to 30.4%

WOOD, CARVINGS AND

ARTICLES OF	5.1%
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* May be prohibited. See p. 22, Wildlife and Fish.

NOTE: Duty rates are subject to change without notice by statute. For further information call your nearest Customs District office.

Prohibited and Restricted Articles

Because Customs inspectors are stationed at ports of entry and along our land and sea borders, they are often called upon to enforce laws and requirements of other Government agencies. For example, the Department of Agriculture is responsible for preventing the entry of injurious pest, plant, and animal diseases into the United States. The Customs officer cannot ignore the Agriculture requirements-the risk of costly damage to our crops, poultry and livestock industry is too great.

Certain articles considered injurious or detrimental to the general welfare of the United States are prohibited entry by law. Among these are absinthe, liquor-filled candy (where prohibited by state law), lottery tickets, narcotics and

dangerous drugs, obscene articles and publications, seditious and treasonable materials, hazardous articles (e.g., fireworks, dangerous toys, toxic or poisonous substances), and switchblade knives (however, a one-armed person may import a switchblade knife for personal use.)

Other items must meet special requirements before they can be released. You will be given a receipt for any articles retained by Customs.

Automobiles

Automobiles imported into the United States must conform to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) emission requirements and Department of Transportation (DOT) safety, bumper and theft prevention standards. Other than models required to meet theft prevention standards, vehicles may be entered conditionally to be brought into conformity. Automobiles that do not meet theft prevention standards will not be permitted entry into the United States, even under bond.

Automobiles that do not meet EPA emission requirements can only be imported by holders of conformity certificates from EPA. These certificate holders are known as Independent Commercial Importers (ICI). Individuals contemplating purchasing a nonconforming vehicle should first make arrangements with an ICI for importing and modifying the vehicle to U.S. specifications.

Vehicles that do not meet DOT safety and bumper standards must be imported by a DOT-registered party under a DOT bond of one and one-half times the value of the vehicle. Bonds may be difficult to obtain and can be expensive. Security deposits of 50% or more of the bond amount may be required.

Vehicles that do not conform to either EPA or DOT standards must be imported by a company that is an ICI and DOT-registered party with a separate DOT bond for one and one-half times the value of the vehicle.

Prospective purchasers should be aware that almost all automobiles purchased overseas are manufactured to European specifications and will require modification. Vehicles imported conditionally to be modified to U. S. specifications, and not modified, or not modified acceptably, must either be exported or destroyed under Customs supervision.

Further information on importing vehicles may be obtained from the Environmental Protection Agency, Atm: EN-340F, Washington, D.C. 20460, telephone (202) 2602504, and the Department of Transportation, Office of Vehicle Safety Compliance (NEF 32), Washington, D.C. 20590. Copies of the Customs pamphlet Importing a Car and the EPA brochure Buying a Car Overseas? Beware! may be obtained by writing the U.S. Customs Service, P.O. Box 7407, Washington, D.C. 20044, or the Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, D.C. 20460.

Biological Materials

Biological materials of public health or veterinary importance (disease organisms and vectors for research and educational purposes) require import permits. Write to the Foreign Quarantine Program, U.S. Public Health Service, Center for Disease Control, Atlanta, Ga. 30333.

Books, Records, Computer Programs and Cassettes

"Piratical" copies of copyrighted articles--unlawfully made articles produced without the authorization of the copyright owner--are prohibited from importation into the United States. Piratical copies will be seized and destroyed, unless the importer can demonstrate that he had no reasonable grounds for believing his actions violated the law. Then, they may only be returned to the country of export.

Ceramic Tableware

Some ceramic tableware sold abroad contains dangerous levels of lead in the glaze that can leach into certain foods and beverages served in them. The Food and Drug Administration recommends that ceramic tableware, especially when purchased in Mexico, the Peoples Republic of China, Hong Kong or India, be tested for lead release on your return or be used for decorative purposes only.

Cultural Property

An export certificate issued by certain Latin American

countries may be required in order to import pre-Columbian monumental and architectural sculpture and murals, whether they are shipped directly or indirectly from the country of origin to the United States. Currently, there are also import restrictions on certain items from Peru, Bolivia, and El Salvador. Customs also enforces the Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act. The regulations prohibit illicit traffic in cultural property while allowing the exchange of national treasures for legitimate scientific, educational, and cultural purposes. For further information, contact the United States Information Agency, Washington, D.C. (202)485-6612.

Drug Paraphernalia

The importation, exportation, manufacture, sale, and transportation of drug paraphernalia are prohibited. Persons convicted of these offenses are subject to fines and imprisonment. As importations contrary to law, drug paraphernalia may be seized by U.S. Custom.

Firearms and Ammunition

Firearms and ammunition are subject to restrictions and import permits approved by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF). Applications to import may be made only by or through a licensed importer, dealer, or manufacturer. Weapons, ammunition, or other devices prohibited by the National Firearms Act will not be admitted into the United States unless specifically authorized by ATF.

No import permit is required when it is proven that the firearms or ammunition were previously taken out of the United States by the person who is returning with such firearms or ammunition. To facilitate reentry, persons may have them registered before departing from the United States at any Customs office or ATF field office. However, not more than three nonautomatic firearms and 1,000 cartridges therefor, will be registered for any one person. Quantities beyond these are subject to the export licensing requirements of the Office of Munitions Control, Department of State, Washington, D.C. 20520.

For further information, contact the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Department of the Treasury, Washington, D.C. 20226; (202) 927-7977.

Residents of the United States carrying firearms or ammunition with them to other countries should consult in advance the customs officials or the respective embassies of those countries as to their regulations.

Food Products

Bakery items and all cured cheeses are admissible. The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service leaflet, Travelers Tips, provides detailed information on bringing food, plant, and animal products into the U.S. Imported foods are also subject to requirements of the Food and Drug Administration.

Fruits and Vegetables

Most fruits and vegetables are either prohibited from entering the country or require an import permit. Every fruit or vegetable must be declared to the Customs officer and must be presented for inspection, no matter how free of pests it appears to be. Most canned or processed items are admissible.

Applications for import permits or requests for information should be addressed to Quarantines, USDA-APHIS-PPQ, Federal Bldg., Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

Gold coins, medals, and bullion, formerly prohibited, may be brought into the United States, under regulations administered by the Office of Foreign Assets Control, except from Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea, Libya, Iraq, Haiti and Iran. Copies of gold coins are prohibited if not properly marked by country of issuance.

Meats, Livestock, Poultry

Meats, livestock, poultry, and their by-products (such as sausage, pate), are either prohibited or restricted from entering the United States, depending on the animal disease condition in country of origin. Fresh meat is generally prohibited from most countries. Canned meat is permitted if the inspector can determine that it is commercially canned, cooked in the container, hermetically sealed, and can be kept without refrigeration. Other canned, cured, or dried meat is severely

restricted from most countries.

All prohibited importations will be seized and destroyed unless the importer returns them immediately to their country of origin.

You should contact USDA-APHIS-VS, Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Maryland 20782, for detailed requirements or call (301) 436-7885.

Medicine/Narcotics

Narcotics and dangerous drugs, including anabolic steroids, are prohibited entry and there are severe penalties if imported. A traveler requiring medicines containing habit-forming drugs or narcotics (e.g., cough medicines, diuretics, heart drugs, tranquilizers, sleeping pills, depressants, stimulants, etc.) should:

- * Have all drugs, medicinals, and similar products properly identified;
- * Carry only such quantity as might normally be carried by an individual having some sort of health problem;
- * Have either a prescription or written statement from your personal physician that the medicinals are being used under a doctor's direction and are necessary for your physical wellbeing while traveling.

Warning

The Food and Drug Administration prohibits the importation, by mail or in person, of fraudulent prescription and non-prescription drugs and medical devices. These may include unorthodox "cures" for medical conditions including cancer, AIDS, and multiple sclerosis. While these drugs and devices may be completely legal elsewhere, they may not have been approved for use in the United States, even under a prescription issued by a foreign physician. They may not legally enter the United States and may be confiscated upon arrival by mail.

For additional information, contact your nearest FDA office or write:

Food and Drug Administration
Import Operations Unit,
Room 12-8 (HFC- 131)
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Merchandise

The importation of goods from the following countries is generally prohibited under regulations administered by the Office of Foreign Assets Control: Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea, Libya, Iraq, Haiti, and Iran.

These proscriptions do not apply to informational materials such as pamphlets, books, tapes, films or recordings.

On June 5, 1992, the President issued an Executive Order prohibiting the importation of goods from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

Specific licenses from the Office of Foreign Assets Control are required to bring prohibited merchandise into the United States; but they are rarely granted. Foreign visitors to the United States may be permitted to bring in small articles for personal use as accompanied baggage, depending upon the goods' country of origin. A limited number of specific licenses are being issued for articles assembled or processed in Haiti using parts or materials previously exported from the United States.

Travelers should be aware that there are severe restrictions on travel and transportation transactions involving Libya and Iraq. Spending money on travel-related transactions involving Cuba, North Korea, and Vietnam is closely controlled and monitored. Because of the strict enforcement of prohibitions, anyone considering travel to any of the countries listed above should contact the Office of Foreign Assets Control, Department of the Treasury, 1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20220 or call 202/622-2520.

Money and Other Monetary Instruments

There is no limitation in terms of total amount of

monetary instruments which may be brought into or taken out of the United States nor is it illegal to do so. However, if you transport or cause to be transported (including by mail or other means) more than \$10,000 in monetary instruments on any occasion into or out of the United States, or if you receive more than that amount, you must file a report (Customs Form 4790) with U.S. Customs (Currency & Foreign Transactions Reporting Act, 31 U.S.C. 1101, et seq.). Failure to comply can result in civil and criminal penalties. Monetary instruments include U.S. or foreign coin in current circulation, currency, traveler's checks in any form, money orders, and negotiable instruments or investment securities in bearer form.

Pets

There are controls, restrictions, and prohibitions on entry of animals, birds, turtles, wildlife, and endangered species. Cats and dogs must be free of evidence of diseases communicable to man. Vaccination against rabies is not required for cats and dogs arriving from rabies-free countries. Personally owned pet birds may be entered (limit of two if of the psittacine family), but APHIS and Public Health Service requirements must be met, including quarantine at any APHIS facility at specified locations, at the owner's expense. Advance reservations are required. Non-human primates, such as monkeys, apes and similar animals, may not be imported. If you plan to take your pet abroad or import one on your return, obtain a copy of our leaflet, Pets, Wildlife, U.S. Customs.

You should check with state, county and municipal authorities about any restrictions and prohibitions they may have before importing a pet.

Plants

Plants, cuttings, seeds, unprocessed plant products and certain endangered species either require an import permit or are prohibited from entering the United States. Endangered or threatened species of plants and plant products, if importation is not prohibited, will require an export permit from the country of origin. Every single plant or plant product must be declared to the Customs officer and must be presented for inspection, no matter how free of pests it appears to be. Applications for import permits or requests for information

should be addressed to: Quarantines, USDA-APHIS-PPQ, Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

Textiles

Textile and apparel items which accompany you and which you have acquired abroad for personal use or as gifts are generally not subject to quantitative restrictions. However, unaccompanied textile and apparel items may be subject to certain quantitative restrictions (quotas) which require a document called a "visa" or "export license" or exempt certificate as appropriate from the country of production. Check with Customs before you depart on your trip.

Trademarked Articles

Foreign-made trademarked articles may be limited as to the quantity which may be brought into the United States if the registered trademark has been recorded by an American trademark owner with U.S. Customs.

The types of articles usually of interest to tourists are
1) lenses, cameras, binoculars, optical goods; 2) tape recorders, musical instruments; 3) jewelry, precious metal-ware; 4) perfumery; 5) watches, clocks.

Persons arriving in the United States with a trademarked article are allowed an exemption, usually one article of a type bearing a protected trademark. An exempted trademark article must accompany you, and you can claim this exemption for the same type of article only once each 30 days. The article must be for your personal use and not for sale. If an exempted article is sold within one year following importation, the article or its value is subject to forfeiture.

If the trademark owner allows a quantity in excess of the aforementioned exemption for its particular trademarked article, the total of those trademarked articles authorized may be entered. Articles bearing counterfeit trademarks, if the amount of such articles exceeds the traveler's personal exemption, are subject to seizure and forfeiture.

Wildlife and Fish

Wildlife and fish are subject to certain import and export restrictions, prohibitions, permits or certificates, and quarantine requirements. This includes:

- * Wild birds, mammals including marine mammals, reptiles, crustaceans, fish, and mollusks.
- * Any part or product, such as skins, feathers, eggs.
- * Products and articles manufactured from wildlife and fish.

Endangered species of wildlife and products made from them are prohibited from being imported or exported. All ivory and ivory products--except antiques--made from elephant ivory are prohibited. Ivory antiques may be imported provided they can be documented as being 100 years old. (Certain other requirements for antiques may apply.) If you contemplate purchasing articles made from wildlife, such as tortoise shell jewelry, leather goods, or other articles made from whalebone, ivory, skins, or fur, please contact--before you go--the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240 which also 'prescribes the limits on migratory game birds, prior to each hunting season. Ask for their pamphlet "Fish and Wildlife."

If you plan to import fish or wildlife, or any product, article or part, check with Customs or Fish and Wildlife Service first, as only certain ports are designated to handle these entries. Additional information is contained in our leaflet Pets, Wildlife, U.S. Customs.

Federal regulations do not authorize the importation of any wildlife or fish into any state of the United States if the state's laws or regulations are more restrictive than any applicable Federal treatment. Wild animals taken, killed, sold, possessed, or exported to the United States in violation of any foreign laws are not allowed entry into the United States.

Customs Pointers

Traveling Back and Forth Across Border

After you have crossed the United States boundary at one point and you swing back into the United States to travel to another point in the foreign country, you run the risk of

losing your customs exemption unless you meet certain requirements. If you make a "swing back" don't risk your exemptions--ask the nearest Customs officer about these requirements.

"Duty-Free" Shops

Articles bought in "duty-free" shops in foreign countries are subject to U.S. customs duty and restrictions but may be included in your personal exemption.

Articles purchased in U.S. "duty-free" shops are subject to U.S. customs duty if reentered into the U.S. Example: Liquor bought in a "duty-free" shop before entering Canada and brought back into the United States will be subject to duty and internal revenue tax.

Note: Many travelers are confused by the term "duty-free" as it relates to shops. Articles sold in duty-free shops are free of duty and taxes only for the country in which that shop is located. Articles sold in duty-free shops are intended for export and are not to be returned to the country of purchase. Thus, for example, if you were to buy a Hermes scarf in Orly Airport's duty-free shop, the price you pay will not include the tax you would have to pay if you bought that same scarf at Hermes in Faubourg St. Honore. So if your purchases exceed your personal exemption, that scarf may not be duty free for you.

Keep Your Sales Slips

You will find your sales slips, invoices, or other evidence of purchase not only helpful when making out your declaration, but necessary if you have unaccompanied articles being sent from the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam or any of the Caribbean Basin Countries listed p. 6.

Packing Your Baggage

Pack your baggage in a manner that will make inspection easy. Do your best to pack separately the articles you have acquired abroad. When the Customs officer asks you to open your luggage or the trunk of your car, please do so without hesitation.

Photographic Film

All imported photographic films, which accompany a traveler, if not for commercial purpose, may be released without examination by Customs unless there is reason to believe they contain objectionable matter.

Films prohibited from entry are those that contain obscene matter, advocate treason or insurrection against the United States, advocate forcible resistance to any law of the United States, or those that threaten the life of or infliction of bodily harm upon any person in the United States.

Developed or undeveloped U.S. film exposed abroad (except motion-picture film to be used for commercial purposes) may enter free of duty and need not be included in your customs exemption.

Foreign film purchased abroad and prints made abroad are dutiable but may be included in your customs exemption.

Shipping Hints

Merchandise-acquired abroad may be sent home by you or by the store where purchased. As these items do not accompany you on your return, they cannot be included in your customs exemption and are subject to duty when received in the United States. Duty cannot be prepaid. There are, however, special procedures to follow for merchandise acquired in and sent from the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam or Caribbean Basin countries. See page 6.

All incoming shipments must be cleared through U.S. Customs. Customs employees cannot, by law, perform entry tasks for the importing public, but they will advise and give information to importers about customs requirements.

Customs collects customs duty (if any) as provided for in the tariff schedule, certain Internal Revenue taxes and several user fees amounting to less than one percent of the value. Any other charges paid on import shipments are for handling by freight forwarders, commercial brokers, or for other delivery services. Some carriers may add other clearance charges that have nothing to do with Customs duties.

Note: Custombrokers are not U.S. Customs employees. Fees charged by the brokers are based on the amount of work done, not on the value of the personal effects or of the tourist purchase you shipped. The fee may seem excessive to you in relation to the value of the shipment. The National Customs Brokers & Forwarders Association is well aware of the difficulties and excessive expense incurred by tourists shipping items home. Their advice is "Ship the easy way--take it with you in your baggage or send it by parcel post prepaid."

Mail Shipments (including parcel post) have proven to be more convenient and less costly for travelers. Parcels must meet the mail requirements of the exporting country as to weight, size, or measurement.

The U.S. Postal Service sends all incoming foreign mail shipments to Customs for examination. Packages free of customs duty are returned to the Postal Service for delivery to you by your home post office without additional postage, handling costs, or other fees.

For packages containing dutiable articles, the Customs officer will attach a mail entry showing the amount of duty to be paid and return the parcel to the Postal Service. The duty and a postal handling fee will be collected when the package is delivered. In addition, there is a \$5 Customs processing fee on dutiable packages.

Formal entry may be required for some shipments (some textiles, wearing apparel and small leather goods) regardless of value. Customs employees cannot prepare this type of entry for you. Only you or a licensed customs broker may prepare a formal entry.

If you pay the duty on a package but feel that the duty was not correct, you may file a protest. This protest can be acted on only by the Customs office which issued the mail entry receipt--Customs Form 3419--attached to your package. Send a copy of this form with your protest letter to the Customs office at the location and address shown on the left side of the form. That office will review the duty assessment based on the information furnished in your letter and, if appropriate, authorize a refund.

Another procedure would be to not accept the parcel. You would then have to provide, within 30 days, a written statement of your objections to the Postmaster where the parcel is being held. Your letter will be forwarded to the issuing Customs

office. The shipment will be detained at the post office until a reply is received.

Express shipments may be sent to the United States from Canada and Mexico and by air freight from other countries. The express company usually provides or arranges for customs clearance of the merchandise for you. A fee is charged for this service.

Freight shipments, whether or not they are free of duty at the time of importation, must clear Customs at the first port of arrival into the United States, or, if you choose, the merchandise may be forwarded in Customs custody (in bond) from the port of arrival to another Customs port of entry for customs clearance.

All arrangements for customs clearance and forwarding in bond must be made by you or someone you designate to act for you. Frequently, a freight forwarder in a foreign country will handle all the necessary arrangements, including the clearance through Customs in the United States by a customs broker. A fee is charged for this service. This fee is not a Customs charge. If a foreign seller consigns a shipment to a broker or agent in the United States, the freight charge is usually paid only to the first port of arrival in the United States. This means there will be additional inland transportation or freight forwarding charges, brokers' fees, insurance, and other items.

An individual may also effect the customs clearance of a single, noncommercial shipment not requiring formal entry for you, if it is not possible for you to personally secure the release of the goods. You must authorize and empower the individual in writing to execute the customs declaration and the entry for you as your unpaid agent. The written authority provided to the individual should be addressed to the "Officer in Charge of Customs" at the port of entry.

Unaccompanied tourist purchases acquired in and sent directly from the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, or a Caribbean Basin country, may be entered, if properly declared and processed, as follows:

* Up to \$1200 free of duty under your personal exemption if from an insular possession; \$600 if from a Caribbean Basin country. Remember that if up to \$400 of this amount was acquired elsewhere than these countries, those articles must accompany you at the time of your return in order to claim duty-free entry under your personal exemption.

* An additional \$1,000 worth of articles, dutiable at a flat five percent rate if from an insular possession, or a flat 10 percent rate (based on the fair retail value in the country where purchased) if the merchandise is from a Caribbean Basin country.

* Any amount over the above, dutiable at various rates of duty.

The procedure outlined below must be followed:

Step 1. You will: a) list all articles acquired abroad on your baggage declaration (Customs Form 6059B) except those sent under the \$50 or the \$100 bona fide gift provision described on p. 7 to friends and relatives in the U.S.; b) indicate which articles are unaccompanied; c) fill out a Declaration of Unaccompanied Articles (Customs Form 255) for each package or container to be sent. This form may be obtained when you clear Customs if it was not available where you made your purchase.

Step 2. Customs at the time of your return will: a) collect duty and tax if owed on goods accompanying you; b) verify your unaccompanied articles against sales slips, invoices, etc.; c) validate Form 255 as to whether goods are free of duty under your personal exemption or subject to a flat rate of duty. Two copies of the three-part form will be returned to you.

Step 3. You will return the yellow copy of the form to the shopkeeper (or vendor) holding your purchase and keep the other copy for your records. You are responsible for advising the shopkeeper at the time you make your purchase that your package is not to be sent until this form is received.

Step 4. The shopkeeper will place the form in an envelope and attach the envelope securely to the outside of the package or container, which must be clearly marked "Unaccompanied Tourist Purchase." Please note that a form must be placed on each box or container. This is the most important step to be followed in order for you to receive the benefits allowed under this procedure.

Step 5. The Postal Service will deliver the package, if sent by mail, to you after Customs clearance. Any duty owed will be collected by the Postal Service plus a postal handling fee; or

You will be notified by the carrier as to the arrival of your shipment at which time you will go to the Customs office

processing your shipment and make entry. Any duty or tax owed will be paid at that time. You may employ a customs broker to do this for you. A fee will be charged by the broker.

Storage charges. Freight and express packages delivered before you return (without prior arrangements for acceptance) will be placed in storage by Customs after five days, at the expense and risk of the owner. If not claimed within one year, the items will be sold.

Mail parcels not claimed within 30 days will be returned to the sender unless a duty assessment is being protested.

Notice to California Residents:

California residents should know that merchandise purchased abroad and brought back to California may be subject to a "use tax." On October 1, 1990, California began to assess a use tax on these purchases, using information from Customs declarations completed by returning travelers at ports of entry. The use-tax rate is the same as the sales-tax rate in the traveler's California county of residence.

For more information about the use-tax program, contact the California Board of Equalization's Occasional Sales Use Tax Unit, (916) 445-9524.

For Further Information

Every effort has been made to indicate essential requirements; however, all regulations of Customs and other agencies cannot be covered in full.

Customs offices will be glad to advise you of any changes in regulations which may have occurred since publication of this leaflet.

District Directors of Customs are located in the following cities:

Anchorage, Alaska 99501	907/271-2675
Baltimore, Md. 21202	301/962-2666
Boston, Mass. 02222-1059	617/565-6147
Buffalo, N.Y. 14202	716/846-4373
Charleston, S.C. 29402	803/724-4312

Charlotte, N.C. 28219704/329-0770
 Charlotte Arealie;
 St. Thomas-V.I. 00801809/774-2530
 Chicago, Ill. 60607312/353-6100
 Cleveland, Ohio 44114216/522-4284
 Dallas/Ft. Worth, Tex. 75261214/574-2170
 Detroit, Mich. 48226-2568313/226-3177
 Duluth, Minnesota 55802-1390218/720-5201
 El Paso, Texas 79985915/540-5800
 Great Falls, Montana 59405406/453-7631
 Honolulu, Hawaii 96806808/541-1725
 Houston, Texas 77029713/671-1000
 Laredo, Texas 78041-3130 512/726-2267
 Los Angeles/Long Beach, Ca. 90731 310/514-6001
 Miami, Florida 33131 305/536-5791
 Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53237-0260414/297-3925
 Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401612/348-1690
 Mobile, Alabama 36602205/690-2106
 New Orleans, Louisiana 70130504/589-6353
 New York, New York
 New York Seaport Area
 New York, New York 10048212/466-5817
 Kennedy Airport Area,
 Jamaica, New York 11430718/917-1542
 Newark Area,
 Newark, New Jersey 07114201/645-3760
 Nogales, Arizona 85621602/761-2010
 Norfolk, Virginia 23510804/441-6546
 Ogdensburg, New York 13669315/393-0660
 Pembina, North Dakota 58271701/825-6201
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106215/597-4605
 Port Arthur, Texas 77642409/724-0087
 Portland, Maine 04112207/780-3326
 Portland, Oregon 97209503/326-2865
 Providence, Rhode Island 02905401/528-5080
 St. Albans, Vermont 05478802/524-1521
 St. Louis, Missouri 63105314/425-3134
 San Diego, California 92188619/557-5455
 San Francisco, California 94126415/465-4340
 San Juan, Puerto Rico 00901809/729-6950
 Savannah, Georgia 31401912/652-4256
 Seattle, Washington 98174206/442-0554
 Tampa, Florida 33605813/228-2381
 Washington, D.C. 20041
 Washington Dulles Intl. Airport
 Chantilly, Va. 22021703/318-5900

Preclearance Offices

Montreal	514/636-3859
Toronto	416/676-3399
Winnipeg	204/783-2206
Calgary	403/221-1733
Edmonton	403/890-4514
Vancouver	604/278-1825
Bermuda	809/291-2560
Nassau	809/327-8461
Freeport	809/352-7256

Customs Assistance Abroad. Should you need Customs assistance while abroad, you can visit or telephone our representatives located at the American Embassy or consulate in...

Bangkok	662/252-5040
Bonn	49/228/339-2207
The Hague.	31/70/924-651
Hermosillo	52/621-75258
Hong Kong	852/5/214-552
London	44/1/499-9000
Merida	52/99/258235
Mexico City	(525) 211-0042
Milan	39/2/29035-218
Monterrey	52/83/42-7972
Montevideo	598/223-6061
Ottawa	(613) 238-5335
Panama City	507/257-562
Paris	33/1/4296-1202
Rome	39/6/4674-2475
Seoul	822/732-2601
Singapore	65/338-0251
Tokyo	81/3/3224-5433
Vienna	43/222/31-55-11

Ask for the U.S. Customs Service.

Frequently, We Are Asked Questions which are not Customs matters. If you want to know about...

Passports. Contact the Passport Agency nearest you at the following Zip Codes: Boston 02222-0123; Chicago 60604-1564; Honolulu 96850, Houston 77002-4874; Los Angeles 90024-36 14, Miami 33130-1680, New Orleans 70113-1931; New York 10111-0031; Philadelphia 19106-1684; San Francisco 94105-2773; Seattle 981741091; Stamford, CT 06901-2767; Washington, D.C. 20524-0002. Some Clerks of Court and Postal Clerks also accept

passport applications.

Baggage Allowance. Ask the airline or steamship line you are traveling on about this.

Currency of Other Nations. Your local bank can be of assistance.

Foreign Countries. For information about the country you will visit or about what articles may be taken into that country, contact the appropriate Embassy, consular office, or tourist information office.

Report Drug Smuggling to U.S. Customs Service 1(800)BE-ALERT

GPO: 1992 0 - 333-244 QL 3

U.S. CUSTOMS

International Mail Imports

Department of the Treasury

Customs Publication No. 514

Revised March 1994

Introduction

I've ordered commemorative plates from Europe before and never paid duty. Why did I have to pay duty this time ?

I received a gift package from my aunt who was traveling abroad. Am I required to pay duty on a gift?

I need to send a foreign-made watch to Switzerland for repair. Will I have to pay duty when it comes back?

We get lots of questions like these, so we have prepared this leaflet to explain U.S. Customs procedures and requirements for parcels mailed to the United States from abroad. If you follow the suggestions offered here, you will get your packages through the customs process as efficiently as possible.

The fastest way to inquire about a particular mail shipment is to communicate directly with the Customs international mail branch that processed your shipment. You will find these mail branches, as well as Customs district offices, starting on page 10 of this pamphlet. Should you need to contact Customs headquarters, you may write to: U.S. Customs Service, Office of Cargo Enforcement and Facilitation, Washington, D.C. 20229.

Mail parcels must meet United States and international postal requirements regarding weight, size, and measurement.

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Location of Customs Offices

What mail is subject to Customs examination?

In general, all mail originating outside the Customs territory of the United States (the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico), which is to be delivered within U.S. Customs territory, is subject to Customs examination. All mail arriving from outside the U.S. Virgin Islands that is to be delivered inside the U.S. Virgin Islands is also subject to Customs examination. The U.S. Postal Service sends all incoming foreign mail packages to Customs for examination and assessment of any applicable duty. This includes international (civilian) mail parcels and those originating at overseas military postal

facilities (APO/FPO).

Free of Duty

Packages that Customs has passed free of duty will be endorsed on the outer wrapper: "Passed Free--U.S. Customs." These packages receive minimal Customs handling and are returned immediately to the Postal Service for delivery by the local post office. In these cases, there will be no additional postage, handling costs or other fees required of the addressee.

Dutiable

Packages that require payment of duty will have a Customs form CF 3419A attached to the outer wrapper. This form is the Customs mail entry, and it will have been filled out by the examining Customs officer indicating the tariff item number, rate of duty, processing fee, and total amount to be paid for that shipment.

The package is then returned to the Postal Service for local delivery and collection of both duty and a postal handling fee, which is assessed by the Postal Service. Some mail importations valued at more than \$1,250 will require a formal entry by the importer, rather than the procedure just described.

The Postal Service fee will appear on the package in the form of postage-due stamps. This procedure has been authorized by international postal convention. An exception to this is made for dutiable material mailed from U.S. military post offices located abroad; in these cases, postal handling fees are not charged. A Customs processing fee of \$5.00 will be assessed on all dutiable mail shipments.

What happens to my parcel if it is not claimed?

Mail parcels not claimed within 30 days will be returned to the sender unless a duty assessment is being protested.

How do I locate a missing or overdue mail parcel?

If your parcel is long overdue, or if you think it may be lost in the mail, you should contact your local post office and request that a parcel tracer action be initiated to locate it. This is a matter over which Customs has no control.

If a parcel has been detained by Customs for a specific reason, such as the lack of a proper invoice, bill of sale, or other documentation; a possible trademark violation; or if a formal Customs entry is required, the Customs office holding your shipment will notify you immediately of the reason for detention and how you can obtain release of the shipment.

How do I protest the Customs duty on my mail package?

If you think the amount of duty has been assessed incorrectly, you may obtain a reconsideration of the duty in either of two ways:

(1) Pay the assessed duty and take delivery of the merchandise. Then, send the yellow copy of the mail entry receipt, CF 3419A, which accompanied the parcel when it was delivered, to the issuing Customs office identified on the form. Include with the yellow copy a statement as to why you believe the assessment is incorrect and copies of any invoices, bills of sale, or other evidence you may have. Requests for an adjustment must be made within 90 days after you have received the package and paid the duty.

(2) Decline to pay the duty and postpone acceptance of the shipment. Then, provide the postmaster, within five days of your refusal, a written statement of your objections to the duty assessment. The postmaster will forward your statement, along with the mail entry (form CF 3419A), any invoices, bills of sale, or other evidence you choose to furnish, to the international mail branch that issued the mail entry.

The postmaster retains custody of the shipment until informed by the international mail branch of the disposition to be made of your protest. No postal storage charges will accrue during this period.

If you are located near one of Customs' international mail branches, the postmaster may send the CF 3419A to that branch instead, along with your statement and evidence for reconsideration of duties or tariffs.

If consideration of your protest results in a refund, the refund check must be made payable to the addressee shown on the mail entry.

Will the same rate of duty apply on future shipments?

The rate of duty assessed on a mail entry is not binding for future importations. A binding ruling on tariff classification may be obtained by writing to the Commissioner of Customs, Attn: Office of Regulations and Rulings, Washington, D.C. 20229.

U.S. Postal Service Regulations prohibit sending alcoholic beverages through the mail (18 U.S.C. 1716(f)).

Am I entitled to any exemptions from duty?

Bona fide gifts.

Bona fide, unsolicited gifts are allowed to enter duty free as long as their fair retail value does not exceed \$50, and if the recipient does not receive more than \$50 worth of such gifts in the same day. (See 19 CFR Section 10.152.) There is no duty exemption for shipments containing alcohol-based perfume, tobacco products or alcoholic beverages unless the entire shipment has a retail value of less than \$5.00. On bona fide gifts sent to the United States from the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa, the limitation is \$100 fair retail value. To qualify for a duty exemption under this provision, the gifts must be sent by persons already outside the United States to persons in the United States.

The gift exemption does not apply to gifts mailed to oneself or mail-ordered from the United States. It also does not apply where two or more persons traveling abroad together mail home gifts to each other.

Gifts intended for more than one person may be consolidated in the same package provided:

* They are individually wrapped,

- * They are labeled with the name of the recipient, and
- * The value of each gift does not exceed \$50 (\$100 if sent from the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, or Guam).

Following these simple instructions will insure quick Customs clearance of gift packages.

Gift Packages, including consolidated gift packages, should be clearly marked on the outside of the package: "Unsolicited Gifts" with 1) the name of the donor, 2) nature of the gifts, if there is more than one in a consolidated package, 3) the accurate fair retail value of each gift, 4) the name of each recipient.

Here is an example of the correct way to mark a consolidated package:

Christmas gifts:

- * To John Jones--One belt, \$20; one box of candy, \$5; one tie, \$5.
- * To Bill Jones--two shirts, \$25; one belt, \$5; one pair of trousers, \$15.

Customs duty will be collected on all improperly marked consolidated packages and individual gifts worth more than \$50.

Should any single gift within a consolidated package exceed the \$50 value limit, then all the gifts making up the consolidated package will be dutiable. Each gift shall be dutiable at the rate that would normally be assessed on it, unless the sender has not marked all gifts so that the quantity and value of each can be readily ascertained. In such a case, the duty rate shall be based on the highest rate of duty for any gift in the consolidated package.

All foreign-made merchandise that enters the United States, whether new or used, is subject to duty.

United States Products Returned.

Articles which are the growth, manufacture, or product of

the United States and have not been processed or enhanced in value while abroad are not subject to duty upon their return to the United States. Packages containing only products of the United States should be clearly marked on the outside wrapper "American Goods Returned."

Personal and Household Effects.

The personal and household effects of any person (military or civilian) employed by the United States Government are eligible for duty-free entry if that person is returning to the United States after completing an assignment of extended duty abroad. The articles must have been in the returnee's possession prior to departure for the United States. A sealed envelope containing a copy of the Government orders terminating the assignment must accompany the articles. This envelope should be attached securely to the outer wrapper of the parcel. The parcel should also be clearly marked on the outside, "Returned Personal Effects--Orders Enclosed."

Articles ordered from military exchanges prior to departure for the United States and mailed from the exchange to a service member's home address after departure do not qualify under this exemption and are dutiable. Goods of foreign origin are subject to duty, even if purchased in military exchanges (PX, AAFEX, NEX).

Will articles acquired while traveling abroad and mailed home be duty-free under my personal exemption?

Travelers returning from abroad are allowed an exemption from Customs duty on \$400 worth of foreign merchandise that accompanies them upon their return to the United States. Except as noted below under the \$1,200 exemption, all merchandise to be entered under the traveler's personal exemption must accompany that individual when reentering the United States. Foreign-made articles purchased during a trip abroad and mailed home are subject to duty.

\$1,200 Exemption

If you return directly or indirectly from the Virgin Islands of the U.S., American Samoa, or Guam, you may receive a

Customs exemption of \$1,200, based upon the fair retail value of the articles in the country where you acquired them. Of this \$1,200, not more than \$400 may be applied to merchandise not obtained in these islands. This duty-free exemption is increased to \$600 if the merchandise was acquired in a Caribbean Basin Initiative beneficiary country (listed on page 13 of this pamphlet).

Tourist purchases acquired in and sent directly from a U.S. insular possession to the United States may be entered free of duty under your \$1,200 exemption if the items are properly declared and processed. Articles acquired elsewhere must accompany you at the time of your return for duty-free entry under your personal exemption.

An additional \$1,000 worth of articles acquired in these islands may also be sent to the United States as unaccompanied tourist purchases and entered at a flat 5% rate of duty. Any amount over this will be dutiable at the various rates of duty applicable to the articles.

The procedures outlined below must be followed.

Step 1. At the time of your return: a) list all articles acquired abroad on your baggage declaration (CF 6059B) except those sent under the bona fide gift provision to friends and relatives in the United States; b) indicate which articles are unaccompanied; c) fill out a Declaration of Unaccompanied Articles (CF 255) for each package you are sending. This three-part form should be available where you make your purchase; if it is not, ask for a copy when you clear U.S. Customs.

Step 2. When you return to the United States, Customs will: a) collect duty and tax on goods accompanying you, if tax or duty is owed; b) verify your unaccompanied articles against sales slips, invoices, etc.; c) validate form 255 as to whether goods are free of duty under your personal exemption or subject to a flat rate of duty. Two copies of the 255 (a yellow and a white) will be returned to you.

Step 3. Return the yellow copy of the form to the shopkeeper or vendor holding your purchase and keep the other copy for your records. The traveler is responsible for informing the shopkeeper at the time of purchase not to send the merchandise until the shopkeeper has received this yellow copy.

Step 4. The shopkeeper then puts the yellow copy of the 255 into an envelope and attaches the envelope securely to the outside of the package. The merchant must also label the package, on the outside wrapper near the envelope if possible, "Unaccompanied Tourist Purchase." NOTE: This is the most important step to follow in order to receive the benefits allowed under this procedure.

Step 5. The Postal Service will deliver your package after it has cleared Customs. The Postal Service will also collect any duty or other Customs fees that may be owed, along with package handling fees.

Are articles from the U.S. insular possessions dutiable other than tourist purchases mailed to the U.S.?

While the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and Guam are insular possessions of the United States, they are outside the Customs territory of the United States. Articles imported into the United States from these insular possessions are subject to duty. However, articles which are the growth or product of these islands, and articles which are manufactured or produced there, are duty free if they: 1) do not contain foreign materials to the value of more than 50 percent of the appraised value of the manufactured article, as determined by Customs, 2) come directly to the Customs territory of the United States from these islands, and 3) are not prohibited by quota limitations or otherwise.

How do I return an article for repair or alteration?

If you are sending foreign-made merchandise abroad for repairs or alterations, you should register the item with Customs before mailing it in order to avoid paying duty twice. (Foreign-made merchandise is dutiable when entering the United States unless the owner has demonstrated prior ownership, and foreign-made repairs may also be dutiable.) You can get a Certificate of Registration, Customs form 4455, for this purpose at any local Customs office.

To export articles for repair, you should bring the merchandise to your nearest Customs office for certification, which simply means that the Customs officer will verify that the article(s) described on the 4455 form are indeed those

being shipped abroad. After doing so, the Customs officer will complete the CF 4455 in duplicate and will enter the Date, Port, and his or her Signature on the forms. The officer will then give both forms to you.

Enclose the original 4455 with the merchandise you are shipping abroad to facilitate Customs processing after the repaired merchandise has been mailed back to you. Keep the duplicate copy just in case something goes awry and you need to assure that you are liable only for duty on the repairs and not on the complete article. Also, be sure to instruct your foreign supplier to return the CF 4455 with the repaired article and to mark on the outside of the return package "Repaired/Altered Merchandise--CF 4455 Enclosed." Goods that have been repaired or altered free of charge may still be subject to Customs duty depending upon the Customs officer's determination after examining the return shipment.

The Customs Service has an arrangement with the U.S. Postal Service for those who live more than 20 miles from a Customs office. In such cases, you may bring your merchandise to the nearest post office, where the postmaster can certify the articles on the CF 4455 in the manner described above. It will still be necessary, however, to get copies CF 4455 from the Customs Service.

How is a duty refund obtained on a damaged article

Parcels in transit from abroad undergo much handling and processing by foreign and domestic post offices as well as by Customs. Customs has possession of a parcel for only a short time out of that entire period and has no control over the shipment during the remainder of its journey. If your parcel arrives so damaged that its contents are beyond repair, you may choose to simply abandon the shipment to the post office. If you do this and you have already paid the Customs duty, you should obtain a statement from the delivering post office that you have abandoned the shipment. Send a copy of that statement along with a copy of your mail entry receipt (CF 3419A) to the issuing Customs office shown on the front of the mail entry receipt and request a full refund of the duty and postal handling fee.

Are replacement articles dutiable?

Occasionally, merchandise from a foreign supplier is unsatisfactory; for example, it may be the wrong size, color, broken in transit, or simply not according to the order placed with the supplier. Recipients of these parcels generally return the item to the foreign firm and request a replacement free of charge.

The replacement article is dutiable. You may, however, request a refund of duty on the original package--the unsatisfactory one--by writing to the Customs international mail branch that first issued the mail entry (CF 3419A) for the unsatisfactory shipment. This branch will be found on the front of form 3419A. When you write to the mail branch requesting a refund on the original package, you must include with your letter: 1) a copy of the original mail entry (CF 3419A) and 2) a statement or other evidence from the post office from which you mailed it back to the supplier showing that the first article was, in fact, returned. You should also enclose any supporting correspondence to or from the foreign supplier concerning the exchange. Upon receipt of this information, the issuing Customs international mail branch will review the transaction and issue you a refund of duty, if appropriate.

Why are clear and complete Customs declarations so important?

We realize that some of the foregoing paperwork requirements may sound cumbersome, but millions of parcels come through Customs international mail branches each year. Without readily accessible, easy-to-read Customs forms attached to the outer wrapping--especially forms 3419A and 4455--Customs officers would be forced to do time consuming, intrusive examinations of almost all packages, which would seriously delay the arrival of your merchandise.

When items are mailed from abroad, responsibility for completing and attaching the Customs declaration lies with the foreign sender, who must provide a full, accurate description of the package's contents and value. Complete, accurate Customs declarations attached to the outside wrapping allows the vast majority to pass Customs unopened, allowing Customs officers to make accurate duty assessments based strictly on the information supplied in the "dec."

These are the addresses and telephone numbers for Customs International Mail Branches:

Mail Branch	Location	Telephone Number
Anchorage, Alaska	605 West Fourth Ave. Room 205 Anchorage, AK 99501	(907) 248-3373
Atlanta, Georgia	Foreign Mail Division P.O. BOX 619050 Hapeville, GA 30320	(404) 763-7602
Boston, Massachusetts	U.S. Customs South Postal Annex, Room 1008, G.M.F. Boston, MA 02205	(617) 565-8635
Buffalo, New York	1200 William Street Buffalo, NY 14240	(716) 846-4319
Charlotte, Amalie	Mail Branch Facility, Sugar Estate Post Office Charlotte Amalie, VI 00801	(809) 774-2511
Chicago, Illinois	U.S. Customs Foreign Mail Unit 11600 West Irving Park Road A.M.F. O'Hare Chicago, IL 60666	(312) 353-6140
Dallas Texas	P.O. Box 619050 2300 West 32nd Street Dallas-Ft. Worth Airport Dallas, TX 75261	(214) 574-2128
Detroit, Michigan	Foreign Mail Section 1401 West Fort Street Room 226, G.M.F. Detroit, MI 48233	(313) 226-3137
Honolulu, Hawaii	3599 North Nimitz Highway Honolulu, HI 96818	(808) 442-9608
Houston, Texas	Mail Facility 2929 Air Freight Rd. Houston, TX 77032	(713) 233-3600
Los Angeles,	300 N. Los Angeles St.	(213) 894-4749

California	Room B-202 Los Angeles, CA 90012-3391	
Miami, Florida	Foreign Mail Branch 1751 N.W. 79th Ave. Miami, FL 33126	(305) 536-4281
Minneapolis/ St. Paul Minnesota	180 East Kellogg Boulevard Room 506 St. Paul, MN 55401	(612) 290-3639
Newark, New Jersey (NYBFMCE) (SURFACE MAIL)	U.S. Customs Foreign Mail Center 80 County Road Jersey City, NJ 07097	(201) 714-6371
New York, New York (AIR MAIL)	Mail Facility, Bldg. 250 J.F.K. Airport Jamaica, NY 11430	(718) 553-1446
Oakland, California	1675 7th Street Oakland, California 94615	(510) 273-7560
Philadelphia Pennsylvania	1000 Tinicum Island Road Philadelphia, PA 19153	(809) 766-6006
San Juan, Puerto Rico	G.P.O, Box 12800 Hato Rey, PR 00936	(809) 766-6006
Seattle, Washington (AMF)	16601 Air Cargo Rd. Seattle, WA 98158	(206) 553-5382
Washington, D.C.	44715 Prentice Drive Sterling, VA 20101-9998	(703) 406-6499

District Directors of Customs are located in the following cities:

Anchorage, Alaska 99501	907/271-2675
Baltimore, Md. 21202	410/962-2666
Boston, Mass. 0222-1059	617/565-6147
Buffalo, N.Y. 14202	716/846-4373
Charleston, S.C. 29401	803/727-4312
Charlotte, N.C. 28219	704/329-0770
Charlotte Amalie, V.I. 00801	809/774-2510

Chicago, Ill. 60607	312/353-6100
Cleveland, Ohio 44114	216/891-3800
Dallas/Ft. Worth, Tex. 75261	214/574-2170
Detroit, Mich. 48226-2568	313/226-3177
Duluth, Minn. 55802-1390	218/720-5201
El Paso, Tex. 79925	915/540-5800
Great Falls, Mont. 59405	406/453-7631
Honolulu, Hawaii 96806	808/541-1725
Houston, Tex. 77029	713/671-1000
Laredo, Tex. 78041-3130	210/726-2267
Los Angeles, Ca. 90731	310/514-6001
Miami, Fla. 33 102	305/876-6803
Milwaukee, Wis. 53237-0260	414/297-3925
Minneapolis, Minn. 55401	612/348-1690
Mobile, Ala. 36602	205/441-5106
New Orleans, La. 70130	504/589-6353
*New York, N.Y. (Seaport) 10048	212/466-5817
*New York, N.Y. (JFK) 11430	718/533-1542
*Newark, N.J. 07 114	201/645-3760
Nogales, Ariz. 85621	602/761-2010
Norfolk, Va. 235 10	804/441-6546
Ogdensburg, N.Y. 13669	315/393-0660
Pembina, N.D. 58271	701/825-6201
Philadelphia, Pa. 19106	215/597-4605
Port Arthur, Tex. 77642	409/724-0087
Portland, Maine 04112	207/780-3326
Portland, Ore. 97209	503/326-2865
Providence, R.I. 02905	401/528-5080
St. Albans, Vt. 05478	802/524-6527
St. Louis, Mo. 63134-3716	314/428-2662
San Diego, Calif. 92101	619/557-5360
San Francisco, Calif. 94126	415/705-4340
San Juan, P.R. 00901	809/729-6950
Savannah, Ca. 31401	912/652-4256
Seattle, Wash. 98104	206/553-0554
Tampa, Fla. 33605	813/228-2381
Washington, D.C. 20166	703/318-5900

* Write to Area Director of Customs.

Should you need Customs assistance while abroad, you can telephone our representatives located in the following cities:

Bangkok /662/252-5040
 Beijing /86-1-532-3831
 Bonn /49/228/339-2207
 Caracas /58-2-285-0037

Central America (Miami) (305) 596-6479
Hermosillo /52/621/7-5258
Hong Kong /852/524-2267
London /44/71-493-4599
Merida /52/99/258235
Mexico City /(905) 211-0042
Milan /39/2/29035-218
Monterrey /52/83/42-7972
MonteVideo /598-223-6061
Ottawa /(613) 230/2120
Panama City /507/257-562
Paris /33/1/4296-1202
Rome /39/6/4674-2475
Seoul /822/397-4644
Singapore /65/338-0251
The Hague /31-703-924-651
Tokyo /81/3-3224-5433
Vienna /43/1-310-5896

or our preclearance operations in...

Montreal /514-636-3859
Toronto /905-676-3399
Winnipeg /204-783-2206
Calgary /403-221-1733
Edmonton /403-890-4514
Vancouver /604-278-1825
Bermuda /809-293-2560
Nassau /809-377-8461
Freeport /809-352-7256

Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI)

The following countries and territories have been designated as beneficiary countries for purposes of the CBI:

Antigua and Barbuda	Honduras
Aruba	Jamaica
Bahamas	Montserrat
Barbados	Netherlands Antilles
Belize	Nicaragua
Costa Rica	Panama
Dominica	Saint Kitts and Nevis
Dominican Republic	Saint Lucia
El Salvador	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Grenada	
Guatemala	Trinidad and Tobago

Guyana
Haiti

Virgin Islands, British

The list of beneficiaries may change from time.

Warning

The Food and Drug Administration prohibits the importation, by mail or in person, of fraudulent prescription and non-prescription drugs and medical devices. These may include unorthodox "cures" for medical conditions including cancer, AIDS and multiple sclerosis. While these drugs and devices may be completely legal elsewhere, they may not have been approved for use in the United States, even under a prescription issued by a foreign physician or under the supervision of a domestic physician. They may not legally enter the United States and may be confiscated upon arrival by mail.

Ceramic tableware sold abroad may contain dangerous levels of lead in the glaze which may be extracted by acid foods and beverages. The Food and Drug Administration recommends that ceramic tableware, especially when purchased in Mexico, the Peoples Republic of China, Hong Kong or India, be tested for lead release by a commercial laboratory on your return or be used for decorative purposes only.

For additional information, contact your nearest FDA office or write:

Food and Drug Administration
Division of Import Operations and Policy
Room 12-30, (HFC-170)
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

The United States Customs Service is authorized by law to prohibit the importation of goods that violate U.S. registered intellectual property rights-namely, trademarks and copyrights. This authority extends to articles imported into the United States through the international mail system. Goods imported in violation of intellectual property rights are subject to seizure and forfeiture. In addition, Customs may assess a monetary penalty, based on the domestic value of the articles, against the importer. Examples of unlawful merchandise include:

* Articles which bear counterfeit trademarks, such as "fake" designer or brand-name clothing or watches.

* Toys which are unlawful copies of copy fight-protected designs.

* Unauthorized reproductions of certain sound recordings.

The Customs Regulations governing intellectual property rights may be found in Title 19, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 133.

There are other categories of merchandise whose importation into the United States also is restricted or prohibited. These categories of merchandise include certain foodstuffs; certain domesticated and wild animals; products made from endangered species; narcotics and certain weapons. The consequences of the attempted entry of restricted or prohibited merchandise vary according to which law the importation violates.

The Customs Regulations governing these classes of merchandise may be found in Title 19, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 12.

For additional information on the above restrictions, please contact the nearest U.S. Customs Service office or write to the U.S. Customs Service, Office of Regulations and Rulings, Washington, D.C. 20229. ATTN: Intellectual Property Rights Branch.

Report Drug Smuggling to U.S. Customs Service 1 (800) BE-ALERT

Department of the Treasury
U.S. Customs Service
Washington, DC 20229

United States Department of State
Bureau of Consular Affairs

Passports

Applying for them the EASY WAY

DEPARTMENT OF STATE PUBLICATION 10049
Bureau of Consular Affairs

Revised March 1993

Applying for Your U.S. Passport

The Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs has prepared this publication to assist you in applying for your U.S. passport. This guide will give you information on where to apply, how to apply, and the best time to apply.

Other Than Passport Agencies, Where Can I Apply for a Passport?

You can apply for a passport at many Federal and state courts, probate courts, and some post offices.

Over 2500 courts and 900 post offices in the United States accept passport applications. Courts and post offices are usually more convenient because they are near your home or your place of business. You save time and money by not having to travel to one of the 13 major U.S. cities where passport agencies are located.

When Do I Have to Apply in Person?

You must always apply in person if you are 13 or older, and if you do not meet the requirements for applying by mail (see section "May I Apply for a Passport by Mail?").

Usually, for children under 13, only a parent or legal guardian need appear to execute a passport application.

What Do I Need to Do to Apply for a Passport at a Courthouse or Post Office?

Go to a courthouse or post office authorized to accept passport applications and complete the DSP-11 application form, but do not sign it until instructed to do so.

You must present:

1. PROOF OF U.S. CITIZENSHIP

That is...

- * a previous U.S. passport, or
- * If you were born in the U.S., a certified copy of your birth certificate issued by the state, city, or county of your birth (a certified copy will have a registrar's raised, embossed, impressed, or multicolored seal and the date the certificate was filed with the registrar's office).

If you have neither a passport nor a certified birth certificate...

- * bring a notice from the registrar of the state where you were born that no birth record exists;
- * also, bring as many as possible of the following: a baptismal certificate, hospital birth record, early census, school record, or family Bible record. (To be considered, these documents must show your full name and date and place of birth.);
- * also, bring a notarized affidavit completed by an older blood relative who has personal knowledge of your birth.
- * If you were born abroad, bring a Certificate of Naturalization, Certificate of Citizenship, Report of Birth Abroad of a U.S. Citizen, or a Certification of Birth (Form FS-545 or DS-1350). If you do not have these documents, check with the acceptance office agent for documents that can be used in their place.

2. TWO PHOTOGRAPHS

- * The photos must be recent (taken within the past six months), identical, 2x2 inches, and either color or black/white;
- * they must show a front view, full face, on a plain, light (white or off-white) background. (Vending machine photographs are not acceptable.)

3. PROOF OF IDENTITY

That is...

- * a previous U.S. passport, a Certificate of Naturalization or Citizenship, a valid driver's license, government or military ID, or corporate ID.

4. FEES

- * \$65 for a ten-year passport;
- * \$40 for a five-year passport for persons under 18 (these amounts include a \$10 execution fee.)

Make your check or money order payable to Passport Services. Post offices (and passport agencies) accept cash, but courts are not required to do so.

5. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

Although a Social Security number is not required for issuance of a passport, Section 603E of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 requires passport applicants to provide this information. Passport Services will provide this information to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) routinely. Any applicant who fails to provide the information is subject to a \$500 penalty enforced by the IRS. All questions on this matter should be referred to the nearest IRS office.

May I Apply for a Passport by Mail?

Yes, if you already have a passport and that passport is your most recent passport, and it was issued within the past 12 years, and if you were over 18 years old at the time it was issued.

Ask the court, post office, or your travel agent for a DSP-82 "Application For Passport By Mail." Fill it out, sign

it, and date it.

Attach to it:

- * your most recent passport;
- * two identical passport photographs (see previous section on passport photographs);
- * and a \$55 fee; make your check or money order payable to Passport Services. (The \$10 execution fee is waived for those eligible to apply by mail.) If your name has been changed, enclose the Court Order, Adoption Decree or Marriage Certificate, or Divorce Decree specifying another name for you to use. (Photocopies will not be accepted.) If your name has changed by any other means, you must apply in person.

Mail the completed DSP-82 application and attachments to:

National Passport Center
P.O. Box 371971
Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7971.

Your previous passport will be returned to you with your new passport.

If you need faster service, you can use an overnight delivery service. If the service of your choice will not deliver to a post office box, send it to:

Mellon Bank
Attn: Passport Supervisor 371971
3 Mellon Bank Center. Rm. 153-2723
Pittsburgh. PA 15259-0001.

Include the appropriate fee for overnight return of your passport.

Note: If the passport has been mutilated, altered or damaged in any manner, you cannot apply by mail. You must apply in person and use Form DSP-11, present evidence of U.S. citizenship, and acceptable identification.

When Should I Apply for a Passport?

Apply for your passport several months in advance of your planned departure. If you will need visas from foreign embassies, allow additional time.

What Happens to My Passport Application After I Submit It?

If you apply at a passport acceptance facility, the day you apply your application will be forwarded to the passport agency that services the acceptance office, or, in the case of mail-in applications, they are forwarded to the National Passport Center.

Applications are processed according to the departure date indicated on the application form. If you give no departure date, the passport agency will assume you are not planning any immediate travel. Your passport will be returned to you by mail at the address you provided on your application.

What Should I Do if My Passport Is Lost or Stolen?

If your passport is lost or stolen in the U.S., report the loss or theft in writing to Passport Services, 1425 K Street, N.W., Department of State, Washington, D.C. 20522-1705, or to the nearest passport agency. If you are abroad, report the loss immediately to local police authorities and contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

What Else Should I Know About Passports?

All persons, including newborn infants, are required to obtain passports in their own name.

If you need to get a valid passport amended because of a name change, use Form DSP-19.

Before traveling abroad, make a copy of the identification page to make it easier to get a new one should it be necessary.

If you require additional visa pages before your passport expires, submit your passport with a signed request for extra pages to one of the passport agencies listed on the last page. (Please allow time for the processing of the request.) If you travel abroad frequently, you may request a 48-page passport at the time of application.

Some countries require that your passport be valid at least 6 months beyond the dates of your trip. If your passport is expiring in less than the required validity, you will need to get a new one. Check with the nearest embassy or consulate of the countries you plan to visit to find out their entry requirements.

In addition to foreign entry requirements, U.S. law must also be considered. With certain exceptions, it is against U.S. law to enter or leave the country without a valid passport. Generally for tourists, the exceptions refer to direct travel within U.S. territories or between North, South, or Central America (except Cuba).

Note: If you mutilate or alter your U.S. passport, you may render it invalid and expose yourself to possible prosecution under the law (Section 1543 of Title 22 of the U.S. Code).

What If I Need a Passport in a Hurry?

If you are leaving on an emergency trip within five working days, apply in person at the nearest passport agency and present your tickets or travel itinerary from an airline, as well as the other required items. Or, apply at a court or post office and have the application sent to the passport agency through an overnight delivery service of your choice (you should include a self-addressed, pre-paid envelope for the return of the passport). Be sure to include your dates of departure and travel plans on your application.

PASSPORT AGENCIES

Apply Early For Your Passport

Boston Passport Agency
Thomas P. O'Neill Fed. Bldg
Rm. 247. 10 Causeway Street

Boston, Massachusetts 02222
Information: 617-565-6998*
617-565-6990

Chicago Passport Agency
Suite 380,
Kluczynski Federal Office Bldg.
230 South Dearborn Street
Chicago, Illinois 60604-1564
Information: 312-353-7155

Honolulu Passport Agency
Room C-106, New Federal Bldg.
300 Ala Moana Blvd.
Honolulu, Hawaii 96850
Information: 808-541-1919
808-541-1918

Houston Passport Agency
Suite 11043,
Mickey Leland Fed. Bldg.
1919 Smith Street
Houston, Texas 77002
Information: 713-653-3153

Los Angeles Passport Agency
Room 13100,
11000 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles, California 90024-3615
Information: 213-575-7070

Miami Passport Agency
3rd Floor, Claude Pepper
Federal Office Bldg.
51 Southwest First Avenue
Miami, Florida 33130-1680
Information: 305-536-4681

New Orleans Passport Agency
Postal Service Building
701 Loyola Ave., Rm T-12005
New Orleans, Louisiana 70113-1931
Information: 504-589-6728*
504-589-6161/62

New York Passport Agency
Room 270, Rockefeller Center
630 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10111-0031

Information: 212-399-5290

Philadelphia Passport Agency
Room 4426. Federal Bldg.
600 Arch Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106-1684
Information: 215-597-7480

San Francisco Passport Agency
Suite. 200,
Tishman Speyer Bldg.
525 Market Street
San Francisco, California 94105-2773
Information: 415-744-4444 or 4010*

Seattle Passport Agency
Room 982, Federal Office Bldg.
915 Second Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98174-1081
Information: 205-220-7777*
205-220-7788

Stamford Passport Agency
One Landmark Square
Broad and Atlantic Streets
Stamford, Connecticut 06902-2767
Information: 203-325-3530*

Washington Passport Agency
1425 K Street N.W.
Washington. D.C. 20522-1705
Information: 202-547-0518*

If you are applying by mail see the section "May I Apply for My Passport by Mail?" for proper mailing addresses. If you have any questions about an application that was mailed, write or call:

National Passport Center
31 Rochester Ave.
Portsmouth, NH 003801-2900
(603) 334-0500

* This is a 24-hour information line that includes general passport information, passport agency location, and hours of operation and information regarding emergency passport services during non-working hours.

