

## Massachusetts Muslims, Know Your Rights! U.S. State Department rules on passport photos

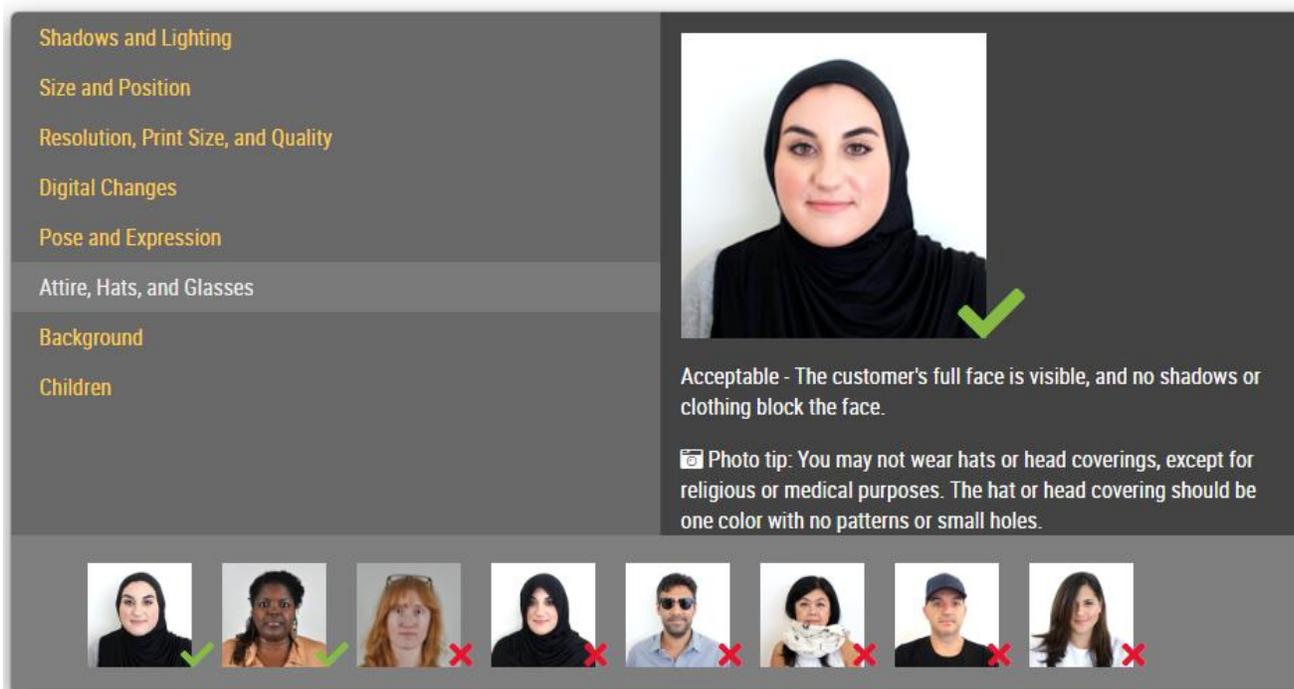
Generally, you cannot wear a hat, head covering, eyeglasses or otherwise cover any part of your face in a U.S. passport photo. However, under [federal law](#), you have the right to request a religious accommodation that allows you to wear a hijab or kufi in your photo. The State Department changed its rules somewhat in September 2025, so if you are applying for a passport or a renewal, be sure that your accommodation request letter (see sample on next page) gives the required information. The [updated rules](#) say:

To request an accommodation, you must submit a signed statement with your application. The statement must:

- Explain how and why your religious beliefs make it difficult for you to complete a specific part of the application process.
- Detail your religious activity or exercise and how it connects to your religious beliefs.

Here is the State Department’s information on what your [photo](#) should look like:

### Photo Examples



The screenshot shows a list of photo requirements on the left and a large example photo on the right. The requirements listed are: Shadows and Lighting, Size and Position, Resolution, Print Size, and Quality, Digital Changes, Pose and Expression, Attire, Hats, and Glasses, Background, and Children. The example photo is of a woman wearing a black hijab, with a green checkmark in the bottom right corner. Below the example photo is a text box that reads: "Acceptable - The customer's full face is visible, and no shadows or clothing block the face." Below this text box is a "Photo tip" that reads: "Photo tip: You may not wear hats or head coverings, except for religious or medical purposes. The hat or head covering should be one color with no patterns or small holes." At the bottom of the screenshot is a row of eight small photo examples, each with a green checkmark or a red X. The first two photos (a woman in a hijab and a woman with glasses) have green checkmarks. The remaining six photos (a woman with glasses, a woman in a hijab, a man with sunglasses, a woman with a headscarf, a man with a baseball cap, and a woman with long hair) have red X's.

Here is a template for your religious accommodation request letter. Make any needed changes to fit your situation.

[Date]

Use this address if you live in Massachusetts. Use it even if you will be sending your application by email.

National Passport Processing Center  
P.O. Box 90155  
Philadelphia, PA 19190-0155

RE: Request for accommodation - religious head covering in passport photo

To whom it may concern:

I am unable to comply with the requirement not to wear a head covering in my passport photo. This is because I am a Muslim who wears a hijab/kufi [choose one] on a daily basis while in public. I do so as part of my sincerely held religious beliefs that [short explanation of your religious beliefs].

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

[your signature]  
[name typed]  
[address]  
[email address]

If your request is granted (and you meet all other requirement), your passport will be issued. If your request is denied, the State Department says that it “will mail you a letter and explain what you need to provide to apply for your passport.” We have not heard of anyone having a problem, but if your request is denied, please [contact](#) CAIR-MA.

*Last updated February 2026*