

Frequently Asked Questions

What is SmartGate?

The Australian Customs and Border Protection Service (Customs and Border Protection) is introducing SmartGate, which gives eligible travellers arriving into Australia's international airports the option to self-process through passport control. It uses the electronic information in the ePassport and face recognition technology to perform the customs and immigration checks that are usually conducted by a Customs and Border Protection officer.

Do I have to apply or register to use SmartGate?

No. To use SmartGate, you simply need to hold an Australian or New Zealand ePassport and be aged 18 or over.

How does SmartGate work?

Step 1, the kiosk, checks if you are eligible to self-process. Step 2, the gate, performs the identity check and clearance.

Step 1

- Look for the SmartGate kiosk, located in the concourses or at passport control.
- Place your ePassport into the reader and answer standard declarations using the touch screen.
- The kiosk will issue you a SmartGate ticket, which you'll need for step 2.

Step 2

- Insert your SmartGate ticket.
- Look at the camera while your face is compared to your ePassport photo.
- Retrieve your ticket and when the gates open, proceed to the baggage hall.
- Collect your luggage and go to the Customs and Border Protection check-point.
- Hand in your SmartGate ticket and Passenger Card.



What is the identity check at the gate?

The gate checks that your face matches your ePassport photo. It is therefore important that you remain still and look at the camera while your photo is being taken.

Who can use SmartGate?

SmartGate can be used by Australian and New Zealand ePassport holders aged 18 or over. It will be gradually opened to other nationalities that have International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) compliant ePassports. Airline crew who hold an Australian or New Zealand ePassport can choose to use SmartGate instead of going through the crew lane.

Currently, there are some ePassport holders who are not eligible to use SmartGate including:

- those aged under 18 years
- New Zealand ePassport holders travelling on military orders.

Do I have to apply or register to use SmartGate?

No. To use SmartGate, you simply need to hold an Australian or New Zealand ePassport and be aged 18 or over.

Where can I use SmartGate?

SmartGate is currently available at Adelaide, Brisbane, Cairns, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney and Gold Coast international airports for arriving travellers.

SmartGate kiosks are also available at Auckland Airport departures enabling eligible travellers to undertake the first step of their entry process into Australia before they depart New Zealand.

What is face recognition technology?

Face recognition technology works by mapping the underlying bone structure of the face. For example, the distances between eyes, nose, mouth and ears. The measurements are then digitally coded to be used for comparison and verification purposes. With SmartGate, a mathematical formula is used to determine whether the photo of the traveller's face matches their ePassport photo.

Why is Customs and Border Protection using face recognition technology?

Face recognition is considered the least intrusive biometric measure and has a high degree of accuracy when used for one-to-one matching. The ePassport photo provides a portable biometric identifier meaning the traveller does not have to enrol or register. A Customs and Border Protection officer can also undertake manual backup without needing to be a fingerprint or iris recognition expert.

How does SmartGate help me?

SmartGate gives eligible travellers a choice to how they are processed when they arrive in Australia from overseas. It provides a secure, efficient way to clear through passport control.

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Will SmartGate be quicker to use?

It will depend on the number of travellers using SmartGate. SmartGate makes passport control a more efficient process in terms of processing the total number of travellers and should result in reduced queue times for many travellers.

Can I use SmartGate in another language?

Currently SmartGate only operates in English. It is planned that other languages will be available in the future.

What is an ePassport?

All Australian passports issued after 24 October 2005 and all New Zealand passports issued after 4 November 2005 are called ePassports. An ePassport has a microchip embedded in the centre pages and an international ePassport symbol on the front cover. The microchip contains the same personal information that is on the colour photo page of the ePassport, including a digitised photograph.



ePassport symbol

How do I get an ePassport?

If you have an older passport, without the ePassport symbol on the cover, you will need to wait until your passport is due for renewal, or apply for a new passport before your existing one expires. Contact the Australian or New Zealand Passport Office for more information.

Will my passport be stamped?

No. Legislation has been changed so that you no longer need your passport to be stamped if you use SmartGate to cross the border. However, if you wish to obtain a stamp, you can do so by asking a Customs and Border Protection officer.

What if I hold dual or multiple passports?

To use SmartGate, you must use the same passport that you use at check-in overseas so that your details match. For Australian citizens, this means you must use your Australian passport, even if you use a foreign passport overseas.

Can I use SmartGate if I have a disability?

Yes. SmartGate is an option for some disabled travellers. Customs and Border Protection is continuing to research options to the extent to which SmartGate can accommodate disabled users.

Can I wear glasses or headwear?

Prescription glasses can be left on but it is asked that all travellers remove sunglasses or headwear as you would if being processed by a Customs and Border Protection officer. For the face matching process to be effective, it is important that travellers look like their passport photo as much as possible.

What happens if I change my hairstyle or weight, will I have trouble using SmartGate next time?

No. SmartGate has been designed to allow for small changes in appearance.

Can I wear prescription glasses?

Yes. However, the matching process works best if you look as much like your ePassport photo as possible.

What happens after I pass through SmartGate?

As a SmartGate user, you are still subject to all existing customs, immigration and quarantine requirements. You will need to present a completed Incoming Passenger Card and your SmartGate ticket to a Customs and Border Protection officer in the arrivals hall once you have collected your luggage. You must continue to declare any goods subject to government prohibitions or restrictions.

Do I still need my Incoming Passenger Card?

Yes. You will need to hand your completed Incoming Passenger Card and SmartGate ticket to a Customs and Border Protection officer after you have collected your luggage.

What is the SmartGate ticket?

The SmartGate ticket is evidence that you have used SmartGate to cross the border. You will need to retain this ticket and present it with your completed Incoming Passenger Card to a Customs and Border Protection officer after you have collected your luggage.

If SmartGate doesn't work for me, will I have to join the back of the manual queue?

No. If you cannot complete the process at either the kiosk or the gate, you will be directed to a SmartGate assistance desk to be manually processed by a Customs and Border Protection officer.

What if I have an ePassport and my friend doesn't, do we have to separate to clear passport control?

Your friend will not be able to use SmartGate. If you want to stay together, you will need to join the manual queue.

What if I'm travelling with people who are under 18 years of age, can I use SmartGate?

No. If you are travelling with children under the age of 18, Customs and Border Protection prefers you to be processed together manually.



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Does SmartGate record any information? For example, does it record the fact that I have cleared customs and immigration today?

Yes it does. SmartGate records the same information that a Customs and Border Protection officer records.

What about my privacy?

All personal information collected via SmartGate, (including the photograph), will be treated in the same way as information collected manually upon arrival. Customs and Border Protection takes steps to store personal information securely, prevent its unauthorised use and maintain its accuracy. Customs and Border Protection will only use or disclose personal information for the purpose for which it was collected or as otherwise required or authorised by law, including where the information is required by other law enforcement or border control authorities.

Where can I obtain further information about SmartGate?

You can email smartgate@customs.gov.au or ring the Customs Information and Support Centre on 1300 363 263.

INFORMATION FOR NEW ZEALAND EPASSPORT HOLDERS

Can I use SmartGate if I am travelling on military orders?

No. You must have a Special Purpose Visa (SPV) which needs to be processed by a Customs and Border Protection officer.

Can I use SmartGate if I am airline crew?

Yes. You can use SmartGate if you are a New Zealand ePassport holder and are aged 18 years or older.