



Home Office

Guidance on examining identity documents 2015

National Document Fraud Unit

Introduction

Secure identity documents are presented as proof of identity, nationality, status within the UK and for employment. Document verification is crucial in ensuring that the documents presented are both genuine and presented by the rightful holder.

There are many thousands of fraudulent identity documents in circulation. However, these documents are not just used for travel, but in any kind of fraud where identity is an issue.

This guidance highlights the type of identity documents seen in the United Kingdom, the main security features present in them and the methods used to forge them. It will assist the reader in the detection of basic counterfeits and forgeries. However, this guidance will not provide the skills to detect all fraudulent documents, particularly those which have been produced using highly professional and sophisticated techniques. If you have concerns about a document, you should always seek further advice.

Aims

The aims of this guide are to;

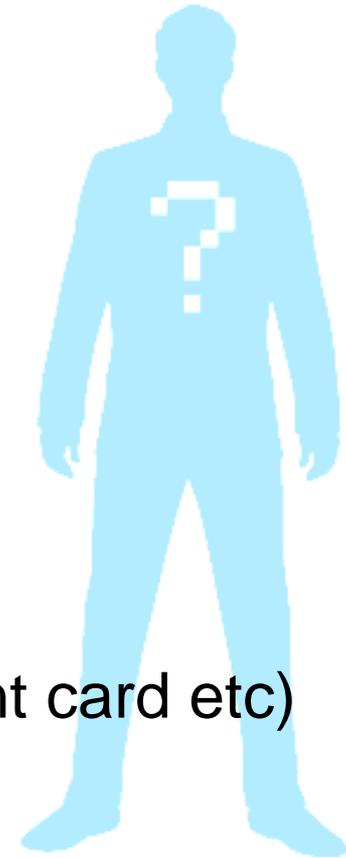
- Increase awareness of different types of identity documents
- Provide a basic awareness of document abuse and associated criminality
- Increase confidence in what to look for when presented with an identity document

You will not be expected to be an expert in forgery detection

Types of Identity Document

An identity document is any document which may be used to verify aspects of a person's personal identity.

- Passports
- National Identity Cards
- Residence Documents
- Driving Licences
- Military Identity Cards
- Official Identity Documents (police warrant card etc)



History of passports

In Britain, the earliest reference to a "safe conduct" document appears in an Act of Parliament dated 1414 and by 1540 the term "passport" was being used.



The first glued photo passports were issued in 1914.

The famous "old blue" was issued in 1920 and the style remained until 1988 when the burgundy coloured European version was issued.



The Machine Readable Zone (MRZ) was introduced in 1981.

The E-passport (biometric) was introduced in the late 1990s.



History of ID cards



ID cards have been used in Europe since 1919 when they were introduced in Belgium.

Belgium, France, Greece, Germany and Spain require citizens to carry ID with them at all times.



The United Kingdom's scheme was scrapped in January 2011 and the database was destroyed.

Documents used for employment

Acceptable documents for employment in the UK

1. UK passports
2. EU passports and ID cards
3. Applicant Registration Cards (ARC) containing appropriate endorsement
4. Non-EU passports containing appropriate endorsement or visa

Documents used for employment

UK passports

British passports are valid for up to 10 years and 9 months. There are currently 3 styles in circulation, issued to British citizens.



No longer valid



No longer issued to British citizens



From 1998 – last issued in 2006



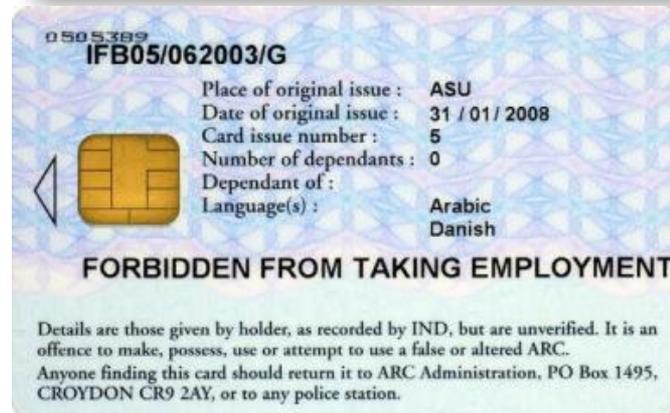
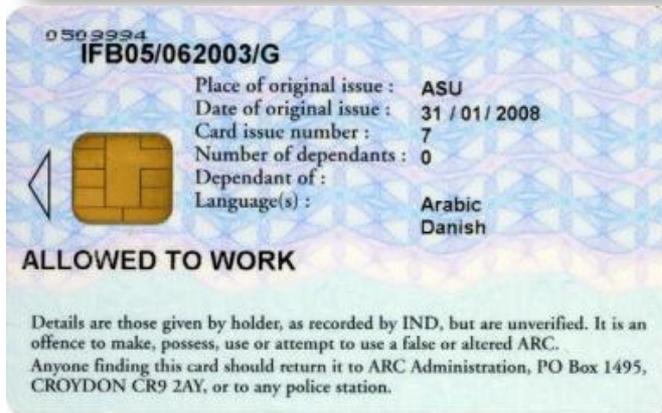
From 2006



From 2010

Documents used for employment

Asylum Registration Cards (ARCs)



ARCs are issued to foreign nationals who have made an application to stay in the UK and are having their application considered. Once the application is either granted or refused the card should be withdrawn. The cards will state whether employment is permitted or forbidden.

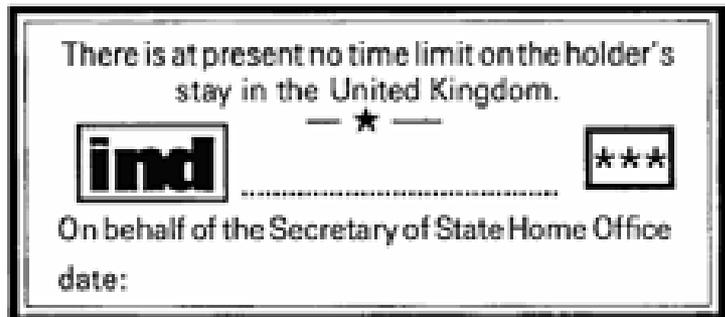
Documents used for employment

EU / EEA Member States

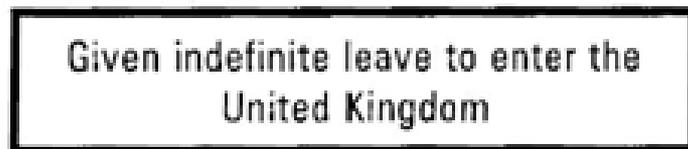
- Passports and identity cards from the following countries:
 - Austria
 - Belgian
 - Bulgaria
 - Croatia
 - Cyprus
 - Czech Republic
 - Denmark
 - Estonia
 - France
 - Finland
 - Germany
 - Greece
 - Hungary
 - Iceland
 - Ireland
 - Italy
 - Latvia
 - Liechtenstein
 - Lithuania
 - Luxembourg
 - Malta
 - Netherlands
 - Norway
 - Poland
 - Portugal
 - Romania
 - Slovakia
 - Slovenia
 - Spain
 - Sweden
 - Switzerland
 - United Kingdom

Documents used for employment

Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) Stamps & Vignettes



+ Home Office ink date stamp



+ Immigration Officer ink date stamp

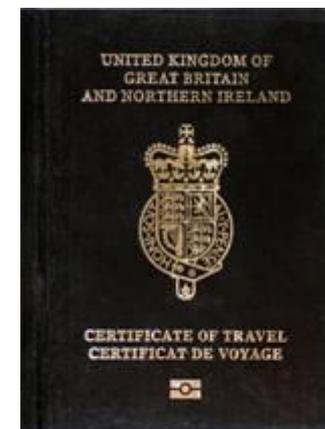
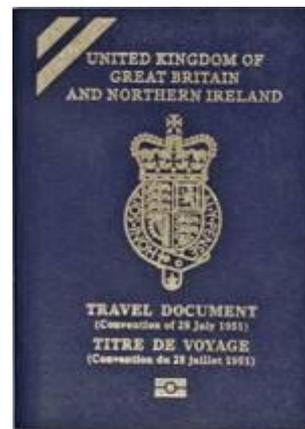
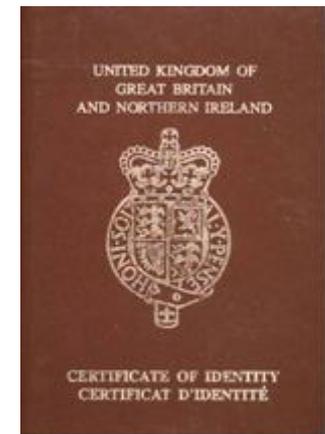
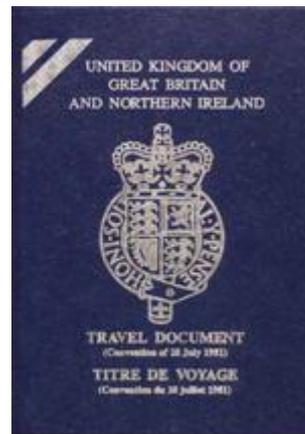


They allow a non EU / EEA national to remain indefinitely in the United Kingdom. They are no longer being issued having been replaced by the residence permit. However, there are many in circulation because they have no expiry date. They are also widely counterfeited. **NB the two stamp impressions are now only valid within passports and not on Home Office letters.**

Home Office Travel Documents-

Original version
(above)

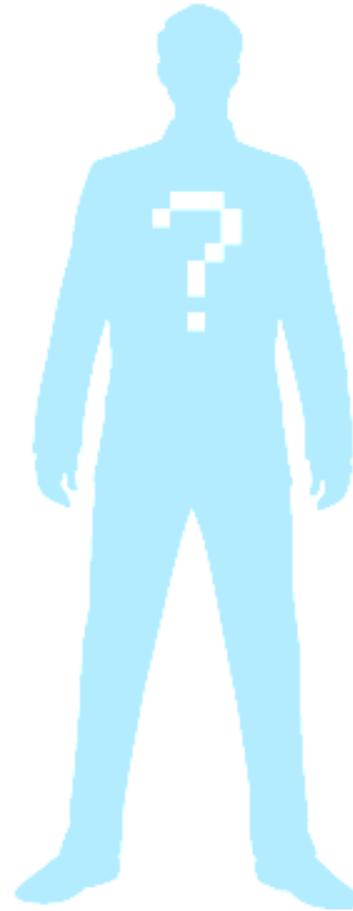
New biometric version
(below)



In all cases, the holder's status (leave to enter or remain) in the UK will be recorded on the observations page.
Travel Documents alone do not confer the right to work.

Why abuse an identity document?

- **Illegal working**
- **Immigration abuse**
- **Financial fraud**
- **Benefit fraud**
- **Hide true identity**



Types of document abuse

Impostors: One of the most common types of document fraud – the holder is simply a “look-alike”

Counterfeits: A complete reproduction of a document from scratch to resemble an officially issued document.

Forgeries: A genuine document that has been unlawfully altered in some way, for example:

- substituting a page.
- substituting a photograph or image.
- altering the personal details.

Pseudo / Fantasy Documents: Documents with no authority and which are not officially recognised – they can occur in various forms and may have the physical appearance of a passport. They are not acceptable proof of either nationality or identity.

Equipment

Magnifiers and ultraviolet (UV) light sources are easy to obtain and can enhance your ability to detect fraudulent documents. However, the use of this equipment will only be effective if the user has an understanding of secure documents and their security features.

Magnifiers: Standard handheld magnifying glasses can be useful when examining documents to see if they are counterfeit (eg. looking at print quality), or if they have been forged (eg. damage around photographs and images)

Ultraviolet (UV) light sources: UV pens and UV light boxes are useful tools for identifying whether documents are made from secure paper or UV safeguards are genuine.

Transmitted light: Shining light through paper (e.g. with a light from above or using a torch) is a useful tool for viewing features such as watermarks and also any damage to paper.

Impersonation

- One of the most common and easiest types of document abuse
- New holder looks like the original holder of the document
- Passports / identity cards are often not altered at all

Impersonation

Initial checks

- Check the signature – Is the one on the application the same as on the document ?
- Does the person in front of you look as old or as young as the document indicates?
- Does the person have any distinguishing features?

Look at the image and look at the person

- Compare the shape of the face
- Look at the features of the face individually
- Look at the position of each in relation to the rest of the face
- Ears are unique to each person



Impostor or not?



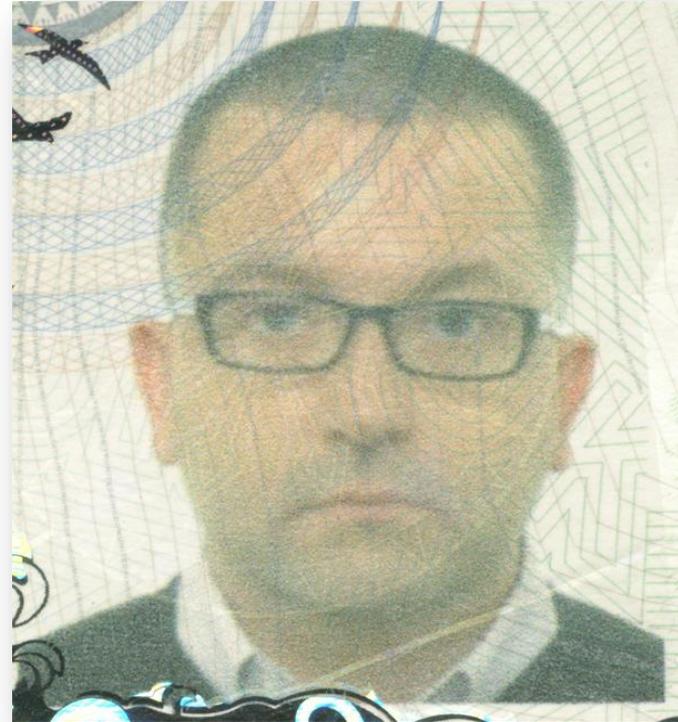
Same person!

Impostor or not?



Impostor!

Impostor or not?



Same person!

Security Features

Base Fluorescence



Here you can see a range of purported secure documents viewed in normal lighting conditions.

Security Features

Base Fluorescence



Using ultraviolet light you can see counterfeit documents that fluoresce (shine) more brightly than genuine documents which use dull, secure paper.

Security Features

Watermarks



A watermark is created during the paper manufacturing process by varying the thickness of the paper. It is best viewed using transmitted light (holding the document up to a light or shining a light through the paper). A real watermark should consist of subtle changes in tone usually with both lighter and darker areas.

A watermark should never react under UV light.

You will notice that many security features in passports can also be found in banknotes.



Security Features

Random Fibres

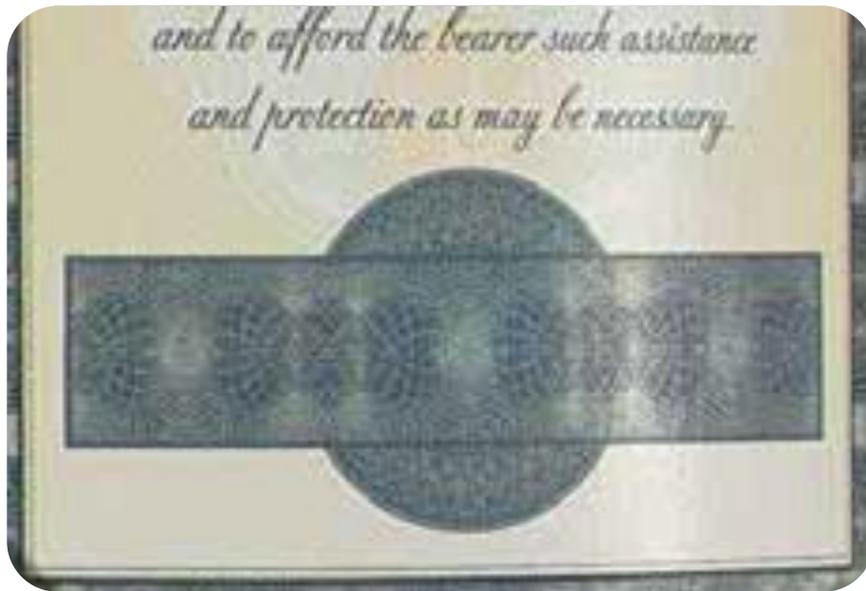
Security fibres which appear randomly across the paper. They can be visible to the naked eye, or fluoresce when exposed to UV light.



Security Features

Intaglio Ink

A printing process which results in the ink having a raised and rough feel which can be felt by running a finger over the paper. Intaglio printing can be found on the inside cover of most (but not all) passports. You can often find a hidden pattern, revealed when the page is viewed at an oblique angle. The images below are of the intaglio printed area in a British passport.



Security Features

Machine Readable Zone - Optical Character Recognition

Below is a chart of the **only** characters that should be seen in the machine readable zone (MRZ). It follows that the presence of any characters that do not match this typeface could indicate that the document may be a counterfeit or a forgery.

Number of characters:

Each line of the MRZ in passports should contain 44 characters in total.

Unique typeface:

Note particularly the flat top to the figure three and the open figure four.

N.B. Some countries have issued genuine passports with a non-compliant typeface within the MRZ – please refer if encountered.



Counterfeit Documents

What to consider:

- The overall quality of the document
- Reaction under UV light
- Presence of watermarks and other paper features
- Security print quality – for instance background print and intaglio ink

Use UV light to:

- Compare the overall fluorescence of a suspect document with a genuine one
- Check for the presence or absence of UV safeguards
- Check for a simulated watermark

Note: some UV features may be diminished in genuine but worn documents

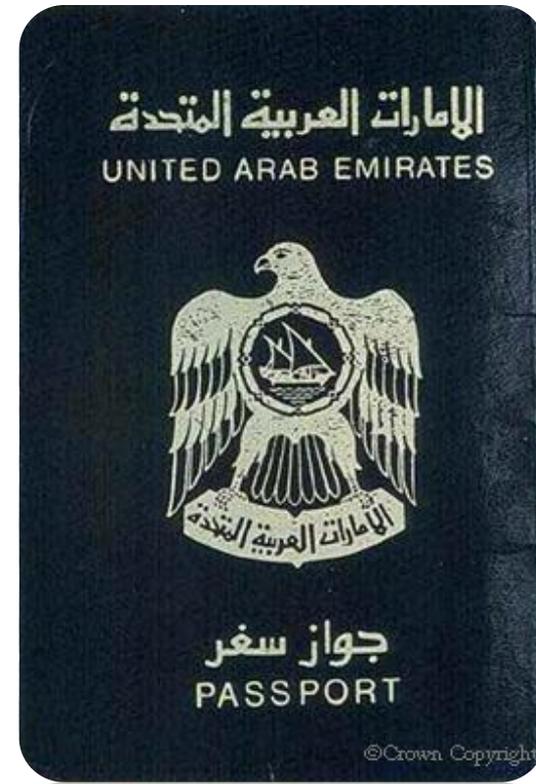
Counterfeit Documents

Look at the **quality** of the document – it should be manufactured to a high standard. Consider the detail of the embossed gold blocking (the foil stamped into the cover of the passport), and feel the texture of the cover material. Compare the quality and fine detail of the genuine example (left) with the counterfeit (right).

Genuine



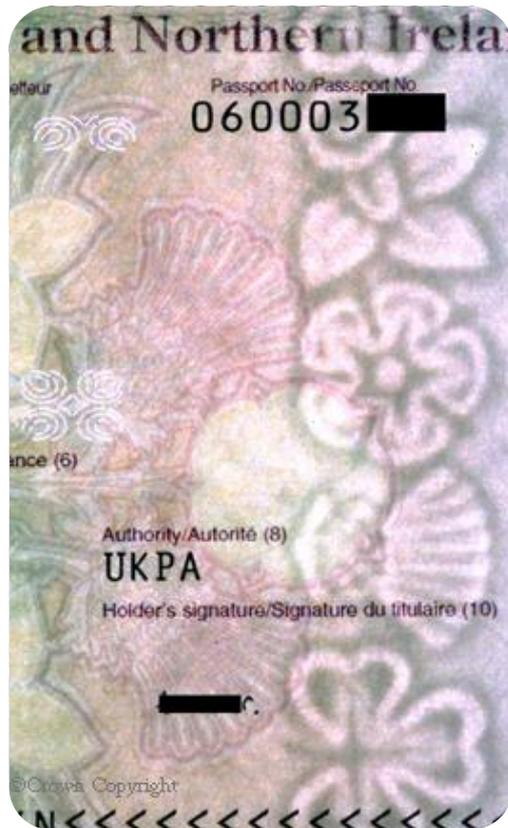
Counterfeit



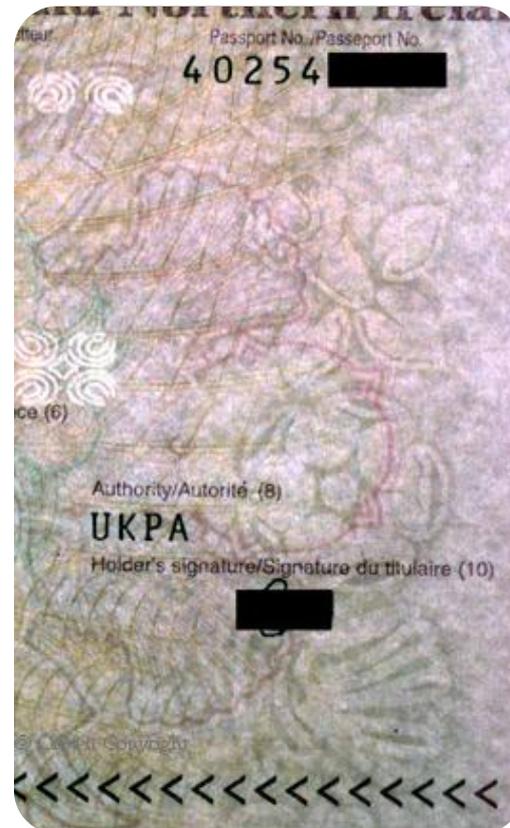
Counterfeit Documents

Nearly all passports contain watermarks. When light is shone through the page the genuine watermark (left) has subtle variations in the light and dark areas (thinner or thicker areas of paper) unlike the counterfeit (right) which has been printed onto the surface.

Genuine

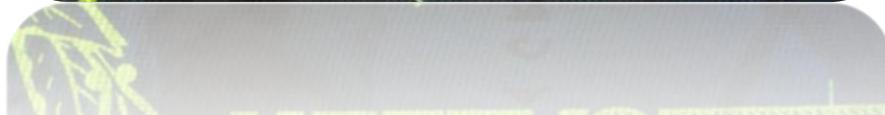


Counterfeit



Counterfeit Documents

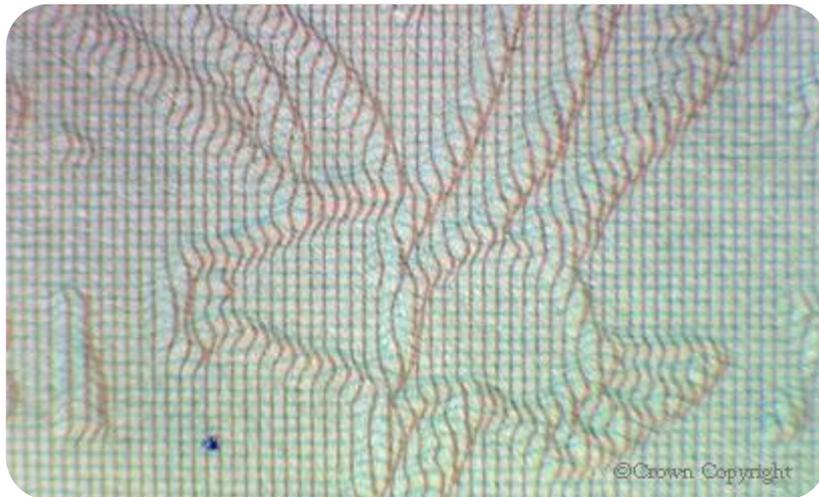
Security fibres appear randomly across the paper. No repeating pattern should be seen as the process is completely random. Looking at two pages from a Greek passport (below) under a UV light source, you can see that the fibres on pages 13 and 15 are in the same place. This is **not** possible in genuine documents.



Counterfeit Documents

Look at the **quality** of the printing - it should be a secure document of high quality.

Genuine



Counterfeit

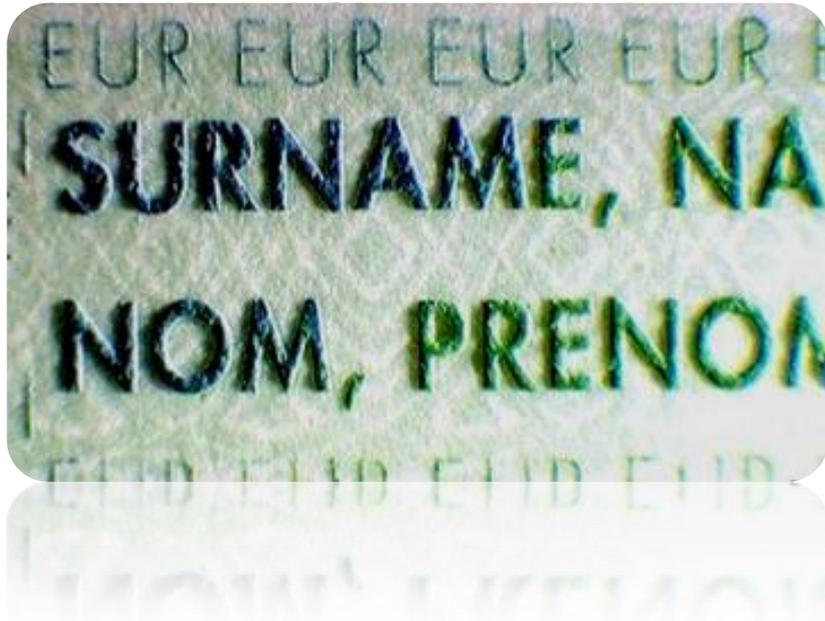


The printed patterns on the pages are deliberately complex, like banknotes, to make copying difficult. The background print in the genuine passport (left) has solid fine lines unlike the random dots of the counterfeit (right), a characteristic of readily available home printers. Print quality is often a quick indicator of counterfeit documents. Commercial printing cannot produce the same quality as security printing.

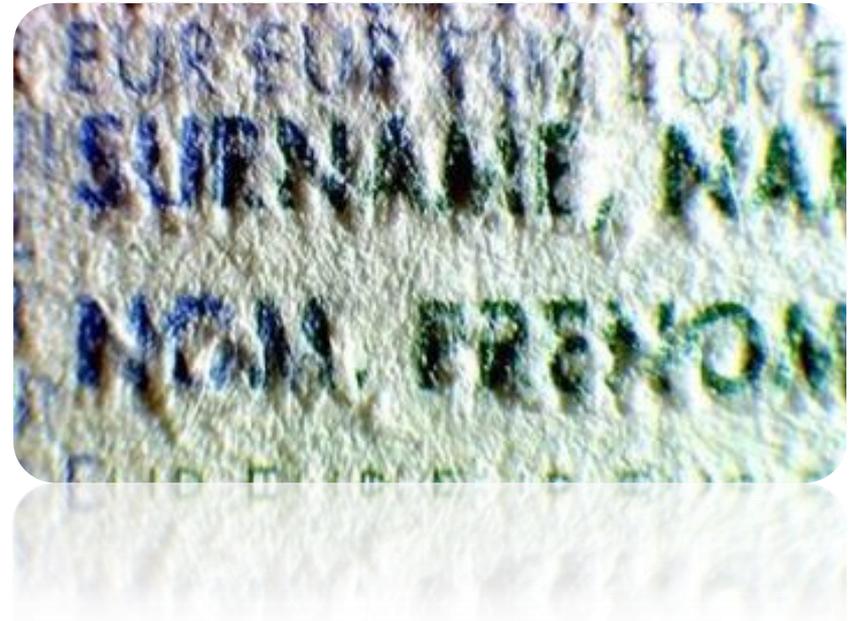
Counterfeit Documents

Genuine intaglio printing will have raised print which can be identified by touch (left). In contrast the counterfeit on the right has been simulated using an embossing process.

Genuine



Counterfeit



Forged Documents

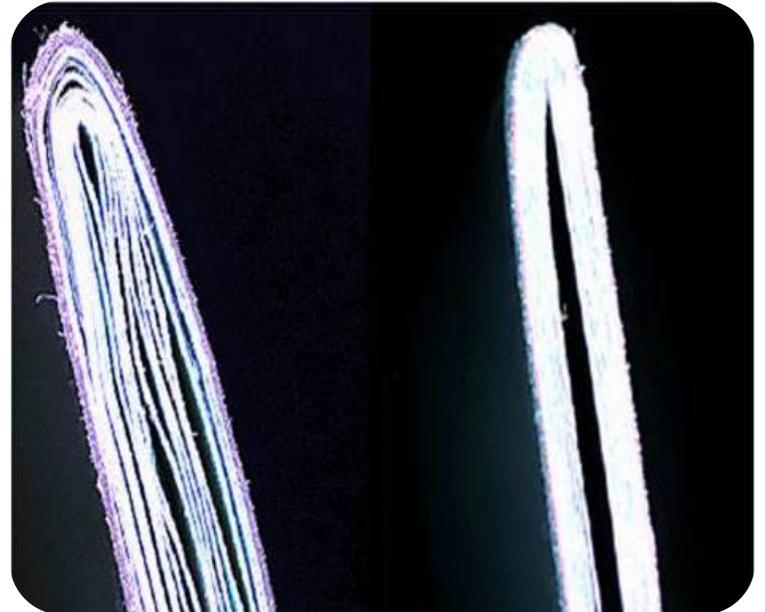
Unlawfully altered documents

There are a number of different ways to alter a genuine document to change the holder's details:

- substitution of pages – usually the bio-data page
- substituted of the photograph or image
- altered personal details

Forged Documents

Substituted pages

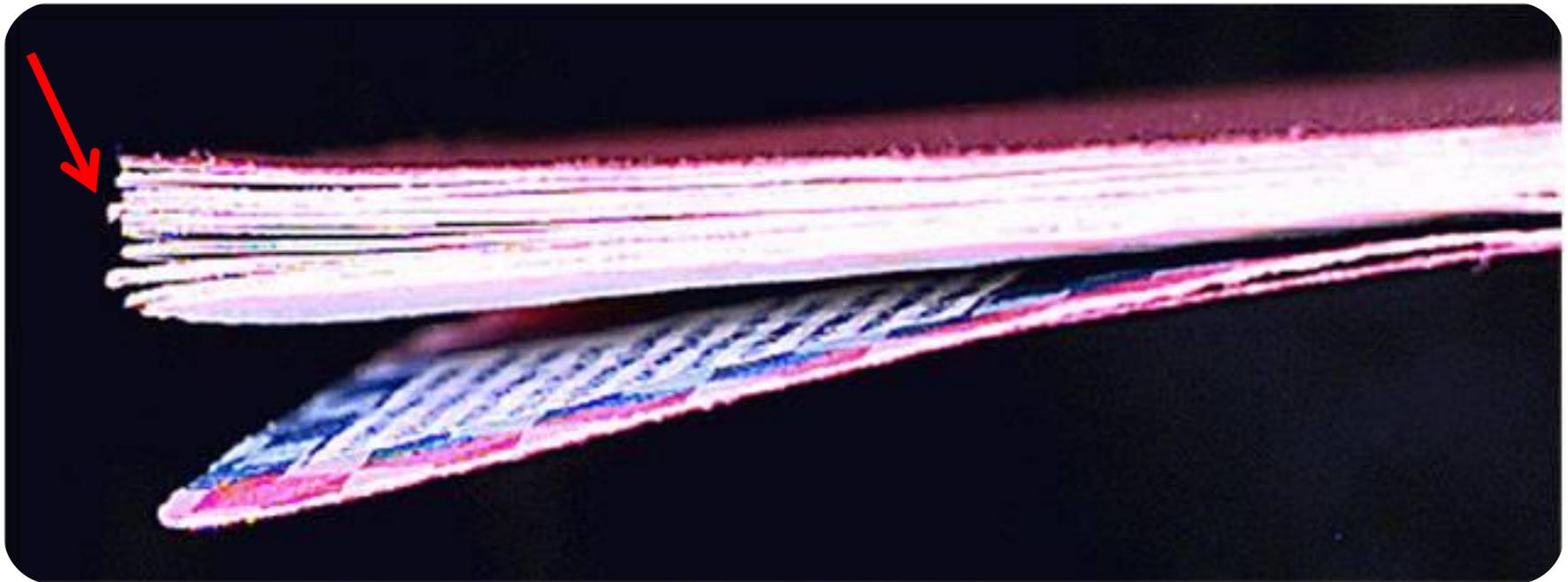


Passports are made up from sheets of paper which are then stitched together and cut to size. A passport's pages and cover should therefore all be in perfect alignment. If a forger takes a passport apart and then re-assembles it by hand it is difficult for all the pages to sit flush as before.

Forged Documents

Substituted pages

Look at the document from more than one angle to check the alignment of the pages. You should not see any pages that are larger or smaller than the rest.



Forged Documents

Substituted photographs / images

Most photographs and digital images in passports or ID cards will be protected by an ink stamp, an emboss, or a laminate with visible safeguards.

An ink seal is produced with wet ink and should not be printed.



Note the printed portion of the seal over the photograph in the forgery differs from the seal on the rest of the card.

Forged Documents

Substituted photographs / images

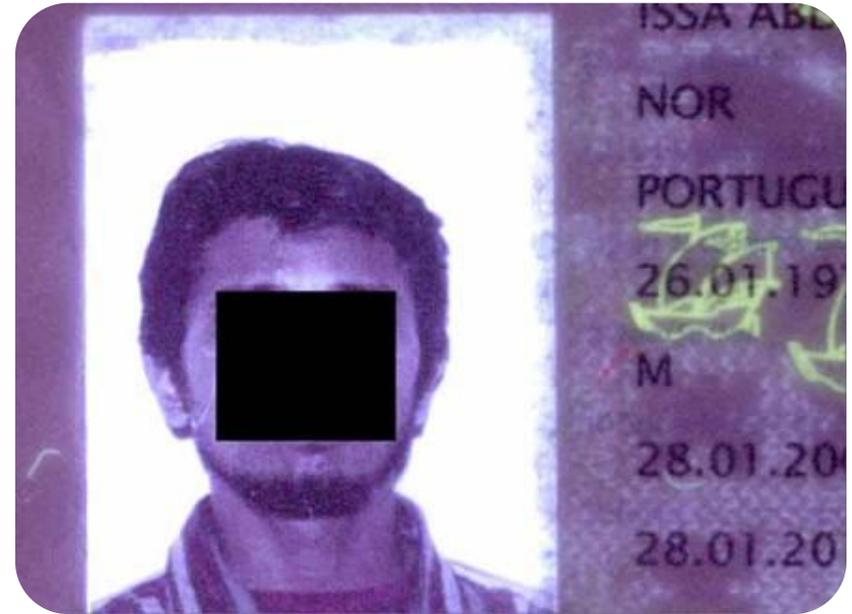
Documents have evolved, with most moving away from traditional stuck-in photographs. Most paper biodata pages contain images which are digitally printed directly onto the page (or on to the underside of the laminate), as seen in this genuine Portuguese passport. This printed image should not react any differently when viewed under a UV light.



Forged Documents

Substituted photographs / images

In this forged Portuguese passport the image has been substituted. The new image has been printed onto a piece of paper and placed onto the page under the laminate. Using a transmitted light source (left) you can see the edges of the new piece of paper sitting on top of the page. Under a UV light source (right), you can see the new piece of paper fluorescing brightly under UV light - ordinary commercial paper has been used.



Forged Documents

Substituted photographs / images

Many forgers simply print a new image (or parts of an image) onto a thin clear laminate and place it on top of the page. In the forged USA passport below, a new face has been added to the original holder's image. Examine holographic and UV features as the new image may incorrectly sit above them.

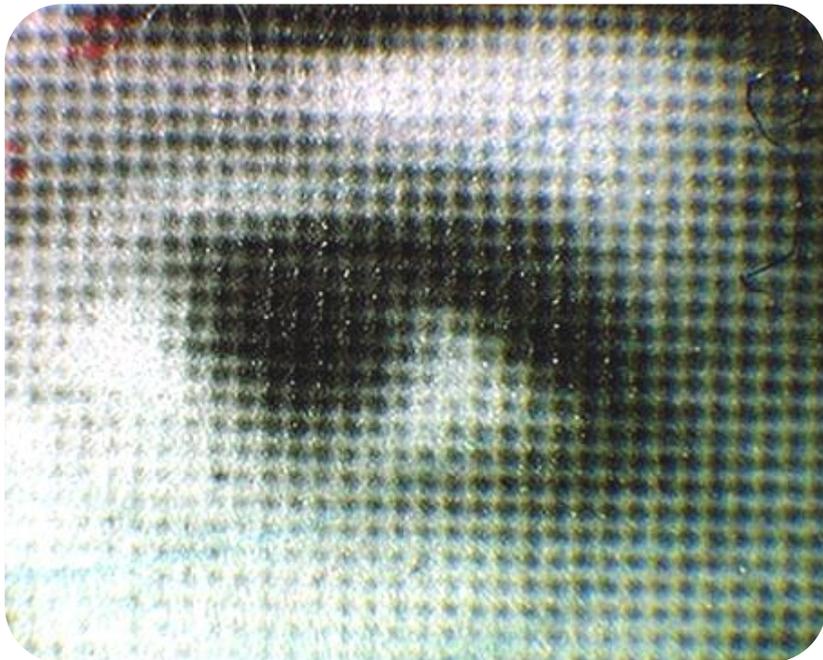


Forged Documents

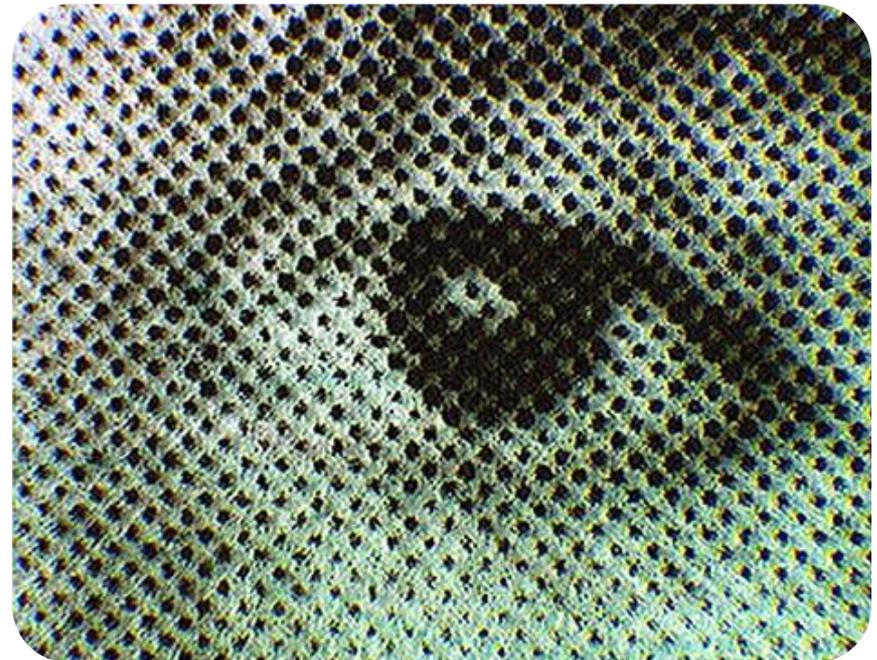
Substituted photographs / images

Passports or ID cards made with polycarbonate (a type of plastic) will have a laser engraved image of the holder. This image should display shades of grey / brown (burned carbon). Forgeries may have printed images and so will contain jet black or coloured dots. Neither of these should be seen in laser engraved images.

Genuine



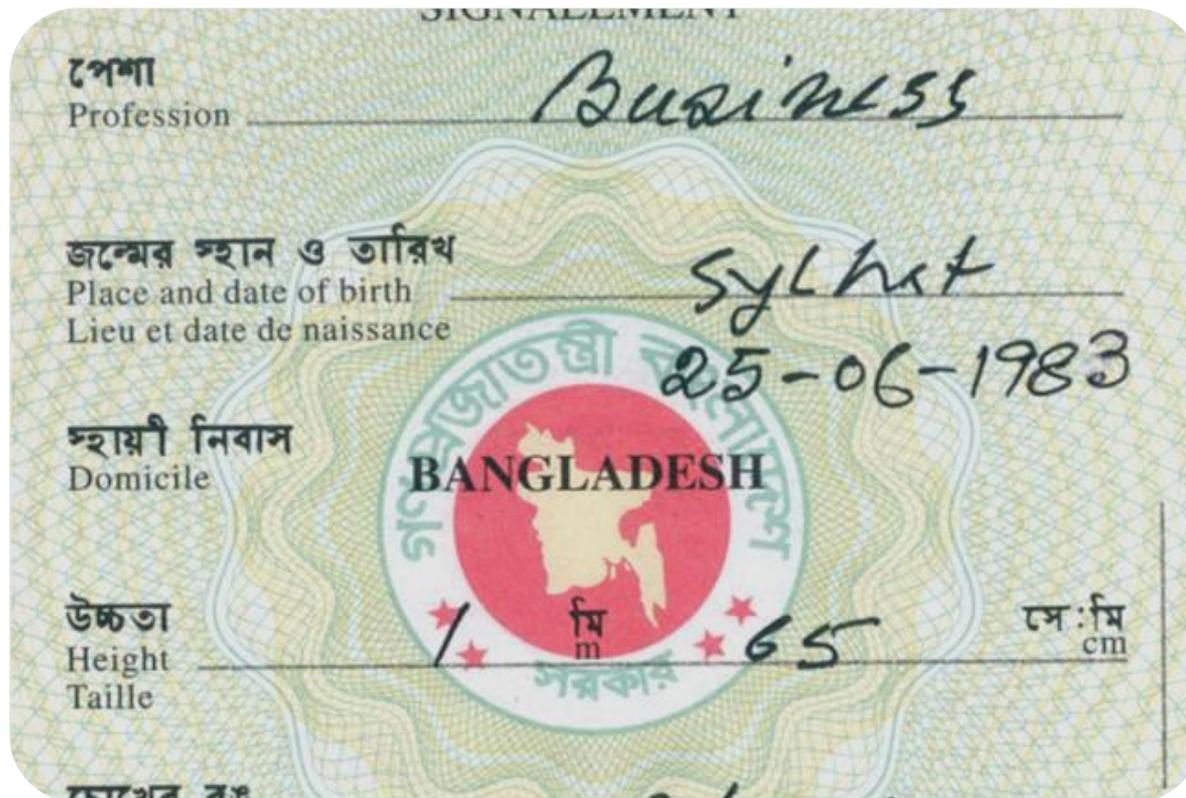
Counterfeit



Forged Documents

Altered details

This image is of a Bangladesh passport with hand written personal details. Many countries still issue passports in this way, including emergency and overseas issued passports.



Forged Documents

Altered details

The passport has been forged by changing the date of birth. The forger has abraded the original pen ink and then over-written a new date.



Forged Documents

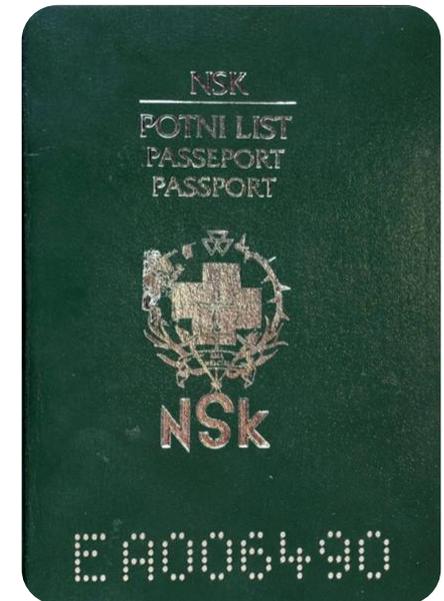
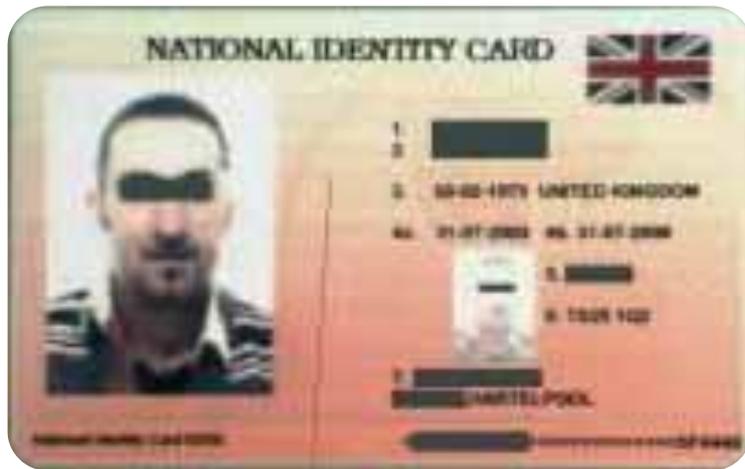
Altered details

This Japanese passport has had the personal details changed – the paper is damaged. Viewed using magnification and light from the side changes to the gender, year and height can be seen.



Pseudo / Fantasy Documents

Pseudo or fantasy documents comprise a range of documents that have no legal basis; they are normally not based on any legitimate document. They may have the appearance of an official document, are not issued by a legally recognised state authority or institution, or by an organisation recognised under international law, and as such have no legal validity.



Basic Document Checks

Recap

- Does the document allow the person to live and work in the United Kingdom?
- Is the person the rightful holder of the document, or an impostor?
- Is the document genuine, or a counterfeit?
- Has the document been unlawfully altered or forged?
- Is the document one that exists or a pseudo / fantasy document?

Further information

Useful Websites

UK Government - guidance for employers:

<https://www.gov.uk/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers>

PRADO - information and images of genuine documents, (European and other countries):

<http://prado.consilium.europa.eu/en/homeindex.html>

CPNI document verification guidance :

http://www.cpni.gov.uk/documents/publications/2007/2007044-gpg_document_verification_guidance.pdf?epslanguage=en-gb

Who do I contact?

If you encounter a suspected false document then contact the Police or your local Immigration Enforcement Office:

<https://www.gov.uk/report-immigration-crime>

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