



The Identity Book

It's small. It's green. It's your ID (Identity) book. Every South African over 16 must have one. It's crucial because it contains your ID number: a personal number that lets Government know who you are. You need an ID book to vote, open a bank account or do anything for which identification is important. Applying for an ID book for the first time is free of charge and quite easy:

1. Take a certified copy of your birth certificate to your nearest Home Affairs office. Phone first to check opening and closing times!
2. Obtain two colour or black and white photos (45mm x 35mm) of your head and shoulders. It's best to do this at a good photo shop or at Home Affairs, to be sure that the photos are acceptable (average cost: R13).
3. Home Affairs will take your fingerprints. Fill out the BI-9 application form in black ink and wait in the queue to hand it in. These queues are often long and the wait is often boring, so take along some work or a book.
4. You'll be told when to collect your new ID book - it usually takes two months.

Because this little green book is so essential, not having one is a big problem. If you lose it or accidentally wash it, go to Home Affairs again, fill out a form for a re-issue and follow steps 1 to 4. This time, however, you'll have to pay for a new ID book (R13). If you don't have an ID book but need one desperately and can't wait two months, you can apply for a temporary ID (R11). It takes only a week to be processed, but expires fairly quickly.

The Passport

An ID book lets South Africans know who you are. But when you leave South Africa for a holiday or to work, you also need a little book to tell people overseas who you are. This is a passport. Applying for a passport is like applying for an ID book: you have to have fingerprints taken, fill out the BI-73 application form, submit four photographs and pay R145. It takes six weeks to obtain a passport, which is valid for ten years.

**Never, ever give or lend your ID to someone else.
They may misuse or even sell it for criminal
purposes. And you'll be held responsible!**

The Visa

You'll see that the passport has empty pages for things called visas. A visa is needed to visit a foreign country; it gives you permission to enter that country. But you can't apply for a visa at Home Affairs, because they only deal with things relating to South Africa. You'll need to get a visa from the country you plan to visit. Since every country has different regulations, you must phone the relevant embassy or consulate to find out what they want to know, what kind of photos they require and what the visa will cost.

Give yourself enough time to obtain a visa before you travel!

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