

# A Pattern Language for USA Citizens Clearing USA Passport and Customs

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## ABSTRACT

This paper contains patterns that form an initial pattern language for United States Citizens re-entering the United States from an international trip, in particular for clearing USA Passport and Customs. It is a team project completed as part of a pattern language project for the Pace University Doctor of Professional Studies (DPS) in Computing program. A preliminary version of this pattern language was presented at a writers' workshop at the 15th Conference on Pattern Languages of Programs (PLoP). PLoP'09, August 28-30, Chicago, IL.

## General Terms

Documentation, Human Factors, Standardization, Languages, Theory, Legal Aspects, Verification.

## Keywords

Patterns, pattern language, Pace University, Doctor of Professional Studies, DPS, PLoP, people group.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

A small subset of the United States population may be true globe trotters. They feel comfortable traveling internationally, are able to handle changing conditions and/or issues and welcome the final return comment from a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agent when they say “Welcome Home”. However, the majority of USA citizens do not fly frequently internationally. For them, that final interview process upon returning to the United States and clearing USA Passport and Customs can be intimidating. Yet, it doesn't need to be., and we have written this pattern language to help those individuals.

Anyone can learn the tricks of the trade, from those who do fly internationally on a frequent basis, which in turn may ease their own travel worries... and potential delays. For example, if your entry card is not filled-in (Completing Entry Cards) before you talk at passport control to a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer, s/he can send you to the back of the line. Or if you bring fruit or meat through customs (Packing for Customs),

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you increase the likelihood that all your baggage will be inspected and cause an additional delay. On the other hand, there are special clearances that you can obtain (Trusted Traveler) that can actually speed up the process and allow you to skip the potentially long queues at ports of entry.

This pattern language contains a set of patterns for US Citizens, applicable when returning to USA points of entry, in particular clearing Passport control and Customs at USA Airports. It is not a Pattern Language for that difficult effort of planning, packing and departing on a international trip. Nor is it a pattern language for clearing metal detector, x-rays or security in the foreign country on the way back. It is however our goal of this pattern language to share experiences to ease worries and speed the journey home.

## 2. FORMAT OF THE PATTERNS

Each pattern contains the following format or schema.

Name: The name and alias of the pattern (labeled in the title for this paper)

Context: Situation that the pattern applies to

Problem: Issue that the pattern is addressing

Forces: External influences that affect the pattern

Solution: An approach to resolve the problem

Rationale: Why the pattern is beneficial

Examples: Real and made up examples

Resulting Context: Result if pattern is used

Related Patterns: Other patterns in this language

Known Uses: Any actual known usages of the pattern.

## 3. PATTERNS

Eight (8) patterns and their associated alias comprise this initial pattern language Table 1 lists the patterns and their alias.

Pattern	Also Known As (aka or Alias)
Suitable/Acceptable Identification	ID Please
Trusted Traveler	Big Brother Is Watching You
What to Wear	Dress For Success
Packing for Customs	The Kitchen Sink
The Tired Traveler	Keep Your Wits About You

Traveling with Children	Are we There Yet
Completing Entry Cards	Bringing A Pen
Answer the Question	Elevator Speech

Table 1

### 3.1 Suitable/Acceptable Identification (aka, ID Please)

#### Context

All travelers entering USA at a Port of Entry are required to validate their identity.

#### Problem

Failure to present valid identification can result in significant delays or barriers to entry until you can prove your USA Citizenship.

#### Forces

Incorrect or expiring identification can result in a significant travel delay for passengers attempting to enter USA. Documentation requirements vary by mode of travel and itinerary. Documentation that may have been acceptable in the past may no longer be sufficient due to changes in requirements due to identification requirements that have become more stringent.

Different modes of travel may have varying validity rules for documentations. A travel document acceptable for one mode of travel may be invalid for another.

Travel on an extended trip may render a valid identification document invalid after a period of time or if the expiration date of the document is near.

Children who previously were not required to have valid identification or certain types of identification, such as passports and visas, are now required to have valid travel documents. Also, passports for children expire quicker than passports for adults.

Valid passports require amendments in the event of marriage or divorce.

#### Solution

Check the identification requirements for your mode of travel and border crossings prior to your trip. Maintain your identification in good standing so that it will be available and valid for travel when needed. Be sure to check the expiration date of your acceptable travel identification and make sure sufficient time remains before the documents expire to cover your trip plus the required time buffer mandated for your selected modes of travel or for potential modes of travel should your plans change while on your trip.

When purchasing airline tickets online, most major airlines will remind you about your passport requirements. Ensure the name on your travel plans completely matches your passport (if full name on passport then full name on travel document).

#### Rationale

Identification rules change to make travel safer for everyone. Most people do not think about identification ahead of time, or if

they do, do not check the validity of the documentation ahead of time.

#### Examples

You embarked on a trip via cruise ship to a destination that did not require a passport. A change in itinerary requires that you disembark the ship and fly back to your office. Without proper/valid identification suitable for air travel, you will not be able to board a plane.

You are traveling with a child. Previously, you did not require any identification for the child. You reach the agent to check-in for your flight or cruise only to learn a birth certificate or passport is required. You cannot board without proper documentation.

You are on a business or personal trip. Due to a change in itinerary you need to extend your trip and travel to another destination for an extended stay. Your passport was valid for six-months before you started your voyage but will expire in five months when you try to enter other international destinations. Insufficient time remains for this passport to remain valid for travel resulting in delay or inconvenience to correct.

#### Resulting Context

People who understand the identification requirements for themselves and members of their traveling party will not have to worry about missing or invalid identification if they check the requirements ahead of time. People who plan for contingencies and changes to itinerary will likely avoid travel delays due to invalid travel documentation.

Also, keep a photocopy of your passport in several locations, and at home, in case you lose it. It will help with the replacement process.

#### Related Patterns

In addition to your passport, remember to complete entry card. Also, see trusted traveler .

#### Known Uses

Any traveler entering USA at a port of entry must have valid identification.

### 3.2 Trusted Traveler (aka, Big Brother is Watching You)

#### Context

Even individuals traveling to/from Canada or Mexico and USA via Air, Land or Sea must carry a passport.

#### Problem

Individuals who travel frequently between USA, Canada and Mexico are often delayed by unpredictable port of entry crossing delays, whether it is at airports, driving their vehicles or via sea.

#### Forces

Effective 2008, all individuals traveling to/from Canada and USA via air are required to have a passport, or secure travel document (NEXUS or FAST card). This is a Canadian – U.S. program designed to let pre-screened travelers cross the border quickly. It only works at Canadian – U.S. border crossings. A state issued driver's license is not valid when traveling via air.

### **Solution**

For USA citizens, the Customs and Border Protection has implemented a "Trusted Traveler Programs" for low risk travelers, that includes expedited passport clearance through dedicated queues and kiosks machines.

For travel between USA and Canada, both USA and Canada citizens can obtain a NEXUS card.

For travel between USA and Mexico, a SENTRI card can be obtained.

For commercial drivers, a Fast Driver Program card can be obtained.

And for other international locations, a new Global Entry Program is being put in place.

### **Rationale**

There are 14 border crossing that offer NEXUS (including all major Canada airports). New locations have recently been opened at Woodstock in New Brunswick, Emerson in Manitoba, and Sault Ste. Marie in Ontario.

### **Examples**

You fly from NYC to Montreal. Upon arrival you go directly to a Kiosks machine, it scans your eye, prints a card and you by-pass passport control and go directly to customs

You drive from directly from NYC to Canada, upon arrival at the border you enter the dedicated NEXUS/FAST lane, show you NEXUS card, and drive through. (Reference: [http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/trusted\\_traveler/](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/trusted_traveler/))

### **Resulting Context**

Reduced wait times when crossing Canada/Mexico and USA borders.

Dedicated lanes (land & sea) & kiosks (air) for individuals traveling to/from Canada and USA with limited to no customs & immigration questioning.

May be use instead of a passport for flights to/from Canada and USA.

May be utilized when entering Canada via Air from anywhere in the world.

Single Canada and USA harmonized program. Single Mexico and USA program, New international program.

### **Related Patterns**

Suitable/Acceptable Identification

### **Known Uses**

The NEXUS program was established in 2002, to speed up border crossing for USA and Canada citizens. Individuals are pre-

approved, low-risk travelers who are citizens or permanent residents of either Canada or the United States. There are also programs in other countries and some major airlines that have programs with the same intention.

The SENTRI system for low risk travelers. SENTRI stands for Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection.

## **3.3 What to Wear (aka, The Dress for Success)**

### **Context**

International travelers often dress for comfort.

### **Problem**

Wearing inappropriate clothing or symbols can lead to excessive delays and scrutiny.

### **Forces**

Security screening is typically performed before boarding, when entering the 'secure' part of an airport, but is not limited to only this area. Security screening is largely homogenous around the globe. You can be screened multiple times when boarding and again on disembarking from the aircraft. You can also be 'randomly' selected for more in depth screening and there is no way to predict this. Often security personnel are trained to use 'profiles' to decide whom to screen.

Your choice of clothing is driven by many factors, peer and advertising pressures, ethnic and religious constraints, physical characteristics, weather conditions at both the source and destination locales and personal comfort.

Given these constraints, people often dress in ways that might increase their delays at security checkpoints. In addition, what you carry in your pockets effects the ease in which you are processed through security.

### **Solution**

Review the US Customs and Department of Homeland Security guidelines on personal dress prior to your trip. In addition, there are some types of dress which will increase the likelihood of added security, although other constraints, such as religious beliefs, will effect your decision. Men and women who adhere to any of the variants of the Islamic dress code, also referred to as the Hijab, will in all likelihood increase their chances of increased screening. In these cases, religious observance mandates dress and there is no solution.

Otherwise, here are some tips. Avoid extraneous items of clothing or ornamentation:

- Heavy jewelry
- Clothing with a lot of metal
- Metal hair decorations
- Belt Buckles
- Metal in shoes, underwear
- Body piercings

- Loose change, keys, phones ...

In addition, wear slip on shoes. Try not to wear loose or oversized clothing, which can hide or obscure items being carried underneath.

Have your passport or other valid picture ID available and with you at all time when going through security.

#### **Rationale**

Appropriate attire and personal items will make your processing through security a smoother and faster experience. It will also help, but not eliminate, the possibility of further more in-depth screening.

#### **Examples**

Understand the departing and receiving country's rules for what personal items are acceptable to bring with you before returning to the U.S. For example, small pocket screwdrivers, like the kind given out in computer shows, are confiscated as potential weapons. Having one on you will also motivate more in depth screening.

Traveling with items like a parachute as carryon would not speed your trip through security. Having a passport with visa stamps in Persian or Arabic will also slow down your passage through security.

Religious dress such the Islamic Hijab or dress other similar code, could target you because of your background, although it is the policy of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security not to profile based on a protected category. The Islamic dress code for women contains proscriptions for loose outer garments and masking ones face, this will increase the chances for added screening.

#### **Resulting Context**

People who understand the security restrictions for international travel.

#### **Related Patterns**

#### **Known Uses**

Travelers returning to the U.S. wanting to avoid delays and extra scrutiny due to the clothing they are wearing.

Travelers wanting to attract minimal attention

### **3.4 Packing for Customs (aka, The Kitchen Sink)**

#### **Context**

Packing to re-enter USA from international travel creates special demands.

#### **Problem**

The contents of your luggage and the amount (too much or too little) of luggage can slow you down dramatically when passing through customs.

#### **Forces**

People pack necessities and items of convenience to carry with them in anticipation of uncertain or unknown conditions at destinations and along the path of their trip. In traveling abroad, people often obtain additional items of interest increasing the amount of carry-on and checked baggage. This accumulation of items can exacerbate an initial problem of over packing before a trip even begins.

It is sometimes difficult to minimize what we pack to just what is needed for a trip (for example, when encountering diverse weather from extreme heat to cold). Too much baggage also subjects the traveler to excess baggage charges, and the risk that all baggage will not arrive at the final destination with them. This can be a fine line, since under packing (i.e. having an overnight bag with you when returning from a two week trip) could also lead to added scrutiny.

In using common carriers such as airplanes and cruise ships, CBP Officers at USA customs checkpoints enforces rules and restrictions about what can be brought back into the USA upon reentry. It is difficult to avoid lengthy delays and taxes on items incorrectly declared or discovered when attempting to reenter the USA through a customs security checkpoint.

"Too Much Baggage" also may slow down the process of clearing a USA customs checkpoint and draw the attention of inspectors.

Travelers returning from certain destinations may be subject to a higher level of scrutiny when passing through a USA customs checkpoint. Passengers should expect more frequent inspections when traveling from "high-risk" countries, such as those known for drug trafficking.

When declaring items above the duty-free allowances. If undeclared items are found during an inspection, the passenger will be subject to additional scrutiny and penalties that result in travel delays now and in the future.

What your packed on a prior trip may effect a future trip. Since, some violations are documented in a database that may be checked by Customs inspectors when attempting to enter the USA on future trips resulting in potentially lengthy delay even when there is no problem with the current packing.

#### **Solution**

Pack items that need to be declared separately. This facilitates any inspection that might occur because of declared items and may get you processed faster. Just remember to declare everything.

Meat and fruit products are especially high on the list of prohibited items and should never be packed in carry-on or checked luggage. Even meat or fruit previously carried in the luggage may be enough for dogs to smell it, and cause additional inspection.

Review the US customs policies and documentation requirements before you go on a trip. (see Trips for Traveling Abroad ... [http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips\\_1232.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html) )

To avoid over packing is to ship items that you will not immediately need ahead of time. All the customs declarations are done at the time of shipping, and having less material on your person when returning through customs and immigration could potentially speed the process along.

## **Rationale**

Pack items for convenience that do not cause unnecessary delay in clearing airport security. Pack questionable, approved items in checked luggage and balance carry-on choices with items that will not be scrutinized by US customs security checkpoints. If questionable items are needed to be carried-on, use "Mitigating Carry-on Issues" to reduce the delay in clearing security

CBP Officers also chooses a random sample of passengers regardless of where they are arriving from. Passengers should not be surprised, or express irritation, if they are inspected when they pass through customs while traveling from "low-risk" countries.

## **Examples**

Travelling with expensive 'new' items and no receipt may lead customs officials to concluded that the items were purchased overseas and you are trying to avoid paying taxes even though the items were purchased in the USA. and all taxes have been paid.

Bringing in items from countries that USA has banned economic exchange with (i.e. Cuban Cigars or North Korean kimchee).

## **Resulting Context**

You are returning home from international travel and you have purchased significant items abroad and want to maximize their velocity through customs.

Travelers' wanting to pack lighter also might have the added benefit of not having to wait for luggage.

Failure to comply with Customs and immigration can result in confiscation of your property or denial of entry.

## **Related Patterns**

### **Known Uses**

Travelers who want to avoid enhanced scrutiny at the borders when returning to the U.S.

Travelers' who decide to bring back gifts or items for personal use that would result in a significant increase in the amount of luggage upon returning.

## **3.5 The Tired Traveler (aka, Keep Your Wits about You)**

### **Context**

After an international travel experience getting to and from the destination, we approach Passport control and customs exhausted, and not thinking clearly, and may be grumpy.

### **Problem**

A long trip can leave one disoriented, tired and confused, which makes it harder to navigate passport control and customs.

### **Forces**

Fatigue, anticipation, and anxiety influence judgment and perspective in negative ways. This can impact your passport and customs clearing experience.

It is important to maintain focus and energy and to be aware of your surroundings and the statutory requirements when crossing a port of entry.

Making a mistake at this transition could delay your arrival, costing you precious time and energy that could be spent recovering or reuniting with home life. As a worst case, it could involve entanglements with law enforcement and fines / loss of freedom.

## **Solution**

Control your feelings of fatigue and anxiety by concentrating on your surroundings and the task at hand, getting through the port of entry with the least amount of delay or disruption.

Use your travel time to rest, even if you cannot sleep, consider closing your eyes for the last half-hour before disembarking. Complete all your entry forms. Enter the immigration area prepared completing entry card, and be sure to answer the question. Remember the CBP Officer is just doing their job.

If you minors with you, remember that traveling with children requires additional effort and before beginning your return travel packing for security should help you smoothly pass through immigration and customs.

## **Rationale**

Be prepared, as you will never be at your best after a long international trip and the scrutiny of Homeland Security.

## **Examples**

After crossing 16 time zones on a direct flight from Singapore to New York, non-stop, you arrive 2 hours after you left, in relative time. You have spent the 19-hour flight writing a 25 page paper, reading journal articles and taking notes, reading a book and have watched three full length movies. You are in a state of mild gastrointestinal distress and only managed 3 hours sleep. You arrive at Newark International Airport barely able to remember your name, much less what day this is or why you were in Singapore in the first place.

You have made three prior visits to Singapore, which causes the CBP Officer to strike up a conversation about your reasons for so much travel to Asia. He also notices that you visited Indonesia and the Philippines on the same journey. The computer (according to the officer) is bringing up erroneous information about you that he is trying to confirm. You begin to wonder if this is an intentional attempt to add to your confusion or just an honest mistake. Ten minutes pass and you are still talking to the officer.

Because you were able to focus and answer the question, what could have turned into a 1 hour delay is only 20 minutes by being prepared.

## **Resulting Context**

Getting home sooner by passing smoothly through immigration and customs control.

## **Related Patterns**

Packing for Security, Completing Entry Card, Traveling with Children and Answer the question,

## **Known Uses**

Any international traveler wanting to minimize delays through Passport control and customs.

A tired user who wants to focus on the pending task of having to pass through passport control and customs without making a mistake or letting exhaustion rule the process.

### **3.6 Traveling with Children (aka, Are We There Yet)**

#### **Context**

Even children crossing ports of entry are required to validate their identity.

#### **Problem**

How do you avoid unnecessary delays, when traveling with children?

#### **Forces**

Traveling with children and crossing ports of entry can be challenging. When returning to the USA with a child who does not share your last name or minors who are not related, questions can arise as to your relation to the child, legal status to travel with the minor(s) in question and perhaps even the validity of the minor child's documents. This can create delays in your processing and be a traumatic experience for the child. Children can also be tired and cranky after a long trip and the experience of crossing borders can be both challenging for the parents/guardians and the children.

#### **Solution**

Have required paperwork and documentation showing they are authorized to travel with you. It is preferable that both parents travel with the minor child.

If only one parent is traveling, or if the children are traveling with other than the legal parent of guardian, it is necessary to obtain a notarized affidavit from the non-traveling parent or parents consenting to the travel and granting legal guardianship for the duration of the travel. Carry a birth certificate or adoption decree providing the minors name and the name(s) of the missing parent(s).

Making sure the non-travelling parent(s) are available upon re-entry would also help in case any issues arise.

#### **Rationale**

Kinship situations are complex in the 21st century. As the west, and the larger world, grapples with defining who is a family, the need and desire to travel do not mitigate. Single parent, same gender parent, family arrangements where there is one biological parent and a legal guardian are not uncommon. Married couples where each spouse maintains their birth surnames provide added confusion to customs officials since the child might not share the current custodial parents surname.

These shifting family arrangements have increased the need to prepare for border crossings with minor children.

#### **Examples**

You invite your nieces to a vacation in Canada and discover when trying to re-enter the USA that you cannot verify your relation to the minors, nor do you have documentation from the parents. The CBP Officer doing their job, prevents you from re-entering the

United States until you can provide proof of your relationship to the minors and parental consent/authorization to take them outside the United States.

Your spouse needs to stay outside the U.S. for business while you need to return to the USA with your daughter. Your daughter does not share the same surname and you have no collaborating proof of your relationship which delays your re-entry.

#### **Resulting Context**

Understanding the identification, documentation (proof of parental or legal guardianship rights) will make the transition across borders with minor children faster.

#### **Related Patterns**

Suitable/Acceptable identification.

#### **Known Uses**

Any person traveling with children crossing into the USA.

### **3.7 Completing Entry Cards (aka, Bringing A Pen)**

#### **Context**

Completion of the Declaration Form is required before entering Immigration/ Passport control.

#### **Problem**

An incomplete or incorrectly filled out declaration form will cause delays in passing through Passport Control and customs.

#### **Forces**

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) requires all individuals/heads-of-household to complete a Declaration Form (6059B) upon entry via Air into USA. These forms are given to you while in the plane.

To complete the form you need to have your Passport (for passport number, issuing authority and expiration date), flight stub (for airline and flight number), and a pen.

#### **Solution**

The simplest solution is to ensure you have on your person your passport, your flight stub, the completed Declaration Form and a pen. However, you can ask your neighbor (nicely) if you could borrow their pen when they are done.

#### **Rationale**

CBP Officers will ask you to step out of the line if you show up at their booth without having completed the Declaration Form. Stepping out of the line will put you back at the end of the queue.

#### **Examples**

You are traveling on Air France flight 001 from Paris to JFK. You are handed the Declaration Form. You complete it, place it with your Passport, and are ready to de-plane upon arrival. You are probably asked (politely) by your neighbor if they can borrow your pen.

#### **Resulting Context**

Reduction in stress from having the Declaration Form completed before you arrive, and saving time not having to find a spot to complete the Declaration Form before getting into the Passport control queue.

#### **Related Patterns**

Suitable/Acceptable Identification is also needed.

#### **Known Uses**

Entering the U.S. by land, air or sea from abroad.

Travelers needing to fill out paper work for entry into the U.S.

### **3.8 Answer the question (aka, Elevator Speech)**

#### **Context**

All travelers entering USA at ports of entry either alone or in a group are subject to questioning from a CBP Officer.

The questions are not bounded in any way, but can range from the nature of your employment and reasons for travel, to the layout of buildings and bus stops in the neighborhood where you claim to live

#### **Problem**

Providing concise, accurate and consistent answers when questioned by CBP Officer is critical. Failure to do so will result in delays due to further scrutiny. It is important to answer questions as broadly as possible, “keep the answers focused” to avoid inconsistencies.

#### **Forces**

Crossing international borders subjects you to questioning on any topic. Even the most casual comment can be the basis for further questioning, screening and delays.

We are legally compelled to respond to officials when crossing ports of entry; following this pattern will make crossing smoother.

When you are asked questions by the officials it is part of a broader security screening. Often, they are simply validating information on your Entry Card.

If traveling with others, questioning can occur separately and then compared by officials for consistency. Answering inconsistently, incorrectly or with too much detail could lead to travel delays.

#### **Solution**

Always tell the truth, it is easier to remember. Do not exaggerate or embellish facts in any way. If you do not know the answer to a question, say so.

Answer only the question asked with straightforward statements of fact. If more information is sought, you will be asked another question.

#### **Rationale**

Even the most casual and friendly of conversations with an agent is an official act. We might not be aware of it, all our actions are being observed, our conversations monitored and analyzed. Being mindful of this will help you avoid delays. And remember the CBP Officer is just doing their job

#### **Examples**

Typically, the first question will be to define the nature of your trip. A simple answer of business or pleasure is enough; after all, you have just ticked a box on your entry card with this answer. The question did not ask you for a detailed itinerary; it was a simple question that merits a simple answer.

When returning to USA from abroad, you are asked, “What is your final destination in the U.S.”? Begin with the City. Only offer additional specifics when asked. The official may then enquire about some detail about the location, if they are familiar with it. Pay attention to such questions, the information they are asking may be to validate your knowledge. If you do not know the answer, say “I don’t know”.

When travelling with a business partner, you pass through immigration separately. The answers you give may be compared for consistency by the officials conducting the interviews.

#### **Resulting Context**

Once questions are satisfactorily answered, the traveler may pass through to the next phase of their journey.

#### **Related Patterns**

Completed Entry Cards will be used by CBP Officer.

#### **Known Uses**

A traveler who is being questioned by CBP Officer should focus on truthfully answering only the question at hand, no more and no less.

A traveler who needs to fight exhaustion and the underlying confusing that arises from it.

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