

Staying on top of your green card renewal is essential for maintaining lawful U.S. permanent residency. This comprehensive, 2026-updated guide explains every step, recent changes, and key tips for smooth renewal. It also links to Lunel Law's trusted immigration services for personalized guidance.

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What Is a Green Card and Why Does Renewal Matter?

A U.S. permanent resident card, better known as a green card, allows immigrants to live and work legally in the United States. Most green cards expire every 10 years and need to be renewed to maintain proof of status.

If your card is close to expiration, maintaining its validity is crucial for employment, travel, and even your eligibility for naturalization in the future. [Family-based immigration](#) is a common path to obtaining a green card; Lunel Law specializes in guiding families through every step.

When and Why Do You Need to Renew Your Green Card?

You're required to renew if:

- Your green card is expiring within six months
- Your card has already expired
- You lost, damaged, or had your card stolen
- Your legal information (such as name) changes

Not renewing can complicate re-entry to the U.S. after travel, limit your ability to prove employment authorization, and create issues when applying for benefits.

Green Card Renewal Timeline: Step-by-Step

Step 1: Prepare Your Application (Form I-90)

Collect your current green card, new photographs (only if requested), and supporting evidence for name or biographical changes.

Step 2: File Form I-90 (Online or by Mail)

- **USCIS online filing** (best for most applicants): \$415
- **Paper filing**: \$465
- **Biometrics fee**: *Eliminated* as of April 2024

Filing online through your USCIS account is faster and less expensive.

[See our guide on [filing mistakes to avoid](#) for tips.]

[See our guide on [Form I-90](#) for best practices and mistakes to avoid]

Step 3: Receive Your Receipt Notice and Automatic Extension

After submitting your I-90, USCIS mails a receipt notice (Form I-797C). **This notice automatically extends your old green card's validity by 24 months**—carry both the expired card and the receipt as evidence of your ongoing lawful status and work eligibility.

Conditional (2-year) green card holders get a 48-month extension with an I-751 receipt.

How Long Does It Take to Renew a Green Card in 2025?

Processing times range from **4 to 10 months** depending on workload and service center location—delays have grown substantially in 2025. Some applicants report wait times exceeding 8 months.

Tip: Track your case online at the [USCIS Case Status page](#).

If Your Green Card Expires or Is Lost

- **Travel:** You can return to the U.S. with an expired green card *only* if you also present your I-90 receipt notice (the extension letter). Airlines and CBP accept both documents as proof of status.
- **Employment:** You do *not* lose work authorization with an expired card. For new jobs, present the expired green card plus your receipt notice as valid I-9 proof.
- **Replacement:** If lost or stolen, file Form I-90 and consider requesting a temporary I-551 (ADIT) stamp from USCIS to serve as emergency proof for work or travel. The stamp in your passport is typically valid for 6–12 months.

If you're outside the U.S. when your card expires, learn about [consular processing](#) for reentry options.

Green Card Renewal Fees and Fee Waiver Eligibility

Filing Method	Fee	Payment Method
Online (USCIS)	\$415	Credit/debit via Pay.gov
Paper (by mail)	\$465	Check, money order, etc.

As of April 2024, USCIS eliminated the biometrics fee for renewals.

Fee Waivers: You may qualify if you receive means-tested benefits (Medicaid, SNAP), your income is below 150% of Federal Poverty Guidelines, or you face financial hardship. File Form I-912 to request a waiver.

[See our [payment/attorney fee page](#) for more info.]

Common Green Card Renewal Issues and How to Avoid Them

- **Delays:** Spiking in 2025 due to record backlogs
- **Denials:** Usually for incomplete forms, missing info, or unpaid fees; double-check all details before submission
- **Lost or expired card outside the U.S.:** Contact [Lunel Law](#) for consular assistance

If your case is outside standard timelines, Lunel Law can help with [processing time requests](#).

Special Situations: Temporary I-551 ADIT Stamps

Need to travel urgently or prove your status before your new card arrives?

- Request a temporary I-551 stamp by scheduling an appointment at your local USCIS office. The stamp in your passport acts as proof of permanent residency for up to one year.

FAQs

Can I track my application status online?

Yes—track your case using your USCIS receipt number at the official status portal or through your myUSCIS account.

What if I filed Form N-400 for naturalization and my green card expires?

No need to renew the green card. Your N-400 receipt plus your expired card serve as proof of status. Learn more about the [naturalization process](#).

Do employers need to reverify my I-9 if my green card expires?

No. If you were originally hired with a green card, your employer cannot require I-9 reverification due to expiration. Starting a new job, use the expired card plus your extension letter.

What if my application is denied?

You may be able to reapply or appeal—consult an experienced immigration attorney for best results. Lunel Law provides [removal defense](#) and can help challenge denials.

[404.975.4500](tel:404.975.4500) [Get My Free Consultation](#)

Related Resources from Lunel Law

- [8 Ways to Get a U.S. Green Card](#)
- [Family-Based Green Cards Guide](#)
- [Consular Processing Guide](#)

Green card renewal in 2025-26 is more complex than ever—stay prepared and informed. For up-to-date guidance, reach out to **Lunel Law**, your dedicated partner in immigration success.