

# Airline Checklist: How to Verify Negative Qualifying Test Results or Documentation of Recovery from COVID-19 for CDC's Order

**Purpose:** To help airlines verify passengers'\* COVID-19 status before passengers board flights to the United States, as required by CDC's [Order](#). See checklist below.

**Airlines MUST refuse to board passengers who do not present a negative viral test result for COVID-19 (option A) or documentation of recovery from COVID-19 (option B).**

## Option A: Passenger Shows a Negative COVID-19 Test Result

Passenger must meet all **5 requirements** to verify option A:

**1. TYPE OF TEST: The test must be a viral test.** The following types of [viral COVID-19 tests](#) can be used:

### **Nucleic acid amplification tests (NAAT)**

In addition to NAAT, phrases indicating a NAAT+ could include, but are not limited to:

- Reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR)
- Quantitative PCR (qPCR)
- Reverse transcription loop-mediated isothermal amplification (RT-LAMP)
- Transcription-mediated amplification (TMA)
- Molecular test or molecular diagnostic test
- Isothermal amplification
- Droplet Digital PCR or digital droplet PCR (ddPCR)
- Clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats (CRISPR)

### **Antigen tests (Note: Antibody or serology tests<sup>§</sup> are different and NOT allowed.)**

Phrases indicating an antigen test could include, but are not limited to:

- Rapid antigen test
- Viral antigen test
- Also, could be noted as Antigen Chromatographic Digital Immunoassay<sup>§</sup>, Antigen Chemiluminescence Immunoassay<sup>§</sup>, or Antigen Lateral Flow Fluorescence

**2. WHERE TEST WAS RUN: The test must include where the test was performed.**

Include information such as the name and contact information for the laboratory or healthcare personnel who performed the test.

**3. TIMING: The test must show a specimen collection date 3 days or less before flight departure.**

The Order uses a 3-day timeframe instead of 72 hours to provide more flexibility to the traveler.

**4. IDENTIFICATION: The test must include information that identifies the person.**

Must have person's name **and** at least one additional identifier.

- Additional identifiers could include, but are not limited to date of birth, age, and passport number.
- Check that identifiers on the test match those on the passenger's other identifying documents (such as passport or driver's license).

**5. NEGATIVE: The test result must be negative.** Results marked "invalid" are not accepted.

Words or phrases describing a negative test could include, but are not limited to:

- NEGATIVE
- UNDETECTABLE
- SARS-CoV-2 RNA NOT DETECTED
- SARS-CoV-2 ANTIGEN NOT DETECTED
- COVID-19 NOT DETECTED
- NOT REACTIVE



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## Option B: Passenger Shows Documentation of Recovery from COVID-19

Passenger must meet all **6 requirements** to verify option B:

- 1. TYPE OF TEST: The test is a viral test.** See guidance in Option A, #1 (Type of Test).
- 2. WHERE TEST WAS RUN: The test must include where the test was performed.**  
Include information such as the name and contact information for the laboratory or healthcare personnel who performed the test.
- 3. TIMING: The test must show a specimen collection date within the last 90 days.**  
Tests older than 90 days don't qualify for option B—passenger must satisfy the requirements of option A.
- 4. IDENTIFICATION: The test must include information that identifies the person.** See guidance in Option A, #4 (Identification).
- 5. POSITIVE: The test result must be positive.** Results marked “invalid” are not accepted.  
Phrases describing a positive test could include, but are not limited to:
  - POSITIVE
  - POSITIVE-SARS-CoV-2 RNA DETECTED
  - SARS-CoV-2 ANTIGEN DETECTED
  - COVID-19 DETECTED
  - REACTIVE
- 6. SIGNED LETTER: Must also have a signed letter stating the passenger is cleared for travel.**
  - From a licensed healthcare provider or a public health official
  - Must be signed and on official letterhead that shows the name, address, and phone number of the healthcare provider or public health official
  - Does not need to specify travel—a letter that clears the person to [end isolation](#) (e.g., to return to work or school) can be used

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### Must a negative test result (option A) or documentation of recovery (option B) be in English?

No, but airlines and other aircraft operators must be able to confirm the test result and review other required information. Airlines and aircraft operators should determine when translation is necessary.

### Is a handwritten test result or letter clearing a person for travel allowed?

No, not allowed if entirely handwritten or typed. Exceptions allowed:

- Test result form on official letterhead can be partially handwritten
- Letter on official letterhead from a healthcare provider or public health official can be typed or handwritten if clearly legible and signed either by hand or an official digital signature

**More FAQs on our website (or scan QR code):** [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/testing-international-air-travelers.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/testing-international-air-travelers.html)



### Notes:

\* CDC's Order has these exemptions: children under 2 years of age, crew on official duty, certain federal law enforcement personnel, members of the US military, and those with humanitarian exemptions approved by CDC.

† Other words or phrases indicating the test is a NAAT: Ct (cycle threshold); RNA (Ribonucleic acid); Sequencing; Next generational sequencing (NGS) or whole genome sequencing (WGS); Oxford Nanopore sequencing (LampORE); Detection of the N gene; Detection of Orf1a/b; Detection of the S gene; Detection of the E gene; and Detection of the RdRp gene.

‡ Indications of antibody tests could include, but are not limited to: total antibody, IgG, and IgM. **Antibody tests are not allowed.**

§ Not all immunoassays or lateral flow tests are antigen tests. Antibody testing can also be conducted using these methods. If immunoassays or lateral flow tests are listed, check if the test was an antigen test. **Antibody tests are not allowed.**