Searching for birth certificates without the aid of the Internet can be a lengthy and unpleasant task. However, with identity theft being one of the fastest growing crimes in the United States, claiming more than 10 million victims a year, keeping your personal information secure is extremely important.

Advances in technology have made searching for and ordering birth certificates online safe, quick and easy – requiring only a few pieces of personal information and an Internet connection. Just be sure to use reputable and trusted websites to ensure your data is handled in the most secure manner possible.

Most government agencies responsible for issuing birth certificates do provide a safe and convenient way to order these important documents online, whether through their own website or by an approved service provider which they authorize.

**How do you know if a website is trusted to handle personal information securely?**

Reputable websites that handle personal information will have certain security features you should look for before you enter any of your data, including things like:

- being certified by external methods – look for seals and/or links to the Better Business Bureau, TrustWave, TRUSTe, VeriSign or other similar certification services
- using secure pages where data is collected – look for a lock by the URL, and/or that the URL begins with “https://”, to denote you are on a secure page
- review the website’s privacy policy to see how they handle the personal information entered
  - do they encrypt the personal data entered
  - is there a clearly explained valid reason for collecting the data requested on the website
  - do they sell or otherwise provide collected information to other parties for reasons beyond the original intended purpose
Is it safe to search for and order birth certificates online?

What information is needed to order a birth certificate online?

As an official government document, birth certificates, like other important vital records, can only be issued by authorized government offices where the event occurred – such as a State Vital Statistics Agency, or a County Department of Health. So, the first thing you will need to know is where the person was born, along with other information shown on the certificate such as:

- the person’s full name
- the city and state where the birth took place (in some cases, the county and/or hospital may also be needed)
- the date of the birth
- the mother’s maiden name
- the father’s full name
- a valid credit card, billing and shipping address

For security purposes, the agencies issuing birth certificates may also employ safeguards that must be confirmed prior to fulfilling a birth certificate application – whether the application is made online, in person, or over the telephone. This may include showing proof of identity for the person requesting the certificate by providing a copy of a valid picture ID, their Social Security number, or answering a series of personal information questions. These measures help ensure the certificate is issued to the correct person, and doesn’t end up in the wrong hands.

What is the benefit to ordering a birth certificate online?

Ordering a birth certificate online is typically the fastest method to obtain a copy, unless you are able to visit the agency issuing the certificate in person. On average, online requests for birth certificates can be processed within 5-7 business days, and can even be shipped to you by UPS or FedEx for fast delivery. Just remember to be sure you’re using a trusted website to place your online order.