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Mailing this to someone inside? Print one side only, black ink, plain white paper. No staples or clips. Put their full name and number on the envelope. Some facilities limit pages per envelope: check their mail rules first.

FEDERAL PRISON GUIDE

VISIT PACKET: USP ATWATER

U.S. Penitentiary · Atwater, CA · Phone 209-386-0257

VISIT CARD · CUT OUT AND KEEP IN THE CAR

WHEN

Saturday, Sunday and federal holidays

The visiting rules give no regular visiting days except Saturday, Sunday and federal holidays...[1]

HOURS

8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

No visitors are processed after 2:00 p.m.[1]

WHO CAN COME

3 adults and 3 children

No more than 3 adults and 3 children (under 16) at one time.[1]

BRING

16 or older

Everyone 16 or older must show valid government photo ID: a driver's license, state ID card or current passpo...[1]

CALL FIRST

209-386-0257

Call before you drive, every time.

THE BOP'S OWN PAPERS DISAGREE. Both of Atwater's papers are old. The visiting rules are from **February 14, 2017**; the handbook was updated **April 14, 2023**. They disagree: the handbook puts **SHU visits on Monday** (non-contact) and **Reintegration Unit visits on Friday**; the rules say Sunday for SHU and Saturday, Sunday and Monday for the RHU. The handbook says processing starts at **8:00 a.m.** (rules: 8:15), allows **$25.00** for vending (rules: $30.00 per adult), and allows 4 diapers and an infant carrier (rules: 2 diapers, no strollers). The driving directions also differ. Call 209-386-0257 before you drive.[1]

BEFORE YOU GO: GET ON THE LIST

1. Your loved one gets you the **visitor information sheet** and a release authorization form. Atwater's rules give no form number. (The BOP's national visitor form is BP-A0629; not confirmed in Atwater's papers.)
2. Fill it out, sign the release, and return it to their **counselor** with **a copy of your government photo ID**. Nothing happens until the counselor has all of it.
3. The counselor runs a criminal background check (NCIC). Anyone with a criminal record needs the warden's approval.
4. The counselor tells them who was approved or denied. **They** tell you. Do not drive until you are approved.
5. The list holds up to **15 people**. You must have known them before prison, unless an exception is approved.
6. They can change the list **once per quarter**.
7. If they are on holdover (passing through), only immediate family whose relationship can be checked may visit. Approval ordinarily takes about 7 days.[1]

AT THE DOOR

WHO CAN BE ON THE LIST	Up to **15 visitors**, family and friends together. Children who visit must be the son, daughter, brother or sister of the visitor or of the inmate.[1]
SCREENING	You must pass through the **walk-through metal detector without setting it off**. You, your things and your car can be searched, and you are on video. Refuse a search and you do not get in. Avoid clothes with metal in them.[1]
MONEY FOR VENDING MACHINES	No more than **$30.00 per adult**, in one clear plastic change purse no bigger than 8 inches long and wide. Only visitors may use the machines, and all food must be eaten before you leave the room.[1]
WHAT YOU CAN CARRY	Only the clear change purse, vending money, your photo ID and essential medication (staff hold it). Everything goes in a clear plastic container. If you were dropped off and have no car, other things can go in a locker, which staff may search.[1]
FOR A BABY	Per child: 2 diapers, 1 unopened pack of wipes, 1 change of clothes, 2 clear bottles with contents, 2 small unopened jars of baby food, 1 receiving blanket, 1 clear cup, and 1 clear diaper bag about 12 by 12 inches. **No strollers.**[1]
WHAT NOT TO WEAR	No low-cut or see-through clothes, tube tops, tank tops, backless or sleeveless clothes, skin-tight clothes, shorts, miniskirts, skirts or dresses above the knee, open-toed shoes, hats, or sports or athletic clothes. **No khaki, green, orange, gray or camouflage.**[1]
TOUCHING	A handshake, hug and brief kiss when the visit starts and when it ends. At the camp you may sit side by side, and they may put an arm around your shoulder.[1]
WHAT THEY WEAR	At the USP they are visually searched before and after the visit and change into a prison jumpsuit. At the camp they wear their issued shirt and pants and are pat-searched.[1]
PARKING	Park in the yellow-lined visitor spaces at the back of the lot. No one may wait in a parked car; drivers who are not visiting must leave and come back. No campers, RVs or tractor trailers.[1]
WHEN IT GETS CROWDED	The USP visiting room holds **100** people; the camp room holds **65**. When it is full, visits are ended based on **how far the visitor traveled** and how long they have been in the room.[1]
COUNTS	During an official count you cannot leave, and no one enters or leaves the visiting room until the count clears.[1]

ALL VISITING DAYS AND HOURS

WHERE	DAYS	HOURS
USP (main prison)	Saturday, Sunday and federal holidays	8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Satellite camp	Saturday, Sunday and federal holidays	8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Special Housing Unit (SHU): Administrative Detention and Disciplinary Segregation	Sundays and federal holidays only. Non-contact, 2 visitors at most, 1 hour. (The handbook says Mondays; see below.)	8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Unit 1B	Saturdays and federal holidays only	8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Reintegration Housing Unit (RHU)	Saturday and Sunday (non-contact) and Monday (contact). (The handbook says Friday; see below.)	8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

No visitors are processed after 2:00 p.m. Processing starts at 8:15 a.m., and you may not be in the parking lot before 8:15 a.m. For SHU and Unit 1B visits, processing stops at 1:30 p.m.[1]

The visiting rules give no regular visiting days except Saturday, Sunday and federal holidays (plus Monday for the Reintegration Housing Unit).

GETTING THERE

From the north (Highway 99)	Exit Highway 99 at Buhach and turn left. Turn right on Santa Fe. Go to Fox Road and turn left. Continue to Federal Way and turn left.
From the south (Highway 99)	Exit Highway 99 at R Street and turn right. Go to Olive Avenue and turn left. Olive becomes Santa Fe. Follow Santa Fe to Fox Road and turn right. Continue on Fox Road to Federal Way and turn left.
Taxi, bus and train	Taxi in Merced: 209-722-8294. Greyhound: 800-231-2222. Amtrak: 800-872-7245.

WHAT TO WEAR TO A VISIT

The BOP beats to its own drum. The front desk has the final say. Keep a spare outfit in the car.

USP ATWATER

Rules dated **02/14/2017** (9 years old)

Official rules (PDF) (bop.gov/locations/institutions/atw/atw_visit.pdf) No Spanish version posted

9 years old. Ask your loved one to check the copy posted in the unit before you drive.

Skirts and dresses	No dresses above the knee (0 inches above knee); no miniskirts.
Shorts	Not in the written rules.
Colors to avoid	No khaki clothing. No green clothing. No orange clothing. No gray clothing.
Leggings, spandex	No skin-tight, revealing or form-fitting clothing.
Bras and metal	Not in the written rules. Some prisons ban underwire bras anyway, and the penalty can be more than being sent home. Wear a sports bra or a bra with no wire.
Camouflage, military	No camouflage clothing.
Shoes	No open-toed shoes.
Children	Not in the written rules.

ALL 18 RULES, IN THE BOP'S OWN WORDS

LENGTH AND FIT

- No dresses above the knee (0 inches above knee); no miniskirts.
  BOP wording: "clothing, any dresses above the knee (i.e., skin tight clothing,"
- No tank tops or sleeveless clothing.
  BOP wording: "miniskirts, sleeveless clothing, etc) revealing or form fitting"
- No low-cut clothing.
  BOP wording: "Visitors will not be permitted to wear low-cut"
- No tube tops or backless clothing.
  BOP wording: "or see-through clothing, tube tops, tank tops, backless"
- No see-through clothing.
  BOP wording: "or see-through clothing, tube tops, tank tops, backless"
- No skin-tight, revealing or form-fitting clothing.
  BOP wording: "miniskirts, sleeveless clothing, etc) revealing or form fitting"
- No sports or athletic attire.
  BOP wording: "or athletic attire. Visitors will be permitted to enter the"

COLORS AND UNIFORMS

- No khaki clothing.
  BOP wording: "clothing, opened toed shoes, hats, suggestive clothing, khaki,"

- No green clothing.
  BOP wording: "green, orange, gray, camouflage color clothing, sports attire,"
- No orange clothing.
  BOP wording: "green, orange, gray, camouflage color clothing, sports attire,"
- No gray clothing.
  BOP wording: "green, orange, gray, camouflage color clothing, sports attire,"
- No camouflage clothing.
  BOP wording: "green, orange, gray, camouflage color clothing, sports attire,"

SHOES

- No open-toed shoes.
  BOP wording: "clothing, opened toed shoes, hats, suggestive clothing, khaki,"

HATS, HOODS AND COATS

- No hats.
  BOP wording: "clothing, opened toed shoes, hats, suggestive clothing, khaki,"
- Religious headgear allowed after it is searched.
  BOP wording: "Visitors will be allowed to wear religious headgear,"

EVERYTHING ELSE

- No suggestive clothing.
  BOP wording: "clothing, opened toed shoes, hats, suggestive clothing, khaki,"

IF THEY SAY NO

- Visits may be denied for attire; denial documented with a witness.
  BOP wording: "Operations Lieutenant. Upon denying a visit the IDO or"
- IDO (or Operations Lieutenant) decides if questionable attire is admitted.
  BOP wording: "Officer will summon the IDO to the Front Lobby to determine as"

MAIL AND THE MAILING ADDRESS

Your full name
Your street address
City, State ZIP

STAMP

Their committed name, exactly as the BOP Inmate Locator shows it

Reg. No. _____-___
USP Atwater
P.O. Box 019001
Atwater, CA 95301

The envelope, filled in. Their name and number must match the BOP Inmate Locator exactly.[2]

Put their name and register number on the envelope. Regular mail is **photocopied**; they get the copy, not your original.[2]

> **USE THE P.O. BOX ONLY.** Never mail to the street address.

THE MAIL RULES

PHOTOCOPIED	Letters, cards and envelopes are photocopied before they get them. Atwater throws the originals away after 30 days, and they cannot be mailed home.[2]
DRUG TESTING	All books, magazines and pictures are drug tested before they get them, so they take a little longer.[2]
BOOKS	Soft-cover only, sent straight from the publisher, a book club or a bookstore. No more than **5 books** in one mailing. **Hardcover books are not allowed at Atwater.**[2]
LEGAL MAIL	Opened only in front of them. The envelope is photocopied and they do not keep the original. The front must say "Special Mail – Open only in the presence of the inmate" or similar.[2]
PACKAGES	Every package needs approval first.[2]
MAIL DAYS	Mail is handed out Monday through Friday, not on weekends or holidays.[2]
THEIR LETTERS TO YOU	At a high-security prison they cannot seal their outgoing letters, and staff may read them (legal mail excepted).[2]
MONEY	Never put money in a letter. It goes to the BOP lockbox in Des Moines, Iowa (see the Money tab).[2]

Sources

1. ATW 5267.08E, Visiting Regulations (February 14, 2017) bop.gov/locations/institutions/atw/atw_visit.pdf
2. USP Atwater Admission and Orientation Handbook (updated April 14, 2023) bop.gov/locations/institutions/atw/atw_ao-handbook.pdf