

Visa Extraordinary — Knowledge Base

Updated September 27, 2025 • Expanded with Interview, Administrative Processing, Visa Bulletin, CEAC, DS-260/DS-160, NVC, Medicals, I-94, Expedites, TAL, Templates.

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Overview & How to Use

In Plain English

This compendium consolidates core topics from Visa Extraordinary's Knowledge Base into one American-English reference. It covers O-1, EB-1/EB-2 NIW, petition assembly, and consular flow. Each chapter includes practical checklists, evidence maps, and step-by-step guidance.

HTML version: expand any section by clicking the summary. DOCX version: all text is expanded for printing and review.

What's New in the PLUS Edition

Deep-dives added: Interview (Q-bank & style), Administrative Processing (221(g)/SAO), Visa Bulletin (how to read & strategy), CEAC status glossary, DS-260 vs. DS-160, NVC document pack, Medicals (I-693), I-94, post-arrival checklist, Expedites, TAL/export-control awareness, and ready-to-use templates.

Translated and structured by Ivan Piskunov.

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O-1 Visa

What O-1 Is

Temporary U.S. work classification for individuals with extraordinary ability in sciences, business, education, athletics (O-1A) or the arts, motion picture/TV (O-1B). A U.S. employer or qualified agent files Form I-129. Show sustained acclaim via regulatory criteria; keep consistency with the U.S. work you intend to perform.

Employer vs. Agent

Employer model: the U.S. company files I-129, outlining duties, period, and compensation.

Agent model: valid for multiple end-clients/venues. Provide proof of agency authority, a master contract, end-client letters, and a dated itinerary covering the requested validity.

Criteria (O-1A / O-1B)

O-1A: one-time major award OR ≥ 3 of the regulatory criteria (awards, memberships with achievement-based selection, media about you, judging, original contributions of major significance, scholarly articles, leading/critical role, high remuneration, commercial success, exhibitions/showcases).

O-1B: distinction (arts) or extraordinary achievement (film/TV) supported by notable productions, reviews/ratings, awards, and leading/critical roles.

Evidence Playbook

Awards: establish prestige/selectivity (organizer, jury, press).

Media: independent outlets; include full-text copies and circulation/traffic context.

Judging: invitations/programs or journal assignments; proof the work was actually evaluated.

Original contributions: third-party adoption, standards participation, measurable outcomes.

High remuneration: percentile comparisons by role/geo; contracts and tax statements.

Leading/critical role: org charts, KPIs, letters tying outcomes to your role; external corroboration.

Process, Docs, Pitfalls

Steps: define role → evidence mapping → advisory opinions (if needed) → letters (recs/LOIs) → assemble exhibits → file I-129 with correct fees.

Pitfalls: generic letters, low-selectivity awards, thin evidence of impact, itinerary gaps in agent cases.

EB-1 (A/B/C)

Plain English

EB-1 is a green-card category. EB-1A = extraordinary ability (self-petition allowed). EB-1B = outstanding professor/researcher with qualifying employer. EB-1C = multinational manager/executive transferring to a U.S. entity.

EB-1A: Criteria & Final Merits

Meet ≥ 3 of 10 criteria (or a one-time major achievement) and pass a holistic 'final merits' assessment proving sustained acclaim among the top small percentage of the field.

EB-1B / EB-1C Snapshots

EB-1B: job offer + ≥ 3 years teaching/research + ≥ 2 of 6 evidentiary categories (major prizes, memberships with selective criteria, published material about the work, judging, original research, authorship).

EB-1C: qualifying corporate relationship; one year abroad in a managerial/executive role in the last three; moving to a managerial/executive role in the U.S.

Evidence Playbook (EB-1A/B)

Independent validation > self-assertions: awards with prestige, judging/peer review, third-party adoption/usage, standards involvement, measurable outcomes (citations/revenue/users/patents).

Compensation: use authoritative surveys with apples-to-apples comparators (role, level, region).

Filing Paths

Adjustment of Status (I-485) if inside the U.S. and your Visa Bulletin chart is current, or Consular Processing via NVC if outside. Consider concurrent filing when allowed.

EB-2 NIW

Plain English

Self-petition under EB-2 with a waiver of job offer/PERM where: (1) your proposed endeavor has substantial merit and national importance; (2) you are well positioned; (3) on balance, it benefits the U.S. to waive the job offer.

Designing the Endeavor

Define the problem/solution, beneficiaries, timeline, geography, and public-interest outcomes. Support with market/industry evidence, pilots or partnerships, and measurable milestones.

Evidence by Prong

Prong 1: industry/government reports, standards, public benefits.

Prong 2: record of achievement, independent letters, resources/funding, MOUs/pilots/IP.

Prong 3: urgency, labor-market realities, why waiving PERM accelerates benefit.

Business Plan Essentials

Executive summary mapped to national benefit; market sizing; go-to-market; regulatory roadmap; KPIs; pro-forma; hiring; partnerships; risk/mitigation.

Criteria & Evidence (Shared)

Awards & Memberships

Awards: prove level (national/international), selectivity, organizer reputation, jury credentials, media coverage. Memberships: achievement-based vetting by recognized experts (show admission rules).

Media About You & Judging

Media: full articles in reputable outlets with reach context; short mentions/advertorials carry low weight. Judging: invitations, assignments, completed reviews, selection criteria.

Scholarly Work & Leading/Critical Roles

Scholarly: copies, peer-review/indexing, citations/usage. Leading/critical: org charts, scope, KPIs, third-party corroboration (press/clients).

High Remuneration & Work Plans

Compensation: percentile comparisons with credible surveys; include contracts and W-2/1099 (or foreign equivalents). Work plans: connect future U.S. work to your extraordinary track record; include LOIs where possible.

Letters (LOIs & Recommendations)

Structure: author credentials → basis of knowledge → concrete achievements → field impact → independent corroboration. Avoid generic praise.

Self-Help: Drafting & Assembly

Translations & Certifications

Translate every non-English exhibit in full; attach a translator's certification of competence and accuracy. Maintain consistent formatting; official extracts may be acceptable where complete.

Formatting & Printing

Readable typography, consistent headings, clear exhibit numbering. Print single-sided on Letter size. Avoid staples/binders; no white-out/highlighters on forms.

Fees & Payments

Use up-to-date USCIS fee schedules. Keep separate payments per form. For card payments, use current G-1450 where accepted.

Quality Control (RFE-Driven)

Narrative integrity; independent corroboration; precise criteria mapping; realistic execution plan; accurate forms/fees. Verify every claim with verifiable exhibits.

Interview — Deep Dive

Before the Interview

Align DS-260/DS-160 answers with your petition; bring a one-page case summary and exhibit index. Originals + copies for civil docs; sort by applicant. Plan logistics (photos, courier, security rules).

Question Bank (Examples)

Background & role: ‘What do you do? Who is the U.S. employer/client? Why you?’.

Evidence: ‘Tell me about this award/publication/judging — how competitive was it?’.

U.S. plans: ‘Where will you work? What outcomes do you expect in year one?’.

Compliance: past visas, overstays, arrests, export-control red flags — answer succinctly and truthfully.

Answering Style

Be concise, consistent, and use plain English. Anchor each major achievement with one numeric proof (citations, users, revenue, ratings, standards, adoption).

Administrative Processing — 221(g)/SAO

What 221(g) Means

A temporary refusal pending checks or documents; the case remains active. Colored sheets are local cues; follow the written checklist on your 221(g) notice.

Typical Triggers & Remedies

Triggers: TAL-related fields, inconsistent histories, missing police certificates, unclear employment/endeavor, security hits. Remedies: submit exactly what's requested, maintain a tracker, avoid duplicate emails, escalate politely if deadlines lapse.

CEAC Statuses in AP

Common labels: 'Refused' (standard wording during AP), 'Administrative Processing', 'Ready', and 'Issued'. Focus on requested actions rather than labels.

SAO/MANTIS (Export-Controlled Tech)

If your work overlaps sensitive tech, expect interagency checks. Prepare a clean technical CV, publications, project summaries, funding sources, and plain-language statements of non-restricted, civilian use.

Visa Bulletin — How to Read & Use

Key Concepts

Priority Date (PD): PERM filing date for PERM cases; I-140 receipt date for NIW/EB-1. Chargeability is usually your country of birth. Two charts: Final Action Dates (approvals/visas) and Dates for Filing (AOS filing when permitted).

Movement & Retrogression

If your PD is later than the listed date, you wait until movement catches up; dates can retrogress (move backward). Track month-to-month trends for planning.

Strategy — Concurrent Filing

When USCIS permits the 'Dates for Filing' chart and your PD is current, consider filing I-485 (and I-765/I-131) with or after I-140 to lock in benefits while the petition is pending.

CEAC & NVC — Quick Reference

NVC Stage

Expect case creation email with Case Number and Invoice ID. Pay fees, complete DS-260, upload civil documents. 'Documentarily Qualified' = queued for interview scheduling.

Post Stage

CEAC statuses: 'Ready' (post can interview), 'Refused' (includes AP), 'Administrative Processing' (under review), 'Issued' (visa printed). Follow post-specific passport pickup instructions.

DS-260 vs. DS-160

Which Form & When

DS-260 = immigrant visas (EB-1/EB-2 NIW via consular path). DS-160 = nonimmigrant visas (e.g., O-1).

Common Pitfalls

Inconsistent dates; gaps in address/work history; missing social media identifiers; unreported prior denials or arrests; inconsistent transliteration. Use exact legal names and truthful, non-speculative answers.

NVC Document Pack

Suggested Structure

By applicant (principal/spouse/child): passports; birth/marriage/divorce certificates + translations; police certificates; court records if any; financial/support docs per category; photos; post-specific items; fee receipts.

Medical (I-693) & I-94

Medicals — Consular vs. AOS

Consular: panel physicians only; follow sealed-envelope rules. AOS: USCIS-designated civil surgeons. Bring prior vaccination records to avoid duplication.

I-94 — What to Check

After each entry, verify class of admission and admit-until date. Save PDFs/screenshots; correct errors via CBP Deferred Inspection or counsel.

After Landing — First 30–60 Days

Checklist

SSN (if not auto-issued), state ID/driver's license, bank accounts, health insurance, employer onboarding, address registration where applicable. Keep copies of visa packet and I-551 stamp (if issued).

Expedites — USCIS, NVC, Consulates

When & How

Consider emergencies, urgent U.S. business/government interests, or clear agency error. Tailor evidence to the adjudicator (USCIS service request, NVC inquiry, consular emergency appointment policy).

TAL — Export-Control Awareness

Sensitive Areas (Examples)

Advanced materials, aerospace, AI/ML with dual-use, encryption, high-energy physics, biotech with export-control concerns. Provide plain-English summaries and end-use statements to mitigate.

Templates & Checklists

Interview-Day Checklist

Passport; photos; appointment letter; originals + copies (civil docs & translations, police certificates); medical results; I-140/I-129 approval; exhibit summary; payment receipts; courier info.

221(g) Response Cover Letter (Skeleton)

Header (case number, applicant, post, date) → bullet requested items and attach labeled exhibits → close with concise status update and contact details.

Visa Bulletin Worksheet

Track category, chargeability, PD, current Final Action/Date for Filing, and next review date; note monthly movement and action items.

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