



Skilled Worker visa

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Overview

A Skilled Worker visa allows you to come to or stay in the UK to do an eligible job with an approved employer.

This visa has replaced the Tier 2 (General) work visa.

It also allows you to work in UK waters.

Eligibility

Your job

To qualify for a Skilled Worker visa, you must:

- work for a UK employer that's been approved by the Home Office
- have a 'certificate of sponsorship' (CoS) from your employer with information about the role you've been offered in the UK
- do a job that's on the list of eligible occupations
- be paid a minimum salary - how much depends on the type of work you do and the date you got your CoS

The specific [eligibility depends on your job](/skilled-worker-visa/your-job) (</skilled-worker-visa/your-job>).

You must have a confirmed job offer before you apply for your visa.

Knowledge of English

You must be able to speak, read, write and understand English. You'll usually need to [prove your knowledge of English](/skilled-worker-visa/knowledge-of-english) (</skilled-worker-visa/knowledge-of-english>) when you apply.

If you're not eligible for a Skilled Worker visa

You may be eligible for [another type of visa to work in the UK](#) ([/check-uk-visa](#)).

How long you can stay

Your visa can last for up to 5 years before you need to extend it. You'll need to apply to extend or update your visa when it expires or if you change jobs

or employer.

If you want to stay longer in the UK

You can apply to extend your visa as many times as you like as long as you still meet the eligibility requirements.

After 5 years, you may be able to [apply to settle permanently in the UK \(/settle-in-the-uk/y/you-have-a-work-visa/tier-2-general-visa\)](#) (also known as ‘indefinite leave to remain’). This gives you the right to live, work and study here for as long as you like, and apply for benefits if you’re eligible.

How to apply

You must apply online.

How you apply depends on whether you’re:

- [outside the UK \(/skilled-worker-visa/apply-from-outside-the-uk\)](#) and are coming to the UK
- inside the UK and [extending your current visa \(/skilled-worker-visa/extend-your-visa\)](#)
- inside the UK and [switching from a different visa \(/skilled-worker-visa/switch-to-this-visa\)](#)

If you want to change your job or employer, you must [apply to update your visa \(/skilled-worker-visa/update-your-visa-if-you-change-job-or-employer\)](#).

[Your partner and children \(/skilled-worker-visa/your-partner-and-children\)](#) may be able to apply to join you or stay in the UK as your ‘dependants’.

How long it takes

You can apply for a visa up to 3 months before the day you are due to start work in the UK. This date is listed on your certificate of sponsorship.

As part of your application, you’ll need to prove your identity and provide your documents.

You may need to allow extra time if you need an appointment to do this. You’ll find out if you need one when you start your application.

Getting a decision

Once you've applied online, proved your identity and provided your documents, you'll usually get a decision on your visa within:

- 3 weeks, if you're outside the UK
- 8 weeks, if you're inside the UK

You may be able to [pay to get a faster decision \(/faster-decision-visa-settlement\)](#) - you'll be told if you can when you apply.

If your application is successful, your [decision email \(/apply-to-come-to-the-uk/getting-a-decision-on-your-application\)](#) will tell you what you'll get to prove your immigration status and what you need to do next.

How much it costs

You, your partner or children will each need to:

- pay the application fee
- pay the healthcare surcharge for each year of your stay
- prove you have enough personal savings

[Check how much money you'll need \(/skilled-worker-visa/how-much-it-costs\).](#)

If you work in public sector healthcare

If you're a doctor or nurse, or you work in health or adult social care, check if you're eligible to apply for the [Health and Care Worker visa \(/health-care-worker-visa\)](#) instead. It's cheaper to apply for and you do not need to pay the annual immigration health surcharge.

What you can and cannot do

With a Skilled Worker visa you can:

- work in an eligible job
- study
- bring [your partner and children \(/skilled-worker-visa/your-partner-and-children\)](#) with you as your 'dependants', if you meet the eligibility requirements
- [take on additional work \(/skilled-worker-visa/second-job\)](#) in certain circumstances
- travel abroad and return to the UK

- apply to settle permanently in the UK (also known as ‘indefinite leave to remain’) if you’ve lived in the UK for 5 years and meet the other eligibility requirements
- do voluntary work

Any voluntary work you do must be unpaid and for one of the following:

- a [registered charity \(/find-charity-information\)](#)
- a voluntary organisation
- an associated fundraising body (an organisation that raises money for a charity or voluntary organisation)
- a statutory body (a government-appointed body, for example Historic England)

You cannot:

- apply for most benefits ([public funds \(/government/publications/public-funds-2\)](#)), or the State Pension
- change jobs or employer unless you apply to update your visa

If your application is successful, you’ll get a full list of what you can and cannot do with a Skilled Worker visa.

→ **Next**
[Your job \(/skilled-worker-visa/your-job\)](#)

[View a printable version of the whole guide \(/skilled-worker-visa/print\)](#)



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