

Visitor Visa

Overview

Generally, a citizen of a foreign country who wishes to enter the United States must first obtain a visa, either a nonimmigrant visa for a temporary stay, or an immigrant visa for permanent residence. Visitor visas are nonimmigrant visas for persons who want to enter the United States temporarily for business (visa category B-1), for tourism (visa category B-2), or for a combination of both purposes (B-1/B-2).

Here are some examples of activities permitted with a visitor visa:

Business (B-1)



- Consult with business associates
- Attend a scientific, educational, professional, or business convention or conference
- Settle an estate
- Negotiate a contract

Tourism (B-2)



- Tourism
- Vacation (holiday)
- Visit with friends or relatives
- Medical treatment
- Participation in social events hosted by fraternal, social, or service organizations
- Participation by amateurs in musical, sports, or similar events or contests, if not being paid for participating
- Enrollment in a short recreational course of study, not for credit toward a degree (for example, a two-day cooking class while on vacation)

Travel Purposes Not Permitted On Visitor Visas



These are some examples of activities that require different categories of visas and cannot be done while on a visitor visa:

- Study
- Employment
- Paid performances, or any professional performance before a paying audience
- Arrival as a crewmember on a ship or aircraft
- Work as foreign press, in radio, film, print journalism, or other information media
- Permanent residence in the United States

Visitor visas will also not be issued for birth tourism (travel for the primary purpose of giving birth in the United States to obtain U.S. citizenship for their child).

How to Apply

There are several steps to apply for a visa. The order of these steps and how you complete them may vary by U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Please consult the instructions on the [U.S. Embassy or Consulate website](#).

Complete the Online Visa Application

- **Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application, [Form DS-160](#)**
– [Learn more](#) about completing the [DS-160](#). You must: 1) complete the online visa application and 2) print the application form confirmation page to bring to your interview.
- **Photo** – You will upload your photo while completing the online Form DS-160. Your photo must be in the format explained in the [Photograph Requirements](#).

Schedule an Interview

Interviews are generally required for visa applicants with certain limited exceptions below. Consular officers may require an interview of any visa applicant.

If you are age: Then an interview is:

13 and younger Generally not required

14-79 Required (some exceptions for renewals)

80 and older Generally not required

You should schedule an appointment for your visa interview at the [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) in the country where you live. You may schedule your interview at another U.S. Embassy or Consulate, but be aware that it may be more difficult to qualify for a visa outside of the country where you live.

Wait times for interview appointments vary by location, season, and visa category, so you should apply for your visa early. Review the interview wait time for the location where you will apply:

Appointment Wait Time

Check the estimated wait time for a nonimmigrant visa interview appointment at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Note: Please check the individual Embassy or Consulate website to determine if your case is eligible for a waiver of the in-person interview.

Applicants scheduling visa appointments in a location different from their place of residence should check post websites for nonresident wait times.

Select a U.S. Embassy or Consulate:

Wait Times for Embassy/Consulate

Enter a City

time**Interview Required**

Students/Exchange Visitors (F, -- days
M, J)

Interview Required Petition-

Based Temporary Workers (H, L, -- days
O, P, Q)

Interview Required Crew and -- days
Transit (C, D, C1/D)

Interview Required Visitors -- days
(B1/B2)

Interview Waiver

Students/Exchange Visitors (F, -- days
M, J)

Interview Waiver Petition-Based

Temporary Workers (H, L, O, P, -- days
Q)

Interview Waiver Crew and -- days
Transit (C, D, C1/D)

Interview Waiver Visitors -- days
(B1/B2)

[See details on appointment availability and processing times](#)

Prepare for Your Interview

- **Fees - Pay the non-refundable visa application fee**, if you are required to pay it before your interview. If your visa is approved, you may also need to pay a visa issuance fee, if applicable to your nationality. Fee information is provided below:

Select your nationality to see**\$160
Issuance Fee**

Enter a country/authority or area

**[All Fees](#)**

- Review the instructions available on the website of the [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) where you will apply to learn more about fee payment.

Gather Required Documentation

Gather and prepare the following required documents before your visa interview:

- **Passport** valid for travel to the United States – Your passport must be valid for at least six months beyond your period of stay in the United States (unless exempt by [country-specific agreements](#)[↗]). Each individual who needs a visa must submit a separate application, including any family members listed in your passport.
- **Nonimmigrant Visa Application, [Form DS-160](#) confirmation page.**
- **Application fee payment receipt**, if you are required to pay before your interview.
- **Photo** – You will upload your photo while completing the online Form DS-160. If the [photo upload fails](#), you must bring one printed photo in the format explained in the [Photograph Requirements](#).

Additional Documentation May Be Required

Review the instructions for how to apply for a visa on the website of the [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) where you will apply. Additional documents may be requested to establish if you are qualified. For example, additional requested documents may include evidence of:

- The purpose of your trip,
- Your intent to depart the United States after your trip, and/or
- Your ability to pay all costs of the trip.

Evidence of your employment and/or your family ties may be sufficient to show the purpose of your trip and your intent to return to your home country. If you cannot cover all the costs for your trip, you may show evidence that another person will cover some or all costs for your trip.

Note: Visa applicants must qualify on the basis of the applicant's residence and ties abroad, rather than assurances from U.S. family and friends. A letter of invitation or Affidavit of Support is not needed to apply for a visitor visa. If you choose to bring a letter of invitation or

Affidavit of Support to your interview, please remember it is not one of the factors used in determining whether to issue or deny the visa.

Attend Your Visa Interview

A consular officer will interview you to determine whether you are qualified to receive a visitor visa. You must establish that you meet the requirements under U.S. law to receive a visa.

Ink-free, digital fingerprint scans are taken as part of the application process. They are usually taken during your interview, but this varies based on location.

After your visa interview, the consular officer may determine that your application requires further [administrative processing](#). The consular officer will inform you if this required.

After the visa is approved, you may need to pay a visa issuance fee (if applicable to your nationality), and make arrangements for the return of the passport and visa to you. Review the [visa processing times](#) to learn more.

Entering the United States

A visa allows a foreign citizen to travel to a U.S. port-of-entry (generally an airport) and request permission to enter the United States. A visa does not guarantee entry into the United States. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials at the port-of-entry have authority to permit or deny admission to the United States. If you are allowed to enter the United States, the CBP official will provide an admission stamp or a paper Form I-94, Arrival/Departure Record. Learn more about admissions and entry requirements, restrictions about bringing food, agricultural products, and other restricted/prohibited goods, and more by reviewing the [CBP website](#).

Extending Your Stay

See [Extend Your Stay](#) on the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) website to learn about requesting to extend your stay beyond the date indicated on

your admission stamp or paper Form I-94.

Failure to depart the United States on time will result in being [out of status](#). Under U.S. law, visas of individuals who are out of status are automatically voided ([Section 222\(g\) of the Immigration and Nationality Act](#)[↗]). Any multiple entry visa that was voided due to being out of status will not be valid for future entries into the United States.

Failure to depart the United States on time may also result in you being ineligible for visas in the future. Review [Visa Denials](#) and [Ineligibilities and Waivers: Laws](#) to learn more.

Change of Status

If your plans change while in the United States (for example, you marry a U.S. citizen or receive an offer of employment), you may be able to request a change in your nonimmigrant status to another category through U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). See [Change My Nonimmigrant Status](#)[↗] on the USCIS website to learn more.

While you are in the United States, receiving a change of status from USCIS does not require you to apply for a new visa. However, once you depart the United States you must apply for a new visa at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the appropriate category for your travel.

Additional Information

- An individual on a visitor visa (B1/B2) is not permitted to accept employment or work in the United States.
- There is no guarantee you will be issued a visa. Do not make final travel plans or buy tickets until you have a visa.
- A valid U.S. visa in an expired passport is still valid. Unless canceled or revoked, a visa is valid until its expiration date. If you have a valid visa in your expired passport, do not remove it from your expired passport. You may use your valid visa in your expired passport along with a new valid passport for travel and admission to the United States.

Travel for Medical Treatment

If you are seeking medical treatment in the United States, the consular officer may ask for further documents at your visa interview, which may include:

- Medical diagnosis from a local physician, explaining the nature of the ailment and the reason you need treatment in the United States.
- Letter from a physician or medical facility in the United States, stating they are willing to treat your specific ailment and detailing the projected length and cost of treatment (including doctors' fees, hospitalization fees, and all medical-related expenses).
- Proof that your transportation, medical, and living expenses in the United States will be paid. This may be in the form of bank or other statements of income/savings or certified copies of income tax returns (either yours or the person or organization paying for your treatment).

Visitor Visas for Personal or Domestic Employees (B-1)

You may apply for a B-1 visitor visa to work in the United States as a personal or domestic employee for your employer in limited situations. You may work in the United States on a visitor visa if your employer is:

- A U.S. citizen who has a permanent home or is stationed in a foreign country, but is visiting or is assigned to the United States temporarily; or
- A foreign citizen who is in the United States on one of the following nonimmigrant visa categories: B, E, F, H, I, J, L, M, O, P, or Q.

Learn more about your rights in the United States and protection available to you by reading the [Legal Rights and Protections](#) pamphlet.

Visa Renewal



Whether you are applying for the first time or renewing your visa, you will use the same application process (please review [How to Apply](#), above). Some applicants seeking to renew their visas in certain visa classes may be eligible for the Interview Waiver (IW) which allows qualified individuals to apply for visa renewals without being interviewed in person by a U.S. consular officer. Review the instructions on the website of the [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) where you will apply to determine if the IW is available and if you qualify.

Do I need a visa if I have an ABTC?



Yes, you will still need a visa to travel to the United States, unless you qualify for the [Visa Waiver Program](#). Having an Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Business Travelers Card (ABTC) does not change visa requirements, your visa status, or the visa process for travel to the United States.

How can I use my ABTC when I apply for my visa?



If you have an Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Business Travelers Card (ABTC), you might be able to schedule an expedited visa interview appointment. Review the instructions for scheduling expedited appointments on the website of the [embassy or consulate](#) where you will apply.

Visa Annotations for Certain Maritime Industry Workers



Certain foreign maritime workers are eligible to apply for a Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) once in the U.S. If you, as a maritime industry worker, will perform services in secure port areas, your visa must be annotated "TWIC Letter Received." Workers whose visas are not annotated will not be permitted by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to apply for a TWIC.

In order for your visa to be annotated, you must obtain a letter from your employer explaining the need for a TWIC and that you are a potential TWIC applicant. See a [template example](#) of this letter. You must present this letter when you apply for the B-1 visa. You must meet all other eligibility requirements for a B-1 visa.

Complete information about the TWIC program is available on TSA's website at <https://www.tsa.gov/for-industry/twic>.

Visa Denial and Ineligibility



Review [Visa Denials](#) for detailed information about visa ineligibilities, denials and waivers.

I was refused a visa, under Section 214(b). May I reapply?



Yes, if you feel circumstances have changed regarding your application. Review [Visa Denials](#) to learn more.

Misrepresentation or Fraud



Attempting to obtain a visa by the willful misrepresentation of a material fact, or fraud, may result in the permanent refusal of a visa or denial of entry into the United States.

Review [Ineligibilities and Waivers: Laws](#).

Citizens of Canada and Bermuda



Citizens of Canada and Bermuda do not require visas to enter the United States, for visit, tourism and temporary business travel purposes. For more information see [U.S. Embassy Ottawa website](#), [U.S. Consulate Hamilton website](#) and [CBP website](#)[↗].

Additional resources for Canadian visitors to the United States can be found on the U.S. Embassy and Consulate websites in Canada.

Citizens of China



In accordance with the agreement signed between the United States and China to extend visa validity, beginning on November 29, 2016, Chinese citizens with 10-year B1, B2 or B1/B2 visas in Peoples' Republic of China passports will be required to update their biographical and other information from their visa application via a website every two years, or upon getting a new passport or B1, B2, or B1/B2 visa, whichever occurs first. This mechanism is called EVUS - Electronic Visa Update System

Electronic Visa Update System

The EVUS website is now open to the public for enrollments at www.EVUS.gov. CBP will not collect a fee for EVUS enrollment at this time. CBP anticipates the eventual implementation of an EVUS enrollment fee, but does not have a time frame. Until the implementation of a fee, travelers can enroll in EVUS without charge. The Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will keep visa holders informed of new information throughout the year. For further information, please visit www.cbp.gov/EVUS.

根据美中双方签署的延长签证有效期的协议，自2016年11月29日起，凡持有10年期B1、B2或B1/B2签证的中华人民共和国护照持有人需要每两年或在获取新护照或最长有效期的B1、B2或B1/B2签证时（以先到者为准），通过网站更新他们签证申请上的个人资料及其它信息。这个机制我们称之为EVUS - 签证更新电子系统。

EVUS的登记网站www.EVUS.gov 现已开放接受登记。美国海关和边境保护局（CBP）目前不会收取登记费用。美国海关和边境保护局预期EVUS登记收费最终会实施，但目前尚未落实执行时间。在收费实施前，旅客可以免费完成EVUS登记。美国国土安全部海关和边境保护局将在今年及时向签证持有人公布最新的信息。获取更多的信息，请访问www.cbp.gov/EVUS。

Citizens of Mexico



Citizens and permanent residents of Mexico generally must have a nonimmigrant visa or Border Crossing Card (also known as a "Laser Visa"). For ease of travel, the B-1/B-2 and the Border Crossing Card have been combined into one document (DSP-150). Select [Border Crossing Card](#) to learn more about this card.

Please visit [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) websites for more information regarding applying for a visa at the U.S. Embassy or Consulates in Mexico.

Further Questions



- Case-Specific Questions - Contact the U.S. Embassy or Consulate handling your visa application for status information. Select [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) for contact information.
- General Questions - review [Contact Us](#).