



The Process for Obtaining a Visa and Entry into the United States

Qualifying for a Visa

Applicants for visitor visas must show that they qualify under provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act. Applicants must demonstrate that they are properly classifiable as visitors under U.S. law.

The presumption in the law is that every visitor visa applicant is an intending immigrant. Therefore, applicants for visitor visas must overcome this presumption by demonstrating that:

- The purpose of their trip is to enter the U.S. for business, pleasure, or medical treatment;
- That they plan to remain for a specific, limited period;
- Evidence of funds to cover expenses in the United States;
- Evidence of compelling social and economic ties abroad; and
- That they have a residence outside the U.S. as well as other binding ties that will insure their return abroad at the end of the visit.

Applying for a Visitor Visa?

Applicants for visitor visas should generally apply at the American Embassy or Consulate with jurisdiction over their place of permanent residence. Although visa applicants may apply at any U.S. consular office abroad, it may be more difficult to qualify for the visa outside the country of permanent residence.

Changes introduced shortly after September 11, 2001 involve extensive and ongoing review of visa issuing practices as they relate to our national security. Visa applications are now subject to a greater degree of scrutiny than in the past so it is important to apply for your visa well in advance of your travel departure date. Select [Getting Your Visitors Visa – Information You Need to Know](#) to learn more.

Required Documentation

As part of the visa application process, an interview at the embassy consular section is required for visa applicants from age 14 through 79. Persons age 13 and younger, and age 80 and older, generally do not require an interview, unless requested by embassy or consulate. Making your appointment for an interview is the first step in the visa application process. The waiting time for an interview appointment for applicants can vary, so early visa application is strongly encouraged. Visa wait times for interview appointments and visa processing time information for each U.S. Embassy or Consulate worldwide is available on our website at [Visa Wait Times](#), and on most embassy websites. During the visa application process, usually at the interview, an ink-free, digital fingerprint scan will be quickly taken. Some visa applications require further [administrative processing](#), which takes additional time after the visa applicant's interview by a Consular Officer.

Each applicant for a visitor visa must submit these forms and documentation, and submit fees as explained below:

- An application, Nonimmigrant Visa Application, Form DS-156, completed and signed. **The DS-156 must be the March 2006 date, electronic "e-form application."** Select [Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form DS-156](#) to access the electronic version of the DS-156.
- A Supplemental Nonimmigrant Visa Application, Form DS-157 provides additional information about your travel plans. Submission of this completed **form is required for all male applicants between 16-45 years of age. It is also required for all applicants from state sponsors of terrorism age 16 and over, irrespective of gender, without exception. Four countries are now designated as state sponsors of terrorism, including Cuba, Syria, Sudan, and Iran. [Select Special Processing Procedures](#) to learn more. You should know that a consular officer may require any nonimmigrant visa applicant to complete [Form, DS-157](#) .**
- A passport valid for travel to the United States and with a validity date at least six months beyond the applicant's intended period of stay in the United States (unless [country-specific agreements](#) provide

exemptions). If more than one person is included in the passport, each person desiring a visa must make an application;

- One (1) 2x2 photograph. See the required photo format explained in [Nonimmigrant Photograph Requirements](#).

What are the Required Fees?

- Nonimmigrant visa application processing fee - For current fees for Department of State government services select [Fees](#).
- Visa issuance fee – Additionally, if the visa is issued, there will be an additional visa issuance reciprocity fee, if applicable. Please consult the [Visa Reciprocity Tables](#) to find out if you must pay a visa issuance reciprocity fee and what the fee amount is. If there is a fee for issuance for the visa, it is equal as nearly as possible to the fee charged to United States citizens by the applicant's country of nationality.

Additional Documentation

It is important that you refer to the Embassy Consular Section web site to determine visa processing timeframes and instructions, learn about interview scheduling, and find out if there are any additional documentation items required. Learn more by contacting the [Embassy Consular Section](#).

Applicants must demonstrate that they are properly classifiable as visitors under U.S. law by:

- Evidence which shows the purpose of the trip, intent to depart the United States, and arrangements made to cover the costs of the trip may be provided. It is impossible to specify the exact form the documentation should take since applicants' circumstances vary greatly.
- Those applicants who do not have sufficient funds to support themselves while in the U.S. must present convincing evidence that an interested person will provide support.
- Depending on individual circumstances, applicants may provide other documentation substantiating the trip's purpose and specifying the nature of binding obligations, such as family ties or employment, which would compel their return abroad.

Checklist (There are a number of items required of all visa applicants including the following):

Payment of a nonrefundable application fee of US \$131. Additionally, payment of a visa issuance fee, if applicable. Nonimmigrant Visa Application, Form DS-156, completed and signed. Blank forms are available free of charge at all U.S. consular offices, online at <https://evisaforms.state.gov>.

Valid passport for travel to the United States with a validity date at least six months beyond the applicant's intended period of stay in the United States. If more than one person is included in the passport, each person desiring a visa must make an application.

One photograph, 2 inches square (roughly 50 mm square) for each applicant, showing full face, without head covering, against a white or off-white background, stapled or glued to the application, DS-156 in the designated space.

Supplemental Nonimmigrant Visa Application, Form DS-157 must be submitted, completed by all male applicants between the ages of 16 and 45, regardless of nationality. All applicants from the countries on the Department of State list of countries that sponsor terrorism must also complete the DS-157. A consular officer can request the form from anyone.

Support materials indicating the purpose of the visit, that they plan to remain in the U.S. only for a specific, limited period of time and that they have a residence outside the U.S. as well as family, business interests or investments that will insure their return to their country of origin at the conclusion of the visit.

Letter of invitation from the show organizer.

While this information is excerpted from the Internet site above, please note that the Department of State's recommended first source of up-to-date visa information is their Internet site at <http://www.travel.state.gov>. Another useful website is <http://www.UnitedStatesVisas.gov>.

Upon arrival to a U.S. point of entry, visitors will be required to pass through U.S. Immigration where an officer of the Department of Homeland Security will review the visitor's visa and make a determination on the length of stay. Business travelers entering the USA on a B-1 or other business visitor visa, whether single entry or multiple entry, should share scheduled plans for their stay in the USA with the immigration officer or risk that the immigration official will arbitrarily stamp their entry documentation with a truncated time period. If the visitor shows ticketing and notes that the purpose of the visit is to cover multiple site visits, (trade show plus business appointments, etc.) they should discuss the itinerary with the immigration officer and request permission to stay in the USA long enough to

complete their plans.

A Department of Homeland Security official can deny entry to an individual even if they have obtained a visa. They can determine and define an approved period for their stay in the USA or they can limit their permission to a period less than their planned itinerary. If a visitor "overstays" the permitted period of visit, they risk losing permission to visit the USA in the future, or a denial of their visa application on a subsequent planned visit.