

captured 6/21/13

Visitor Visas - Business and Pleasure

- [Overview](#)
- [Visa Waiver Program](#)
- [Travel Purposes Not Permitted On Visitor Visas](#)
- [How to Apply](#)
- [Schedule an Interview](#)
- [Prepare for Your Interview](#)
- [Gather Required Documentation](#)
- [Attend Your Visa Interview](#)
- [Additional Information](#)
- [Travel for Medical Treatment](#)
- [Visitor Visas for Personal or Domestic Employees \(B-1\)](#)
- [Do I need a visa if I have an ABTC?](#)
- [How can I use my ABTC when I apply for my visa?](#)
- [Visa Annotations for Certain Maritime Industry Workers](#)
- [Border Crossing Cards - Citizens of Mexico](#)
- [Visa Denial and Ineligibility](#)
- [I was refused a visa, under section 214\(b\). May I reapply?](#)
- [Misrepresentation or Fraud](#)
- [Entering the U.S. - Port of Entry](#)
- [How Do I Extend My Stay?](#)
- [How can I find out how long I am authorized to stay in the U.S.?](#)
- [I did not turn in my I-94 when I left the United States, what should I do?](#)
- [How Do I Change My Status?](#)
- [Further Questions](#)

[Glossary](#)

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 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), tourism, pleasure or visiting (visa category B-2), or 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

Learn more about [Business Travel](#) on a visitor visa.

Tourism and Visit (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).

Visa Waiver Program

Travelers coming to the U.S. for tourism or business for 90 days or less from qualified countries may be eligible to visit the U.S. without a visa if they meet the visa waiver program requirements. Select [Visa Waiver Program](#) to learn more, and find out if you meet the visa waiver requirements.

Travel Purposes Not Permitted On Visitor Visas

These are some examples of activities that require different categories of visas and cannot be done on 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, radio, film, journalists, and other information media
- permanent residence in the U.S.

How to Apply

There are several steps to apply for a visa. The order of these steps and how you complete them may vary at the U.S. embassy or consulate where you apply. Please consult the instructions available on the [embassy or consulate website](#) where you will apply.

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

While interviews are generally not required for applicants of certain ages outlined below, consular

officers have the discretion to require an interview of any applicant, regardless of age.

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 must schedule an appointment for your visa interview, generally, at the U.S. embassy or consulate in the country where you live. You may schedule your interview at any U.S. embassy or consulate, but be aware that it may be difficult to qualify for a visa outside of your place of permanent residence.

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.

Prepare for Your Interview

- **Fees** - Pay the non-refundable visa application fee, if you are required to pay it before your interview. For current fees for Department of State government services select [Fees](#). When your visa is approved, you may also pay a visa issuance reciprocity fee, if applicable to your nationality. Please review the [Visa Reciprocity Tables](#) to find out if you must pay a visa issuance fee.
- Review the instructions available on the website of the [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 U.S. - Your passport must be valid for at least six months beyond your period of stay in the U. S. (unless exempt by [country-specific agreements](#)). If more than one person is included in your passport, each person who needs a visa must submit a separate application.
- **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 [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 U.S. 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.

Attend Your Visa Interview

During your visa interview, a consular officer will determine whether you are qualified to receive a visa, and if so, which visa category is appropriate based on your purpose of travel. You will need to establish that you meet the requirements under U.S. law to receive the category of visa for which you are applying.

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

After your visa interview, your application may require further [administrative processing](#). You will be informed by the consular officer if further processing is necessary for your application.

When the visa is approved, you may pay a visa issuance fee if applicable to your nationality, and will be informed how your passport with visa will be returned to you. Review the [visa processing time](#), to learn how soon your passport with visa will generally be ready for pick-up or delivery by the courier.

Additional Information

- We cannot guarantee that you will be issued a visa. Do not make final travel plans or buy tickets until you have a visa.
- 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 to request admission to the U.S.

Travel for Medical Treatment

If you are seeking medical treatment in the U.S., 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 U.S.
- Letter from a physician or medical facility in the U.S., 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 U.S. 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 U.S. as a personal or domestic for your employer in limited situations. You may work in the U.S. 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 U.S. temporarily; or
- A foreign citizen who is in the U.S. 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 U.S. and protection available to you by reading the [Legal Rights and Protections pamphlet](#).

Do I need a visa if I have an ABTC?

Yes, you will still need a visa to travel to the U.S., 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 U.S. Review the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for participants in APEC meetings in 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. Review the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for participants in APEC meetings in the United States.

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. Click [here](#) for 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 <http://www.tsa.gov/twic>.

Border Crossing Cards - 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 B1/B2 and the Border Crossing Card have been combined into one document (DSP-150). Select [Border Crossing Card](#) to learn more about this card.

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](#).

Entering the U.S. - Port of Entry

A visa allows a foreign citizen coming from abroad, to travel to the United States port of entry and request permission to enter the U.S. Applicants should be aware that a visa does not guarantee entry into the United States. The Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials have authority to permit or deny admission to the United States. If you are allowed to enter the U.S., the CBP official will determine the length of your visit.

Notice: New Electronic I-94 Process - A new electronic I-94 process at air and sea ports of entry was fully implemented by May 25, 2013. Under the new CBP process, a CBP officer will provide each admitted nonimmigrant traveler with an admission stamp on their passport. CBP will no longer issue a paper Form I-94 upon entry to the U.S., with some exceptions. [Learn more](#) on the CBP website.

If you are issued a paper Form I-94, this will document your authorized stay and is the official record of your permission to be in the U.S. It is very important to keep inside your passport. In advance of travel, prospective travelers should review important information about [Admissions/Entry](#) requirements, as well as information related to restrictions about [bringing food, agricultural products](#) or other [restricted/prohibited goods](#) explained on the Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection website.

How Do I Extend My Stay?

- Visitors who wish to stay beyond the date indicated on their admission stamp or paper Form I-94 are required to have approval by USCIS. See [Extend Your Stay](#) on the USCIS website.
- You must depart the United States on or before the date indicated on your admission stamp or paper Form I-94, unless your request to extend your stay is approved by USCIS.
- Failure to depart the United States on time will result in you being [out of status](#), can void your visa, and may make you ineligible for visas you may apply for in the future. Review [Visa Denials, Ineligibilities and Waivers: Laws](#), and section [222\(g\) of the Immigration and Nationality Act](#) to learn more.

How can I find out how long I am authorized to stay in the U.S.?

- A visa does not guarantee entry into the United States, but allows a foreign citizen coming from abroad, to travel to the United States port of entry and request permission to enter the U.S. The Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials have authority to permit or deny admission to the United States, and determine how long a traveler may stay. If you are allowed to enter the U.S., the CBP official will determine the length of your visit.

Notice: New Electronic I-94 Process - A new electronic I-94 process at air and sea ports of entry was fully implemented by May 25, 2013. Under the new CBP process, a CBP officer will provide each admitted nonimmigrant traveler with an admission stamp on their passport. CBP will no longer issue a paper Form I-94 upon entry to the U.S., with some exceptions. [Learn more](#) on the CBP website.

- On the admission stamp or paper Form I-94, the U.S. immigration inspector records either a date or "D/S" (duration of status). If your admission stamp or paper Form I-94 contains a specific date, then that is the date by which you must leave the United States. If you are issued a paper Form I-94, this will document your authorized stay and is the official record of your permission to be in the U.S. It is very important to keep inside your passport. Review information about [Admission](#) on the CBP Website. Also, see [Duration of Stay](#).

I did not turn in my I-94 when I left the United States, what should I do?

If you failed to turn in your paper Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record, see [Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection](#) website for more information. If you did not receive a paper Form I-94 and your record was created electronically, CBP will record your departure using manifest information obtained from the air or sea carrier.

How Do I Change My Status?

Some nonimmigrant visa holders, while present in the U.S., are able to file a request which must be approved by USCIS to change to another nonimmigrant category. See [Change My Nonimmigrant Status](#) on the USCIS website.

Important Note: Filing a request with USCIS for approval of change of status before your authorized stay expires, while you remain in the U.S., does not by itself require the visa holder to apply for a new visa. However, if you cannot remain in the U.S. while USCIS processes your change of status request, you will need to apply for a nonimmigrant visa at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad.

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](#).