



OVERVIEW OF U.S. NONIMMIGRANT VISA PROCESSING

What Is a Nonimmigrant Visa (NIV)?

A nonimmigrant visa (NIV) grants temporary permission to travel to the United States. Most foreign nationals must apply for and obtain a U.S. visa that fits the purpose of their travel, which is placed in their passport. *For example, a foreign national who wants to vacation at Disney World will require a B-2 visitor visa.*

Many foreign nationals already residing in the United States may also need a visa to return to the United States after international travel, if their visa has expired, or if they need a different type of visa. *For example, an F-1 student who recently changed their status to that of an H-1B worker while in the United States is able to work and remain in the while in valid status. If the H-1B worker returns to their home country to visit family, they will need to apply for an H-1B visa to return to the United States.*

There are exceptions to visa requirements for Canadians and other foreign nationals who are eligible for visa waiver programs. Speak to your immigration attorney if you have questions about whether you need a visa to travel.

What are the Steps to Apply for a Visa?

There are two steps to the visa process:

STEP 1: Completing a DS-160, Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application

To apply for a temporary visa, each person must complete a separate DS-160 online at: <https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/>.

Some important reminders:

- Be prepared to provide personal and biographic information (e.g., passport, address, travel, work, education, and social media information) and upload a passport-sized photo as part of this process. For more information on documents to provide, review the DOS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).
- You can access the application questions in different languages by selecting a language on the top right-hand side of the website where it says, "select tooltip language." If you select a language other than English, when you click on any sentence, it will automatically be translated for you. Note that the application must be completed in English.
- When you start Form DS-160, the website will provide you with an application ID. Print or save this so you can access it easily.
- The government's website can be difficult to navigate and is

frequently out of service. Click the "save" button very often, so your answers are not lost if you get logged out.

- DOS will automatically delete a DS-160 application if it is not accessed for 30 days. If you cannot complete the application right away, schedule a reminder to access it every few weeks.
- Once you have completed the Form DS-160, save the Confirmation. You will need it for your visa interview appointment.

STEP 2: Scheduling your visa appointment

After the DS-160 is submitted, you will need to schedule an appointment with a U.S. embassy or consulate. Typically, you must schedule and attend a visa interview at a U.S. embassy or consulate located in your country of nationality or residence. Attempting to schedule a visa appointment in another country will likely result in cancellation or denial of the appointment request. Review the website of the embassy or consulate at which you will apply to determine how to schedule your appointment. Typically, it will be through one of the following systems:

- ustraveldocs.com
- <https://ais.usvisa-info.com>
- <https://www.usvisascheduling.com>

You will need to create an account, log in, select the appropriate visa category, and pay the nonimmigrant visa application fee. Fees vary based on visa category and your nationality. Once you pay the fee, you should be able to select a visa appointment date and time. Consulates have different visa appointment wait times, which can vary from a few days to more than a year.

If your travel is urgent and there are no appointments available online, you may be able to request an expedited appointment after scheduling an initial appointment.

STEP 3: Attending your interview and traveling to the U.S.

The last step is attending the visa interview. Carefully review the instructions and required document list provided by the consulate for your interview. You will need to leave your passport with the Embassy or Consulate for visa stamping.

Once your visa is issued, you may travel to the United States and ask to be admitted in the status listed on the visa. A visa does not guarantee admission into the United States, that final decision is made by the border official when you arrive.

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