

How to apply for a visa to come to the UK

1. Choose a visa

You may need a visa to come to the UK to study, work, visit or join family.

There are different visas depending on:

- where you come from
- why you want to come to the UK
- how long you want to stay for
- your personal circumstances and skills

Before you apply, you must [check if you need a visa \(/check-uk-visa\)](/check-uk-visa) and what type you need. Depending on your nationality, you might not need a visa to visit or transit through the UK.

Your application must be approved before you travel.

You do not need to apply for a visa if you're an Irish citizen.

If you want to visit the UK

Apply for a [Standard Visitor visa \(/standard-visitor-visa\)](/standard-visitor-visa) to visit the UK for up to 6 months. For example:

- for a holiday or to see family and friends
- for a business trip or meeting
- to do a short course of study

You must apply for a [Marriage Visitor visa \(/marriage-visa\)](/marriage-visa) if you want to visit the UK to get married or register a civil partnership.

If you have a visitor visa you cannot take a job in the UK.

If you' re travelling through the UK

You might need a visa if you' re travelling through the UK on your way to another country, for example if you have a layover between flights.

[Apply for a visa to travel through the UK \(/transit-visa\)](/transit-visa).

If you want to study in the UK

Your course length, type and place of study affect which visa to apply for.

A [Standard Visitor visa \(/standard-visitor-visa\)](/standard-visitor-visa) lets you do a short course of study that lasts no longer than 6 months.

A [Short-term study visa \(/visa-to-study-english\)](/visa-to-study-english) lets you come to the UK to study an English language course that is over 6 months and up to 11 months.

A [Student visa \(/student-visa\)](/student-visa) is usually for a longer course. You must be sponsored by a licensed college or university and have a confirmed place. On this visa, you may be able to do some work.

A [Child Student visa \(/child-study-visa\)](/child-study-visa) is for 4 to 17 year olds who want to study at an independent school. If you' re 16 or over, this visa lets you do some work.

If you want to work in the UK

You can work in the UK on a short or long-term basis with a work visa. There are many types of [work visa \(/browse/visas-immigration/work-visas\)](/browse/visas-immigration/work-visas).

The visa you need depends upon:

- your skills and qualifications
- if you have a job offer and sponsorship
- if you want to bring your family with you
- what you' ll be doing - for example sporting, charitable or religious work

You can set up a business with an [Innovator Founder visa \(/innovator-founder-visa\)](/innovator-founder-visa).

If you want to join family in the UK

If you' re a spouse, partner or family member of someone who has British citizenship or settlement in the UK, you can apply for a [family visa \(/uk-family-visa\)](/uk-family-visa) to join them. They may need to show that they can support you financially.

You may be able to apply for indefinite leave to remain (ILR) after a set amount of time living in the UK.

If your family member is in the UK on a visa

You may be able to apply for a visa to join a family member who' s in the UK on a visa. They must be either:

- your spouse or partner
- your parent if you're 18 or under

[Check what visa you'll need \(/check-uk-visa\)](/check-uk-visa) to join them.

Family reunion visas for refugees

If you were separated from your partner or child when you were forced to leave your country, they can [apply to join you \(/settlement-refugee-or-humanitarian-protection/family-reunion\)](/settlement-refugee-or-humanitarian-protection/family-reunion) in the UK.

Your family members can apply if you have been given asylum or 5 years' humanitarian protection, and not have British citizenship.

If your family member is from the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein

You can [apply for a free EU Settlement Scheme family permit \(/family-permit\)](/family-permit) to come to the UK if you have a close family member who:

- was living in the UK by 31 December 2020
- has pre-settled or settled status
- you had a relationship with by 31 December 2020 (unless you're applying for a child who was born or adopted after this date)

Close family members include your spouse or civil partner, child, grandchild, parent or grandparent.

A family permit lets you live, work and study in the UK for up to 6 months. You can [apply to the EU Settlement Scheme \(/settled-status-eu-citizens-families/not-EU-EEA-Swiss-citizen\)](/settled-status-eu-citizens-families/not-EU-EEA-Swiss-citizen) to stay in the UK after your family permit expires. You usually need to apply within 3 months of arriving in the UK.

Other ways to get permission to live in the UK

If you' re from the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein

If you started living in the UK by 31 December 2020, you may be able to apply to the free EU Settlement Scheme instead of applying for a visa. The deadline to apply was 30 June 2021, but you can still apply if you can show reasonable grounds for the delay in applying.

Check if you can still [apply to the EU Settlement Scheme \(/settled-status-eu-citizens-families/who-can-apply\)](/settled-status-eu-citizens-families/who-can-apply).

You can only apply from outside the UK if you have a valid passport or national identity card with a biometric chip.

Commonwealth citizens

You can apply for an [Ancestry visa \(/ancestry-visa\)](/ancestry-visa) to work in the UK if you have a British grandparent and meet other eligibility criteria.

You may have [right of abode \(/right-of-abode\)](/right-of-abode) to live in the UK.

If you' re a Commonwealth citizen and cannot prove your right to be in the UK, read about [the Windrush scheme \(/government/publications/undocumented-commonwealth-citizens-resident-in-the-uk\)](/government/publications/undocumented-commonwealth-citizens-resident-in-the-uk).

Returning residents

You' ll need to apply for a returning resident visa to come back to the UK if one of the following is true:

- you had indefinite leave to remain under the EU Settlement Scheme ('settled status') and left the UK for more than 5 continuous years (or 4 continuous years if you' re a Swiss citizen or their family

member)

- you had permanent permission to stay in the UK ('indefinite leave to remain') but it was not under the EU Settlement Scheme and you left the UK for more than 2 years

Other visas

There may be another visa that's right for you based on your circumstances. [Check if you need a visa \(/check-uk-visa\)](#) and what other visas you're eligible for.

2. Prepare your application

You can apply and pay for most visas online.

If you have dependants who want to come to the UK with you, each person will need to apply and pay separately.

When to apply

The earliest you can apply is usually:

- 3 months before your planned travel date for visit visas
- 3 months before your employment start date for most work visas
- 6 months before your course start date for Student and Child Student visas

Settlement applications take up to 6 months and must be approved before you come to the UK. If you're given permission to settle in the UK, you must travel before your permission ends.

How long it takes to get a decision

How quickly you'll get a decision on your visa application depends on [the visa you apply for \(/apply-to-come-to-the-uk\)](/apply-to-come-to-the-uk).

You may be able to [pay for a faster decision on your visa application \(/faster-decision-visa-settlement\)](/faster-decision-visa-settlement) depending on:

- the type of visa you apply for
- how you apply
- where you apply from

Fees

There is a [fee for each visa \(/visa-fees\)](/visa-fees). The fee depends on which visa you apply for.

The fees are the same for each family member who applies to come to the UK with you.

Pay for healthcare

You'll need to pay the [healthcare surcharge \(/healthcare-immigration-application\)](/healthcare-immigration-application) as part of your application, if you're:

- applying for a visa to work, study or join your family
- applying to stay for more than 6 months
- not applying to live permanently in the UK

Applying for someone else

You can apply for a visa for someone else. For example, a relative overseas who does not have access to a computer or your child, if they cannot apply for themselves.

You must get permission from the person you' re applying for, or written permission from their parent or guardian if the applicant is under 18.

Enter the applicant' s details into the form, not your own.

Proving you do not have tuberculosis (TB)

If you' re coming to the UK for more than 6 months you might need to have a TB test for your visa application.

[Check if you' ll need a TB test \(/tb-test-visa\)](/tb-test-visa).

If you do, you must provide a certificate showing you do not have TB with your visa application.

Change or cancel your application

If you want to change something in your application after you' ve sent it [contact UK Visas and Immigration \(UKVI\) \(/contact-ukvi-inside-outside-uk\)](/contact-ukvi-inside-outside-uk).

You can ask to [cancel your application \(/cancel-visa\)](/cancel-visa). Your fee will only be refunded if UKVI has not started processing your application.

3. Prove your identity

When you apply, you'll need to prove your identity and provide documents to show your eligibility.

How you do this depends on where you're from and what type of passport you have.

You'll either:

- go to an appointment at a visa application centre
- use the 'UK Immigration: ID Check' smartphone app

You'll find out if you need to go to an appointment or use the smartphone app when you start your application.

If you need to go to an appointment at a visa application centre

Visa application centres are run by external companies. You'll get a link to their website where you can book an appointment to provide your biometric information (your fingerprints and photograph).

Booking your appointment

You may have to travel to get to your nearest visa application centre (this could be in another country).

If you do not prove your identity within 240 days of submitting your application online, you will need to start a new application.

You can choose to use a standard service or to pay extra for optional services. Paying for optional services does not mean your application is more likely to be successful.

Children under 16

Children under 16 must go to the appointment with an adult who is over 18.

Children under 5 must attend the appointment to have a photograph taken. They do not need to give their fingerprints.

Standard services

Most visa application centres offer free appointments.

In some locations you' ll need to pay £76.50 for a standard appointment. You can choose to travel to a different visa application centre with free appointments, but you' ll need to pay your own travel costs.

You may be able to either:

- upload your evidence before your appointment
- bring your evidence to your appointment and have it scanned there for a fee

The document checklist in your application will explain what to provide.

Visa application centres will usually keep your passport while they process your application. They may also keep your documents too.

Extra optional services

You can choose to pay for an appointment, for example if you want to book it for a specific date and time.

You may also be able to choose to pay for other extra services, such as:

- getting your documents scanned instead of doing this yourself
- keeping your passport while your application is processed

Paying for optional services does not mean your application is more likely to be successful.

If you applied for someone else

The applicant will need to attend the appointment at the visa application centre to provide their biometric information and documents.

They' ll also need to sign a copy of their application form, to confirm that the information is correct.

If you need to use the 'UK Immigration: ID Check' smartphone app

You' ll be asked to use the 'UK Immigration: ID Check' app to scan your identity document and submit a digital photo of your face.

You will need to scan and upload documents that show your eligibility as part of your online application. The document checklist in your application will explain what to provide.

If you applied for someone else

The applicant will need to prove their identity using the app.

4. Getting a decision on your application

You' ll get a letter or an email telling you the Home Office has made a decision on your application.

It will tell you what you need to do next.

If you have not received your email, check your spam or junk folder.

If your application is successful

You'll be given either:

- a sticker (called a vignette) that goes in your passport - if you gave your biometric information at a visa application centre
- an online record of your immigration status (an 'eVisa')

The vignette or online immigration status information will show:

- what you've been granted (for example, a Student visa)
- the dates your visa is valid (start date and end date)
- the conditions of your visa

Your visa conditions

The conditions say what you can and cannot do in the UK. For example, they might say:

- 'No access to public funds' - you cannot claim benefits
- 'No work' - you cannot take paid or unpaid work in the UK
- 'Restricted work' - you can only work for your sponsor

Getting your vignette

If the visa application centre kept your passport, they'll either:

- send it to you with the vignette inside - if you paid for this service when you applied
- ask you to collect the passport and vignette

If you kept your passport, you'll need to take it to the visa application centre to collect your vignette.

If there's an error in your vignette

If you notice an error in your vignette, you should contact your visa application centre immediately to correct it before you come to the UK.

If you notice the error after you've arrived in the UK, you must [report it to UK Visas and Immigration \(UKVI\) \(/government/publications/correcting-an-incorrect-endorsement-ecb19/correcting-an-incorrect-endorsement-ecb19\)](#) within 3 months of arriving or you'll need to make a new application.

Getting an eVisa

An eVisa is an online record of your immigration status. eVisas have replaced [biometric residence permits \(BRPs\) \(/biometric-residence-permits\)](#).

You'll be able to [view your immigration status information online \(/view-prove-immigration-status\)](#) and share it with others, for example employers or universities.

Some government organisations and public authorities will be able to access your immigration status information, for example when you travel through the UK border.

If your application is refused

You'll get a letter or an email explaining why your application was refused.

Your passport will be returned, if it was kept as part of your application.

Your refusal letter will explain if you have the right to either an:

- [administrative review \(/ask-for-a-visa-administrative-review\)](/ask-for-a-visa-administrative-review)
- [immigration decision appeal \(/immigration-asylum-tribunal/appeal-from-outside-the-uk\)](/immigration-asylum-tribunal/appeal-from-outside-the-uk)



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