



It is sometimes confusing deciding which visa would be the best one suited for your exchange. There are several different kinds of visas with different requirements and fees. Listed below are some of the more frequently used visas for exchanges.

Business and Visitor Exchange Visa: B-1/B-2 Visa:

These visas are commonly known as the “visas for temporary visitors for business or pleasure”. You may apply for either a B-1 (Business) or a B-2 (pleasure) visa. The B-2 visa also covers dependents of visitors on B-1 visas. This can also cover students coming for internships or training programs who will not receive any type of stipend or wage.

Trainee Visa: H-3 Visa:

This is for training purposes only in a specific field which the visitor cannot get sufficiently at home. The visitor must focus on training specifically with the understanding that it will help vocationally when the visitor returns to his or her home country. There can be a salary involved and the business or company must endorse the visitor through proper documentation.

Exchange Visitor: J-1 Visa:

The J-1 visa is specifically for cultural exchange trips for students, researchers, and physicians to come to the United States. Following the completion of their program, exchange visitors are expected to return to their home country. The J-2 visa is issued to spouses and dependents of J-1 visitors. These individuals are not permitted to seek employment in the United States. However, they are permitted to receive an education in the United States. This visa concludes when the corresponding J-1 visa expires and cannot be extended for more than one academic year.

- People eligible to enter the country with a J-1/J-2 visa are:
 - college/university students
 - au pairs
 - governmental visitors
 - scholars
 - professors
 - camp counselors
 - research specialists
 - teachers

Academic Visa: F-1 Visa:

This is the most common type of student visa and covers:

- Foreign nationals qualified to attend a full course of study at colleges, universities, conservatories, or academic high schools in the U.S.
- Foreign nationals coming to attend a full course at U.S. institutions with language training programs



The visa continues until graduation and remains valid as long as the student maintains good academic standing. Vocational training is not included in the visa. It is possible for an F1 visa holder to transfer from one institution to another or switch academic programs by informing the alteration to the USCIS. The F-1 status holders can travel in and out of the country, or stay in the country continuously until the completion of their studies.

- The student may also complete internship work (as long as it is necessary towards the completion of his/her degree) for up to 12 months while in the United States.
- An F-2 visa can also be issued to families of the F-1 visa holder. They are not permitted to receive compensation for employment. However, minors may receive a public education during their permitted time in the U.S.

Transfer Employee Visa: L-1 Visa:

The L-1 visa is a temporary visa (non-immigrant visa) that allows companies operating both in the United States and abroad to transfer certain classes of employee from its foreign operations to its U.S. operations for up to seven years. The employee must have worked for a parent, affiliate, subsidiary, or branch office of the U.S. company outside of the USA for at least one year out of the last three years.

Vocational Education Visa: M-1 Visa:

The M1 visa is suitable for foreign students wishing to attend a full vocational or non-academic course, other than language training, at colleges, universities, or conservatories in the United States. On M1 student visa, a person can remain in the country for one year or for as long as he or she is enrolled as a full time student in the course of study plus 30-days to prepare to leave the U.S. With an M-1 it is possible for a foreign visitor to:

- Transfer from one college to another by notifying the alteration to the USCIS (US Citizenship and Immigration Services);
- Work lawfully on-campus on a part-time basis;
- Work lawfully off-campus on a project study that's related to their area of study

Extraordinary Ability Visa: O-1 Visa:

This visa applies to persons who have extraordinary ability in the sciences, arts, education, business, or athletics, or extraordinary achievements in the motion picture and television field. "Extraordinary ability" for purposes of the arts is not an especially high standard. It means "distinction" which, in turn, means a high level of achievement in the field, substantially above that ordinarily encountered.

Internationally Recognized Performers Visa: P-1 Visa:

This visa applied to individual or team athletes, or members of foreign-based entertainment groups provided the group consists of at least two beneficiaries entering solely to perform or entertain with the group. In general, the group must have been internationally recognized for a sustained period and 75 percent of its members must have been associated with the group for at least one year.



Artist Exchange Visa: P-2 Visa:

This visa applies to artists or entertainers who will perform under a reciprocal exchange program with artists in the US.

Culturally Unique Exchange Visa: P-3 Visa:

This visa is available to individuals or groups coming to the US to perform, teach, or coach in a commercial or noncommercial program that is culturally unique. “Culturally unique” means “a style of artistic expression, methodology, or medium unique to a particular country, nation, society, class, ethnicity, religion, tribe, or other group of persons”. P-3 performers are not required to have been associated with their groups for any length of time.

Cultural Exchange Visa: Q-1 Visa:

This visa applies to participants in an international cultural exchange program for the purpose of providing practical training, employment, and the sharing of the history, culture, and traditions of the visitor’s home country. The visa is appropriate for:

- Foreign nationals entering the U.S. through an international cultural exchange program to share and promote history, culture and traditions of their home country
- Foreign nationals entering the U.S. through an exchange program to undertake employment or practical training that is directly related to sharing culture and history of their home country

TN Visa for Canadians and Mexicans:

Created specifically because of NAFTA, this visa allows Canadian and Mexican citizens to travel freely to jobs in the United States. The visa is good for one year, allows unlimited entrances to the United States, and may be extended indefinitely as long as employment continues for the American company.