

Visa Documents Definitions

All of these forms as well as other forms can be downloaded from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) website.

Employment Authorization Document (EAD) - The EAD authorizes a nonresident alien to work in the United States for a specified period of time. Nonimmigrant aliens who are temporarily in the United States may file a Form I-765 (Application for Employment Authorization) to request an Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

Form DS-2019: (Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor, J-1 Status) - This document is needed to obtain a J-1 status at the US embassy or Consular Office in the home country of a nonresident alien as a sponsor designated by the US Department of State. Exchange Visitors may remain in the United States for the duration of their valid status. It replaces the IAP-66 Certificate of Eligibility form.

Form I-20: (Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant, F-1 Student) - The I-20 is issued from a school which attests to several facts, including a belief that the nonresident is a student who intends to pursue an academic program to completion. This certificate is also a statement that the nonresident alien has been accepted by the school for a full course of study. Form I-20 is required for an F-1 visa application. The form does not guarantee that a visa will be issued nor does it imply that the nonimmigrant is maintaining or has maintained student status. When the foreign student is outside the U.S., the I-20 and financial documentation must be taken to a U.S. Embassy or American Consulate and submitted with an application for a visa. If the foreign student is located inside the U.S., the I-20 is used to notify USCIS of a change in schools or of an extension in the program of study. Form I-20 may also be needed if an application for reinstatement to student status is requested.

Form I-765: (Application for Employment Authorization) - Certain aliens who are temporarily in the United States may file a Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, to request an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). Other aliens who are authorized to work in the United States without restrictions should also use this form to apply for a document evidencing such authorization.

Form I-539: (Application to Extend/Extend Nonimmigrant Status) - This form is used by some nonimmigrants to request extensions of stay or changes from one nonimmigrant category to another nonimmigrant category.

Form I-551: (Permanent Resident Card) - The Permanent Resident Card is commonly known as a "*green card*" or "*resident alien card*". Possession of a green card is evidence that the person has attained status as a lawful permanent resident with a right to live and work permanently in the United States.

Form I-485: (Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status) is submitted by the individual wishing to obtain permanent resident status. It is generally filed with supporting evidence, and may be filed in conjunction with several other applications or petitions.

Form I-797- This is a multi-purpose form for Temporary Worker (H1-B) or Alien of Extraordinary Ability (O-1) status. The Form I-797 is used by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service to notify the petitioner of the action taken on behalf of the beneficiary. The petitioner may be an employer filing on behalf of a nonimmigrant worker or the nonimmigrant who filed on behalf of a family member or for themselves. Form I-797C serves as a receipt notice acknowledging receipt of an application and Form I-797A serves as a Notice of Decision on the application.

Passport - The passport is a formal identity document issued by a national government that identifies an individual as a citizen of a particular country. This document requests permission for the bearer to be permitted to enter and pass through other countries. Passports are connected with the right of legal protection abroad and the right to enter one's country of citizenship. Passports contain the holder's photograph, signature, date of birth, nationality, and sometimes other means of individual identification. A passport is usually necessary for international travel. These documents may be stamped and sealed with visas issued by the host country authorizing entry.

Visa - The visa is an endorsement made in a passport that allows the bearer to enter a particular country. A visa indicates the purpose of a nonimmigrant's visit to the country. It is valid for a specified period of times or a specified number of entries. The validity period of the visa stamp relates only to the period during which it may be used for admission into a particular country

Form I-94: (Arrival-Departure Record) - The I-94 is a small white card which all nonimmigrants receive and complete at their port-of-entry. The I-94 shows the date of arrival in the United States and includes the date in which their authorized period of stay expires. The form must be completed and presented to a United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) inspector who may ask questions about the purpose and length of stay, and the individual's residence abroad. When leaving the country, the I-94 must be returned to a USCIS representative or authorized agent. An approved Form I-94 establishes that the nonimmigrant arrived in the country legally and has not stayed beyond the authorized period.