

Immigration FAQ

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Q. Where do I start with my questions on living or staying in the UK?

A. Try these websites:

[Immigration & Nationality Directorate](#) - The IND is the branch of the Home Office which handles immigration into the UK.

[Applying from the USA](#) - People applying for a visa from the United States should make their visa application to the British Embassy in Chicago; Los Angeles, or New York. If you have any further questions, please contact Chicago; Los Angeles, or New York directly. Click [here](#) for a list of British Embassies in the USA.

[Applying from the UK](#) - see this section of the IND website for forms. Completion of an application form is compulsory for all applications to stay in the UK (except applications for asylum and applications under EC law). There are eight different application forms and it is important that you use the correct form. If you are in any doubt as to which form you should use please telephone the Immigration and Nationality Enquiry Bureau on 0870 606 7766, or if you cannot download an application form, please telephone the Application Forms Unit on 0870 241 0645. Please note, these application forms should only be used if you are already in the UK and are applying to extend your stay. If you are currently overseas, you should contact your nearest British overseas mission.

Q. What about Common Law Unmarried Partners / Same Sex Partners

[See the Britain USA website on this issue](#)

Marriage to a UK citizen

Q. Can I enter the UK on a visitor's visa and marry?

A. Although it can be done, it is frowned upon by the Home Office and is not recommended. It is recommended you enter the UK with a fiancée / fiancé visa. (See below.)

Q. Do I need a fiancée / fiancé visa to enter and marry in the UK?

A. Yes. See this link for more info: [Across The Pond - Fiance\(e\) Visa Specific Questions](#)

Q. What do I need to do after I am married to a UK citizen?

A. You must apply for your Further Leave To Remain visa from the Home Office.

FLR (Further Leave To Remain Visa) FORM - The FLR is an initial settlement visa. The FLR visa allows you to work legally in the UK as well as have access to the [National Health Service](#) and apply for a [National Insurance Number](#) (Social Security number equivalent). When your husband or wife arrives in the United Kingdom, they will be given permission to stay and work for 12 months* under the FLR visa. (*As of May 14, 2003, the FLR will be good for 24 months) Near the end of the FLR period, if you are still married and plan to live together, your husband or wife must apply to remain in the U.K. permanently.

You must apply for your ILR visa about 6 weeks before your FLR visa expires via the Home Office. No sooner and no later. If you apply for the ILR by mail, it can take anywhere from 4 to 12 weeks to receive your passport back from the Home Office. Keep this in mind if you expect to do any travel because if you must ask for your passport back, your application will be withdrawn and you will have to start all over.

You may apply for your FLR or ILR visas in person at the Home Office in Croydon (London). If you do apply in person, be sure to show up EARLY to queue up. 6 a.m. is a good time. The Home Office will expect you to take a number and the process could involve several hours of waiting to be called up for your 'interview'. There is a limited number of people that the Home Office will see in a day. If you arrive late, you could be out of luck! One last thing..be sure to have all of the paperwork required in order and be sure they are ORIGINALS and not photo copies. See the application forms for full instructions on what is required.

ILR (Indefinite Leave To Remain Visa) FORM - once you receive your ILR, you no longer have to deal with the Home Office on settlement in the UK. Again, this may be applied for by mail (4-12 weeks processing) or in person at the Home Office. Again, be sure to arrive as early as possible if applying in person. [See above](#).

Q. What if I have posted by passport to the Home Office to get my visa and I need it back to travel?

A. If you want your passport back so that you can travel, the Home Office will return it, but your application will be withdrawn. See this link for more: [Getting your passport back](#).

Work permits

Q. Is it difficult to find employment in the UK as a US citizen?

A. Yes, it is difficult. The rules are that all jobs in the UK must first be offered to UK citizens. If they cannot be filled by UK citizens, they must be offered to European Union citizens. If they cannot be filled by EU citizens, then these jobs are opened up to non-UK / non-EU citizens. Each employer must prove that the job cannot be filled by UK or EU citizens, making it difficult for employers to offer jobs to US citizens. It is not impossible, but it is difficult to get a company to sponsor you because of these rules. **It is strongly advised that you do not seek illegal 'under the table' employment in the U.K. or you may risk deportation and refusal to re-enter the U.K.**

Visiting As A Tourist

Q. What are the rules on visiting the UK as a tourist?

A. You are allowed to enter and stay in the UK for up to 6 months. You may also extend your visitors visa for another 6 months via the Home Office..

Visiting As A Student

Q. How can I study in the U.K.?

A. BUNAC is a very well-known and established organization which helps students from all over the world to live and study in the U.K. Please see their website at www.bunac.org. You might also want to read our page on [University / College / Study](#). You may also extend your student visa. See this link: [Extending your visa/leave to remain as a student](#)

Forms

[Application Forms](#) - The Immigration and Nationality Directorate can provide you with forms. **Please note, these application forms should only be used if you are already in the UK and are applying to extend your stay.** If you are currently overseas, you should contact your nearest British embassy.

Dual Citizenship

Q. Can I apply for dual US / UK citizenship?

A. You may apply once you have been married to a UK citizen for 3years. See this link for more information: [Dual Citizenship](#).

Settling

Q. How can I settle in the UK?

A. There are several ways in which an American citizen may settle in the United Kingdom:

A. [Umarried Partner](#)

B. [Highly Skilled Migrant Program - Questions and Answers](#) on this program.

C. [BUNAC](#) - BUNAC's overseas work/travel programmes offer students and young people an enriching and affordable alternative to package tourism.

D. US Company transfer - being transferred by your US company to the U.K. Logistically worked out by individual companies.

E. [UK Ancestor](#)

G. [Student Visa](#)

H. [Visitor Visa](#)

I. [Innovator](#)

J. Au pair - The USA is not included in the UK au pair scheme.

K. [Working Holiday](#)

Bringing Children and Pets

Q. How do I bring my children over to the U.K.?

A. Please see this link: [Bringing Children](#)

Q. How do I bring my pets over to the U.K.?

A. Please see this link: [Bringing Pets](#)

Useful Links

[UK Visas](#) - All the information and guidance on obtaining U.K. visas.

[Residence In Britain](#) - Information from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office in London.

[Over The Pond](#) - Compiled by an American who has been through the process of marrying a Brit. This guide is for those engaged or who are married to a permanent resident or citizen of the United Kingdom. It includes information on all aspects of marriage-based immigration to the United Kingdom -- obtaining a fiance(e) visa, marriage visa, permanent residency, and citizenship. It also includes information on getting married in Scotland; if you are to be married in England, Wales, or Northern Ireland. Be sure to check out the [FAQ](#).

[American Embassy London A-Z Site Index](#)

[Britain USA](#) - run by the British Information Services, a New York-based Section of the British Embassy in Washington DC

Get your questions answered! - For further questions, please see our [Immigration forum](#). This is a free service. You may post your questions and receive answers in a timely manner from others who have gone through what you are about to.