**The UK has very tough immigration laws, which are enforced. Before travelling, make sure you have all the required visas and documentation or you will be refused entry. This section is intended to give you an overview of what documentation you may need.**



Who needs a UK visa?

If you are not a British citizen you might need entry clearance (that is permission) to enter the UK. Only British nationals, European Union citizens, non-EU member states of the European Economic Area (EEA - Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland), Switzerland, and members of the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) are exempt from needing a visa to enter the UK.

If you do not fall under any of the above-mentioned states, you must check whether you will need a visa for entry, or for long stays (over 6 months).

There are 56 countries and territories that do not need an entry visa for stays of up to 6 months. Anyone planning on staying for longer than the permitted six months must obtain a proper visa (study, work, or otherwise) in order to remain in the UK legally.

Since December 2013, citizens of Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have been able to obtain an Electronic Visa Waiver (EVW) online. This allows them to visit or study for up to six months without a visa. For stays longer than six months, a visa is required.

**You will also need a visa if you:**

* are stateless (you do not have a nationality).
* hold a non-national travel document (a travel document which does not give you the nationality or citizenship of the country that issued it).
* hold a passport issued by an authority unrecognised in the UK.
* are a refugee (whether you plan to work or study, even for 6 months or less).

Nationals of the following 10 countries now need a visa when staying in the UK longer than six months: Australia, Canada, Hong Kong SAR, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea and the USA.

You can find out what type of entry clearance you need based on your nationality, purpose of the visit and country location, by going to the Foreign Office page, click [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration) .

Visas are issued for a maximum stay of six months. If you require a visa and wish to remain in the UK longer than six months, you must leave the country and apply for a new visa. If you wish to leave and return to the UK within the duration of your visa, it will save you a lot of trouble if you apply for a multiple-entry visa. If you only have a single-entry visa you will have to apply for a new visa each time you leave the country.

Make sure you check whether you need a visa or not as there are many different types of visas (study, work, marriage, joining a spouse, visitor, amongst others) and you may or may not require one depending on nationality or amount of time you plan to remain in the UK.

**Where to apply for a United Kingdom visa?**

Visas and other forms of entry clearance (such as an entry certificate) for England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland need to be obtained prior to your arrival in Great Britain.  You must also be outside the Isle of Man and the Channels Island to apply for your visa. Visa applications are started online via the [Apply for a UK Visa](https://www.gov.uk/apply-uk-visa)  website. Before starting your online application, check the website’s list of [visa application centers](https://www.gov.uk/find-a-visa-application-centre)  so you know where you must go for your face to face appointment (it could be in another country).

How to apply for a UK visa?

To start application for a visa, you must enter the website mentioned above and choose your visa type. Then you will need to:

* register for an account
* fill out the application form (in English)
* pay for the visa fee online if applicable
* print out your form
* book and attend an appointment at any of their listed visa application centers

If you are required to have an appointment, you must bring the following original (no photocopies are allowed) support documents (this does not guarantee that your visa will be approved and you must keep that in mind):

* Valid travel documentation (passport or any document that allows you to travel internationally)
* One passport sized photograph

**Strongly recommended support documents:**

* Previous travel documentation
* Financial documents to prove economic solvency, this can be in the form of a bank statement, proof of earnings (letter from employer, with start date of employment, salary, position and contact details), or letter and documentation from a third party that resides or visits the UK legally at the time of your stay, providing financial support (in addition to themselves and/or family)
* Confirmation of legal residence (if you reside in a country that is not where your passport was issued)
* Details of employment or studies (confirmation from education institute or employer confirming your enrollment)
* Business registration documents if you are self employed

Visa applications can take from 3 to 8 weeks to be approved (or denied). It is recommended that you apply approximately three months before your travels to allow enough time for the application to be processed.

If you are denied a visa you will be notified in writing of the refusal and the reasons for it. In certain cases you will have the right to appeal the decision and as such will be given advice on how to do so. Instead of appealing you can simply apply again, but if the reasons for the initial refusal still apply, your application will probably be turned down again.

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