



B1-B2 VISA Overview

(<https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/visit/visitor.html>)

Generally, a citizen of a foreign country who wishes to enter the United States must first obtain a visa, either a nonimmigrant visa for temporary stay, or an immigrant visa for permanent residence. Visitor visas are nonimmigrant visas for persons who want to enter the United States temporarily for business (visa category B-1), tourism, pleasure or visiting (visa category B-2), or a combination of both purposes (B-1/B-2). The maximum duration of stay on a B1-B2 visa is 6 months.

Most commonly scholars visit Bard College for the following purpose:

- **Conference, Meeting, or Business Event attendee:**
You can travel to the US on a B1 visa for a conference, meeting, business event provided you will receive no salary or income from a U.S based company/entity.
- **Scientific, Educational, Professional or Business purposes:**
You can travel to the US on a B1 visa for the above purpose if you will receive no salary or income from a U.S. based company/entity.
- **Lecturer or Speaker:**
You can travel to the US on a B1 visa and offer a lecture provided no salary or income from a U.S. based company/entity, other than expenses incidental to the visit, are received. If honorarium will be received, activities can last no longer than nine days at any single institution or organization; payment must be offered by an institution or organization described in INA 212(q); honorarium is for services conducted for the benefit of the institution or entity; and visa applicant will not have accepted such payment or expenses from more than five institutions or organizations over the last six months.
- **Researcher**
You can travel to the US on a B1 visa for the purpose of research provided there is no salary/income from a U.S. based source, or benefit to U.S. institution.

Travel Purposes Not Permitted On Visitor Visas:

- study
- employment
- paid performances, or any professional performance before a paying audience
- work as foreign press, radio, film, journalists, and other information media
- permanent residence in the United States

How to Apply

There are several steps to apply for a visa. The order of these steps and how you complete them may vary at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate where you apply. Please consult the instructions available on the [U.S. Embassy or Consulate website](#) where you will apply.

Complete the Online Visa Application

- **Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application, [Form DS-160](#)** – [Learn more](#) about completing the [DS-160](#). You must:
 - 1) complete the online visa application and
 - 2) print the application form confirmation page to bring to your interview.
- **Photo** – You will upload your photo while completing the online Form DS-160. Your photo must be in the format explained in the [Photograph Requirements](#).

Schedule an Interview

While interviews are generally not required for applicants of certain ages outlined below, consular officers have the discretion to require an interview of any applicant, regardless of age.

If you are age:

13 and younger

14-79

80 and older

Then an interview is:

Generally not required

Required (some exceptions for renewals)

Generally not required

You must schedule an appointment for your visa interview, generally, at the [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) in the country where you live. You may schedule your interview at any U.S. Embassy or Consulate, but be aware that it may be difficult to qualify for a visa outside of your place of permanent residence. Wait times for interview appointments vary by location, season, and visa category, so you should apply for your visa early. Review the interview wait time for the location where you will apply.

Prepare for Your Interview

- **Fees - Pay the non-refundable visa application fee**, if you are required to pay it before your interview. When your visa is approved, you may also pay a visa issuance fee, if applicable to your nationality.
- Application Fee: \$160

Gather Required Documentation

Gather and prepare the following required documents before your visa interview:

- **Passport** valid for travel to the United States - Your passport must be valid for at least six months beyond your period of stay in the United States, unless exempt by [country-specific agreements](#) (PDF - 57 KB). If more than one person is included in your passport, each person who needs a visa must submit a separate application.
- **Nonimmigrant Visa Application, [Form DS-160](#) confirmation page**
- **Application fee payment receipt**, if you are required to pay before your interview.
- **Photo** – You will upload your photo while completing the online Form DS-160. If the [photo upload fails](#), you must bring one printed photo in the format explained in the [Photograph Requirements](#).

Additional Documentation May Be Required

Review the instructions for how to apply for a visa on the website of the [embassy or consulate](#) where you will apply. Additional documents may be requested to establish if you are qualified. For example, additional requested documents may include evidence of:

- The purpose of your trip;
- Your intent to depart the United States after your trip; and/or
- Your ability to pay all costs of the trip.

Evidence of your employment and/or your family ties may be sufficient to show the purpose of your trip and your intent to return to your home country. If you cannot cover all the costs for your trip, you may show evidence that another person will cover some or all costs for your trip.

Note: Visa applicants must qualify on the basis of the applicant's residence and ties abroad, rather than assurances from U.S. family and friends. A letter of invitation or Affidavit of Support is not needed to apply for a nonimmigrant tourist visa. If you do choose to bring a letter of invitation or Affidavit of Support to your interview, please remember that it is not one of the factors that we use in determining whether to issue or deny a nonimmigrant tourist visa.

Attend Your Visa Interview

During your visa interview, a consular officer will determine whether you are qualified to receive a visa, and if so, which visa category is appropriate based on your purpose of travel. You will need to establish that you meet the requirements under U.S. law to receive the category of visa for which you are applying.

Ink-free, digital fingerprint scans will be taken as part of your application process. They are usually taken during your interview, but this varies based on location.

After your visa interview, your application may require further [administrative processing](#). You will be informed by the consular officer if further processing is necessary for your application.

When the visa is approved, you may pay a visa issuance fee if applicable to your nationality, and will be informed how your passport with visa will be returned to you. Review the [visa processing time](#), to learn how soon your passport with visa will generally be ready for pick-up or delivery by the courier.

Entering the United States

A visa allows a foreign citizen to travel to a U.S. port-of-entry (generally an airport) and request permission to enter the United States. A visa does not guarantee entry into the United States. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials at the port-of-entry have authority to permit or deny admission to the United States. If you are allowed to enter the United States, the CBP official will provide an admission stamp or a paper Form I-94, Arrival/Departure Record. Learn more on the [CBP website](#).

Extending Your Stay

See [Extend Your Stay](#) on the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) website to learn about requesting to extend your stay beyond the date indicated on your admission stamp or paper Form I-94.

You must depart the United States on or before the date indicated on your admission stamp or paper Form I-94, unless your request to extend your stay is approved by USCIS.

Failure to depart the United States on time will result in you being [out of status](#). Under U.S. law, visas of travelers who are out of status are automatically voided ([Section 222\(g\) of the Immigration and Nationality Act](#)). If you had a multiple-entry visa and it was voided due to you being out of status, it will not be valid for future entries into the United States.

Failure to depart the United States on time may also result in you being ineligible for visas you may apply for in the future. Review [Visa Denials](#) and [Ineligibilities and Waivers: Laws](#) to learn more.

Change of Status

While in the United States, you may be able to request that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) change your nonimmigrant status to another nonimmigrant category. See [Change My Nonimmigrant Status](#) on the USCIS website to learn more.

Requesting a change of status from USCIS while you are in the United States and before your authorized stay expires does not require that you apply for a new visa. However, if you cannot remain in the United States while USCIS processes your change of status request, you must apply for a visa at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Additional Information

- Visitors are not permitted to accept employment or work in the United States.
- We cannot guarantee that you will be issued a visa. Do not make final travel plans or buy tickets until you have a visa.
- Unless canceled or revoked, a visa is valid until its expiration date. Therefore, a valid U.S. visa in an expired passport is still valid. If you have a valid visa in your expired passport, do not remove it from your expired passport. You may use your valid visa in your expired passport along with a new valid passport for travel and admission to the United States.

Visa Renewal

Whether you are applying for the first time or renewing your visa, you will use the same application process (please review [How to Apply](#), above). Some applicants seeking to renew their visas in certain visa classes may be eligible for the Interview Waiver Program (IWP) which allows qualified individuals to apply for visa renewals without being interviewed in person by a U.S. consular officer. Review the instructions on the website of the [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) where you will apply to determine if the IWP is available and if you qualify.

Further Questions:

- **Case-Specific Questions** - Contact the U.S. Embassy or Consulate handling your visa application for status information. Select [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) for contact information.
- **General Questions** - review [Contact Us](#).

TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT REQUIREMENTS:

If you will be requesting reimbursement of your travel expenses and you are a B-1 or W-B visa holder, Bard College will need a copy of your [I-94 card](#), visa, and valid passport.