

General information concerning the visa procedure**

Who needs a visa?

In general, foreign nationals require a visa for entry into and residence in the Federal Republic of Germany. This visa must be applied for from the relevant German mission abroad (embassy or consulate general) in their home country. Citizens of certain countries do not require a visa if they wish to visit Germany for a period of **up to three months** without taking up gainful employment.

An overview of the countries whose citizens require/do not require a visa to enter the Federal Republic can be found on the Internet pages of the [Federal Foreign Office](#).

Foreign citizens that intend to stay for **longer than three months** or **take up gainful employment** must obtain a visa, irrespective of their nationality. Citizens of the following countries are exempt from this obligation: Australia, Israel, Japan, Canada, Republic of Korea, New Zealand and the United States of America. These may apply for the necessary residence permit from the Foreigners' Authority within three months of entering the country.

If you are in any doubt about whether you require a visa, please contact a German mission abroad for further information.

Where can I get a visa?

Visa applications are processed and visas are issued by the foreign missions of the Federal Republic of Germany in the applicant's respective country of origin or authorized residence.

How can I apply for a visa?

Application forms are issued by the relevant German mission abroad, to where the completed application must also be submitted. The application must include the exact purpose of entry into and stay in Germany as well as the location and duration of the applicant's intended stay. Additional information may be required depending on the purpose of the stay.

The information provided must be given completely and truthfully. Any inaccuracies or ambiguities may result in the visa being revoked or the residence permit not being renewed, thus requiring the person to leave the country.

If an entry ban has been imposed due to extradition or deportation, the person concerned must apply for the entry ban to be annulled before applying for a visa. This application must be submitted to the Foreigners' Authority that imposed the entry ban.

* This does not apply to citizens of European Union Member States, EEA countries or Switzerland

How can I extend my stay on federal territory?

Applications for residence permits must be submitted to the Foreigners' Authority before your visa expires or before the end of your permitted visa-free stay.

What is the procedure for applying for a visa?

Procedure without involvement of the Foreigners' Authority:

Applications for visas that do not require approval by a Foreigners' Authority (e.g. for intended stays of up to three months) may be processed by the relevant German mission abroad on their own authority.

Procedure with involvement of the Foreigners' Authority:

Applications for visas that require approval (in particular those for permanent stays) are forwarded by the respective German mission abroad to the responsible German Foreigners' Authority with a request for comment. The applications are usually forwarded by the Foreign Office's courier service. Because visa applications contain sensitive data, extra security measures are required that make the dispatch process more complicated than would otherwise be the case. Dispatching therefore takes an average of two to three weeks. Although Federal Office of Administration in Cologne faxes applications to the Foreigners' Authority before dispatching, they cannot generally be processed until the complete application and all of the necessary documents arrive at the Foreigners' Authority.

The Foreigners' Authority assesses the documents and makes any necessary inquiries. Reference persons resident or living in Berlin (e.g. the spouse or future employers) are often requested to provide additional documentation or information.

Once the application has been assessed, the Foreigners' Authority issues a statement to the German mission abroad. **The latter then assumes sole responsibility for deciding on whether to issue the visa.** The statement by the Foreigners' Authority is a purely internal administrative procedure addressed neither to the applicant nor to the reference persons, but exclusively to the respective German mission abroad. The outcome is therefore not usually communicated to the applicant. The German mission abroad alone notifies the applicant of its decision. If the application is turned down, an appeal may be lodged with the German mission abroad.

General information:

This data sheet is based on "normal" cases. Please note that deviations are possible in individual cases. Please refer to the relevant leaflets for information on how to apply for a visa for the subsequent immigration of family members of foreign or German nationals, for employment purposes, business trips, studying in Germany and working as an au pair.

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