How Do I Apply for a Visa?

Do I need a visa to work, study, or undertake vocational training in Germany? Here you can find out everything you need to know about visa requirements, the visa application process, and residence titles.

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First, a few general points: the necessity for a **visa** for Germany depends on your nationality and the purpose of your visit to Germany.

Visa regulations for non-EU nationals

Are you not a citizen of the EU or an **EFTA** country and would like to work, study or do vocational training in Germany?

- In principle, you are **required to obtain a visa**: you must apply for a visa at the **German mission abroad in your country of residence** before entering Germany. This will allow you to start your job, vocational training or studies in Germany (depending on the **type of visa**).
- After entering Germany, you must apply for a r**esidence permit** at the **foreigners authority** in Germany in good time before your visa expires.

There are **exceptions** to this visa requirement for nationals of so-called "**privileged countries**". Depending on the purpose of their stay, they may enter Germany without a visa. You can find the exceptions here:

For nationals of Australia, Israel, Japan, Canada, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the USA

For nationals of Andorra, Brazil, El Salvador, Honduras, Monaco and San Marino

The infographic "**Entry and employment of privileged citizens**" also provides an overview of these regulations. Further information on visa requirements and visa-free travel is available on the **Federal Foreign Office's website**.

Multiple nationalities: What do you need to bear in mind?

If you hold more than one nationality, you should first check whether you are eligible for privileged entry under any of these nationalities.

Quick-Check

Your pathway to Germany starts here

Are you looking to work, study, complete vocational training, or start a business in Germany? Choose what you would like to do, then start the Quick-Check.

work | study | do vocational training | start a business | do research

Start Quick-Check

EU nationals do not require a visa

If you are a citizen of the EU or an EFTA country (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland), **freedom of movement** applies to you:

- You may enter Germany without a visa and have unrestricted access to the German labour market.
- You also do not need a visa or a **residence permit** to study, undertake vocational training, or for other purposes in Germany.
- In all cases, the only requirement for entry is a valid identity card or passport.

How to apply for your visa

Step 1: Check the requirements

Before applying for any visa (regardless of the type), you must check whether you meet the basic requirements for being granted a **residence title** (Section 5(1) of the Residence Act [AufenthG]):

- **Sufficient means of support**: during the visa application process, you must prove that you can finance your own living expenses in Germany. There are various ways to do this: depending on the purpose of

your visit, you can use either your future salary, a **Declaration of Commitment** or a **blocked account** containing a specific minimum amount as proof.

- **Proof of identity and nationality**: you must provide proof of your identity and nationality. As a rule, a valid passport, which you submit with your visa application, is sufficient for this purpose.
- **No grounds for expulsion:** there must be no reasons preventing your stay in Germany. The authorities will check whether you could pose a threat to public safety and order. Indications of this may arise, for example, from the information you provide in your visa application or during the security interview.
- **Passport requirement**: as a national of a non-EU or EFTA country, you may generally only enter Germany if you hold a valid and recognised passport or passport substitute. You can find out the specific requirements your passport must meet from the relevant **German mission abroad**.

In addition to these basic requirements, you must also comply with the specific requirements relating to the purpose of your entry and stay. Depending on why you are coming to Germany – for example, to work or study – you must meet different requirements (such as German language skills or a degree) for your visa. You can find out what you need to bear in mind in the "**Visa types at a Glance**" section.

Do I need a visa sponsorship for my visa application?

No, you do not need a visa sponsorship from an employer to enter Germany for work. If you are required to have a visa, you will usually apply for it yourself at the relevant German mission abroad. Please refer to the "**Visa Types at a Glance**" section for more information on the relevant application requirements.

Step 2: Apply for a visa in your country of residence

If you meet all the visa requirements, you will need to prepare the documents for your visa application. You can usually find the list of required documents on the website of the German Embassy in your country of residence. To do this, look under "**Contacts worldwide**" to find the embassy responsible for your case.

You can submit your visa application online via the Federal Foreign Office's **Consular Services Portal**. If it is not yet possible to apply for a visa via the Consular Services Portal in your country, please use the **digital**

Videx application. Complete the online form and submit it, together with the required documents, to the German embassy responsible for your case.

Plan your visa application well in advance

The waiting time for an appointment at the German embassy varies depending on the location. You should therefore allow plenty of time for the appointment request and the processing time.

The **fee for an entry visa** is 75 euros. This applies to all visas for a long-term stay in Germany. The fee is non-refundable if your visa application is refused.

In certain cases, the fees may be **reduced** or you may not have to pay any fees at all. For example, spouses and children of German nationals do not have to pay any fees. This also applies to people who receive a publicly funded scholarship for their stay in Germany. You can find out more details from the relevant **German mission abroad** or from **the Federal Foreign Office**.

Fast-track procedure for skilled workers: how to speed things up

Have you already found an employer and are due to start work soon? Your future employer can speed up the process from Germany. Please advise them about the **fast-track procedure for skilled workers** before you book an appointment at the embassy.

Step 3: Planning your entry into Germany

Has your visa been granted? You can now start preparing for your trip to Germany.

Make sure you bring all your **personal documents** with you, both the originals and digital copies: for example, your birth certificate, school leaving certificates and qualification documents, and, if applicable, your driving licence and marriage certificate.

Remember that you will need **health insurance** in Germany from day one. Proof of insurance will be required at the latest when you collect your visa from the German embassy. If necessary, take out travel health insurance to cover the period before you start your job, training or studies, and confirm its requirements with your local German mission abroad. For more information, please see the "**Health Insurance**" section.

Find out about your new home before you travel. In the "**Arriving & Living**" section, you'll find information on key areas of life to help you settle in: finding accommodation, language courses and more.

Step 4: Apply for a residence permit in Germany

A warm welcome to Germany! Your visa is usually valid for up to twelve months. Within this period, you must apply for a residence permit so that you can stay in Germany on a long-term basis. Immediately after your arrival, contact the **competent foreigners authority** and find out which documents you need to submit your application. Then make an appointment to apply for the relevant residence permit.

Information on the web

Federal Foreign Office (AA)

You can find out which visa you need in order to come to Germany using the Visa-Navigator.

Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)

Centre of Excellence for Asylum, Migration and Integration in Germany

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