

Inviting Relatives & Friends: B-2 Tourist Visa

What kind of visa should my relatives obtain?

Most visitors should apply for a B-2 visitor visa at the U.S. Embassy/Consulate in order to enter the U.S. as a tourist. Review the [Department of State site](#) for more information on this type of visa.

However, some individuals may be eligible to enter the U.S. on the **Visa Waiver Program** (see below) instead.

Parents and siblings of people in F-1 or J-1 status are *not eligible* for F-2 or J-2 status. Forms I-20 and DS-2019 are *not* issued to invite parents, parents-in-law, or siblings. If you wish, you may send your relatives a **copy** of your I-20 or DS-2019 form, but they should not submit it to the consular officer unless asked for it. **Do not** send your original I-20 or DS-2019 to your parents, other non-dependent relatives, or friends. You should keep the form yourself.

What is the Visa Waiver Program? (WT)

The Visa Waiver Program allows visitors from certain countries to visit the U.S. for pleasure or business up to 90 days without a visa. For a complete list of participating countries, please visit the Department of State site. Visitors must meet certain requirements to participate in the program. Eligible visitors do not need to visit a U.S. consulate and apply for a visa prior to visiting the U.S. Visa waiver travelers will instead be required to register their travel plans in the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) a minimum of 72 hours prior to departure.

Individuals who enter the U.S. on the Visa Waiver Program are not eligible to change status; nor may visitors apply for an extension of their stay beyond 90 days. Individuals who previously experienced visa denials or who believe they might be ineligible for a visa should contact their local U.S. embassy or consulate prior to traveling on the Visa Waiver Program.

What documents do my relatives need to obtain a B-2 visa?

International Services recommends that your relatives take the following documents with them to the U.S. consulate:

1. *An invitation from you:* Write a letter in English to your relative, stating (1) whom you are inviting, (2) the purpose of the visit (for example, vacation, attend graduation, meet a new baby), (3) the dates (even approximate dates) of the visit, (4) what financial support you are offering (for example, cost of travel, room and board)
2. *Evidence of financial support:* If you are going to provide any financial support for the visit, you need to furnish your relatives with appropriate documentation. This could be a letter verifying employment and/or a bank statement showing not just your current balance(s), but also the *history* of the account, making clear that the current balance is not the result of a recent, large deposit. Include information about the date the account was opened and the average monthly

balance. You may also need to submit an Affidavit of Support if your visitors will pay for their expenses themselves though, you are not required to complete the Affidavit of Support form.

3. *Visa application form, along with photographs*
4. *Evidence of ties to the home country:* The reason U.S. consular officers **most frequently deny** B-2 visa applications is lack of evidence of strong ties to the visitor's home country. Under U.S. law, consular officers are not supposed to issue a B visa if they do not believe the applicant has ties that will bring him or her back home. Go here for more information on this matter and denials.
5. *Support letter from ATS International Services:* U.S. consular officers sometimes ask B-2 visa applicants for a letter certifying that the people inviting them are in fact students or scholars in the United States. **If you need such a letter please fill out a REQUEST FOR FAMILY/FRIEND INVITATION LETTER (form available on oneATS or from Manager of International Student Services) and indicate the following:**
 1. *Name and birthdays of who is coming*
 2. Arrival Date
 3. Departure Date
 4. Information about the purpose of their visit
 5. Information about your graduation application

Your family members or friends should also bring “proof of ties” to their home country with them when they apply for the visa stamp at the U.S. consulate, such as:

- Copies of deeds to any property (land, house, apartment) they own at home
- Bank statements of any accounts they maintain at home
- If they are employed, they could bring a letter from that employer stating that they will return to their job after the visit to the U.S.
- All other documentation as specifically required by the Embassy or Consulate (check website for the necessary documentation: <http://usembassy.state.gov>)

Additional information about the B-2 Visa:

- Visitors in B-2 status may have a difficult time changing status in the U.S. to a different visa category.
- B-2 visitors are advised NOT to enroll in classes at a U.S. university or college.
- Note: The length of the visa does not equate to the length of stay. When the visitor enters the U.S., their documents will be inspected by a U.S. border official. The officer will determine the amount of time the visitor will be permitted to remain in the U.S. and write that date on the I-94 Arrival/Departure record. The maximum period of admission for a regular B-2 visitor is 6 months.

For detailed information about the B-2 nonimmigrant visa, go to:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1262.html