



SECURING OUR BORDER CONTROLLING MIGRATION

YOUR STAY IN THE UK

Important information for visitors, students
and workers with a visa to come to the UK.



Now that you have been issued with your visa we look forward to welcoming you to the UK.

This leaflet provides you with customs and immigration information that you need to know before you come to the UK.

You should read and understand this information before you begin your journey.





Understand what happens at the UK border

When you arrive at the UK border, you will need to show the following items to a UK Border Agency officer:

- Valid passport
- Valid visa
- Completed landing card

Your passport will be scanned and your landing card and visa will be checked to ensure that you have the right to enter the UK. Your fingerprints may also be taken. If you do not have a valid passport and visa you will be refused entry to the UK.

The UK works closely with other countries to ensure that people entering the UK are who they say they are. Fraud and forgery experts in the UK Border Agency stop many individuals attempting to enter the UK using false or forged documents.

The officer may ask you for more information about your visit before allowing you to enter. **Anyone found to have used false documents or provided false information to obtain a UK visa will be refused entry and may be banned from entering the UK for up to 10 years.**

It is also a criminal offence to assist someone unlawfully to enter the UK. If convicted, this can result in a prison sentence of up to 14 years.

TIP

Make sure that your documents are valid and are in good order before you travel.

Travelling with children

The UK Border Agency takes its duty to safeguard children very seriously. If a child (under 18 years) is travelling to the UK as an accompanied child, he or she must travel with the adult named on the child's visa. If a child is travelling as an unaccompanied child, he or she may travel alone or with another adult.

If you are accompanying a child and are not the child's parent, or may appear not to be the parent (for example if you have a different family name), it may ease your entry into the UK if you carry evidence of your relationship with the child and/or the reason why you are bringing the child to the UK. This evidence could include:

- a birth or adoption certificate showing your relationship with the child
- a letter from the child's school detailing term dates
- return tickets covering your period of stay or
- divorce/marriage certificates if you are the parent but have a different family name from the child.



Understand the terms of your visa...

Your visa is an important document and shows any restrictions that apply to you.

When you receive your visa it is your responsibility to **read through it thoroughly, check it and understand it**. If you think there is an error on your visa, you should immediately contact the visa application centre which issued you with your visa.

The image below shows an example visa highlighting the information you will need to look out for on your own visa.

Whether you are visiting the UK or coming here for work or study, you must comply with the conditions attached to your visa. For example, if your visa does not allow you to work, you must not do so or **you could be fined, deported and even banned from returning to the UK for up to 10 years**.

...and do not abuse them

You may need to pay for using the National Health Service, although you would not normally be required to pay for emergency treatment in advance. You should hold adequate insurance for your trip and discuss any potential costs with your provider before any treatment.

You will only be allowed to extend or change your visa while in the UK in certain, very limited circumstances. **If you are in any doubt about what your visa allows you to do, you should visit the website below for the most up-to-date information.**

TIP

For more information about your visa visit www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas

Valid until date: You must leave the UK by this date, unless your visa allows you to seek an extension of your stay. If you are allowed to apply for an extension, you must do this **before** your visa expires.

Valid from date: You cannot enter the UK before this date.

Length of stay: This is the maximum amount of time you are permitted to stay in the UK. If you have a multiple entry visa this will be the maximum amount of time you are able to stay in the UK on any one occasion.

Entry terms: If your visa says 'MULT' (multiple), it means you can enter the UK a number of times while the visa is valid. If your visa says 01, you may use it to enter the UK only once, if it says 02, you can use it to enter the UK twice while the visa is valid.

Other conditions: Any specific conditions attached to your visa are listed here. For example, if your visa does not allow you to work it will say so here. If your visa says 'No recourse to public funds' you will not be able to claim most benefits, tax credits or housing assistance that are paid for by the UK government. If you are in the UK as a visitor, you are not allowed access to the National Health Service except in an emergency.

Visa category: Your visa is for a specific purpose which you must keep to. Different visas are different colours.





Bringing food or plant items into the UK

There are strict controls on the food products you can bring into the UK from outside the European Union (EU), even for personal use. Certain food products can carry pests and diseases, and these could have a harmful effect on the UK environment and economy.

Foods you cannot bring into the UK include:

- all meat and meat products
- all milk and dairy products

Import restrictions also apply to fish, fish products, egg, honey and some fruits, plants and vegetables. You must declare these products at the red channel or the red-point phone when you arrive in the UK.

The UK Border Agency uses detection dogs and trained officers to detect banned or restricted items. **All illegal products will be seized and may be destroyed. If you fail to declare items, you could face criminal prosecution, a fine or even imprisonment.**

You are responsible for the contents of your baggage, so be aware of what your baggage contains.

TIP

To find out what types of food are banned or restricted from entry into the UK visit the customs area on our website www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/travellingtotheuk and read our leaflets 'Bringing food products into the UK' and 'Bringing fruit, vegetables and plant products into the UK'. You can also call the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) Helpline on +44 (0)20 7238 6951 if you have any questions.

Items you cannot bring into the UK

You are not allowed to bring any of the following goods into the UK:

- Illegal drugs
- Firearms and ammunition
- Offensive weapons, including knives
- Indecent and obscene material
- Counterfeit, pirated and fake goods
- Endangered species

You must declare these items on arrival at the red channel or red-point phone. **Banned goods will be seized and may be destroyed, and you could be prosecuted.**



TIP

For information on the types of goods you cannot bring into the UK, see the 'Travelling to the UK Notice 1' leaflet in the customs area at www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/travellingtotheuk

Restrictions on other goods

When travelling to the UK from outside the EU, you may bring in an allowance of goods (see right) for your own use (or as gifts) without paying UK tax or duty.

The alcohol and tobacco allowances are only available to those aged 17 and over. Tax or duty are charged on the full value of any item over £390. You cannot group your individual allowances to bring in an item worth more than the limit.

If we have reason to suspect that the goods are not for your own use, you will be stopped and questioned by a UK Border Agency officer and your goods may be seized.

Tobacco

- 200 cigarettes; or
- 100 cigarillos; or
- 50 cigars; or
- 250g of tobacco



Alcohol

- 16 litres of beer and
- 4 litres of still table wine and
- 1 litre of spirits or strong liqueurs (over 22% volume), or 2 litres of fortified wine (such as port or sherry), sparkling wine or other alcoholic beverage of less than 22%



Other goods

- £390 worth of all other goods including gifts and souvenirs



TIP

For full details of your allowance see the 'Travelling to the UK Notice 1' leaflet in the customs area at www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/travellingtotheuk

Declare cash of 10,000 euros or more

When arriving in the UK directly from a country outside the EU you must complete a cash declaration form if you are carrying cash of 10,000 euros or more (including coins, traveller's cheques, banker's drafts or the same amount in other currencies). This is to prevent cash being brought into the UK for illegal purposes.

You will also need to make a declaration if you leave the UK and travel directly to a country outside the EU with cash of 10,000 euros or more, or the equivalent.

If you fail to complete a cash declaration form, or you supply incorrect information, you will face a penalty charge.

TIP

If you are unsure about whether the currency you are carrying is the same or more than the equivalent of 10,000 euros, please speak to a UK Border Agency officer.



Stay informed and stay legal



Subscribe today to receive automatic customs and immigration updates by email. To register, visit www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-and-updates/newsfeeds

Feedback

Your views matter to us. Your feedback will help us make improvements and develop our services. We are interested in hearing from visa applicants about their recent experience when applying for a visa.

To take part, visit www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-survey

If you want to complain about the service you have received from the UK Border Agency, you can do this online.

Visit www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-complain

Help us to stop human trafficking

Human trafficking is a serious crime where people are often forced into exploitation through prostitution, slavery, domestic service or forced labour.

If your visa allows you to work in the UK, be aware that this right may be limited to certain types of employment only. Do not accept offers of employment outside your visa entitlement as this may result in you being exploited.

Further information visit www.blueblindfold.org.uk

To tell us about any unlawful activity relating to border security, immigration or customs crime, you can contact:

Customs Hotline - 0800 595 0000 (this telephone number can be used in the UK only). Email: customs.hotline@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk

Crimestoppers - 0800 555 111 (this telephone number can be used in the UK only) or complete the online form on the Crimestoppers website www.crimestoppers-uk.org

You do not have to give your name or any personal details when you call.

The information in this leaflet is correct at the time of writing. You should always check the UK Border Agency website for the most up-to-date information relevant to your own personal circumstances. Produced by the UK Border Agency
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1. Home (<https://www.gov.uk/>)
2. Visas and immigration (<https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration>)
3. Travelling to the UK (<https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/arriving-in-the-uk>)

Entering the UK

1. Overview

Your passport or identity card (<https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control/before-you-leave-for-the-uk>) will be checked when you arrive at a UK port or airport to make sure you're allowed to come into the country. It must be valid for the whole of your stay.

You may also need a visa (<https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control/before-you-leave-for-the-uk>) to come into or travel through the UK (<https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control/layovers-and-transiting>), depending on your nationality.

There will be no change to the rights and status of EU nationals living in the UK, nor UK nationals living in the EU (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-leaving-the-eu-what-you-need-to-know>), while the UK remains in the EU.

What you can bring with you (<https://www.gov.uk/duty-free-goods>) depends on where you're travelling from. You must declare to customs:

- anything over your duty-free allowance (<https://www.gov.uk/duty-free-goods>)
- banned or restricted goods (<https://www.gov.uk/duty-free-goods/banned-and-restricted-goods>) in the UK, eg meat and dairy products from most non-EU countries
- goods that you plan to sell
- more than €10,000 (<https://www.gov.uk/bringing-cash-into-uk>) (or its equivalent) in cash, if you're coming from outside the EU

You and your baggage may be checked (<https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control/baggage-checks>) for anything you must declare.

2. Before you leave for the UK

Check what documents you'll need to enter the UK.

You're from an EEA country or Switzerland

You can enter the UK with either a valid passport or a national identity card issued by a EEA country (<https://www.gov.uk/eu-eea>). It must be valid for the whole of your stay.

You're not from an EEA country

You must have a valid passport to enter the UK. It must be valid for the whole of your stay.

You may also need a visa, depending on which country you're from.

Check if you need a visa to enter the UK (<https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa>).

You may also need a visa if you're 'transiting' or travelling through the UK (<https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control/transiting-at-a-uk-airport>), eg you're changing flights at a UK airport.

Applying for a visa

You must apply for your visa (<https://www.gov.uk/apply-uk-visa>) before you arrive in the UK.

Travelling with children

You may be asked at the border to prove the relationship between yourself and any children travelling with you, if you don't seem to be the parent, eg if you have a different surname.

You can prove this with:

- a birth or adoption certificate showing your relationship with the child
- divorce or marriage certificates if you're the parent but have a different surname from the child
- a letter from the child's parent giving permission for the child to travel with you and providing contact details, if you're not the parent

Before you board

Your 'carrier' (eg airline or transport provider) will check your passport and other travel documents. They'll send this information electronically to Border Force (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/border-force>).

You can ask to see the information about you (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ips-privacy-policy>) that's been sent by carriers. You'll have to pay a £10 fee.

3. At border control

Your passport or identity card will be checked.

You must:

- have your passport or identity card ready - remove it from a holder or wallet if you use one
- remove your sunglasses if you're wearing them
- move through passport control together if you're in a family

Arriving by bus or coach

You have to leave the bus when you arrive at border control.

Make sure you:

- are ready to get off the bus when you arrive
- have your travel documents ready

Read the guidance for school parties and groups coming to the UK by coach (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-parties-visiting-the-uk-by-coach>).

You're from an **EEA** country and Switzerland

You can use the EU/**EEA** (<https://www.gov.uk/eu-eea>) channel to get your passport or identity card checked - this is usually faster than the other channels.

You can use automatic ePassport gates at some airports if your passport has a 'chip' on it and you're over 18.

These gates use facial recognition technology to check your identity against the photo in your passport.

You're from a non-**EEA** country

Your carrier will give you a landing card - fill this in before you arrive at border control.

Your passport, landing card (and visa if you have one) will be checked.

You'll usually be asked why you're coming to the UK.

Keep documents that show the reason for your visit in your hand luggage, so you can show them if asked, eg your travel itinerary, work permit or university letter.

Registered travellers

If you've joined the Registered Traveller Service (<https://www.gov.uk/registered-traveller>), you can use the:

- UK/**EEA** channels
- automatic ePassport gates if your passport has a 'chip'

You won't need a landing card at some UK airports.

Travelling with a UK biometric visa

You'll have a biometric visa if your fingerprints were taken when you applied.

Your fingerprints will be checked at border control - they'll be checked against the ones stored on your visa document.

If you're refused entry

You'll be told in writing:

- why you've been refused entry to the UK
- if you can appeal against the decision
- when you will be removed from the UK

You'll usually have to leave the UK immediately.

You may be allowed into the UK temporarily (usually for up to a week) but your passport will be taken from you and you must report to immigration officers at set times.

4. Baggage checks

You must co-operate if you're stopped and asked about your baggage.

If you break the rules (<https://www.gov.uk/duty-free-goods>) your goods and any vehicle you use to transport them may be seized (<https://www.gov.uk/customs-seizures>).

If your baggage is checked

Your baggage is usually checked in front of you.

Customs officers keep a record of:

- all baggage they open and check
- any damage to your baggage or belongings during a check

If your things are damaged

You may be offered compensation if your baggage or belongings are damaged during a customs check.

Making a complaint

You can:

- ask for the duty manager if you want to complain about a customs check while you're at the border
- send your complaint to Border Force (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/border-force/about/complaints-procedure>) if you want to complain later

5. Layovers and transiting through a UK airport

Passing through a UK airport while on the way to another country is called 'transiting'. Some travellers call it a 'layover'.

There are 2 types of transiting:

- 'airside' - you don't pass through UK border control before you leave on your connecting journey
- 'landside' - you do pass through UK border control, but come back through it and leave the UK within a short amount of time (usually 24 hours)

Find out if you need a UK visa (<https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa>) for your layover.