

Summary of Commonly Used Visa Classifications

Visa Type	Possible Income from U.S. Sources	Eligibility Criteria	Maximum length of stay	Advantages	Disadvantages
J-1 Exchange Visitor (Research Scholar and Short-term scholar)	Employment permitted as designated on the Form DS-2019. Occasional lectures and consultations under certain circumstances with prior approval.	Institution appointment to teach or conduct research. Generally expected to have at least a bachelor's degree with experience in field. Adequate financial support for length of program.	Up to three years.	No Dept. of Labor or USCIS approval required. J-2 spouse can obtain work permission.	May be subject to two-year home residency requirement based on funding, skills list or medical trainee; may not be used for tenure track positions.
H-1B Temporary Worker in a Specialty Occupation	Employment permitted only with petitioning employer. May work for several employers provided employer has an approved H-1B petition for employee.	Generally, position must require at least a bachelor's degree or its equivalent; qualify as a specialty occupation; temporary in nature and meet wage requirements.	Initial period of up to 3 years with extensions in up to 3-year increments for cumulative total of 6 years.	May have long-term intent to immigrate; not subject to two-year home residence requirement.	Must file with both the Dept. of Labor (DOL) and USCIS; employer may incur severe liability under DOL rule; employer liable for return transportation if employment is terminated prematurely; H-4 spouse cannot work; aliens subject to two-year home residence requirement are ineligible.
O-1 Alien of Extraordinary Ability	Employment is authorized for the petitioning employer. May work for several employers provided employer has an approved O-1 petition for employee.	Proof that established extraordinary ability in sciences, arts, education, business and athletics; must be internationally recognized.	Initial period of stay of up to 3 years with unlimited one-year extensions thereafter.	Labor Condition Application not required; no limit on one-year extension; option for alien who is subject to 212(e) two-year home residence requirement.	Requires extensive documentation; approval based on a subjective review of applicant's standing in field; employer liable for return transportation if employment is terminated prematurely.

TN Trade NAFTA	Employment is only permitted with petitioning employer. Multiple employment is permitted with prior DHS approval.	Must be a Canadian or Mexican citizen; must possess minimum education/credentials requirements of NAFTA approved professions; entry must be temporary.	Admitted in up to one-year increments with unlimited one-year extensions.	Alternative to H-1B; process easier and faster than H-1B; entry as TN possible for aliens subject to 212(e) two-year home residence rule; no limit on extensions.	Only granted in up to one-year increments; requires more documentation than J-1; increased scrutiny for proof of nonimmigrant intent; spouse unable to work; Mexican citizens must obtain TN stamp from U.S. Consulate before applying for admission.
B-1 Visitor for Business	Employment not permitted; may receive reimbursement for incidental expenses or per diem; may receive honorarium payment and payment for associated incidental expenses if activity is less than nine days if the alien has not accepted such payment or expenses from more than five institutions within previous six-month period.	Proof of academic or business purpose for the trip; proof of adequate financial support for length of visit.	Six months at entry; renewable to twelve months.	Quick and easy to obtain; no government form or petition required.	Strict limitations on payments from U.S. sources; limited stay in U.S.; cannot stay for more than nine days at any one institution/university if being paid an honorarium.
WB Waiver Business (Visa Waiver Program)	Employment not permitted; may receive reimbursement for incidental expenses or per diem; may receive honorarium payment and payment for associated incidental expenses if activity is less than nine days if the alien has not accepted such payment or expenses from more than five institutions within the previous six-month period.	Applicable for citizens of countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program.	90 days or less	No need to visit U.S. Consulate	No extensions or change of status permitted within the U.S.; employment not allowed; limited stay in U.S.; cannot stay for more than nine days at any one institution/university if being paid an honorarium.
Immigrant/Permanent Resident ("Green Card")	No restrictions.	Outstanding professional background or professional skills; family member of US citizen; refugee or asylee; Diversity Program. (WHOI only sponsors employment based petitions)	Indefinite; Naturalization optional after five years, (three years if married to a U.S. citizen).	No need for work permits or extensions of stay.	Extensive time, effort and documentation.