

Business Visitors

Do's & Don'ts



Many people enter the UK each year on a standard visitor visa (business).



Many assume that this type of visa allows them to work unrestricted in the UK for a period of time.

This is not correct. The standard visitor visa (business) is very restrictive in terms of the activities that can be carried out and length of time individuals are allowed to stay in the UK.

If the applicant is a citizen of a country such as USA, Australia, Canada or New Zealand¹ there is no need to obtain a visa in advance of travelling to the UK. Applicants from countries such as India, South Africa, Turkey or Russia¹ will need to obtain a visa in advance of travelling to the UK. Please note that applicants are not able to apply for a standard visitor visa (business) from within the UK. This type of visa is obtained by applying to the British Consulate in the applicant's home country (or country of legal residence).

The purpose of the standard visitor visa (business) is for individuals who work and live overseas to enter the UK for short periods of time (up to a maximum of 6 months) in order to undertake certain "Permissible Activities" which include (but are not limited to):

Business – General Activities

- Attending pre-arranged meetings, conferences, seminars and interviews;
- Speaking at a conference on a one-off basis or give a short series of talks and speeches (but only where it is not run as a commercial event and will not make a profit);
- Negotiating and signing deals and contracts;
- Attending trade fairs (if it is restricted to promotional work and does not involve selling direct to the public);
- Carrying out site visits and inspections;
- Gather information for the visitor's employment overseas; and
- Be briefed on the requirements of a UK based customer, provided any work for the customer is done outside of the UK.

See our guide Permanent Establishment

¹This is not a definitive list and you will need to visit <https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa> for the full list.

Business – Corporate Activities

- Board level directors attending board meetings in the UK provided they are not employed by a UK company;
- An employee of an overseas based company may advise and consult, troubleshoot, provide training and share skills and knowledge, on a specific internal project with UK employees of the same corporate group provided no work is directly carried out for clients;
- An internal auditor may carry out regulatory or financial audits at a UK branch of the same group of companies as the visitor's employer overseas;
- A journalist, correspondent, producer or cameraman gathering information for an overseas publication, programme or film;
- An employee of a foreign manufacturer or supplier may install, dismantle, repair, service or advise on equipment, computer software or hardware where it has a contract of purchase or supply or lease with a UK company or organisation;
- A client of a UK export company may be seconded to the UK company, in order to oversee the requirements for goods and services that are being provided under contract by the UK company or its subsidiary company, provided the two companies are not part of the same group; and
- Interpreting or translating for visiting business persons.

This is not a definitive list and applicants are advised to take legal advice about whether their activities in the UK will amount to a “Permissible Activity”, particularly as there are certain rules regarding “Permissible Activities” that apply only to specific sectors.

If an individual is carrying out activities which do not fall within the list set out above (or on the relevant website), [it is highly likely that an alternative visa will be required.](#)

When entering the UK on a Standard Visitor Visa (Business), there are certain “Dos and Don'ts”.

Do

- Consider at an early stage the length and frequency of any visits to the UK
- If entering the UK frequently, carefully consider tax issues (see below)
- Have enough money to support and accommodate yourself without working
- Continue to receive salary from abroad (if appropriate)
- Only stay a maximum of 6 months
- Only carry out “permissible activities” (see above for further details)

Don't

- Stay longer than 6 months
- Get paid for work done here in the UK
- Undertake studies for more than 30 days or set up a business in the UK
- Intend to transfer your base to the UK even on a temporary basis
- Charge members of the public for services provided or goods received
- Try and switch into another visa category whilst in the UK on a standard visitor visa

Tax consequences

If a visitor spends more than 183 days in the UK in any one tax year (6 April to 5 April) (which if they did, they would be in breach of the visitor visa (business) rules), they will be deemed to be resident in the UK for tax purposes and will be expected to declare their income in the UK to Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC).

Summary

The standard visitor visa (business) is quite a restrictive visa. Visitors can only remain in the UK for a maximum of 6 months and can only carry out “Permissible Activities”. Visitors should also be cautious of their tax position especially if they are making frequent trips to the UK. Please also be aware if you enter the UK on a standard visitor visa (business) you cannot switch into any other visa category while you are in the UK.

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