



TEFL IBERIA

SPANISH VISA GUIDE

USA

USE THIS GUIDE TO DIRECT YOU THROUGH
EACH AND EVERY STEP INVOLVED
IN STARTING A NEW LIFE IN SPAIN

2027 edition

tefliberia



WELCOME TO TEFL IBERIA

If you're reading this, you're thinking of starting a new adventure in Barcelona! We couldn't be more excited for you, and we hope you feel the same.

Before you set off, there are a few important pieces of paperwork to take care of. But don't worry, we're here to help. This guide walks you step by step through the student visa process, which is essential for your legal status in Spain.

If you have a question at any point, our coordination team is here to help:

Coordination team

coordination@tefl-iberia.com

We'll do our best to make the process as stress free as possible.

¡Hasta pronto!

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Let's get
STARTED

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Why a student visa?

Spain, like the rest of the EU, requires people from outside the EU to have a visa to live and work there long term.

A work visa is hard to get: your employer has to sponsor you, which is expensive and complicated, and show that no EU candidate could do the job.

A far easier option is a student visa. You need a course of at least 20 hours a week, and once your employer gets a work permit for you, you can work up to 30 hours a week. We'll help you both with the paperwork.

Our student visa programme starts with the 4-week Trinity CertTESOL in Barcelona, followed by 6 or 11 months of Spanish, 20 hours a week (09:30 to 13:30), at our accredited partner Spanish school, with occasional teacher development workshops. Classes are in the morning, as most English teaching work is in the afternoon.

[See our student visa programmes](#), and our [Dates & Fees page](#) for prices.

The next steps guide you through applying for a Spanish student visa and the documents you need.



STEP 1

Choose your visa type

There are 2 types of student visa. Which one you need depends on how long you plan to stay in Spain and whether you'd like to work.

Short-term (up to 180 days)

- Fewer documents and less paperwork.
- You can't work, or renew your visa from Spain.

Long-term (over 180 days, so 7 months or more)

- You can work up to 30 hours a week once your employer gets a work permit for you.
- You can renew your visa from Spain.
- You also need an FBI criminal record check.

Both our programmes (7 or 12 months) need a long-term visa. We strongly recommend the 12-month option, even if you're not sure you'll stay a full year: most of our students end up wanting to stay at least 12 months.

When to apply: US consulates accept applications up to 6 months before your course starts, and you must apply at least 2 months before. Don't gather documents too early, as some have a time limit (see Step 2).

Documents required	Short-term visa	Long-term visa
Passport	✓	✓
Visa application form	✓	✓
Visa fee	✓	✓
Enrolment letter	✓	✓
2 passport photos	✓	✓
Proof of funds	✓	✓
Health insurance	✓	✓
Medical certificate	✓	✓
Proof of address	✓	✓
FBI criminal record check		✓

Got questions about your documents?

CONTACT US: COORDINATION@TEFL-IBERIA.COM

STEP 2

Gather your documents

You hand in your passport with your visa application, and the visa is a sticker fixed to one of its pages. US applications go through BLS International, which keeps your passport while the visa is processed.

For any student visa

- **Visa application form** ([download here](#)) and 2 recent US passport-size photos. [Here](#) is an example of a completed form, and we'll help you fill yours in.
- **Your passport**, valid for at least 1 year, with at least 2 blank pages and issued in the last 10 years, plus a photocopy of the page with your details.
- **Enrolment letter** from our accredited partner Spanish school for full-time study (20 hours a week), with proof that your course is paid in full. We send you the letter as soon as you've paid.
- **Visa fee** of \$160 (non-refundable), plus \$20 for the BLS service.
- **Proof of funds** of **\$700 a month** for your stay, for example \$4,900 for 7 months: your 3 most recent monthly bank statements, showing your full name and final balance. Prepaid accommodation reduces the amount you need.
- **Health insurance** from an insurer authorised in Spain, with no co-payments or deductibles, at least €30,000 of cover and valid for your whole stay. Travel insurance isn't accepted. *For a quote, contact Lluís López at Atlantida, llopez@atlantida.net.*
- **Medical certificate** stating that you have no illness that could have serious public health implications under the International Health Regulations (2005), issued in the 90 days before you apply. Use [this bilingual template](#) (or your consulate's) and you won't need a translation. It doesn't need an apostille.
- **Proof of address** in your consulate's area, such as a US driver's licence or state ID.

STEP 2

Gather your documents

For a long-term visa (over 180 days)

- **All the documents on the previous page**
- **FBI criminal record check**, plus a police check from any other country you've lived in during the last 5 years. Each one needs the Hague Apostille and a sworn translation into Spanish. State or local police checks aren't accepted.
 1. Request your [Identity History Summary](#) from the FBI, with your fingerprints (you can give them at a participating US Post Office).
 2. Send the FBI report to the US Department of State for a [federal apostille](#). A state apostille isn't valid.
 3. Get it translated. Our sworn translator gives TEFL Iberia students a 10% discount (see Useful links).

Medical certificate: issued no more than 90 days before you apply.
FBI check: issued no more than 6 months before you apply.

Applying for a long-term visa? You need one more document, and two of your documents have a time limit.

Tips for your appointment

- **Check your consulate's own list** before your appointment: the requirements differ slightly from one consulate to another (see Step 3).
- **Bring the original and a photocopy** of every document. Some consulates, such as New York and Los Angeles, ask for notarised copies.
- **Not a US citizen?** You also need proof of legal residence in the US, such as a green card. Holders of B-1/B-2 visas can't apply in the US.
- **Don't book flights** until you have your visa.

For a stay of over 6 months the visa is usually valid for up to a year. Within 1 month of arriving in Spain, you apply for your foreigner identity card (TIE), which you then use for the rest of your stay. With our [Premium Visa & Bureaucracy Service](#), we book the appointment for you.

STEP 3

Submit your application

Once you have all your documents, you submit them at the BLS centre for the consulate that covers the state where you legally live. Applications from outside a consulate's area are refused.

New York (New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Delaware)

- In person, by appointment, at **BLS**, 55 W 39th St, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10018.
- Book: [BLS appointments](#). Requirements: [BLS page](#) and [consulate page](#).
- You hand in the application and collect your passport in person.

Miami (Florida, Georgia, South Carolina)

- In person, by appointment, at **BLS**, 3191 Coral Way, Suite 611, Miami, FL 33145.
- Book: [BLS appointments](#). Requirements: [BLS page](#).
- A representative can hand it in for you (notarised form on the BLS page), but you collect the visa in person.

Chicago (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin)

- In person, by appointment, at **BLS**, 121 W Wacker Dr, Suite 1307, Chicago, IL 60601.
- Book: [BLS appointments](#). Requirements: [BLS page](#) and [consulate page](#).
- When you book, choose a national visa.

US student visa applications go through **BLS International**

Book a national (student) visa appointment. The visa fee and the BLS fee are paid at the appointment; how you pay depends on the centre.

Houston (Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas)

- In person, by appointment, at **BLS**, 2500 West Loop South, 3rd Floor, Suite 350, Houston, TX 77027.
- Book: [BLS appointments](#). Requirements: [BLS page](#) and [consulate page](#).
- Houston also accepts applications by post through BLS's [postal service](#), but BLS recommends going in person, as post is slower. You can collect your passport at BLS or pay extra to have it couriered back.
- Allow at least 6 weeks.

Los Angeles (Southern California: Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties; Arizona, Colorado, Utah)

- In person, by appointment, at **BLS**, 5455 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 1011, Los Angeles, CA 90036.
- Book: [BLS appointments](#). Requirements: [BLS page](#) and [consulate page](#).
- Pay the visa fee by money order.
- You collect your passport in person; a representative can't.

STEP 3

Submit your application (continued)

San Francisco (Alaska, Northern California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming, US Pacific)

- In person, by appointment, at **BLS**, 717 Market St, Suite 425, San Francisco, CA 94103.
- Book: [BLS appointments](#). Requirements: [BLS page](#) and [consulate page](#).
- Pay the visa fee by money order to "Consulate of Spain" (no cash or cards).

Washington DC (District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina)

- In person, by appointment, at **BLS**, 1660 L St NW, Suite 216, Washington, DC 20036.
- Book: [BLS appointments](#). Requirements: [BLS page](#) and [consulate page](#).
- You collect your visa in person at BLS.

Boston (Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Maine)

- In person, by appointment, at **BLS**, 15 Court Square, Suite 520, Boston, MA 02108.
- Book: [BLS appointments](#). Requirements: [BLS page](#) and [consulate page](#).
- Include the signed [disclaimer form](#).
- Your proof of address must be notarised.
- Pay in cash or by debit card at BLS.
- Your passport must also be valid until 3 months after your stay.

San Juan (Puerto Rico, Culebra and Vieques, US Virgin Islands)

- Consulate General of Spain, Edificio Mercantil Plaza, Floor 11, Office 1101, Avenida Ponce de León, Hato Rey, PR 00918.
- Ask the visa section how to apply: cog.sanjuan.vis@maec.es.

What happens next?

Now your application is in the consulate's hands. The consulate needs approval from Spain before it can issue the visa, and the legal deadline for a decision is 1 month, though it's often longer. Each consulate gives its own estimate: at least 4 weeks in Los Angeles and Chicago, at least 5 weeks in Washington, at least 6 weeks in Houston, 5 to 8 weeks in San Francisco and about 8 weeks in Boston. When your visa is ready, you collect your passport in person at the BLS centre. Don't book flights until you have your visa.



Next stop: BARCELONA!

Frequently asked questions

Do I have to go in person, or can I post my documents?

You apply in person, by appointment, at the BLS International centre for your consulate. Houston also accepts applications by post, and some consulates let an authorised representative hand in the application for you. Check your consulate's page.

How long does it take to get an appointment?

It varies from month to month. Check the BLS booking page often, as new appointments are released at random times. Book early: you must apply at least 2 months before your course starts.

What is the appointment like?

It's short: you hand in your documents and your passport, and the staff may check them with you. They speak English. Bring everything on your consulate's list: an incomplete application is returned and you'll need a new appointment.

What happens after my appointment?

The consulate needs approval from Spain before it can issue the visa. The legal deadline for a decision is 1 month, but it's often longer: see "What happens next?" in Step 3 for each consulate's estimate. When your visa is ready, you collect your passport in person at the BLS centre (Houston can courier it back for an extra fee).

Which documents need to be translated?

Your FBI check needs a sworn translation into Spanish, as well as the apostille. Your medical certificate needs one too, unless you use a bilingual template. Your bank statements don't. See *Useful links for our sworn translator*.



Next stop:
BARCELONA!

Frequently asked questions

How many hours can I work on a student visa?

You can work up to 30 hours a week once your employer gets a work permit for you. We'll help you both with the paperwork. The permit only covers work in Catalonia, the region that issued it.

Do I need to sign up for 7 to 12 months?

If you'd like to work in Barcelona, yes. A course of 7 to 12 months gives you a long-term student visa (legally, a stay of over 180 days, so 7 months is the minimum). That's the visa that lets you work with a work permit and renew from Spain.

You can study for less time and get a short-term visa instead, but you won't be able to work or to renew your visa from Spain.

How long does it take to get a student visa?

It depends on your consulate, but we recommend allowing 3 to 4 months to gather your documents, attend your appointment and receive your visa, so start about 5 months before you'd like to arrive. You can apply up to 6 months before your course starts, and no later than 2 months before.

Can I extend my student visa from within Spain?

Yes. If you have a long-term visa (7 months or more), you can renew it from Spain by signing up for another year of Spanish with us. A Spanish course visa can be renewed once, and for the renewal you'll need to have passed the DELE or SIELE Spanish exam, or be enrolled for the DELE. If you'd like to stay for 2 years or more, please get in touch.

I already have a student visa with a different school. Can I renew with TEFL Iberia?

Yes, as long as your previous course was a Spanish course at a school accredited by the Instituto Cervantes or at an Escuela Oficial de Idiomas. You'll need a certificate of completion (certificado de aprovechamiento) from your old school and an enrolment letter from our accredited partner Spanish school.

Any other questions? Email our team at coordination@tefl-iberia.com.



Next stop:
BARCELONA!

Frequently asked questions

Can I leave Europe to reset my time as a tourist?

US citizens don't need a visa to visit Spain, but you can only spend up to 90 days in any 180-day period in the Schengen area. Time outside Schengen (in the UK or Ireland, for example) doesn't count, but the 180-day window keeps rolling, so a short trip out doesn't reset it.

Can I work as self-employed on a student visa?

Not automatically. On a Spanish course, any work needs an authorisation first, whether you're employed or self-employed. Talk to us before you start.

Do I need a visa for the Trinity CertTESOL course?

No. US citizens can stay in Spain for up to 90 days without a visa, and the CertTESOL takes 4 weeks.

Can I apply for a student visa from within Spain?

No, you need to apply from the US. You can't arrive as a tourist and then change to a student visa.

Can I switch to a work visa later?

It's very difficult. Your employer would need to sponsor you, which is expensive and complicated, and show that no EU candidate could do the job. Students on a Spanish course also can't switch to a work permit from inside Spain.

What happens if my visa is refused?

First you appeal the decision. If the refusal is confirmed, we refund your Spanish course minus an admin fee. Some refusals aren't refundable, for example if you don't meet the financial requirement. See our [terms and conditions](#).

Any other questions? Contact our coordination team at
coordination@tefl-iberia.com

An aerial photograph of Barcelona, Spain, showing a dense urban landscape with numerous buildings and red-tiled roofs. The text 'Next stop. BARCELONA!' is overlaid on the image.

Next stop.
BARCELONA!

Useful links

- [New York consulate: study visa](#)
- [Miami: BLS student visa page](#)
- [Chicago consulate: study visa](#)
- [Houston consulate: study visa](#)
- [Los Angeles consulate: study visa](#)
- [San Francisco consulate: study visa](#)
- [Washington consulate: study visa](#)
- [Boston consulate: study visa](#)
- [San Juan consulate \(Spanish\)](#)
- [BLS International: book an appointment](#)
- [Spanish visa application form](#)
- [Example of a completed form](#)
- [Medical certificate template](#)
- [FBI Identity History Summary](#)
- [Apostille \(US Department of State\)](#)
- [Our student visa programmes](#)

Consulate websites can differ between their English and Spanish versions, and the Spanish version is often more detailed and more up to date. If in doubt, use your browser's translation tool on the Spanish version.

Health insurance and translations

We've researched the market for good-value health insurance and sworn translators. Whichever insurer you choose must be authorised to operate in Spain.

- [Atlantida health insurance](#): contact **Lluís López** at llopez@atlantida.net
- [Sworn Spanish translator](#): contact **Susana García** at info@traductorjurado.org for a 10% discount for TEFL Iberia students

Our Premium Visa & Bureaucracy Service

An optional extra to take the stress out of Spanish bureaucracy. [See the student visa page](#) for details.

Before you set off

Guidance on gathering your paperwork, help with the application form, a discount on health insurance, a quick enrolment letter, and access to an immigration lawyer (extra fee).

Once you're in Barcelona

We book your TIE appointment, check your documents, pay the local tax and go with you to the foreign office. Help with your padrón, social security number, bank account and a local SIM.



Next stop: BARCELONA!

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