



Settle. Seoul

IMMIGRATION · INDIVIDUAL ARTICLE PDF

From visa to residence card, step by step.

The full immigration journey for a newcomer — using the E-2 teaching visa as the worked example — from the documents you gather at home to the residence card, appointments, renewals and changing status.

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Links in this PDF open the official source or the online guide. Opening hours, prices, programmes and access rules change — confirm with the responsible operator before you travel.

THE ESSENTIALS

- Register within 90 days of entry if you stay longer than 90 days.
- A booking is not a filing: keep proof of every accepted application.
- Never start a new job, workplace or activity before the immigration route is clear.

Adapted from the Settle Seoul 2027 digital edition, pages 17, 18, 19, 20, 27, 52.

Official routes: HiKorea — hikorea.go.kr · Korea Immigration Service — immigration.go.kr · 1345 immigration contact centre · Korean consulate in your home country.

STAGE 1 · BEFORE YOU FLY

Build the E-2 document file at home

Editorial overview of the common E-2 (foreign language instructor) route. Requirements change and vary by nationality, consulate and employer — your employer and the Korean consulate give the binding list.

Documents commonly requested

- Valid passport with blank pages and passport photos.
- Degree certificate, usually apostilled or consular-legalised, plus sealed transcripts where asked.
- A national-level criminal record check, apostilled and recent — these take weeks, so order early.
- Signed employment contract and a self-health statement where your employer requests one.

How the visa is issued

- Your employer usually applies in Korea for a Visa Issuance Number or Certificate of Confirmation of Visa Issuance.
- You then apply through a Korean consulate or the e-visa route, sometimes with an interview.
- Keep scans of everything you send and every version of the offer and contract.

Check before signing

Match the visa to the actual duties, employer and workplace. The guide advises asking 1345 about any permission or report needed before starting or changing workplaces.

STAGE 2 · FIRST WEEKS

Register and get your residence card

Most arrivals staying over 90 days must register for a residence card (still widely called the ARC) within 90 days of entry. Exceptions apply.

1. **Get a fixed address first** — You need accepted proof of your place of stay — a lease, or a housing confirmation from your employer if your name is not on the lease.
2. **Book through HiKorea** — Reserve a visit at the immigration office responsible for your address. Slots in Seoul can fill weeks ahead, so book as soon as you know your address.
3. **Assemble the file** — Integrated application form, passport, a recent passport photo, proof of address, the fee and any status-specific documents. E-2 holders may be asked for employer documents and health-check results.
4. **Attend and keep the receipt** — Arrive early with originals and copies, and confirm the accepted payment method. Keep the receipt — it shows your application was accepted.
5. **Collect or receive the card** — The card typically takes a few weeks. Until then, your passport and receipt are your proof. Many banking and phone services wait for the card.

How to handle an immigration visit

Keep separate evidence of the appointment, the submitted application and the final decision. A reservation alone does not extend your stay.

Before you go

- Select the correct service and the office for your actual task.
- Check the status-specific document list, maintenance notices and the current fee.
- Write down your status, expiry date, address and question in one sentence.

On the day

- Bring the current form, originals, copies and fees; take a number and wait to be called.
- If asked for more documents, note exactly what, by when, and how to submit.
- Leave with a receipt or acknowledgement, not just a verbal answer.

No slot near your deadline?

- Ask the responsible office about filing — do not assume a walk-in exception.
- Use e-application only when your status and service are eligible; the guide notes online filing must be done by the day before expiry.
- Call 1345 (multilingual) with your details ready.

Report changes and renew on time

Different changes have different deadlines. Address changes are a particularly common source of avoidable penalties.

Moving home

- Registered foreign residents generally have 15 days to report a change of place of stay.
- A lease report (p. 27) is separate and does not complete the immigration report.

Workplace changes

- E-2 instructors have specific workplace-reporting obligations.
- Do not begin an additional role, private lessons or a second workplace until the route is clear.

Extensions

- The guide says extensions can normally be filed from four months before expiry.
- File early enough to obtain anything missing; keep the acceptance evidence.

Moving to a different status

Changing status — for example from E-2 to another work visa, a job-seeking status, a study status, or a family-based status after marriage — is a separate application with its own eligibility and documents.

Plan the switch

- Confirm eligibility for the new status before resigning, accepting a role or letting your current status lapse.
- Ask whether the change can be filed inside Korea or requires a new visa from abroad.
- Time it within your permitted stay; a pending application does not automatically authorise new work.

Ask this

- "For my current status and expiry date, what must I file, by when, and what evidence confirms that you accepted it?"
- If an application is pending, ask what leaving Korea would do to it and to your re-entry position.

Get it in writing

This page is editorial guidance, not legal advice. For complex cases — a gap between jobs, a refused application or a dispute with an employer — contact 1345, Korea Legal Aid or a qualified immigration specialist before a deadline passes.

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