

BOTELHO LAW GROUP

Immigration Interview Preparation Series

CONSULAR PROCESSING INTERVIEW COMPLETE PREPARATION GUIDE

For Marriage-Based Immigrant Visa Interviews at U.S. Embassies and Consulates Abroad — CR-1, IR-1, and F2A Cases

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A MESSAGE TO OUR CLIENTS

Your immigrant visa interview at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate is the final and most important step in your family-based case. Everything that has come before — the I-130 petition approved by USCIS, the fees and forms processed by the National Visa Center, the civil documents, the Affidavit of Support — has been building toward this one appointment.

The consular officer conducting your interview has one primary goal: to determine whether your marriage is genuine and whether you are eligible to enter the United States as a lawful permanent resident. Unlike an interview at a USCIS office in the United States, your petitioner spouse will normally NOT be in the room with you. You will answer for both of you. That single fact shapes how you must prepare.

This guide walks you through what to expect at post, what to bring, what questions will be asked, and how to present yourself and your case in the best possible light. Please read every section carefully. If anything is unclear, or if you have concerns about a specific issue in your case, contact our office immediately at 508-500-1551.

WHO THIS GUIDE IS FOR

You are the spouse of a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident, and you are living OUTSIDE the United States.

Your interview will take place at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your home country or country of residence.

Case types: CR-1 (married under 2 years), IR-1 (married 2+ years), F2A (spouse of an LPR).

YOUR CASE PATH AT A GLANCE

1. USCIS approves the I-130 petition filed by your spouse.
2. The case transfers to the National Visa Center (NVC).
3. You pay fees, file the DS-260, and submit civil documents and the I-864.
4. NVC declares your case “documentarily qualified” and schedules the interview.
5. Medical exam → interview at post → visa issuance → entry to the U.S. as an LPR.

The Single Biggest Difference from a USCIS Interview

At a USCIS field office in the United States, both spouses attend and the officer can watch you answer together. At a U.S. Embassy or Consulate, you will almost always be interviewed alone. Most posts do not permit the U.S. petitioner to accompany you into the interview window, and attorneys are generally not permitted to appear with you.

This means you personally must be able to speak with confidence about your spouse's job, home, family, routine, finances, and your shared plans — without any prompting. Prepare as though every question about your spouse's life will be directed to you, because it will be.

PART 1 — IMPORTANT GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

The websites below are official U.S. government resources that apply directly to consular cases. We strongly encourage you to bookmark them and review them carefully. When this document is provided to you as a PDF, each link is clickable. These resources are updated regularly by the government and contain the most current instructions for your specific embassy or consulate.

RESOURCE	WHAT IT IS FOR / LINK
U.S. Embassy Finder	Find your specific embassy or consulate and confirm the interview location, hours, security rules, appointment procedures, and any post-specific document requirements. Rules vary significantly by post — always check this before your interview. https://www.usembassy.gov
DOS Interview Preparation	The Department of State's official immigrant visa interview preparation overview, explaining the full process from NVC through the interview. https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate/the-immigrant-visa-process/interview/prepare/interview-preparation.html
Medical Exam Instructions	Official instructions for the required medical examination, including which vaccines are required and how to locate an approved panel physician in your country. You must use a panel physician — not your own doctor. https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate/the-immigrant-visa-process/interview/prepare/medical-examination.html
DS-260 Online Form	The online immigrant visa application. Print your DS-260 confirmation page from here and bring it to your interview. Your sworn testimony must be consistent with everything on this form. https://ceac.state.gov/IV
CEAC Case Tracker	Check your case status and all post-interview updates in the Consular Electronic Application Center. Use this to monitor progress after your interview, especially during administrative processing. https://ceac.state.gov/CEACStatTracker
Civil Documents by Country	Look up the exact civil document requirements for your country — birth certificate format, police certificate procedures, marriage record format, and known document availability issues. https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country.html
221(g) Administrative Processing	The Department of State's explanation of what a 221(g) refusal and administrative processing mean, and how such cases are resolved. Read this if you receive a 221(g) notice at your interview. https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/administrative-processing-information.html
NVC Contact Information	How to reach the National Visa Center using the Public Inquiry Form for questions about your case before it is transferred to post. https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate/national-visa-center/nvc-contact-information.html
USCIS Immigrant Fee	After your visa is approved, you must pay the USCIS Immigrant Fee before traveling to the United States. Pay here and keep your receipt — your green card will not be produced until this is paid. https://www.uscis.gov/file-online/uscis-immigrant-fee

PART 2 — UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE OF YOUR INTERVIEW

What the Consular Officer Is Evaluating

Your immigrant visa interview is a formal legal proceeding, not a casual conversation. The consular officer has authority to issue or refuse your visa that same day. Understanding exactly what the officer is looking for — and why — will help you prepare effectively.

Is your marriage genuine?	The officer must be satisfied that you entered your marriage in good faith — because you love each other and intend to build a real life together — and NOT primarily to obtain an immigration benefit. This is the central question in every marriage-based interview. Everything you bring and everything you say should speak to the reality of your relationship.
Can you speak credibly about your spouse's life?	Because your petitioner is not in the room, the officer tests the marriage largely through your own knowledge. Officers ask about your spouse's employer, income, home, daily schedule, children, parents, and your shared plans. Vague or uncertain answers about basic facts of your spouse's life are one of the most common reasons a consular officer doubts a marriage.
Are you admissible?	Under INA Section 212, certain grounds can make a person ineligible for a visa. These include prior immigration violations (overstays, unlawful presence, misrepresentation), criminal history, certain medical conditions, and security concerns. The officer is required to screen for all of these. Some grounds may be waivable with Form I-601 or I-601A.
Is your application complete?	The officer will verify that your DS-260, civil documents, police certificates, financial support documents, and medical exam are complete, consistent, and credible. Missing or inconsistent documents are the single most common cause of 221(g) delays at post.
Is your sponsor able to support you?	The U.S. citizen or LPR petitioner must demonstrate sufficient income to support you at 125% of the federal poverty guidelines. The Form I-864 Affidavit of Support must be complete, current, signed, and supported by tax and income evidence. If the petitioner's income is insufficient, a joint sponsor must file a complete I-864 package of their own.
Does the petitioner maintain U.S. domicile?	This issue arises far more often in consular cases than in adjustment cases. The petitioning spouse must be domiciled in the United States, or must show they will re-establish domicile before or at the same time you enter. If your petitioner is currently living abroad with you, tell our office immediately — this requires specific documentation.

Your Credibility Is Everything

Officers are trained to detect inconsistencies. They compare your answers to your DS-260, your petitioner's I-130 petition, your prior U.S. visa applications and interviews, your travel history, and any previous statements you have made to U.S. immigration authorities. Every prior nonimmigrant visa application you have ever filed is visible to the officer.

Even an innocent mistake — a wrong date, a misremembered fact — can raise concerns. The key is to be honest, calm, consistent, and prepared. If you realize mid-interview that you have given an incorrect answer, correct it immediately and plainly.

PART 3 — WHAT TO EXPECT: A STEP-BY-STEP WALKTHROUGH

At a U.S. Embassy or Consulate

Procedures vary by post. The sequence below describes the typical experience, but you must confirm the specific rules for your embassy or consulate at usembassy.gov before your appointment.

STEP 1

Before the Day

- Complete your medical examination with an approved panel physician well before the interview date. Some panel physicians require appointments weeks in advance, and some tests take days to return.
- Confirm your appointment date, time, and location on your interview letter and on your post's website.
- Confirm how your post delivers passports after approval — courier, pickup, or mail — and register for delivery if the post requires it in advance.
- Confirm your post's document intake procedure. Some posts require you to pre-scan or upload documents; others collect them at the window.

STEP 2

Arrival & Security

- Arrive 15–30 minutes before your appointment time. Do not be late — late arrivals may not be admitted, and rescheduling can take months.
- Consult your specific embassy's website at usembassy.gov for exact security rules — these vary by location.
- Most embassies prohibit: cell phones, smart watches, earbuds, USB drives, laptops, large bags, food, liquids, lighters, knives, and sealed envelopes (except a sealed medical packet from a panel physician).
- There is often no storage available at the embassy. Plan in advance for where prohibited items will be left.
- You will go through a security screening similar to an airport. Present your passport and interview appointment letter at the gate to gain entry.

STEP 3

Check-In & Document Intake

- Embassy staff will verify your identity, scan your fingerprints, and collect your documents. Fingerprinting is normally done at this stage, before the interview.
- Your case is already in the Consular Electronic Application Center (CEAC) — the officer will have access to your DS-260, your NVC submission, your petition, and your prior visa history. Be consistent with what you previously submitted.
- Staff may ask you to sit and wait, sometimes for several hours. Interviews are not always called in appointment order.
- Stay calm, organized, and respectful to all staff at all times. Everything from the gate onward is part of the impression your case makes.

STEP 4

The Oath

- Before your interview begins, you will be placed under oath — you swear that everything you say is true.
- This is a solemn legal obligation. Everything you say from this point forward is sworn testimony.
- Providing false information to a consular officer is a federal crime and can result in a permanent bar to immigration benefits under INA §212(a)(6)(C).
- Answer clearly and honestly. If you do not understand a question, ask the officer to repeat or clarify — never guess.

STEP 5**The Interview**

- Most interviews are conducted standing at a window, not seated in a private room. Other applicants may be within earshot. This is normal — do not let it rattle you.
- The officer will confirm your biographical information from the DS-260 and review your application file.
- They will ask about how you met, how your relationship developed, your wedding, your spouse's life and work in the United States, and your plans together.
- They will screen for grounds of inadmissibility under INA §212 (prior overstays, misrepresentation, criminal history, security concerns, medical issues).
- Interviews at post are often short — frequently 5 to 15 minutes. A short interview is not a bad sign. Complex cases may take considerably longer.
- Present documents only when asked. Have everything organized in a labeled folder so you can retrieve any item within seconds.

STEP 6**The Decision**

- **APPROVED:** Your passport is retained for visa printing. Immigrant visas are typically valid for 6 months, and are often limited by the validity of your medical exam. You will receive instructions for passport and visa delivery by courier or pick-up.
- **221(g) ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSING:** Not a final denial — additional documents or additional review are required. You will receive a written notice listing exactly what is needed. Follow those instructions precisely and contact our office the same day you receive it.
- **REFUSED / INADMISSIBILITY FINDING:** If the officer finds you inadmissible under INA §212, you may be eligible for a waiver (such as Form I-601). Contact our office immediately to discuss next steps.
- **RETURNED TO USCIS:** In rare cases where the officer doubts the validity of the marriage, the petition may be returned to USCIS with a recommendation for revocation. This is a serious outcome — contact our office the same day.

STEP 7**After Approval**

- Confirm courier or pickup arrangements per your embassy's instructions at usembassy.gov.
- When you receive your visa packet, carefully review your name spelling, date of birth, visa classification, and expiration date. Report any errors to the post immediately — before you travel.
- Pay the USCIS Immigrant Fee at uscis.gov/file-online/uscis-immigrant-fee BEFORE traveling to the United States. Your physical green card will not be produced until this fee is paid.
- You must enter the United States before your visa expires. Do not book travel that cuts this close.
- Upon entry, a CBP officer at the port of entry will admit you as a Lawful Permanent Resident and stamp your passport. Your green card will be mailed to your designated U.S. address within a few weeks.

Language and Interpreters at Post

Practices differ by embassy. Many posts conduct immigrant visa interviews in the local language; others conduct them in English; some allow you to choose. A number of posts provide an interpreter, while others require you to bring your own at your expense — and some prohibit outside interpreters entirely.

Confirm your post's specific interpreter policy at usembassy.gov well before your appointment. Never rely on a family member to interpret. If you are more comfortable in your native language, use it — accuracy of your sworn testimony matters far more than demonstrating English ability.

If You Were Married Less Than Two Years — CR-1 Conditional Status

If you have been married for less than two years on the date you ENTER the United States, you will be admitted as a conditional permanent resident and will receive a 2-year conditional green card (Form I-551, category CR1) rather than a 10-year card.

Form I-751, Petition to Remove Conditions on Residence, must be filed jointly with your spouse during the 90-day window immediately before that card expires. Note that the two-year clock runs from the date of your ENTRY, not the date of your interview or your wedding. We will contact you about this filing, but please calendar the date yourself as well.

PART 4 — WHAT TO BRING TO YOUR INTERVIEW

Organization is critical. Bring originals and one clean set of photocopies for every document, organized in labeled sections. The officer should never have to wait while you search through a disorganized stack of papers. A well-organized document packet projects confidence and credibility.

Bring originals of every civil document even if you already uploaded copies to the NVC. The consular officer will want to inspect originals, and posts routinely refuse cases under 221(g) when originals are missing.

A. Identification and Appointment Documents

- **Passport** — Must be valid for at least 6 months beyond your intended U.S. entry date, and must have at least one blank visa page. Bring ALL prior passports as well; they contain prior U.S. visa stamps and travel history the officer may want to review.
- **Interview Appointment Letter** — The official appointment notice from the embassy or consulate. Print it. Do not lose it.
- **DS-260 Confirmation Page** — Print from ceac.state.gov/IV. The officer will use your DS-260 as the basis for the interview.
- **NVC Welcome Letter / Case Number** — Your NVC case number and invoice ID, and confirmation of fee payments.
- **Two U.S.-Style Passport Photos** — Check your specific embassy's photo requirements at usembassy.gov. Most require 2 x 2 inches, white background, recent, no glasses. Some posts require photos even if you uploaded them to CEAC.
- **I-130 Approval Notice (Form I-797)** — A copy of the approval notice for the petition filed by your spouse.

B. Civil Status Documents**Country-Specific Requirements**

Civil document requirements vary significantly by country, and some documents that exist in one country are considered unavailable or unreliable in another. Before gathering your documents, verify the exact required format for your country of birth and residence on the Department of State's Visa Reciprocity and Civil Documents by Country page.

- **Birth Certificate** — In the specific format required for your country of birth (often a long-form or full extract). Must include a certified English translation if not in English.
- **Marriage Certificate** — The official government-issued certificate for your current marriage. If you married in a religious ceremony only, you may also need the civil registration document.
- **Divorce, Annulment, or Death Certificates** — Required for EVERY prior marriage of BOTH the petitioner and the beneficiary. You cannot be legally married without having legally ended any prior marriage, and the officer will verify this.
- **Police Certificates** — Required from your country of nationality, your country of current residence, and every country where you have lived for 6 or more months since age 16. Requirements and validity periods vary by country — check the reciprocity page and your post's instructions.
- **Court and Prison Records** — For any arrest, charge, citation, or conviction anywhere in the world, regardless of the outcome. Bring records even if the charges were dropped, expunged, pardoned, or you were found not guilty.

- **Military Records** — If you have served in any military or paramilitary force, bring discharge papers or service records.
- **Name Change Documents** — If your name has ever legally changed by marriage, divorce, court order, or any other process.
- **Certified English Translations** — Required for ALL documents not in English. The translator must certify in writing that they are competent to translate and that the translation is accurate and complete.
- **Documents for Accompanying Children** — If any of your children are immigrating with you, bring their birth certificates, passports, medical exams, and, where one parent is not immigrating, proof of custody or a consent to travel as required by your post.

C. Financial Support — Affidavit of Support

The I-864 Affidavit of Support is a legally binding contract in which the petitioner promises the U.S. government that you will not become a public charge. Consular officers scrutinize it carefully, and an incomplete or outdated I-864 package is one of the most frequent causes of a 221(g).

- **Form I-864** — Signed by the petitioner, and by a joint sponsor if one is required. Must be the most current version of the form.
- **IRS Tax Transcripts or Tax Returns** — The most recent tax year is required; providing the last three years is strongly recommended. Tax transcripts are preferred over returns and can be obtained free at [irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov).
- **W-2s and 1099s** — For the same years as the tax returns provided.
- **Recent Pay Stubs** — The last 3–6 months, showing employer name, employee name, pay period, and year-to-date earnings.
- **Employment Letter** — On company letterhead, signed by an employer representative, stating job title, start date, hours per week, and annual or hourly wage.
- **Proof of U.S. Domicile** — The petitioner must prove they live in the United States. Acceptable evidence includes a lease or mortgage, utility bills, driver's license, voter registration, and bank statements. If the petitioner has been living abroad, bring evidence of concrete steps to re-establish U.S. domicile: a signed lease, a job offer, school enrollment for children, or a shipped household goods receipt.
- **Joint Sponsor Package** — If the petitioner does not meet the income requirement, a qualifying joint sponsor must provide a complete I-864 package of their own with all of the above documents, plus proof of U.S. citizenship or lawful permanent residence.
- **Additional Assets (if needed)** — Bank statements, investment account statements, or real estate documents if assets are being used to supplement income.

D. Evidence of Your Bona Fide Marriage

This is often the most important category of documents in a marriage-based interview. The officer is looking for evidence that your marriage is real — that you communicate constantly, spend time together, support each other financially, and are building a shared future. In consular cases, where the couple is by definition living apart, evidence of continuous contact and in-person visits carries particular weight.

STRONGEST EVIDENCE

- ✓ Joint bank or financial accounts showing regular activity
- ✓ Joint lease, mortgage, or property ownership documents
- ✓ Utility or phone bills listing both spouses
- ✓ Joint federal or state tax returns (filed as married)
- ✓ Insurance policies listing the spouse as beneficiary or co-insured
- ✓ Birth certificates of children born to the marriage, or pregnancy records
- ✓ Passport stamps, boarding passes, and hotel records from every visit
- ✓ Photographs across the entire relationship, labeled with dates and locations

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

- ✓ Communication logs — WhatsApp, video calls, texts, with visible dates and times
- ✓ Wire transfers or remittance receipts to the spouse
- ✓ Wedding photos, ceremony program, invitations, and guest list
- ✓ Affidavits from family members and friends who know you as a couple
- ✓ Emails, cards, letters, and social media posts over time
- ✓ Evidence of planning a shared future — housing, school, employment, immigration of children
- ✓ Evidence you have met each other's families
- ✓ Power of attorney, wills, or beneficiary designations naming your spouse

A Word on Volume

Do not bring six binders. Bring a curated, well-labeled selection that tells the story of your relationship from the first contact to the present. Consular officers have limited time and will typically look at only a few items, but they may ask for anything. Quality, organization, and range of dates matter more than sheer volume.

E. Medical Examination

The medical examination must be completed by a government-approved panel physician — you cannot go to your personal doctor. The exam must be completed before your interview.

- Find approved panel physicians and complete instructions on the Department of State's Medical Examination page. Book early; some panel physicians have long waits.
- Bring your vaccination records. If you are missing required vaccines, the panel physician will administer them, potentially at additional cost.
- At many posts the panel physician transmits results electronically and you bring nothing. At others you receive a sealed envelope. If you receive a sealed packet, bring it to your interview and give it to embassy staff as directed — do NOT open the envelope. A packet that has been opened will not be accepted.
- The validity of your medical exam limits the validity of your immigrant visa. An older exam can result in a shorter window to travel, so do not complete the exam far in advance of your interview date unless your post instructs otherwise.

F. What NOT to Bring

Leave These at Home or in Your Vehicle

- ✗ Cell phones, smartphones, smart watches, tablets, or any electronics
- ✗ Earbuds, headphones, or Bluetooth devices
- ✗ USB drives or any portable storage devices
- ✗ Laptops or portable computers
- ✗ Large bags, backpacks, or luggage
- ✗ Food, beverages, or liquids of any kind
- ✗ Knives, scissors, lighters, or matches
- ✗ Sealed envelopes (EXCEPT your sealed medical packet from the panel physician)
- ✗ Children who are not themselves applicants, unless your post specifically permits it
- ✗ Friends or family members who are not also being interviewed

Most posts do not provide storage for prohibited items, and vendors outside the gate are not secure. Plan ahead.

PART 5 — TYPES OF QUESTIONS YOU WILL BE ASKED

The questions below represent the full range of topics a consular officer may cover in a marriage-based immigrant visa interview. You will not be asked every question — the officer selects questions based on your specific case file and on how your answers develop. Review all of them and make sure you can answer each one truthfully, confidently, and consistently.

How to Answer Interview Questions

- Be direct and truthful. There are no trick questions — the officer wants factual information.
- Be concise. Answer the question asked and then stop. Do not over-explain or volunteer information that was not requested.
- If you do not remember an exact date or fact, it is perfectly acceptable to say “approximately” or “I am not certain of the exact date.” Guessing at a specific answer is far worse than admitting uncertainty.
- If you do not understand a question, ask the officer to repeat or rephrase it. Never guess at what is being asked.
- Answer in the language you are most comfortable speaking. Accuracy matters more than demonstrating English ability.
- Never argue, become emotional, or speak disrespectfully to the officer, even if you believe a question is unfair or intrusive. Questions about your private life are a normal part of this process.
- Do not memorize scripted answers with your spouse. Officers recognize rehearsed language, and it undermines credibility. Know your life together; do not perform it.

IDENTITY • Identity and Biographical Background

- ▶ What is your full legal name? Have you ever used any other names — maiden name, prior married name, nickname, or alias?
- ▶ What is your date of birth? Where were you born (city, state or province, country)?
- ▶ What is your current address? Where have you lived over the past five years?
- ▶ What is your highest level of education? What schools did you attend and when?
- ▶ What is your current occupation? Where do you work and how long have you worked there?
- ▶ Do you have any children? What are their names, dates of birth, and where do they currently live? Are they immigrating with you?
- ▶ Have you ever applied for a U.S. visa before? What type, and in what year? Was it approved or denied?
- ▶ Have you ever traveled to or lived in the United States before? When, and for how long?

- ▶ Who is supporting you financially now, while you are waiting to immigrate?

MARRIAGE • Your Marriage and Relationship

- ▶ How did you and your spouse first meet? When and where was this?
- ▶ Who introduced you, or what platform or setting brought you together?
- ▶ How long did you know each other before you began a romantic relationship?
- ▶ How did your relationship develop while you were apart? How did you communicate?
- ▶ How many times has your spouse traveled to see you? When were those visits, how long did each last, and where did you stay?
- ▶ When was the last time you saw your spouse in person? When will you see each other next?
- ▶ Who proposed? How, when, and where did the proposal happen?
- ▶ When and where were you married? Was it a civil ceremony, a religious ceremony, or both?
- ▶ Who attended your wedding? Approximately how many guests? Did your spouse's family attend? Did yours?
- ▶ Did you have a honeymoon? If so, where did you go?
- ▶ How do you communicate on a daily basis — phone, video calls, messages? What application do you use most?
- ▶ How often do you speak with your spouse? What is the time difference between you?
- ▶ What language do you speak with each other?
- ▶ Did you speak with your spouse today or yesterday? What did you talk about?

PETITIONER • Knowledge of Your Spouse's Life in the United States

Expect heavy questioning in this area. Because your petitioner is not present to answer for themselves, your knowledge of their daily life is the officer's primary window into whether the marriage is real.

- ▶ What is your spouse's full name and date of birth?
- ▶ What is your spouse's current employer and job title? How long have they worked there?
- ▶ What is your spouse's approximate annual income?
- ▶ What is your spouse's home address in the United States? Do they rent or own?
- ▶ Describe your spouse's home — how many bedrooms, what floor, is there a yard, what does the neighborhood look like?
- ▶ Does anyone else live in that home?
- ▶ What are your spouse's daily routines — what time do they wake up, what time do they leave for work, what time do they get home?
- ▶ Does your spouse own a car? What kind?
- ▶ What are the names of your spouse's parents and siblings? Have you met them, in person or by video?
- ▶ Does your spouse have children from a prior relationship? What are their names and ages, and where do they live?
- ▶ Has your spouse been married before? How many times, and when did those marriages end?
- ▶ What is your spouse's immigration status — U.S. citizen or permanent resident? When did they obtain it?
- ▶ Where will you live when you arrive in the United States? Is that where your spouse lives now?
- ▶ What are your plans as a couple once you arrive? Will you work? Do you plan to study?
- ▶ Do you plan to have children together?

IMMIGRATION • Immigration and Travel History

- ▶ Have you ever overstayed a visa in the United States or any other country?
- ▶ Have you ever been deported, removed, or granted voluntary departure from the United States or any other country?
- ▶ Have you ever applied for asylum or refugee status anywhere in the world?
- ▶ Have you ever been denied a visa to the United States or any other country? If so, explain the circumstances.
- ▶ Have you ever made a misrepresentation or provided false information to obtain a U.S. visa or any immigration benefit?
- ▶ Has anyone ever filed an immigrant petition for you before? Who, and what happened to it?
- ▶ Have you ever worked in the United States without authorization?
- ▶ Have you ever entered the United States without inspection?
- ▶ Have you ever used a passport, identity document, or name other than your own?
- ▶ Are you currently in removal proceedings, or have you ever been?

CRIMINAL • Criminal and Security History

- ▶ Have you ever been arrested, cited, charged, or detained by police or law enforcement in any country?
- ▶ Have you ever been convicted of any crime, including traffic offenses, misdemeanors, or felonies?
- ▶ Have you ever been involved in drug trafficking, money laundering, human trafficking, or any organized criminal activity?
- ▶ Have you ever been a member of a gang, terrorist organization, or paramilitary group?
- ▶ Have you ever participated in the persecution of any group based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group, or political opinion?
- ▶ Have you ever served in any military or paramilitary force? If so, which one, when, and what was your role?
- ▶ Are there any pending charges or investigations against you in any country?

FINANCIAL • Financial Support and Sponsorship

- ▶ What is your spouse's current annual income? Who is their employer?
- ▶ Does your spouse file U.S. tax returns? What income did they report last year?
- ▶ Will there be a joint sponsor helping to support you? Who are they and what is their relationship to you or your spouse?
- ▶ Where does your spouse live — do they rent or own their home?
- ▶ Do you have any joint financial accounts with your spouse?
- ▶ Does your spouse send you money? How often, how much, and through what method?
- ▶ Who paid for your visa fees, your medical exam, and your travel to the interview?
- ▶ How will you support yourself when you arrive in the United States?

MEDICAL • Medical and Public Health

- ▶ Have you completed your medical examination with an approved panel physician?
- ▶ Did the panel physician identify any issues or require follow-up testing?
- ▶ Have you received all required vaccinations?
- ▶ Do you have any physical or mental health condition that might affect your ability to care for yourself?
- ▶ Have you ever been treated for drug or alcohol addiction?

Red Flag Topics — Prepare Honest Answers

Officers are trained to pay particular attention to certain situations. None of these is disqualifying on its own, but each will trigger more scrutiny and more detailed questioning. If any apply to your case, be prepared to explain clearly and to provide supporting documentation.

- **Short courtship:** If you married within a few months of meeting, be ready to explain how you came to know each other so well so quickly.
- **Very limited in-person contact:** Consular officers know that couples in these cases live apart, but they look closely at how many times you have actually been together and for how long. Bring passport stamps and boarding passes for every visit.
- **Significant age difference:** Your communication history, detailed knowledge of each other's lives, and shared plans matter especially here.
- **Different cultural, religious, or language backgrounds:** Not disqualifying — but be prepared to explain how you communicate and share a life across those differences.
- **Prior visa denials or a prior refusal at this same post:** Any prior denial is in your record. Be prepared to explain what has changed and why the outcome should be different now.
- **Prior marriages by either spouse:** Bring complete divorce or death certificates for every prior marriage. The officer will verify that your current marriage is legally valid.
- **Prior spousal petitions filed by your petitioner:** If your spouse has sponsored a previous spouse, the case receives additional scrutiny, and in some circumstances a statutory bar or waiver requirement applies. Tell our office before your interview.
- **Prior U.S. presence with an overstay or unlawful work:** Be prepared to state the dates accurately. Do not minimize or round them.
- **A petitioner currently living abroad:** Expect domicile questions and bring evidence of plans to re-establish U.S. residence.

PART 6 — PREPARATION CHECKLISTS**One Month Before Your Interview**

- ✓ Schedule and complete your medical examination with an approved panel physician
- ✓ Verify all required civil documents are in hand — birth certificate, marriage certificate, police certificates from every qualifying country, divorce or death certificates for all prior marriages
- ✓ Confirm all non-English documents have certified English translations
- ✓ Confirm police certificates are current and in the format your post requires
- ✓ Review your DS-260 in full — your sworn answers at the interview must be consistent with what you submitted
- ✓ Review your petitioner's I-130 petition for consistency with your DS-260
- ✓ Confirm the I-864 is signed and that tax and income documents cover the most recent tax year
- ✓ Compile your relationship evidence package — photos, communication records, visit records, financial evidence
- ✓ Review the specific requirements, security rules, and interpreter policy for your post at usembassy.gov
- ✓ Arrange travel and lodging if your consulate is far from your home
- ✓ Contact our office to review your document packet before the interview

One Week Before Your Interview

- ✓ Confirm your appointment date, time, and location
- ✓ Organize all documents in a labeled folder — originals and one set of copies, in the order listed in Part 4
- ✓ Reprint your DS-260 confirmation page, fee payment receipts, and appointment letter
- ✓ Confirm your medical exam results have been completed and transmitted, or that you hold the sealed packet

- ✓ Review your relationship timeline: when you met, first in-person meeting, each visit, the proposal, the wedding, significant events since
- ✓ Review your petitioner spouse's basic information: employer, income, address, daily routine, family members, prior marriages
- ✓ Recheck embassy security rules and confirm exactly what you may and may not bring
- ✓ Register for passport courier delivery if your post requires advance registration
- ✓ Plan your route to the embassy or consulate and confirm transportation
- ✓ Arrange childcare if you have young children who cannot accompany you

The Day Before Your Interview

- ✓ Lay out all documents in their organized folder and do a final check against Part 4
- ✓ Charge nothing you cannot bring — decide now where your phone and electronics will be left
- ✓ Set your alarm and have a reliable wake-up plan — do not be late
- ✓ Choose your professional attire — dress as you would for an important job interview
- ✓ Confirm you have local currency for transportation and any post-specific fees
- ✓ Get a full night of sleep — being rested helps you stay calm and clear
- ✓ Do not drink alcohol the night before

The Morning of Your Interview

- ✓ Eat a good breakfast — you may be waiting for several hours
- ✓ Leave with ample extra time to account for traffic, parking, and security lines
- ✓ Bring only permitted items — leave electronics and prohibited items at your hotel or in your vehicle
- ✓ Bring water only if permitted by your embassy's rules (check first)
- ✓ Remain calm and positive — you have prepared thoroughly

After Your Interview — What to Do Next

- If approved: Note the date your passport is expected back and how it will be delivered. Pay the USCIS Immigrant Fee before traveling. Photograph your visa page as soon as you receive it and send it to our office. Do not book travel that lands after your visa expiration date.
- If issued a 221(g): Photograph or scan the 221(g) notice immediately — including both sides and any checkboxes. Send it to our office the same day. Do not submit anything to the post until you hear from us. Track your case at ceac.state.gov/CEACStatTracker.
- If refused: Remain calm and obtain any written notice provided. Contact our office immediately. Many refusals can be addressed with additional evidence, and some inadmissibility findings can be overcome with a waiver such as Form I-601.
- If your petition is returned to USCIS: Contact our office the same day. This outcome has strict response deadlines and requires immediate attention.
- After you enter the United States: Confirm your green card is mailed to the correct address, apply for a Social Security number if you did not request one on the DS-260, and keep your stamped passport safe as proof of status until the card arrives.
- If you received CR-1 conditional status: Calendar your card's expiration date now. Form I-751 must be filed in the 90-day window before it expires. Contact us 3–4 months ahead.
- Always: Send our office a brief written summary of the interview — what questions were asked, how it went, and copies of any documents you were given.

PART 7 — HOW BOTELHO LAW GROUP SUPPORTS YOU

We Are With You Every Step of the Way

- Before your interview: Call us at 508-500-1551 with any last-minute document questions, concerns about a specific issue in your case, or if you are unsure whether to bring a particular document.
- During your interview: Attorneys are generally not permitted to appear with you at a consular interview. We cannot be in the room — but we have prepared you as thoroughly as possible. Trust your preparation.
- After your interview: Contact us immediately — the same day — with a summary of what happened, especially if you received a 221(g) or a refusal.
- If you receive a 221(g): We will review the notice, prepare the response package, and coordinate submission with you and the post.
- If you are found inadmissible: We will evaluate waiver eligibility and, where available, prepare and file the appropriate waiver application.
- Track your case status at ceac.state.gov/CEACStatTracker — check this regularly after your interview.
- Upon approval: We will assist with entry planning, the USCIS Immigrant Fee, your conditional green card timeline if applicable, and any follow-up filings required.

QUESTIONS? BOTELHO LAW GROUP IS HERE TO HELP.

901 Eastern Ave., Suite 2, Fall River, MA 02723

508-500-1551

Disclaimer

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Every immigration case is unique, and the outcome of any interview depends on the specific facts, documents, and circumstances of that individual case. Procedures, document requirements, and security rules vary by embassy and consulate and are subject to change without notice; always confirm current requirements with your post. The information provided here may not apply to your specific situation.

You should not act or refrain from acting on the basis of any information in this guide without first seeking the advice of a qualified immigration attorney regarding your particular matter. If you have specific questions about your case, your documents, or your eligibility, please contact our office directly to speak with an experienced immigration attorney.