

## The Application Process

The following is a general description of the application process:  
(No matter where you got married this will be applicable.)

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You get married and get the marriage certificate.

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Get the application forms relating to the "Immediate Relative Visa" (commonly called the green card). This application must be filled by the American spouse. This is an application for a temporary resident card which will be valid for a period of 24 months and will have to be renewed by the American spouse at the end of this period. The main form is the I-130 (Petition for Alien Relative) which will kick-start the whole process.

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After having obtained and completed the numerous required forms and documents, send them, along with the filing fee &ndash; about \$185 (non-refundable if the application is rejected), to the USCIS or deliver it to the consulate of your country.

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If your application is valid, you will receive a "Notice of Approval", which will explain that your petition has been approved and that the process has started. Following this notice, you will receive a letter explaining which documents you will need for your future interview. Make sure you take care of this well in advance, as getting all the documents can take a long time.

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You will then get an interview date as well as all the details to get your medical exams done. This will include getting all your common shots up to date for the American requirements and meeting with a doctor, following blood tests and lung X-rays. In France, there are only 3 or 4 consulate approved doctors (a list with their details will be included in the letter notifying you of the interview date).

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Once you've passed your medical review, you will have an interview with an immigration officer and your paperwork will be reviewed. A few questions about your relationship to your new spouse will be asked (how and when you met, etc.). It is always a good idea to bring a couple pictures that can help prove your honesty at the interview. It probably will not be needed but it does feel reassuring. You will also need to have the proper mailing items, so that the embassy can return your passport to you with the new stamp on it. (In France this would require a 2 kg inflatable Chronopost envelope.)

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If everything goes well, your application will be approved by the officer. He will then keep your passport as well as some of your documents.

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Several days later (usually within 5 working days) you will receive your passport, freshly stamped with your new visa, as well as a sealed envelope containing all the documents needed for your arrival at the customs in the USA. DO NOT OPEN this envelope.

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That is it! Book your flight, pack your bags, and go...

For more detailed info, you can consult the book *Fiance and Marriage Visas* by Ilona Bray, available on Amazon.com.