

EXPRESS ENTRY & PERMANENT RESIDENCE

Express Entry: Tips, Document Checklist and FAQs

FREE GUIDE

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Express Entry is the main way skilled people become permanent residents of Canada. Here is what it is, a few tips that actually move the needle, the full document checklist I give my own clients, and answers to the questions we hear most.

Express Entry in 90 seconds

Express Entry is not a program on its own. It is a pool that manages three federal programs: the **Federal Skilled Worker** class, the **Canadian Experience Class** (for people with Canadian work experience), and the **Federal Skilled Trades** class.

You create a profile, the system scores you with the **Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS)**, and you sit in the pool ranked against everyone else. Periodically IRCC runs a draw and invites the highest-scoring candidates. If you get an **Invitation to Apply (ITA)**, you have 60 days to submit a full PR application.

THE BIG LEVER

A **provincial nomination adds 600 points** to your CRS, which effectively guarantees an invitation. If your score is short, a Provincial Nominee Program is often the fastest route in.

Five ways to raise your CRS score

- **Squeeze your language test.** Points jump at higher bands, so retaking IELTS or CELPIP to move up even one level can be worth more than you expect.
- **Add French.** A second official language can add meaningful points, and there are French-focused draws.
- **Get Canadian experience or study.** Canadian work experience and Canadian credentials both score well.
- **Assess your foreign education (ECA).** You usually need an Educational Credential Assessment to claim points for a degree earned abroad.
- **Do not forget your spouse.** Your partner's language, education, and experience can add points.

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Your Express Entry document checklist

Express Entry is a documents game, and the file that wins is the one that is complete and consistent. This is the checklist I give my own clients, grouped the way IRCC actually asks for things. Two stages matter: your **profile** (pre-ITA) and your full application after an invitation (**post-ITA**, the e-APR). Start the slow items early.

Language test must be under 2 years old both when you create your profile and when you submit. **ECA** must be under 5 years old at both of those points. After your **Invitation to Apply**, you have **60 days** to submit the complete application. If your passport expires within 6 months of applying, renew it and update your details.

1. Identity and civil status

- ☐ Passport(s): bio page plus every page with stamps or visas, current and previous
- ☐ National identity card, if you have one
- ☐ Birth certificate, if available or requested
- ☐ Marriage certificate if married, divorce or separation papers if applicable, death certificate if widowed
- ☐ Name-change or name-variation documents, if applicable
- ☐ PR photo to spec (JPG, 4 MB or less, 715x1000 to 2000x2800 px, taken in the last 12 months)
- ☐ Previous Canadian immigration documents (TRV or eTA, study or work permits, any refusal letters)

2. Personal history, addresses and travel

- ☐ Address history for the last 10 years (or since age 18), with no gaps
- ☐ Personal history for the last 10 years (work, study, unemployment, travel), with no gaps
- ☐ Travel history for the last 10 years: every trip outside your country of residence, with dates
- ☐ CV or resume (recommended)



3. Education

- ☐ Highest completed diploma or degree certificate(s)

- ☐ Transcripts or mark sheets for completed programs

- ☐ ECA report plus reference number, if your education was outside Canada

- ☐ Canadian education documents if applicable: diploma, transcripts and study permit(s)

- ☐ Professional licence or registration, if your occupation needs one

4. Language test results

- ☐ Approved test result (IELTS General Training, CELPIP-General, PTE Core, TEF Canada or TCF Canada)

- ☐ Second official language test, if you are claiming those points

- ☐ Spouse or partner language test, if claiming spouse points

5. Work experience

- ☐ Employer reference letter for each job claimed: job title, duties, dates, hours per week, salary, benefits, contact details and a signature

- ☐ Supporting evidence as available: contracts, pay stubs, tax slips or returns, promotion letters

- ☐ Canadian work evidence if applicable: work permits, T4s or NOAs, pay stubs, ROE, contract

- ☐ Self-employment evidence if applicable: business registration, invoices, client letters, proof of payment, tax filings, bank statements



6. Job offer or work authorization (if applicable)

- ☐ Certificate of qualification in a skilled trade, if applicable
- ☐ Written job offer with pay, duties, hours and conditions
- ☐ LMIA confirmation and number, or an LMIA-exempt offer of employment number
- ☐ Current work permit(s) and proof you are authorized to work
- ☐ Employer letter confirming ongoing employment for at least one year, if applicable

7. Proof of funds (if required)

- ☐ Bank letter from each institution: account numbers, date opened, current and 6-month average balance, any debts
- ☐ Bank statements for the last 6 months
- ☐ Investment or fixed-deposit certificates, if you are relying on them
- ☐ Evidence for any large deposits (sale agreement, bonus letter, gift deed)
- ☐ If exempt (valid job offer plus work authorization, or a CEC invitation): a letter of explanation and proof

8. Police certificates

START THESE EARLY

Required for you and every family member aged 18 or over, for each country where you lived for 6 months in a row or more. Some take weeks or months to arrive.

- ☐ Police certificate for your current country of residence, issued within 6 months before you submit
- ☐ Police certificate for any other country you lived in 6+ months in a row, issued after your last stay there
- ☐ If one cannot arrive in time: a letter of explanation plus proof you requested it (receipts, tracking)



9. Medical exam and biometrics

- ☐ Upfront Immigration Medical Exam (IME) and IMM 1017B information sheet, after your invitation
- ☐ Previous IME info or number, if you did one in the last 5 years and are in Canada
- ☐ Previous biometrics confirmation, if you have given biometrics before

10. Spouse or partner and dependent children

- ☐ Spouse or partner passport and national ID
- ☐ Marriage certificate, or a common-law evidence package (joint lease, joint bills, shared accounts, photos) plus IMM 5409
- ☐ Dependent children birth certificates
- ☐ Adoption, custody or permission-to-travel documents, if applicable
- ☐ Proof children are dependent, if applicable (school records, financial support)

11. Provincial nomination (if applicable)

- ☐ Provincial nomination certificate
- ☐ PNP support letter or work-permit support letter, if issued
- ☐ Any correspondence from the province about nomination conditions

12. Additional supporting documents

- ☐ Proof of a relative in Canada, if claiming those points (their PR or citizenship, proof of relationship and residence)
- ☐ Military service record or discharge book, if applicable
- ☐ Court documents and proof of disposition, if applicable
- ☐ Letters of explanation for anything complex (name differences, gaps, refusals)



13. Translations

Include a complete translation package: a scan of the original, a full English or French translation, and, if you did not use a certified translator, an affidavit from the translator. All stamps and seals must also be translated. Translations cannot be done by you or a family member.

14. Forms and authorizations

- ☐ IMM 5476 Use of a Representative, if you hired one
- ☐ IMM 5475 Authority to Release Personal Information, if applicable
- ☐ IMM 5409 Statutory Declaration of Common-law Union, if declared
- ☐ Our office forms (retainer, consent, document-request forms)

THE FINAL WORD IS IRCC, NOT THIS LIST

This is a general checklist. Your personalized document checklist inside your IRCC online account is the final authority, and IRCC can ask for more at any time.



Insider tips from filing hundreds of these

These are the small things we do on real files that are easy to miss when you complete your own profile.

If you are applying under the Canadian Experience Class, you do not need to show settlement funds. CEC has no proof of funds requirement, so if the profile asks, you can enter 0 and it will not make you ineligible.

You will not find a dedicated place to upload your IELTS or CELPIP result. Attach it together with your education and diploma documents, or under client information.

ALWAYS SEND A SUBMISSION LETTER

Include a short letter that addresses every detail of your file. If anything is not perfect, for example you selected the wrong NOC code when you created your profile, say so up front. Explaining it yourself is always better than leaving IRCC to find it.

ACCOMPANYING VS NON ACCOMPANYING FAMILY

Whether a spouse or child is accompanying or not affects your CRS, and it has to be represented clearly. We have shown non accompanying family members hundreds of times without a single problem, because the representation was clean. If your situation is unusual or you are unsure, speak to a consultant before you submit. Do not guess on this one.

IF YOU HAVE LOST STATUS

If you are applying for PR after losing status: if you are still inside your 90 day window, apply for restoration to a bridging open work permit immediately. If you have been out of status for longer, leaving Canada is usually the safer move, because staying out of status can create serious problems. Get advice before you decide.

Take screenshots of every screen you fill in, including your 10 year personal history and 10 year address history. Once you submit the profile you cannot go back and review it, so keep your own copy.

Attach proof of your salary being deposited into your account. IRCC has been asking for this more and more, so provide it before they ask rather than waiting for a request.

IF YOU GET MARRIED AFTER YOU APPLY

If you marry after submitting your PR application but before you land, you must declare it to IRCC. The good news is that you can add your spouse at this stage without affecting your CRS, once your portal one email has arrived, or your ready for visa email if you are outside Canada. It adds some delay. This is delicate, so speak to us before you make the change.

Download form IMM 5669 from the IRCC website and use it to organize your 10 year personal history and address history before you touch the online profile. The Express Entry portal is essentially the digital version of IMM 5669, so everything it asks is already on that form. A simple spreadsheet works just as well. Organize first, then enter.

Common questions

What CRS score do I need? There is no fixed pass mark. Each draw has its own cut-off, so aim as high as you reasonably can, then watch the draws for your category.

Do I need a job offer? No. A valid offer can help, but many people are invited without one. A provincial nomination or strong French is often more powerful.

How long does it take? After you receive an ITA and submit a complete application, IRCC aims to process most PR applications within about six months, though this varies.

What is an ECA? An Educational Credential Assessment confirms your foreign degree equals a Canadian one. You generally need it before you can claim education points.



Want the full step-by-step?

Our Express Entry Self-Help Guide walks through the profile, the documents, and the traps, in the right order. It is coming soon. If your case is complex, talk it through with a licensed RCIC.

Book a consultation

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