

The China Work Visa Checklist

From job offer to residence permit, in the right order. Print it, tick it off.



A starting point, not legal advice. Rules and documents change and vary by city. Always confirm the current requirements with your employer and with the Chinese embassy or visa centre in your country.

Before you say *yes*

- ☐ The offer comes from a **licensed employer** that will sponsor your work permit. Ask for the legal company name, not just the recruiter's.
- ☐ The job is in **writing**: a contract with title, city, salary, hours, and who pays for visa costs, the medical check and document authentication.
- ☐ Your **passport** is valid for at least six months (ideally well over a year, as your residence permit depends on it), with blank pages.
- ☐ You know the **rules for your profile**: degree level, years of experience and, for teachers, the certificate your city asks for.

1 Documents

START FIRST · TAKES LONGEST

- ☐ Degree certificate (and transcript if asked).
- ☐ National criminal record check from your home country. It often must be dated within the last six months: ask your employer, and don't order it too early.
- ☐ CV and proof of experience (reference letters, previous contracts).
- ☐ Teaching certificate if relevant (TEFL, TESOL or CELTA).
- ☐ Passport-style photos and a copy of your passport photo page.
- ☐ Apostille or legalisation of the documents that need it, in your home country. Ask your employer exactly which documents, and in which order.
- ☐ Your **name is spelled exactly the same** on your passport, degree and certificates. A mismatch is a common cause of delays.

2 Work permit notice

BEFORE YOU FLY

- ☐ Your employer applies online for your **work permit** using your documents.
- ☐ You receive the **notification letter** and the invitation once approved.

3 Z visa

IN YOUR HOME COUNTRY

- ☐ Apply at the **Chinese embassy, consulate or visa application centre** with the notice from step 2.
- ☐ Check the visa is a **Z (work) visa**, not a tourist, business or other category.
- ☐ Remember: the Z visa gets you **into** China. It is not the long-term permit.

4 After you land

30-DAY CLOCK

- ☐ **Register your address** with the local police (hotels do it for you).
- ☐ Complete the **medical check** at a designated clinic.
- ☐ Collect your **work permit** and apply for your **residence permit within 30 days of entry**.
- ☐ Expect the Exit-Entry office to **keep your passport** while it processes your residence permit: don't book international travel during that time. Otherwise, nobody (including your employer) should hold it.

THE ONE RULE NEVER TO BREAK

Never start work *before* your Z visa

Not on a tourist visa, a business visa or visa-free entry, even "just while the paperwork is sorted". That is illegal employment, and the risk (fines, detention, deportation, re-entry ban) falls on you, not the employer.

Red flags: *walk away*

"Come on a tourist visa, we'll change it later."

"You don't need a degree, we have connections."

No written contract, or salary paid in cash.

The employer won't name the company that will sponsor your permit.

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