



What You Need to Know

Deciding to work abroad is definitely a big step in your life. You should be prepared for what you should do before you start working abroad. Here are some helpful tips and things to consider once you've decided to work abroad and be an overseas Filipino worker (OFW).

1. Check out overseas job listings. We recommend the OPAP and PASEI listings we have in www.trabahoabroad.com. Job vacancies are also posted in the premises of licensed recruitment agencies.

2. POEA publishes a list of licensed recruitment agencies quarterly to guide job seekers like you and me.

3. Make sure that the recruitment agency you are applying with is licensed to operate. Verify the agency's legality first! Take note of their name and license number then cross-check it with the POEA. It's better to be safe than sorry.

4. Avoid recruitment agencies not licensed by POEA and licensed agencies without job orders.

5. Do not deal with fixers and unauthorized representatives of a licensed agency. Also, do not transact business outside the registered address of the agency. There is a danger that you will never see your payment ever again.

6. Do not be enticed by ads or brochures requiring you to reply to a Post Office (P.O.) Box, and to enclose payment for processing of papers. This is not advisable and there is a high possibility that you will never see your money again.

7. There will be a lot of documents that you would need to submit, make sure that the documents are all in order and you have photocopies. Pay attention to the small stuff like making sure that your passport pictures are the right size. And always make sure all the information you provide is correct.

8. Acquaint yourself with any paperwork, especially contracts. Read the fine print, there might be some loopholes there which may be to your disadvantage.

9. Don't be afraid to ask about things you don't understand. Ask the appropriate person or office. Ask those who have worked abroad so you would have an idea of what to expect.

10. Do not accept a tourist visa. You're there to work, not go sight-seeing. Your entry into the country should be legal. Other means of entry will deprive you of seeking benefits accorded to OFWs. And besides, leaving as a tourist but with the intention of working abroad is illegal both in the Philippines and the host country.

11. Get an E-card. The OFW Electron Card (E-card) is an identification card issued by the Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE) through its attached agencies, the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA). The card is a multi-function card containing information about the OFW which he will need in dealing with government institutions, locally and abroad.

12. The legal placement fee to be collected by licensed recruitment agencies from applicants must be equivalent to one month salary of the worker as stipulated in the employment contract. The amount, however, does not include documentation and processing costs.

13. Documentation costs include fees for passport, NBI/Police clearance, medical examinations, Medicare premium, trade tests, authentication, birth certificate, etc. Processing costs include visa, POEA processing fee and OWWA membership fee to be paid by the employer.

14. Review your contract. Know your rights. Acquaint yourself with the grievance machinery.

15. If you are sending money back home, remit using formal remittance institutions. They're safer and will definitely reach their intended destination.

16. If you need assistance like counseling, request for repatriation or referrals to those who can help you legally, you can contact the Assistance and Welfare Division, Welfare Service Branch, 2nd Floor, POEA Building, Tel. No. 722-11-96 / 722-11-82.

17. Been robbed, cheated or treated badly? You can file cases against recruitment agencies and fellow workers via the Legal Assistance Division at the POEA head office or any POEA Regional Office. You can also complain about your foreign employer at the Philippine Embassy or Consulate nearest your jobsite if there are violations of rules and regulations on overseas employment, misconduct or contractual disputes.

18. If it's about money claims arising from employer-employee-relationship such as unpaid wages, breach of contract and illegal dismissal, contact the Migrant Worker's Desk, National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) in NLRC Regional Offices where you reside.

19. If you're vacationing in the Philippines after a working stint abroad and you still plan to go back, you are considered a returning overseas Filipino worker or balik-manggagawa. All you have to do is secure an overseas employment certificate (OEC) at the POEA Balik-Manggagawa Processing Division, regional centers and satellite offices and some Philippine Overseas Labor Offices to enable you to leave the country again and avail of the same privileges such as exemption from travel tax and airport terminal fee. You don't have to go through the whole process again.

Airport Procedures and Travel Tips

The most significant indication that you really are going to work abroad is getting there. The most common mode of transport would be via airplane. Here are some tips before you board that plane for your place of work as well as some tips on what to do when you get there.

What to do and bring before you go

- Dress conservatively. Don't wear expensive looking jewelry.
- Carry minimal amount of valuables.
- Travel light.
- Avoid handbags, fanny packs, and outside pockets.
 - If you wear glasses, bring an extra pair.
 - Bring the medicines that you need. Keep them in their original, labeled containers. Bring copies of your prescriptions and the generic names for the drugs.
- Pack an extra set of passport photos along with the two photocopies of your passport identification page to make replacement of your passport easier in the event it is lost or stolen, one to leave behind to your family and the other to bring with you on your trip.
 - Put your name, address, and phone nos. inside and outside of every piece of luggage. Use covered luggage tags to avoid casual observation of your identity or nationality. If possible, lock your luggage.

What to leave behind

- Valuable or expensive-looking jewelry
- Irreplaceable family objects
- All unnecessary credit cards
- Social Security card, any cards and similar items you may routinely carry in your wallet
 - Other illegal objects in your host country such as guns and deadly weapons, prohibited substances, and animals
 - Leave a copy of your itinerary with family or friends at home in case they need to contact you during an emergency.

Things to arrange before you go

- Your itinerary
- Legal documents such as passport, overseas employment certificate (OEC), VISA,

- validated employment contract
 - Responsibilities of the family members while you are away
 - Complete contact numbers and addresses, days and time of call of your family members

At the airport

- Be at the airport at least (3) hours before your flight.
- Proceed to the "Departure Area"
- Prepare Passport and Airline Ticket and show to the guard at the gate.
- Once inside the airport, go directly to the Labor Assistance Center, an extension unit of POEA, and present the following documents:
 - Overseas Employment Certificate, Validated Agency Worker's Agreement and/or Validated Employment Contract, PDOS Certificate
 - Passport
 - Airline Ticket

What to do before boarding the plane

- Proceed to the Airline Counter, Check in baggages and submit Airline Ticket, Passport, VISA, and OEC. 2. Make sure that all submitted documents are returned together with the Boarding Pass, Receipt of Baggages Checked in, and Departure Card. 3. Then go directly to the Immigration Counter and present all documents for inspection.

What to Do upon Arriving

- Proceed to the Immigration Counter and present VISA/Passport Embarkation Card (Arrival Card)
 - Go to Baggage Claim Area (Carousel)
 - Go through Customs and present Customs Declaration Form.
 - Exit the area, make sure to present Baggage Claim Tabs.
 - Proceed to Arrival Hall or designated waiting Area. Wait for somebody to pick you up, either employer or representative of your employment agency. If nobody picks you up, make a phone call to your employer or agency, thus, use your initiative in getting access to phone, either coin or phone card.

OFW Hotlines

Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA)

Tel nos. 834-3000 / 834-4000
Website: www.dfa.gov.ph

Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs (OUMWA)

Website: www.dfa.gov.ph/olamwa/menu.htm
Email: olamwa@dfa.gov.ph

Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO)

Tel No. 532 8321
Fax No. 561 8332
Website: www.cfo.gov.ph
Email: cfodfa@info.com.ph

Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE)

Tel no. 527-8000
Website: www.dole.gov.ph

Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA)

Tel nos. 551-16507
Website: www.owwa.gov.ph

Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA)

Tel no. 722-1144 / 722-1155
Website: www.poea.gov.ph

National Statistics Office (NSO)

Tel no. 737-1111
Website: www.census.gov.ph