

Good Faith Marriage

Any immigration process that involves your relationship to your spouse will require you to prove that you married in good faith. In other words, you need to show Immigration that you didn't get married just to get a green card. You will need to prove that you and your spouse have shared a life together. This will not look the same for all couples. For example, a younger couple will have different experiences from a couple who married at an older age. Regardless of circumstance, all immigrants who use their marriage as an immigration process will need to demonstrate that they have a legitimate relationship.

When Will You Need to Prove a Good Faith Marriage?

Common examples of needing to prove a good faith marriage to Immigration:

- Lifting the conditions of residency
- VAWA self-petition
- Petitioning for a spouse's green card
- Self-petitioning as a widow(er)

Evidence of a Good Faith Marriage

Younger Couples

Younger couples often have children in common and usually share debt or assets, such as a home and a car. They would also most likely be beneficiaries of each other's life insurance policies. Basically, you need to present aspects of your relationship that any couple in your position would be able to show.

Older Couples

On the other hand, couples who married later in life might not mingle assets in the same way. For example, it is less likely that you will have parented the same children, and your kids might be the beneficiaries of your life insurance policy instead of your new spouse. Also, you might not put a new spouse as the co-owner of the home that you took years to pay for. However, you might share a checking account for household expenses, or you might buy a car together. Context is really important for all of this. Consider what a married couple in your situation would normally be able to show.

Potential Problems

Immigration may look at the following aspects of your relationship and question the legitimacy of your marriage, or look at it with more scrutiny if:

- There is a wide age gap between you and your spouse
- You don't speak the same language
- The marriage took place while you were in deportation proceedings
- You are related to each other
- You met online
- You had an arranged marriage
- You don't live together
- You can't answer simple questions about one another

ALERT: Do Not Get Married Just for a Green Card

If Immigration determines that you did not marry in good faith, you will become permanently ineligible for any lawful immigration processes in the United States. You could also face fines and jail time. Do not get married just to get a green card. An immigration lawyer can help you determine your best immigration options.

Civil Documents by Country

The U.S. Department of State provides a list of acceptable documents on their website for each country that has a relationship with the United States. For example, if you are looking for what documents you need to prove a marriage, start by selecting your country and then scroll until you see the marriage certificate section. There you will find the documentation you need to give U.S. Immigration that is specific to your country. This resource can also be helpful if you need to find out how

to get a copy of a divorce, birth, adoption, or death certificate from your home country.

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[Green Cards Immigration](#)

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Table of Contents

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