

Your Guide to a Spanish NIE

Navigating the administrative side of things in Spain can feel a bit like a maze, but getting a handle on the **NIE** is the absolute first step to opening almost any door here.

Here is a straightforward breakdown of what it is, when you will need it, and exactly how to secure one.



What is a NIE?

NIE stands for *Número de Identidad de Extranjero* (Foreigner Identification Number). It is a unique, personal tax and administrative identification number assigned by the Spanish National Police to non-Spanish citizens.

- **The Format:** It consists of a letter, followed by seven digits, and ends with another letter (e.g., X-1234567-Y).
- **Validity:** Your NIE number is assigned **for life**. It never changes and never expires, though the physical A4 paper certificate it is printed on is sometimes requested to be "recent" (under 3 months old) for certain strict bureaucratic transactions.
- **Important Distinction:** A NIE is *only* an identification and tax number. It does **not** grant you legal residency or the right to work on its own—it simply tracks your legal and financial footprint in Spain.

When is it Used?

You will need a NIE for practically any significant legal, financial, or administrative transaction in Spain. It is nearly impossible to operate without one if you are doing more than just visiting as a basic tourist.

You will always be asked for your NIE but not limited too when:

- **Buying or selling property** (or even signing long-term rental contracts)
- **Opening a Spanish bank account**
- **Signing an employment contract** or registering as self-employed (*autónomo*)
- **Setting up utilities** (internet, electricity, water, or getting a monthly mobile contract)
- **Buying a vehicle** or validating a foreign driving license
- **Paying taxes** or dealing with inheritance assets in Spain

How Do You Get One?

The process looks a bit different depending on whether you are currently inside Spain or applying from abroad.

The Step-by-Step Process

1. Gather Your Documentation: Preparation.

You will need to print and prepare a specific stack of paperwork:



- **Form EX-15:** The official NIE application form (filled out in Spanish, but left unsigned until you are in front of the official).
- **Valid Passport:** Your original passport, plus a complete photocopy of the photo page (some offices require copies of all pages).
- **Justification Document:** Proof of *why* you need the NIE (e.g., a property reservation agreement, a job offer, or a bank letter).

2. Book an Appointment (Cita Previa): Crucial Step.

If you are in Spain, you must book an appointment online via the official government portal (administracionespublicas.gob.es). Select the province where you are staying, choose the **Policía Nacional** option for NIE issuance, and secure a date.

- *Note: Appointments fill up incredibly fast, so it's best to check early in the morning.*

3. Pay the Government Tax (Modelo 790-012): Before the Appointment.

You cannot pay the fee at the police station. You must download and fill out **Formulario Modelo 790 (Código 012)** online, print it, and take it to a local bank branch to pay the administrative fee (approximately €12). The bank will stamp the paper as proof of payment, which you must bring to your appointment.

4. Attend the Appointment & Receive Your Number: Final Step.

Present all your documents, copies, and the stamped tax receipt at the designated police station or *Oficina de Extranjería*. Depending on the specific office, you will either be handed your white A4 NIE certificate on the spot or asked to return a few days later to collect it.

Applying from Abroad: If you aren't in Spain yet, you can complete this entire process by making an appointment at the nearest **Spanish Consulate or Embassy** in your home country. They will process the paperwork and eventually email you the NIE certificate, though this can take anywhere from 2 to 6 weeks.

If you don't want to deal with the Spanish online booking system or long lines, many people choose to hire a *gestor* (a local administrative agent) or your lawyer to handle the application on their behalf using a power of attorney.