

Question:

Dear Vice Consul,

I applied for a visa to the United States, but I did not get one. The officer I spoke to said something about “ties”, but I’m really confused by what he meant. Can you tell me what I need to do to get a visa?

Sincerely,

Confused Trini

Answer:

We at the US Embassy understand that the visa application process can be confusing, nerve-wracking and sometimes disappointing. Due to the frequency of general inquiries both before and after the application process, we want to demystify the process for all of our would-be applicants.

The most important thing you need to know is that our officers are required, by US Immigration Law, to assume that all applicants intend to immigrate and live permanently in the United States until they prove to the officer otherwise. This is the same at every Embassy and Consulate throughout the world, not just in the Caribbean, and certainly not just in Trinidad and Tobago. What this means is that the burden of proof is on YOU, the applicant, to prove to the officer that you will return to Trinidad and Tobago after your visit to the US. You must show during your interview that you possess strong enough ties to Trinidad or Tobago to bring you back here after a short stay in the US.

So what are ties? Basically a tie is something that will require you to return to Trinidad or Tobago within a reasonable amount of time. Ties can be a variety of things, but, generally speaking, our officers look at personal, professional, and economic ties. Our officers do not use a check-list of requirements; instead, they try to learn as much information about the applicant, including things like his or her family situation, employment history, financial ability to pay for a trip, travel history, or plans for the future. Then, based on the ties that the applicant has shown, the officer determines whether or not the applicant is qualified for a visa. This means that the officer will weigh your ties against the US Immigration Law in order to determine whether or not you have proven that you are not an intending immigrant.

If your ties to Trinidad or Tobago are considered strong enough by US Immigration Law, then the officer can issue you a visa. If, however, your ties are not strong enough according to US Immigration Law, then the officer is legally required to *not* issue a visa. It is also important to note that the ties of the applicant him or herself are the determining factor, not the purpose of travel, or the ties of any sponsor or third-party. Regardless of why you want to travel to the US, if your ties are not strong enough according to US Immigration Law, then the officer cannot issue a visa.