

How to Fill Out a Personal Information Form

A Personal Information Form, or PIF, is the form you use to apply for refugee status in Canada. On the PIF, you have to explain why you think you are a refugee. People at the Refugee Protection Division of the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB or the board) will read your PIF before they hold your refugee hearing. The PIF will help them decide whether you are a refugee.

If you can, get the help of a lawyer to fill out the PIF. If you cannot get help from a lawyer, use this guide. Keep in mind that these instructions are not legal advice. For information on how to find a lawyer or community organization that can help, see fact sheet #2, *Legal Help and Other Services for Refugee Claimants*.

Time limit

The IRB must get your completed PIF **within 28 days** of when you got it. If you miss this deadline, the board will ask you to go to an “abandonment hearing” (unless you have asked for and received an extension from the IRB before the 28-day deadline). At the hearing, the IRB may decide that you have abandoned (or given up) your refugee claim.

Filling out the PIF

Do the following when filling out your PIF:

- Before you start, get an extra copy of the PIF, or photocopy it, to use as a first draft. Use the other copy for the final document that you will give to the board.
- If you can get a lawyer, do not fill out the final copy until you get his or her help. But before you meet with the lawyer, complete your first draft of the form.
- Print clearly and use a pen with dark ink because you will have to make photocopies of the final form.
- **Answer all the questions** — don’t leave any of the spaces blank. If a question does not apply to you, write “N/A,” which means not applicable.
- If you are not sure of an answer to a question, or do not understand it, write that as your answer. Do not guess and put in the wrong information.
- Make sure the information in all your answers is consistent. For example, if you have to record the same dates in more than one answer — such as when you went to school — make sure those dates are the same each time.
- Make three photocopies of the form.
- Mail or deliver the original PIF and the two copies to the board. **Make sure the IRB gets your PIF within 28 days of when you got it.** If the IRB mailed the PIF to you, it will assume that you got it within 7 days. If you take your PIF to the board in person, you will get a receipt. Keep the receipt in case you have to prove later on when you delivered it.
- Keep a copy of the PIF for your records.

The PIF is an important document. You will have to swear (promise) that the information you put on the form is complete, accurate, and true. At your refugee claim hearing, the board members may ask you questions about that information. A refugee protection officer and a minister's representative of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) may also ask you questions about your PIF.

Claimants under 18 years old

Refugee claims of family members are processed together, but each member of the family must complete his or her own PIF. Follow these procedures for refugee claimants who are under 18 years old (column on the right):

- **Children 6 years of age and under** who are claiming refugee status under their parent's claim: Only questions 1 and 2 of the PIF must be completed. The child's parent or another person (a "designated representative") must then sign the form.
- **Children 7 to 17:** The entire PIF must be completed. The child's parent or a designated representative must then sign the form.
- **Children who are alone:** For unaccompanied children, no matter what their age, the entire PIF must be completed. A designated representative must then sign the form.

For more information, read the IRB guide called *The Refugee Protection Claim Process*. It is online at www.cisr-irb.gc.ca/en/about/tribunals/rpd/claimant/index_e.htm.

Table explaining key sections of the PIF

The following table will help you to fill out your PIF. The table does not explain everything on the form, but covers the sections that may be unclear or that are especially important.

The left column lists the section headings and question numbers that are on the PIF. The right column explains how to fill out the form.

Section heading and question number on the PIF	How to fill out the PIF
<p>Personal Identity Question 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1(a): "Given name(s)" means your first name or the name you normally use. 1(b): "Family name(s)" means your last name or surname. • 1(d): Print your real date of birth, even if your documents show another date. • 1(g): "Nationality, ethnicity or tribe." If your refugee claim is based on your nationality or membership in a social group, it is important to accurately fill out this question. Nationality and social group (which includes ethnicity or tribe), are two of the five grounds on which you can claim refugee status according to the United Nations <i>Convention Relating to the</i>

<p>Personal Identity (continued)</p>	<p><i>Status of Refugees.</i> Keep in mind that nationality does not mean citizenship.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1(h): “Religion and denomination.” It is important to accurately fill out this question if you are claiming refugee status based on your religious beliefs (for example, if you are a Muslim who had lived in a mainly non-Muslim country). • 1(i): “First language” refers to the first language you ever learned; also called your mother tongue. • 1(l): Print your real name correctly, even if the immigration officer spelled it wrong on the form or you used false documents and a false name to come to Canada.
<p>Citizenship Question 2</p>	<p>2(b): Under the “Status” column, for each country you have lived in, say whether you were a citizen, a permanent resident, a visitor, a worker, or whatever else applies.</p>
<p>Family Information Questions 3, 4, and 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3: List everyone you have been married to, from first to last. Include people you lived with in a common-law relationship — opposite sex or same sex. If you are no longer married to someone, explain what happened and when. For example, you may be divorced or separated, or your partner may have died. <p>“Date status was acquired” means each date that your marital status changed — for example, the date you got married, divorced, or separated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 and 5: In the list of relatives, remember to include any half brothers, half sisters, or adopted children.
<p>Education Question 6</p>	<p>List the total years of education you have. Include all the time you were in school, even if you did not finish a course. In the columns provided, list the dates you started and finished at the school, the name of the school, the place it was located, and the level you achieved. If you did not finish the program, write “not completed” in this last column.</p>
<p>Work Experience Question 7</p>	<p>Include all the types of work you did, even if you were not paid for it. Also include any self-employed work you did. Start the list with your most recent work.</p>
<p>Military Service Question 8</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8(a): “compulsory” means all citizens of a certain age must serve in the military.

<p>Military Service (continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8(p) and 8(q): “conclusion of service” refers to when you left the military and your military service ended. • 8(r): “Did you participate in combat?” is asking if you were in a battle or if you fought.
<p>Arrests and Criminal Offences Questions 9 and 10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9(a): If your refugee claim is based on your fear that the police or other authorities in your home country are looking for you, or because they detained or arrested you, then answer “Yes” to this question. Then add “See question 31” on the same line, just after the “No” box. Explain the details of the arrests or offences in your answer to question 31. <p>You must also answer “Yes” if the police have looked for you, or arrested or detained you in other countries, including Canada.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 (lower left section): “If convicted, what was the sentence?” is asking what penalty you got for the offence. For example, did you go to jail, and if so, for how long? (Put the length of time in “Prison term served.”) Were you fined, and if so, how much?
<p>Residence Question 11</p>	<p>List the address of every place you have lived in the past 10 years, starting with the place you live now.</p>
<p>Travel and Other Documents Questions 12 to 22</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12: Check your passport and make sure the places and dates of your travel match the ones you put in the PIF. • 13 to 15: List all of your identity or travel documents, such as the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identity documents include a birth certificate, school certificates, national identity cards, driver’s licences, military papers, membership cards for professional or political organizations, and medical records. (If you decide to provide your driver’s licence, CIC staff will keep it, making it more difficult for you to get a Canadian driver’s licence.) ○ Travel documents include passports, visas, and plane, train, and bus tickets. • 14 and 15 (last column): “Specify: genuine, not genuine, improperly obtained,” means that you have to say whether the document is real or counterfeit (forged or fake). If the

<p>Travel and Other Documents (continued)</p>	<p>document is a fake, explain how and when you got it, and who gave it to you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17: Explain the reasons why you did not get, or could not get, a passport or travel document. • 18(a): Some countries require citizens who leave the country to apply for a document that states that a person is in good standing with the government and is allowed to leave and return (sometimes called an exit visa). If you were required to have this special permission to leave your country, answer “Yes.” If you were required to get this document but did not, explain why in 18(c). • 19(a): People who visit or immigrate to Canada must get a visa to enter the country. For a list of countries and the location of their Canadian visa offices, check the CIC website at www.cic.gc.ca/english/offices/apply-where.html. • 19(e): If you got a visitor visa to enter Canada and claimed refugee status upon arrival, explain the reason you did this in question 31. • 22: List all other identity documents you have in your possession — or could get — and any other documents you had with you when you came to Canada but that got lost or stolen, or that you got rid of.
<p>Travel to Canada and Claims for Refugee Protection Questions 23 to 26</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23: List all the places and countries that you traveled to and from on your way to Canada. Include the dates you left a place and when you arrived at the next. List them in order from the most recent to the first place you left. Also list how you traveled from one place to another (for example, by bus, train, plane, or other mode of transportation). • 24(b): State where in Canada you made your claim for refugee protection. • 25(a): It is very important to state whether you went back to the country you fled after you made this refugee claim. • 26: List all your previous claims for refugee protection in Canada. Also list any refugee claims you made in other countries, or with the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees. If you made a previous claim in Canada and

<p>Travel to Canada and Claims for Refugee Protection (continued)</p>	<p>your claim was rejected, you will not be allowed to make a new claim.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attach copies of all the documents issued for those claims.
<p>Why You Are Claiming Refugee Protection in Canada Question 31</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31: “Narrative” means your own story, in your own words. This is the most important part of the PIF. Explain why you are afraid to return to your home country, and why you are claiming refugee protection in Canada. Be as detailed and accurate as possible about all of the reasons you were afraid to remain in your country and the events that made you decide to leave. <p>If you need more space, write on some other sheets of paper and attach them to the form.</p> <p>In addition to the information requested on the PIF, include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What happened to you and your family, and when it happened — put this in the order it happened, starting with the first event. ○ Why you are afraid and what you fear. ○ Who you fear will harm you. ○ The country where you fear you will be harmed. ○ Why the government in that country will not protect you. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your fear must be based on one or more of the following things, called “grounds”: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Race, which includes ethnic groups. ○ Religion, which can apply whether or not you belong to a particular religious group. It can also apply if you have certain religious beliefs or have no such beliefs. ○ Nationality — which is not always the same as citizenship — can also mean race, language, and other ethnic or cultural characteristics. ○ Membership in a particular social group, which applies no matter why you belong to the group. For example, it can apply even if you are a member of a group based on something that you cannot change, like your sex. ○ Political opinion, which can apply even if you do not belong to a political party or take part in political action. • You have to show that you are not safe anywhere in the country, not just in some parts of it.

<p>Why You Are Claiming Refugee Protection in Canada (continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain anything that might seem odd or suspicious to the people who will read your PIF. For example, it could seem strange if you have a passport from a government that is now harming you. But if you got the passport before the trouble began, that would explain why. • If you used false travel documents to get to Canada, explain how you got them and where they are now.
<p>Where You Can Be Contacted in Canada</p>	<p>If you change your address, tell the IRB immediately. Use the change of address form in the PIF kit to do this.</p>
<p>Your Counsel</p>	<p>“Counsel” means “lawyer.”</p>
<p>Annex</p>	<p>This section explains how to fill out a PIF, just as this guide does, but not in as much detail. Keep the Annex separate from the form itself.</p>

How to Fill Out a Personal Information Form is based on the Inland Refugee Society publication *Self-Help Guide for the PIF* (www.inlandrefugeesociety.org).

This fact sheet is one in a series for people who are making a refugee claim:

#1 *Starting a Refugee Claim*

#2 *Legal Help and Other Services for Refugee Claimants*

#3 *How to Fill Out a Personal Information Form*

#4 *A Guide to Humanitarian and Compassionate Applications*

#5 *A Guide to Pre-Removal Risk Assessment Applications*

These fact sheets are available in Chinese, English, and Spanish. You can read them online at www.lss.bc.ca (under “publications”). For copies, contact:

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This fact sheet explains the law in general. It is not intended to give you legal advice on your particular problem.



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