**Top Tips for Requesting Information from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

**1) Is your enquiry an FOI request?**

An FOI request can be for any piece of recorded information that we hold. If however you have a general enquiry or one about Consular assistance please call our switchboard on 020 7008 1500. For travel enquiries we provide country specific advice on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.atom) and you can email us at TravelAdvicePublicEnquiries@fco.gov.uk.

**2) Is all of some of the information that you want already available?**

Please look at our [publications](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?keywords=&publication_filter_option=all&topics%5B%5D=all&departments%5B%5D=foreign-commonwealth-office&official_document_status=all&world_locations%5B%5D=all&from_date=&to_date=&commit=Refresh+results) for examples of previous responses and the [datasets](http://data.gov.uk/publisher/foreign-and-commonwealth-office) that we publish online. Have we released this or similar information before? Do existing publications provide some or all of the information that you want? Other places to look before making your request are [Hansard](http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/hansard/) covering parliamentary debates and the [National Archives](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/) for historical data.

**3) Please tailor your request**

Please note that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) consists of nearly 270 diplomatic offices throughout the world. If your request means that we would need to contact each one of them, it is likely to exceed the cost limit in line with FOIA section 12. If possible, please avoid this by telling us if there is a specific country, geographical area, or issue you are interested in and by specifying a timeframe.

**4) Have you made the question specific to the information that you need?**

Our resources are limited, so it’s important to target your information request as efficiently as possible. This will make best use of public resources and enable officials to process your request faster. Does your question focus on the specific information that you need?

**5) ‘Round robin’ requests**

It costs public resources for each government department to answer an FOI request. Do you need answers from all government departments, or are particular departments more likely to hold the information for which you are looking? [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and/or individual department websites can give you an overview of the information held by each government department.

**6) Mutual respect**

As public servants we are committed to providing you with the best service we can. If we disagree about how to do this, please respect our position as we will yours.

**7) Be patient**

We aim to acknowledge your information request within 24 hours and to respond substantively within 20 working days. However, please bear in mind that some requests can take longer especially if we need to consider the public interest in withholding or releasing the information.

**8) Make sure you fully understand our response before using the appeal process**

Where we refuse to disclose any part of the information which you have requested, we will fully explain our reasons for doing so. Please carefully consider our reasoning before challenging these decisions. However, if you do disagree, please explain what you would like us to consider when reviewing our decision.