



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE For Creatives

DO NOT WRITE IN ABOVE SPACE

1

FULL
NAME

HOW

2

DATE
OF
BIRTH

TO

3

SOCIAL
SECURITY
NUMBER

MOVE TO

BY TOBIAS VAN SCHNEIDER

NYC

NEW YORK CITY

11222-2016

4

INCLUDES
TOPICS
SUCH AS:

- ☐ FINDING A JOB IN NYC
- ☐ WORK VISAS EXPLAINED
- ☐ LIST OF ATTORNEYS
- ☐ CALCULATE COST OF LIVING

- ☐ FIND AN APARTMENT
- ☐ SETTLING INTO NYC
- ☐ DOING YOUR TAXES
- ☐ NO BULLSHIT



(01)04601234567893



1st EDITION, MAR, 2017

HOW TO MOVE TO NYC

COPYRIGHT 2017, HOUSE OF VAN SCHNEIDER LLC

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO SUPPORTED
THIS BOOK DURING THE PRE-ORDER PROCESS.
YOU ARE MY HEROES.

AUTHOR & LAYOUT: TOBIAS VAN SCHNEIDER

EDITING: LIZZY SPANO

ILLUSTRATION: LU YU

PUBLISHED BY: HOUSE OF VAN SCHNEIDER LLC

WRITTEN & DESIGNED IN NEW YORK CITY

WWW.VANSCHNEIDER.COM





Tobias in SoHo, Manhattan, 2015
Three years after moving to New York.

PICTURE BY MARION LUTTENBERGER

Why I Wrote This Book

Six years ago I decided to move to New York City. I was born in Germany but lived in Austria at the time, where I ran my own design studio.

Like many who moved to New York before me, I packed my bags without a plan but with big dreams. Fast forward to today and I'm still living and creating in NYC. This city never stops, and I love that about it.

As you can imagine, moving from a small town in Austria to one of the biggest and most expensive cities in the world wasn't easy. One of many obstacles I had to overcome was the language barrier, because my English wasn't great. On top of that, the only traditional education I had was high school, and I dropped out at the age of 15. I knew without a degree it would be harder for me to enter a new country known for its demanding immigration procedure. But I did, and it was worth it.

I learned a lot from my move to New York and even more in the years I've lived here since. Now I'm sharing everything I know with you, with the hope of making your move as easy and enjoyable as possible.

Most of this information is available in some form on the internet but it's either scattered, outdated or written in complicated government language. Here I've provided all the information you need when planning your move, collected in the simplest form possible. No bullshit, no fluff.

My Lawyer Says I Have to Do This

How to Read This Book

I wanted to make this book short, so of course it ended up being more than 100 pages. Still I tried to keep everything as simple as possible. The layout isn't fancy. The images are few and far between. This should be a utility tool for you, without any pretty distractions.

This book is not a city guide. It's designed to help you move to New York from outside the United States as efficiently as possible.

Skip around if you like. Don't waste your time reading chapters that don't apply to you. For example: Don't need a job? Skip the first chapter. Don't need a visa? Skip the third chapter (and count yourself lucky). If you're not sure, keep reading. We'll figure it out together.

As part of this book, I'm writing a series of blog articles about New York. Follow along at vanschneider.com/blog.

By purchasing and reading this book, you accept the following:

The information in this book is based on my personal experience and research. I'm a designer, not a lawyer or legal expert, so please consult a professional if you have any doubt or legal questions. None of the information contained here should be taken as legal advice.

I started drafting this book in 2015 and wrote the majority of it in 2016 and 2017. Since then, a few things have changed. For example, the United States got a new president who has already made changes to the immigration policy.

While I truly hope most work visa requirements won't change too quickly, please consult your immigration lawyer to confirm that the information in this book is current.

Awesome, glad that's out of the way.

Now let's get started.

IND

SAMPLE CHAPTER

Chapter 1

Get a tourist visa
& scout the city

PAGE 8

Chapter 2

How to network and
find a job

PAGE 10

Chapter 3

Applying and getting a
US work visa

PAGE 20

Chapter 4

Making your final move
to New York City

PAGE 54

CHAPTERS EDITION

INDEX

Chapter 5

Finding your dream
apartment

PAGE 64

Chapter 6

Setting up
the essentials

PAGE 72

Chapter 7

Understanding how
New York Works

PAGE 94

Chapter 8

Taxes and other
annual maintenance

PAGE 100

Step 1

Get a Tourist Visa and Visit

Before moving to New York you should visit. This will give you a chance to scout the city and get a feel for it.

Of course it's a big city and you can't familiarize yourself with everything immediately, but I recommend spending at least 1-3 months in New York before considering a more permanent move.

Inside This Chapter

- Applying for a tourist visa
- Where to stay on your visit

Apply for a Tourist Visa

The regular ESTA tourist visa allows you to stay in the United States for a maximum of 90 days. You can apply for the ESTA visa [here](#) for a small cost.

The ESTA visa does NOT allow you to work for American companies while in New York (we'll talk more about work visas in Chapter 3). You might, however, still work remotely on your freelance projects from back home. This is a smart way to finance your trip to the city.

You don't have to stay three months, but you should stay at least 2-4 weeks if you can afford it. If you are a freelancer, you can mark these trips as a business expense as long as you're meeting with some potential clients in New York. This should make it much easier to stay without losing too much cash.

Where to Stay

New York is expensive, but for your first three months you just need to find a good temporary solution; you mostly need a place to sleep and not much more. Below are the most budget-friendly options, ranked by affordability.

Apartment Swap

If you have a friend in New York who would like to stay in your country for a while, offer them an apartment swap for a few weeks. This is the best and most affordable solution you can find. Since there is no money involved and it's just friends switching apartments, your landlords should have no problem with it.

Hostels

If you're traveling alone and don't have high expectations for your lodging, you could stay at one of [many affordable hostels](#) in the New York area. Unfortunately most of them are outside the city center, requiring you to commute to Manhattan every day. While this is one of the cheapest options, it's not the most convenient.

Airbnb

I've used [Airbnb](#) several times for trips like this. There are still some affordable Airbnb rooms available in New York if you are OK with sharing an apartment with five other roommates — it's only temporary.

If you can afford to stay up to three months in New York, switch your Airbnb apartment every four weeks to a new location. This is a great strategy to not only make friends and valuable contacts in the city, but to also experience different neighborhoods before choosing where to live.

For example:

- **Month 1** - Airbnb in Lower Manhattan
- **Month 2** - Airbnb in Upper Manhattan
- **Month 3** - Airbnb in Brooklyn
(Williamsburg or Greenpoint are good starting points in Brooklyn)

Chapter Summary

[Get your ESTA visa](#) and visit New York already! Stay as long as legally possible (three months) to get a feel for the city.

Step 2

Networking and Finding a Job

Finding a job in New York is not easy. Tens of thousands seek to live and work here every year. As a non-American citizen, you'll likely need to work harder and smarter than all the other people who want the same job you do.

I've always felt New York is a friendly city, but it's competitive — especially for you. Companies in the United States will always hire someone from within the country first if that person matches their current job opening. To hire someone from overseas means more work, risk and investment from their side. Knowing that, you need to prove that you are a better hire and worth the investment. This topic could easily fill its own book but it's not the purpose of this one, so I'll keep it short and snappy.

I will assume that you are an expert at whatever you do and have a company already interested in hiring you. (Please note that you should absolutely have a job lined up before moving here, as most visas require a company to sponsor you. More on this in Chapter 3.)

I'm a designer, so this chapter naturally focuses on my experience finding a job within the creative and tech industry. However, the principles described in these pages could apply to most industries.

Inside This Chapter

- Is an internship worth it?
- Networking events & making friends
- Networking via social media & email
- The interview process

Starting With an Internship

Internships are very common in New York and are offered by most companies I have worked with in the past. Bigger companies announce their internship programs once a year; small companies are generally open to internships all year, so you can get in touch with them anytime.

Are interns getting paid?

This depends on the company and it's less organized than in Europe, for example. Bigger companies in New York (this is very specific to New York) usually pay their interns up to \$2,000 a month while small companies pay up to \$1,000 or often nothing. I know of a lot of small studios that cannot afford to pay their interns but still accept them.

One of the main reasons small companies usually pay less is because of the way interns enter the United States. In some cases, interns do their internship illegally — which is very risky — rather than applying for a proper visa (see Chapter 3 for visa information). Many small studios simply can't afford to hire interns the official way because it would mean they have to pay the intern plus legal fees, insurance and so on.

If you are looking for an internship, first ask the company if they are paying for it and how much they are paying. I know many people who have done free internships in the city. Depending on where you do your internship, it could be a great opportunity to make connections that may later help you find a job. I never advise anyone to work for free, but if I really wanted to work at a specific studio and get good names on my CV, I would weigh my options and make a decision for myself.

Doing a free internship isn't a problem if you do it on your own terms. Only beware of studios who ask you to work for free right at the beginning, as they may end up taking advantage of you. But if you can afford to do an unpaid internship and think it could be a good investment for your career, do it.

Networking and Making Friends

The best way to find a job is to make connections. Everyone knows this, but it is even more true in a big, busy place like New York. If you can make the pre-move visit and stay here for three months, be sure to network the hell out of New York City. And I say that as an introvert who doesn't like networking.

Most people are hired based on recommendations, and often these recommendations are not from a deep connection. If I met you once or twice, for example, I might already have reason enough to recommend you for a job. Networking isn't so much about becoming best friends but about staying on each other's radar.

Let's say you are an illustrator. We just met each other at an event, you showed me your work and I liked it. Chances are high that if in the following days a friend asks me for an illustrator recommendation, I'll think of you because you're still fresh on my mind. It's a little bit like forcing your own luck.

Networking Events

The great thing about New York is that there are networking events happening every day, no exaggeration. When I first moved here I knew almost no one. However, there were a few events that helped me not only find potential jobs, but also make my first friends within the industry.

There are too many to list them all, but here is the essential list of networking events I found valuable for my first year in New York City.

Meetups.com

Because I had no idea what was happening in the city, I browsed [meetups.com](https://www.meetups.com) for events that might interest me. You can filter for events in your area or neighborhood and specify your industry. Most of these events are small and casual. It's just a group of people with similar interests meeting over free beer and pizza.

Tip: Meetups.com usually displays the list of people who plan to attend each event. This is a great feature because you can review the list of attendees before committing to the event to see if it's worth your time. Upload a picture of yourself on meetups.com, add a short, interesting bio with a URL to your portfolio and I guarantee others will stalk you on the attendee list as well. If you're lucky, people will walk up to you at the event before you even try to approach anyone else.

Fun fact: I met Randy Hunt, VP of Design at Etsy, at one of the first meetups I attended. He was giving a talk there. I knew who he was and had seen his work, but he certainly didn't know mine. Randy has since become a good friend.

AIGA

[The AIGA](https://aiga.org), a professional association for design, hosts dozens of events throughout the year in the city. They're either free or at a discounted price for members. I went to a couple of them my first year in New York and made a lot of great connections. This is where you will make your friends, especially if you're more of a traditional graphic designer or illustrator.

Another fun fact: I used to be on the board of directors at AIGA in New York City. I was nominated to join the board by a group of people — one of these people was Randy Hunt, who I just mentioned. This is how the dots connect.

The Art Directors Club

[The Art Directors Club](https://artdirectorsclub.org) organizes a range of events in the city that are free for its members. These events are often small, which is great for introverts like me. Becoming a member of the ADC is also good for your visa (more on this in Chapter 3 where we talk about visas in detail).

Other Networking Opportunities

Another great networking opportunity is [Dribbble Meetups](#), usually organized by the community itself.

[WorkingNotWorking](#) also organizes some of the coolest events for creatives in the city.

Product companies such as Google, Spotify or Facebook host little design or developer events at their offices. Even if you're not interested in joining these companies specifically, you will meet many like-minded people there.

The best way to stay informed about these events is by following design or development-related Twitter accounts (i.e. Google Design, Google Dev, Spotify Design and so on). Just Google the design or development teams you are interested in and you will find the right accounts to follow.

The same goes for any other design studios or product companies.

The Internet and Social Media

The best place for networking, especially for my fellow introverts out there, is the internet. Big surprise! It's even better when combined with in-person events.

For example, if you go to a Meetup event, don't just collect business cards and leave. Prior to the event, check out the attendee list, find the three most interesting people and send them a quick tweet saying: "Hey, I saw you're going to XYZ event next week. I'm coming too. Looking forward to meeting you."

After the event, go through the list of attendees and send them a quick tweet like: "Hey Susan, great meeting you at XYZ event the other day" or "Hey Rob, I saw you at XYZ event. Sad we didn't get a chance to talk, but hopefully next time."

I'm a huge fan of Twitter for making initial contact. If you move to New York and plan to work in the creative industry, Twitter is one of your most useful tools. Warming up before networking events or following up after is important, and Twitter makes it easy. Twitter is also less creepy or annoying than email, especially if you didn't exchange contact information at the event.

How to Network on Twitter

The easiest way to meet people at certain companies is typically through friends of friends. But let's say this isn't an option and you have to approach someone you don't know. The best way to do this is to simply tweet at them. If you're in NYC for three months checking out the city, tweet at some people and ask if they have time for a few questions. But before you do that, here are some handy guidelines.

Twitter Dos & Dont's

- DO send a short tweet to the people you'd like to meet. Keep it simple and casual.

- DON'T say things like, "Can I pick your brain?" Nobody likes that and chances are low that someone replies with excitement. People in New York tend to be busy, and asking someone to pick their brain usually sounds like extra work for them.

- DO be specific and respectful of their time. I personally get a lot of messages from people who visit New York and want to meet. I decline most of them because if I said yes to everyone, I would have a full-time job meeting up with people. It's not that I don't like to meet people, but I simply can't afford it. Put yourself in the shoes of someone you are contacting. Think of how you'd like to be approached by a stranger.

- DO try to meet for coffee or lunch. Lunch is the best excuse because it's a limited amount of time, and everyone has to eat lunch anyway. You will have more chances picking someone up for lunch at their company than trying to schedule a couple beers or dinner. Beers and dinner have no defined time limit — 30 minutes is too short, 1 hour might seem rushed, 2+ hours is too long. Save that for your second date.

- DON'T be complicated with the specifics. If someone agrees to meet, propose three example dates for lunch and offer to come to their office. Make it as easy as possible for the person you'd like to meet. They're doing you a favor, after all.

Lunch Dos & Dont's

- DON'T make polite small talk that wastes both of your time. When you meet with someone, share a bit about yourself: the purpose of this meeting, why you are here, what kind of job you are looking for, etc. Leave an impression, but don't bore or pressure the other person. Ask as many concrete questions as possible. Show interest in what they have to say. If you are interested, you are interesting.

- DO be friendly, prepared and purpose-driven. Make it easy for people to help you.

How to Email Busy People

Email is a little harder than Twitter because it's more personal and can come off as annoying. However, email is still one of the most effective tools for finding a job. Here are a few tips to help you write emails that get the response you want.

1. The elevator pitch

Skip the small talk and begin your email with a short, action-oriented summary explaining what the email is about. Say what you want up front — all other details should be optional to read. I know it's hard because we don't want to sound rude, but it's more rude to steal someone's time by throwing words around. Overall, try to not talk too much about yourself. Instead, add a link to your bio for extra credibility.

2. Don't try to score on the first date

There's a fine balance between saying what you want and trying too hard. Trying to score on the first date is dangerous; it can ruin the whole relationship immediately. If you want something, first explain what and then tell me why this is beneficial for both of us. If it's only beneficial for you, that's cool too, as long as that's clear up front. Be honest and authentic. Don't be a cheesy sales person trying to outsmart someone.

3. Format your email

Most emails that don't get a reply are horribly formatted and a pain to read. Take the extra minute to make your email easy to scan and digest. Instead of sending a wall of text, use breaks and format your email properly so the recipient doesn't have to do it for you before she can begin reading.

One good formatting rule is to use numbers. Every time I reply to emails I take them apart and number key sections, as I've done in this section of the book. It takes me a lot of time but helps the recipient easily digest the information and get back to me in the same fashion, which ends up saving us both time.

Don't make people format your messages to reply to you. The easier you can make it for the reader, the higher the chances they'll reply with the exact information you're looking for.

4. Send it again

If you haven't received a reply in more than a week, copy the same email and send it again. Don't add more things to it or ask if they got the email, or why they didn't reply. Asking these questions doesn't help anyone and only puts pressure on the recipient. Just send the same email again. If you change anything, simply optimize the intro or subject line. Every time someone does this I'm thankful because it either serves as reminder or points out an email I may have overlooked.

5. Don't ask to ask a question

Sending an email asking if you can ask even more questions will accomplish nothing. What do you expect someone to say in reply? Send questions right away if you want answers, and number them. If you plan to ask 10 questions but know the receiver might be overwhelmed, send five right away and the other five after they reply. It's important to get to the point, but at the same time not overwhelm the person on the other end.

6. No bullshit office jargon

If you write something like "holistic high level overview of potential synergies using cutting edge technologies" my brain is already dead before I can hit the reply button.

7. Be funny

You wouldn't believe how much a funny GIF helps. Anything that makes me smile is a bonus. As the saying goes, time I enjoy wasting is not wasted.

How to Use LinkedIn

Despite its reputation, LinkedIn can be useful for finding a job within the creative industry. You might appreciate [this article about how make the most of LinkedIn as a designer or developer.](#)

The Interview Process

Let's assume you've already found a job opportunity (likely through a recommendation) and you're offered an interview. The interview process will be unique to each company, but here are some general guidelines.

Interviews

If you're interviewing at a small studio or agency, you'll usually complete one or two interviews before they will offer you a job.

The interview process at bigger companies such as Spotify or Google can be much longer and can take up to 4+ weeks. If you are interested in working at a bigger product company, make sure you have enough time in New York to complete the interview process. Usually, the interview process at bigger companies consists of 4-6 rounds of interviews.

Typical Interview Process (With Bigger Companies)

The first two interviews will likely be online or via the phone with your assigned recruiter covering basics such as your background. But remember: While parts of the interview process can take place via Skype, being there in person is always a bonus and sets you apart (see Chapter 1).

The following two rounds of interviews are often in person with specific people from your department of interest. For example, if you are applying as a designer, these interviews are first with some senior designers and then later with other stakeholders. These interviews are usually portfolios reviews, culture-fit interviews or concrete design tests that can last up to a full day at the company's office.

The last one or two interviews are with your recruiter again. This is when you will go through salary negotiations and hopefully get some feedback on how you did during the interviews.

If you get the job, your recruiter will call with a verbal offer. Shortly after, you will receive the written offer letter. This is important to know, especially for people who need to apply for work visas in the United States. You do not have the job until you sign the written offer letter. Even if you accept the offer verbally, it's not final and can always change. If you want to be a 100% sure, wait for your written offer letter and then start the visa process.

A good resource is my "How to get a job at X" interview series on my blog where companies such as Nike, Electronic Arts, Airbnb and so on share their detailed hiring process. [Check it out here.](#)

Questions you should ask your potential employer:

- Will they cover the visa costs for you (including attorney costs)?
- Will they provide an attorney, or do you need to find your own?
- What health benefits (health insurance) package do they offer?
- Will they pay for your relocation? (Usually, only big companies do.)
- Will they provide you with housing for the first three months? (Big companies sometimes do this to make it easier for you to find an apartment.)

Chapter Summary

- Most jobs in New York are given to people who get recommended.
- Build your network, make friends and have fun. It's worth it.
- Be clear about what you want and be respectful of other people's time.
- Be in NYC for job interviews. Interviews can last up to four weeks.
- You don't officially have a job until you sign the offer letter.
- With the help of the company hiring you, begin the visa application process immediately after signing the offer letter.

**GET THE FULL
E-BOOK AT
LETSGOTO.NYC**



LET'S GO TO NYC

EDITION NR.1

MADE WITH LOVE
IN NEW YORK CITY

WRITTEN BY
TOBIAS VAN SCHNEIDER

© 2017
