

NIE vs Green NIE (Residencia) vs TIE

Full comparison of Spain's three main identity documents for foreigners

FEATURE	NIE NUMBER	Green NIE EX-18 / RESIDENCIA	TIE PLASTIC CARD
Physical document?	No, number only	Yes: green paper doc.	Yes: plastic card
Who gets it?	All foreigners	EU / EEA / Swiss only	Non-EU only
Proof of residence?	✗ No	✓ Yes	✓ Yes
Photo & fingerprints?	✗ No	✗ No	✓ Yes
Contains NIE number?	✓ Is the NIE	✓ Yes	✓ Yes
Validity	Lifetime	5+ years (renewable)	Matches visa / permit
Required for long stays?	✓ Yes	✓ Yes (EU citizens)	✓ Yes (non-EU citizens)
Allows you to work?	✗ Alone, no	✓ Yes	Depends on permit
Form	EX-15	EX-18	EX-17