Words with related meanings are oftentimes misused or interchanged as their similarity causes confusion to some people. This is the case with the terms immigrant and refugee which both relate to people transferring from one country to another. Despite the similarity, these two have different meanings and are not quite interchangeable. This post will help you discover the difference between an immigrant and a refugee to help you use them more accurately in your writing.

The word immigrant is mainly used as a noun referring to “a person who comes to a country to take up permanent residence.” An immigrant is someone who chooses to resettle to another country seeking better work opportunities and a better life. Immigrants are processed under the receiving country’s immigration laws.

On the other hand, the term refugee functions as a noun pertaining to “a person who flees to a foreign country or power to escape danger or persecution” or “a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.” The main difference between an immigrant and a refugee is that immigrants have a choice to leave their country to seek opportunities elsewhere while refugees are forced to leave because of circumstances.
Now that we have distinguished between the words immigrant and refugee, you should be able to use them correctly in your sentences. Remember that while both terms refer to people transferring from one country to another, immigrants do it by choice while refugees are forced to do so due to circumstances.