



PREPARING FOR YOUR F1 VISA INTERVIEW

Applying for a visa includes a lot of steps and we understand that it can produce some anxiety. Review this list to help you plan and prepare for your visa interview as best as possible.

SETTING UP YOUR INTERVIEW

PREPARING FOR YOUR INTERVIEW

- FIND YOUR U.S. EMBASSY**
Rules and instructions can vary by U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Find your closest facility [here](#) and follow their instructions. You can apply for your visa at an Embassy outside your home country, if needed.
- I-901 SEVIS FEE**
You must pay the \$350 [SEVIS fee](#) prior to scheduling your visa appointment. Once paid, print, and bring your receipt to your visa interview. Pay your fee [here](#).
- COMPLETE VISA APPLICATION**
Fill out the online nonimmigrant visa application, [Form DS-160](#). Print the application form confirmation page and bring it to your interview.
- SCHEDULE & PAY FOR THE INTERVIEW**
Interviews are generally required. Schedule your interview at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate nearest you. You can check average [interview wait times](#) per city. The visa application fee is nonrefundable and differs per location.
- GATHER REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION**
You will need to bring proper [documentation](#) to your visa interview which includes your passport, printed photo (if necessary), school acceptance letters, receipts, and more. Make sure it is all in order before your appointment.
- PROOF OF ACCEPTANCE**
You must show proof that you have been accepted to an SEVP-certified school. Your Form I-20 and your acceptance letter from Etown will verify your acceptance. Remember to bring your visa application and SEVIS fee receipts.
- FINANCES**
You must show proof that you have the financial ability to pay for school costs (tuition, room, board, etc.) that exceed the amount on your Form I-20, minus any scholarships received. Bring certified and official bank statements.
- ACADEMIC PROGRAM**
Be ready to show you are prepared for the program you've been accepted for by bringing official test scores, transcripts, diplomas, or certifications from your previous school.
- NONIMMIGRANT VISA**
An F1 visa is a "nonimmigrant" visa, meaning you do not plan to remain in the U.S. In that, you need to convince the consular office that you plan to return to your home country to use your education.
- STUDY, NOT EMPLOYMENT**
Your main purpose in coming to the U.S. is to study, not for the chance to work before/after graduation. You must be able to clearly articulate your plan to return home at the end of your program.

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- TIES TO HOME COUNTRY**
“Ties” mean things that bind you to your hometown, homeland, place of residence (i.e., job, family, financial prospects owned or will inherit, investments, etc.)
- TIES TO HOME COUNTRY PT. 2**
You may get questions about your future career goals, employment, family, relationships, grades, educational objectives, or career options in your home country. Every situation is different but prepare for them all.
- SPEAK FOR YOURSELF**
This is YOUR interview, so do not bring your family or friends. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf. Practice your answers, be confident, and be yourself!
- FIRST IMPRESSIONS MATTER**
Consulars process large volumes of applications and are under pressure to be quick and efficient. They must decide on the impression they form with the first 1-2 minutes. What you say and how you act matters.
- BE CONCISE**
Keep your answers short, to the point, honest, and friendly. Practice your answers with a native speaker, write them out, and adjust your talking points as needed to get your point across.
- NOT ALL COUNTRIES ARE EQUAL**
It may be harder for applicants to receive a visa from countries suffering economic problems or from countries where many students have remained in the U.S. as immigrant.
- MAINTAIN A POSITIVE ATTITUDE**
Do not engage in an argument or disagreement with the consular, despite the outcome. You may ask the consular for the reason why they denied your application.
- IF THERE’S A DENIAL**
Try to get your denial reason in writing. Ask the officer for a list of documents they suggest you bring in order to overcome the refusal. You can review the denial explanation [here](#).
- TRY, TRY, TRY AGAIN**
Apply for another interview if you believe you have demonstrated proof of requirements or will have the appropriate documentation for the next interview. Please inform your DSO of the denial.
- EXPEDITED APPOINTMENTS**
Not every appointment requires an expedited request, but if you are unable to receive an appointment before/close to your program start date, inform your DSO.
- TIMELINE**
F1 visas cannot be issued more than 120 days in advance of your program start date on your Form I-20. Once approved, you cannot enter the U.S. more than 30 days prior to your program start date.
- TRAVEL**
A visa does not guarantee entry to the U.S. A U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) officer will grant/deny admission to the U.S. Do not enter the U.S. with any other visa than your F-1.

TRAVEL & ARRIVAL TIPS

- CARRY ON DOCUMENTS**
Do not check your documents in your luggage. You **MUST** take them in your carry-on to present them to the U.S. Customs & Border Patrol office.
- DOCUMENTS FOR TRAVEL**
You must travel with: Form I-20 in Initial Status, Passport with your F-1 visa, financial documents, College acceptance letter.
- PORT OF ENTRY**
Your port of entry is the city/location where you first enter the U.S. It is at this destination where the CBP officer will determine if you are approved for admission.
- I-94 DEPARTURE/ARRIVAL**
The I-94 is an electronic document used for identification purposes (i.e., to receive a driver's license or social security card to work) which lists your port of entry and departure/arrival dates.
- FORM I-515A**
If you do not bring certain forms with you when you arrive in the U.S. (whether first arrival or later on), you may be issued a [Form I-515A](#) that explains next steps. You **MUST** tell your DSO immediately as there are only 30 days to complete the checklist.
- TIMELINE**
You are not allowed to enter the U.S. more than 30 days prior to the program start date listed on your Form I-20. Please plan your flights accordingly.
- DELAY**
If you will arrive later than the program start date, please notify your International Student Advisor immediately. You will not be allowed entry past the program start date on your Form I-20.
- ARRIVAL**
Notify your International Student Advisor of your arrival into the U.S. and then again when you arrive onto campus. We look forward to welcoming you in person!