

Preparing for Your Visa Interview

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need to attend an in-person interview to get my visa?

Yes. If this is your first time applying for an F-1 visa, an in-person interview at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate nearest your home is required.

How early can I apply for my visa?

The earliest you are able to attend a visa interview is 120 days prior to your program start date (you can find this information in item #5 on your I-20).

What documents do I need to make an appointment for my student visa?*

- Your passport, valid for a minimum of 6 months beyond your expected entry date into the United States.
- Your *original* Form I-20, signed by the Designated School official and by you.
- The on-line visa application (Form DS-160).
- Receipt of payment for the SEVIS (I-901) Fee
- Machine readable visa fee (if applicable)
- Reciprocity fee (if applicable)
- **Be sure to check with your local Consulate or Embassy to see what additional forms may be required.**

*Please note: the details and order of processes will vary at Consulates. This information is meant as a general guide.

How long will I have to wait to have my visa interview at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate?

Appointment wait times vary depending on the Consulate or Embassy where you make your appointment. To view wait times for interview appointments and processing visit:

<http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/wait-times.html/>

What documents do I need to take with me to my appointment?

- Your *original* I-20 signed by the DSO and by you.
- Documentation of finances
- SEVIS fee receipt
- Original letter of admission

What should I *not* bring with me to the visa interview?

You should reference the website of the Embassy or Consulate where you will have your appointment, but in general, you should not bring these items with you to the interview:

- Backpacks
- Laptops
- Cell phones

How long will the visa interview be?

Visa interviews typically last between 3-5 minutes. This is a *conversation* and not a document review.

Will the visa interview be conducted in English or my native language?

This depends. Typically, if you have been accepted into an undergraduate or graduate degree program, the visa interview will be conducted in English. However, if you are coming to the United States to study English as a Second language, the interview is likely to be conducted in your native language.

What questions will I be asked?

Most Consulates and Embassies have a “What to Expect” video on their website which you should view. While there is not a set script that the Consular Official will read from, in general, the Consular Official will focus on the following areas:

- *A greeting:* The first thing the Consular official will do is greet you. Try to appear relaxed and return the greeting.
- *Request to see your documentation:* You should have all of the required documents (see FAQ #3) organized and ready to hand to the Consular Official. You should not bring unnecessary documentation with you.
- *Immigrant Intent:* Since F-1 student status implies a temporary stay in the United States, with **no intention of immigrating**, you must prove to the Consular Official that you plan to return to your home country upon completion of your studies. Therefore, you should be prepared to discuss that you have strong family or professional ties (a business, job offer, property, etc.) to your home country.
- *Why you want to come to the United States to Study:* Discuss the personal and academic reasons behind your decision to study in the United States. Also discuss how having earned a degree (or improved your English) in the United States will assist you in realizing your future career goals.

Is there anything I should not say during the interview?

DO NOT say that you want to study in the United States because you have friends or family here and do not mention unimportant reasons (e.g. you like American pop culture.).

DO NOT say anything to indicate that your ultimate goal is to stay in the United States, apply for permanent residency, etc. Such statements will result in an automatic denial of your visa application.

When will I know if my visa application has been successful?

The Consular Official will notify you at the end of the interview.

What will the next step be after successfully getting my visa?

This process will vary depending on the specific Consulate or Embassy, but you will need to submit your passport so that the visa can be applied. This usually takes three to five business days.