

# PREPARING FOR SUCCESSFUL F-1 VISA INTERVIEWS

**Going for a Visa interview can be one of the most daunting experiences in life.**

**The key to keep from being overwhelmed and not feeling intimidated is preparation.**

*Carefully read all the information in this document and then review each section until you feel you are thoroughly prepared — keep it handy so you can refer-back to it until you go for your interview.*

Knowing what to expect, preparing for interview questions, and bringing the right documents can help set you at ease. This information sheet is intended to help students prepare for F-1 Visa interviews. It includes two sections: **10 Points to Remember When Applying for an F-1 Nonimmigrant Visa** and **What to Take to a Visa Interview**.

## 10 POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN APPLYING FOR AN F-1 VISA

### 01: Ties to your home country

U.S. immigration law requires consular officers to view every Visa applicant as an “intending immigrant” until the applicant proves otherwise. Therefore, you must be able to demonstrate you have stronger reasons to return to your home country than to remain in the U.S. In this sense, “ties to your home country” are the things that bind you to your hometown, homeland, or place of residence. Things like family, financial prospects (your own or a likely inheritance), investments, and/or a job/career. Interviewing officers may ask about your specific intentions for coming to the U.S. — the promise of future employment, family or other relationships, educational objectives, grades, long-range plans, and career prospects in your home country. Each person’s situation is different and there is no “magic” explanation or single document, certificate, or letter, that can guarantee Visa issuance.

### 02: English

Anticipate that your Visa interview will be conducted in American English rather than your native language. Practicing conversational English with a native English speaker before the interview can help you become more comfortable and will be useful for your future studies. You can also watch American television shows, listen to American music, and read books written in English to become better acquainted with hearing and reading English. If you are coming to the U.S. for the purpose of intensive English language studies, be prepared to explain how learning English will be useful for you in your home country.

### 03: Speak for yourself

Do not bring parents, family members, or friends with you to your interview. The consular officer wants to interview you. Not your family or friends. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf. Minors (students under 18 years of age) applying for high school programs who need family members with them in case questions arise about finances, for example, should ask their family members to wait in the waiting room until called.

### 04: Know your program of study & how it fits career goals

Being able to clearly articulate the reasons you wish to pursue studies in a particular program at a particular program at a particular school in the U.S. is of primary importance. If you are unable to provide a good explanation, the consular officer may be unconvinced that you are planning to study, rather than immigrate. You must also be able to explain how studying in the U.S. relates to your future professional career in your home country.

### 05: Be concise & truthful

Because of the enormous volume of applications received, all consular officers are under considerable time pressure to conduct quick and efficient interviews. They often must make decisions based upon impressions formed during the first few minutes of an interview. Consequently, the initial impression you create is crucial to your success. Speak only when the officer asks a question, keep your answers short and to the point while avoiding one-word answers. Speak truthfully; your credibility is key to a successful interview.

### 06: Supplemental Documentation

It should be clear to the consular officer at a glance what documents you are presenting and what they signify. Long written explanations cannot be quickly read or evaluated. You may have only 2 to 3 minutes of interview time.

### 07: All countries are NOT equal

Applicants from countries suffering economic difficulties or countries from which many students have remained in the U.S. as immigrants may have more difficulty getting visas. Statistically, applicants from those countries are more likely to be asked about job opportunities in their home countries after completing their programs of study in the U.S.

## 08: Employment

Remember, your main purpose for coming to the U.S. is education, not employment. You are coming to study, not for the chance to work before or after graduation. While many students do work during their studies, employment is always incidental to their educational purpose. You must be able to clearly articulate your plan to return home upon completion of your program. If your spouse is applying for an accompanying F-2 Visa, be aware that F-2 dependents are not permitted under any circumstances to be employed in the U.S. If asked, you must be prepared to address what your spouse intends to do with his or her time in the U.S. while you are studying. Engaging in volunteer opportunities and attending school part-time are permitted activities.

## 09: Dependents remaining at home

If your dependents will remain behind in your home country, be prepared to address how they will support themselves in your absence. This can be especially problematic if you are the primary source of income for your family. If the consular officer gets the impression that your family will need you to remit money from the U.S. in order to provide for them, your visa application will almost certainly be denied. If your family decides later to join you in the U.S., it is helpful to have them apply at the same post where you received your visa.

## 10: Maintain positive attitude

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*This 10 point list was adapted from a list compiled by NAFSA: Association of international educators. NAFSA would like to credit Gerald A. Wunsch, Esq. (then a member of the Consular Issues Working Group, and a former U.S. Consular Officer in Mexico, Suriname, and the Netherlands) and Martha Wailes of Indiana University for their contributions to the list. NAFSA also appreciates the input of the U.S. Department of State.*

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# WHAT TO TAKE TO A VISA INTERVIEW

Applicants are solely responsible for bringing all required documents (originals, certified copies, and photocopies) to visa interviews. Failure to bring all required documents may cause a delay or even a denial of the visa. Original documents will be returned when the interview has been completed; photocopies may be retained.

## The following documents are generally required for Visa interviews:

- Interview Appointment Letter** you received from the National Visa Center (NVC)
- Passport for each applicant** valid for travel to the U.S. and valid for at least six months beyond your intended period of stay; also bring any old passports issued within the past ten years (be prepared to leave your passport at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate for at least two weeks)
- Photographs** (two identical color photographs that meet the U.S. Department of State Photo Requirements) for each applicant
- Form DS-160 Nonimmigrant Visa Application confirmation page**
- Form DS-160 Application Fee:** Payment or Payment Receipt, if payment was required before the interview and was collected by NVC; any unpaid fees must be paid at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate during the interview
- Supporting Documents:** original or certified copies of all documents uploaded in the online Consular Electronic Application Center (CEAC)
- Form I-20 Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status** for all applicants
- I-901 SEVIS Fee Receipt**
- Financial Documentation** demonstrating your ability to pay all educational, living, and travel expenses (bank book, bank statement, affidavit of financial support, etc.)
- Proof of Relationship** to the principle applicant for all dependent applicants (marriage certificate, birth certificates, etc.)
- English Translations** of any documents not sent to NVC that require translation; they must be presented on the day of your interview.

## Supplemental documentation may also be requested, including:

- Evidence of Academic Preparation:** transcripts, diplomas, degrees, or certificates from schools you attended and standardized test scores required by the school where you intend to study
- Evidence of Your Intent to Depart the U.S. upon completion of your program of study**

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