

Tips for getting an F-1 visa

First Steps for Applying for your F-1 Visa

1. To find your nearest US Embassy or Consulate go to:
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/embassies/embassies_1214.html
2. By looking at their web pages, phoning or visiting, find out EXACTLY what your embassy requires for you to get an F-1 visa (though the requirements are fairly universal, there may be slight deviations from country to country) and how to schedule an appointment.
3. Fill out the following visa forms. Many embassies have these posted on-line or you can go to http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/forms/forms_1342.html:
 - a. **DS-156** Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form
 - b. **DS-158** Contact Information and Work History for Nonimmigrant Visa Applicant
 - c. If a male between the ages of 16 and 45, **DS-157** Supplemental Nonimmigrant Visa Application
4. Schedule an appointment with your local embassy. Many embassies will allow you to schedule and interview time on-line so be sure to check for that option.
5. Pay fees associated with your F-1 visa

Preparation is Everything

- An Interview required: Short 2 minutes - be ready to answer questions such as; How long do you plan to stay? Why do you want to study in the U.S. instead of your own country?
- Be ready to explain ties to home country and your plans to use your U.S. education in home country.
- Visa applications must be filled out completely and correctly. If a question does not apply to your situation, write in N/A (not applicable). This tells the officer that you have read the question, but that it does not apply your situation.
- Translations are needed with any documents not in English

I: Bring to your Visa Interview:

- SEVIS I-20 Signed by the school & the student
- SEVIS Fee Receipt
- Passport valid for at least 6 months
- One 2x2 photo per person applying
- Completed visa applications (DS-156, DS-158, and, if applicable, DS-157)

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If dependents will accompany you bring

- Birth & marriage certificates
- Application materials & fees for dependents
- Financial documents as proof of family/student funds
 - Affidavits of Support
 - U.S. Sources – Form I-134
 - Foreign Sources – Notarized Affidavits of Support

II: Evidence of ties to home country

- Financial ties
 - Current bank account statement (showing the balance & when established)
 - Other Investments
 - Family owned business
 - Proof of University study
 - Ownership of a residence in home country (a deed or lease)
- Employment or employment opportunities
 - Employment confirmation letter
 - Offers of employment upon return letter
 - Statistics on projected position availability in field of study
- Family ties
 - Immediate family in home country
 - Leaving spouse and/or children
 - Fiancé in home country

At the Interview

Remove documents from envelopes and place them in a flat folder, grouped according to their purpose so that you can access them quickly during your interview. Dress well, speak clearly, look the interviewer in the eye and answer all questions specifically. Be prepared to present your own case and information since it is possible your family or friends may not be permitted to accompany you for the interview. Items to bring with you (again, confirm personally with the embassy in your country what exactly is required to bring to the interview. It may vary.):

Be prepared to speak English - Though your interview will most likely take place in your home country, do not expect the interview to be conducted in your native language. Be prepared to speak English. Interviews can make you nervous, especially if they are not in your native language, so be sure to practice ahead of time with a native speaker or friend who is proficient in English. Remember that the interview is very short and it is important that you be able to say what you need to without forgetting or stumbling on words.

Be Concise - As mentioned above, you only have a limited amount of time to make your case. Remember that the embassy or consulate gets a huge amount of applications and are under heavy time pressure. You may only have 2 to 5 minutes with the officer. This is a situation where first impressions are crucial. Keep your answers short and to the point, and do not waste time on insignificant details or stories. Have all documents easily accessible. You will want to make a favorable impression in the first minute or two of the interview, since the Consul official is under time pressure to conduct a short and efficient interview. Show a positive attitude and do not argue with the Consul official.

If Your Visa is Denied

- Be polite - you may be very upset and frustrated, but argument will work against you. Remember, you will have to deal with this person again, so do your best not to give him or her a bad impression.
- Ask the consular officer to give you a written explanation of your denial. He or she is required to do so upon request.

You are legally allowed to reapply within a twelve-month period of your first denial. When reapplying, make sure to carefully put together your case, add new evidence and make sure that you are able to discount the reasons of your first denial.