



SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

Tips on applying for your student (F-1) visa

If you are applying for a student visa for the first time, an in-person interview is usually required. June, July, and August are usually the busiest months, so it might be difficult to get an appointment during this time. Don't wait until the last minute! You are encouraged to apply for your visa as soon as you know when you plan to travel. Allow several weeks for planning and getting an appointment for the visa. You can call the embassy or go to the embassy web site for information and instructions.

Applicants for a student visa must provide the following items when they go to the Embassy for the interview:

- a. Form I-20 (included with your acceptance letter from the ALI)
- b. A completed [DS-160](#) non-immigrant visa application with a photo of each person applying (forms available at embassy)
- c. A passport valid for at least 6 months beyond your expected stay in the US
- d. A receipt for the visa processing fee for each applicant
- e. Financial documents (such as bank books, account statements, tax documents) that show you have sufficient funds (money) to cover tuition and living expenses during your time in the US. The embassy official might need evidence that there are no restrictions on the transfer of funds that would prevent the funds from being made available during the projected stay.
- f. Proof of your relationship to your spouse and children if you are married and/or have children.
- g. Consuls (embassy officials) also want to see evidence that you have strong economic, social, family, or career ties to your home country. Applicants for an F-1 or any non-immigrant visa must convince the official that:

- You have a residence in your home country
- You intend to return to that residence
- You intend to leave the US when your course of study is completed

How to prepare for your visa interview

In addition to the documents you present, you need to listen carefully to the questions the embassy official might ask you.

Even if the official asks you a question that you think is strange, you must answer it. The official is usually trying to decide whether you intend to stay in the US after you have completed your program. If the official thinks you plan to stay in the US, he or she must refuse your visa. Remember, the F-1 visa is for people who intend to return to their home country. Tell the official when you are going to go home.

In addition, you can prepare reasons why you want to study English in the US.

1. Talk about your professional development - how will you use English when you get back to your country? Why is it important for you to know English?
2. Do you intend to study another subject once you have finished your English program? Which subject? Why do you need English?

3. Talk about how learning English more quickly and efficiently is helped by first-hand knowledge of the American culture and interaction with many native speakers.

4. Talk about your choice of English program: show that you know about the university that you have applied to, and be able to explain your choice if you can. Mention that some of the most advanced teaching methods and technical help in language learning can be found in the US.

5. **DO NOT** say you want to go to the US just because your friends are there, you like American movies or some unimportant reason or because you have family in the US.

Remember that an official has to see as many as 200 people a day. Officials do not have a lot of time to discuss your application; they must make a quick decision. Help them by being completely prepared.

What to do if the official refuses to give you a visa

The most frequent reason for a visa refusal is that the official thinks you may not return to your home country.

It is not possible to say exactly what evidence you should take to convince the official that you will go home because applicants' circumstances vary greatly.

Think again about your ties to your home country: family relationships, job, home or farm ownership, other commitments. Is there any additional evidence that you could present? Did you explain your situation clearly? Did you answer all the questions?

Consular officers have the responsibility for issuance or denial of visas. If your visa is denied, you can re-apply.

If you decide to re-apply, you should be prepared to show additional evidence or explain in a different way how your situation has changed since the first application.

You should try at least twice. If you are refused a second time, the probability that a third try will work is not very high.

Additional information is available at the Department of State web site: <http://www.state.gov> and the U.S. Citizens and Immigration Services web site: <http://www.uscis.gov>