

# OBTAINING AN F-1 AND/OR J-1 VISA

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**Please be aware that the interview at the Consulate will be done in English, not in your native language. You should think off applying for your visa as soon as possible, although the embassy will not issue it more than 90 days before you start your program.**

This handout is provided as a general guide. Make sure you follow the steps given to you at the Consulate. To locate the consulate that has jurisdiction over your country, please visit <http://usembassy.state.gov> . Here are some points to remember when you are ready to go to your visa appointment:

1. **Demonstrate strong ties to your home country:** If you are a prospective student, the interviewing officer may ask you about your specific intentions or 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, of course, and there is no magic explanation or single document, certificate, or letter which can guarantee visa issuance.
2. **Speak for Yourself:** Do not bring parents or family members with you to the interview. The consular officer wants to interview you, not your family.
3. **Know your Program of study and How it fits with your Career Plans:** If you are not able to articulate the reasons why you will study a particular program in the US, you may not succeed in convincing the consular officer that you are indeed planning to study, rather to immigrate.
4. **Be Concise:** Consular officers are under considerable time pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. Answer the Officer's questions short and to the point.
5. **Supplemental Documentation:** It should be clear at a glance to the consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they signify. Remember that you will have 2-3 minutes of interview time, if you are lucky.
6. **Not All Countries are Equal:** Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or from countries where many students have remained in the US as immigrants will have more difficulty getting visas. They are also more likely to be asked about job opportunities at home after they study in the US.
7. **Employment:** Your main purpose of coming to the US should be to study, not for the chance to work before or after graduation. If your spouse is also applying for an F-1 dependant visa, please be aware that F-2 dependents cannot, under any circumstances, be employed in the US. Be prepared to address what your spouse intends to do with his or her time while you are in school.
8. **Dependents Remaining at Home:** If your spouse and children are remaining behind in your country, be prepared to address how they will support themselves in your absence. This can be an issue, if you are the primary source of income for your family. If the consular officer believes that your family will require that you send them money from the US to live on, your student visa application will almost certainly be denied. If your family decides you join you later in the US, it is helpful to have them apply for their F-2 visa at the same consulate you did.

9. **Maintain a Positive Attitude:** Do not engage the consular officer in an argument. If you are denied a student visa, ask the officer for a list of documents he or she would suggest you bring in order to overcome the refusal, and try to get the reason you were denied in writing.