

INCOMING STUDENT GUIDE

Step One:-Obtaining the student visa

1. When you go for the visa dress decently. Avoid any Americanism. Speak slowly and clearly. Don't appear tense and don't look desperate. Showing self-confidence helps often. You may or may not put on a tie and a blazer.
2. Go with a friend having a vehicle (just in case you have to go & get something).
3. The US counselors should never feel that you will have any sort of difficulty in language, in finance, racial, religious, etc.
4. You should be able to convince them that you will come back to India after graduating.

If they ask you, points in favor may be

- a) Only child in the family.
 - b) Hefty immovable property in India (take documents proving the same).
 - c) Lots of relatives in India and none abroad.
 - d) Parents not willing to come to USA for settlement.
 - e) Interest in teaching in India after graduating from USA.
 - f) Willing to serve the Indian industries after completing studies in USA.
5. Things to be taken with you when you go for the visa
- a) Signed I-20 form. (School and Student copy).
 - b) Completely filled visa application form.
 - c) Two 35mm by 35mm size photos (take some glue).
 - d) Your passport.
 - e) Admission & financial aid letters.
 - f) TOEFL & GRE score reports (original and photocopy).
 - g) Original copy of grade reports from your Indian Institution.
 - h) Copy of Statement of Purpose.
 - i) C.A Certificate.
 - j) Affidavit of your sponsor/s addressed to the Consulate General of USA.
 - k) Original copy of I.T returns of your sponsors for the past three years.
 - l) Bank Statement showing the liquid property in the name of your sponsors.

m) Original copy of degree awarded if available.

Step Two: - Flight Booking and Travelling Tips

1. After getting the visa the next thing to do is booking tickets.
2. Days before the flight, call the airline to confirm your reservation and to cross-check everything the travel agent may have told you.
3. Indicate whether you want Asian Vegetarian Meal (AVM). This can be done at the time of booking the tickets with the travel agent.
4. Some airlines offer Frequent Flier programs (e.g. Air France, TWA, United Airlines) implying that after a certain number of miles of flying with that airline you get a free ticket. Enroll in such programs.
5. Avoid transit of airline at airports. A direct flight is the best. If change of airline can't be avoided, make sure that there is at least 4-6 hours gap between the scheduled arrival of one flight and the scheduled departure of the connecting flight.
6. Baggage is usually safe with a single airline while change of airline sometimes leads to misplaced luggage. Some airlines don't take care about baggage transfer. You may have to personally carry it (check this while booking).
7. Arrive at the airport at least 2 hours before the check-in time.
8. Drink lot of fluids on the flight. This will help you recover the jetlag very fast.
9. Many airlines are fussy about the weight of your cabin baggage. It is always better to check with your travel agent regarding this.
10. Always keep a photocopy of your passport, tickets, I-20, and contact info of your school in every baggage including your cabin baggage.
11. Always keep original copies of your CA certificate, bank statements, sponsor's affidavit, passport, and admission letters in your cabin baggage. Sometimes, the immigration officials may ask you to present them at the airport.
12. Ideally, a student can bring \$ 500/- in cash, \$ 1000/- in TC's and a personal draft of the amount equal to one quarter's expenses. You may check your I-20 to determine this amount.

Step Three:-Do the following things before departure

1. Learn typing.
2. Learn driving.
3. Learn to cook (It helps when you live off campus).
4. Make your passport valid for 6 months more than your stay indicated in your I-20.
5. Have a complete medical checkup done.

Step Four:-Time To Pack!!

1. Start your packing at least two days before departure date.
2. Buy two strong suitcases - they should be able to withstand a lot of mishandling. They should be as large as possible within the size limitations (however most airlines are not very strict about baggage size).
3. Put identification marks and labels both inside & outside the suitcases (apart from this, the airlines will also provide you with adhesive labels).
4. For the dimensions and the weight of the suitcases as well as the carryon baggage please check with your airlines/travel agent. Usually 23 kgs/50 lbs per bag is allowed for check in baggage.

Things to be kept:-

Clothes

The dress code on campus is pretty informal and a T-shirt worn with jeans is almost a universal dress code for both sexes here. Formal dressing is mandatory occasionally. You may, of course, want to bring along some Indian clothes (saris, kurtas, etc) with you. We would also recommend that you get a pair of good leather shoes, as they are fairly expensive here. In general the following list should suffice:

The following are recommended to be bought from India (at least for the first year!!).

- At least 15 pairs of undergarments (Most important!! and note the stress on at least).
- 4/5 pairs of Jeans.
- 10/12 T-shirts.
- 1/2 pairs of formal trousers/shirts.
- Saris/salwar kameez/etc (for the ladies only!!).
- Kurtas or at least one Indian ethnic dress for the guys.
- A suit (recommended—you'll need it when you are being interviewed for your job)
- 1 pair of thermals (available cheap in the US).
- At least 15 pairs of socks.
- 3/4 pairs of informal shirts (Half Sleeve for Spring/Summer).
- 2 large towels, 2 small towels, 2/3 napkins.
- 1 pair woolen gloves and a monkey cap (if u feel like it - better buy here in the US though).
- An umbrella.
- Fall Jacket / Windcheater (1).
- In summer it gets pretty warm and preferable clothing during this time is shorts/capris/skirts, sleeveless tops for girls and shorts and t-shirts for guys.
- Get 1 or 2 good strong pair of shoes, preferable with a good grip on the sole.
- Chappals (1 pair).
- Leather sandals/floater (1 pair).
- Belts (2 or 3).
- Leather shoes (1 pair).

Also, remember that the laundry cycle is generally once in 15 days, so get sufficient clothes accordingly. One round of laundry costs \$1.25 per wash and \$1 per dry cycle.

Do not buy stuff for snow/winter from India; just get the basic stuff mentioned above. Snow/Winter jackets, sweat shirts, flees etc. You will have to buy the winter jacket from here, since nothing available in India is good enough for this place. Don't worry yourself if you can't bring any of the items listed above most of them are available pretty cheap in the US (made in China). Exceptions are leather goods and formal wear.

Personal Items

Get the following for your first few days (or weeks if you want), but just that much.

- Toothbrush and toothpaste.
- Shaving kit [includes shaving Creams/Gels, Razor, Razor blades (pack of 5), shaving brush (optional), aftershave (optional)].
- Hair comb/brush.
- Soap (2 bath soaps).
- Shampoo (1 bottle).
- Perfumes and Deodorants.
- Ear buds.
- Tooth floss.
- Coconut oil.
- Alarm Clock.
- Nail cutter.
- Cold Cream/Moisturizer (essential in winter).
- Pictures of Friends and Family.
- Pictures of Gods and deities.
- Headset and microphone set.
- CDs/Cassettes of Music and Data.

Kitchen Ware

Don't go overboard in stuffing your bags with all possible. Exercise restraint instead of packing stuff that would last all your life. After you land here you just might realize what a waste of money it all was. These all will help you if you live off campus

- Pressure cooker (expensive here so recommended that you get it from India). Bring a large one if you plan to share accommodation - at least 3 liters. Spare accessories for the cooker (safety valves, gasket, whistle, etc - very imp).
- Cutting board (suggestion: Anjali cutter - preferably the bigger one).
- Masala dabba.
- 1 non-stick ware frying pan.
- Wooden stirrer (2).
- Spoons, forks (2 or 3).
- A sharp knife.

- Butter knife.
- Potato peeler (1).
- Serving spoons (chamcha/karandi – at least 2).
- A pair of kitchen tongs (pakkad/idiki).
- Deep frying pan (kadahi, preferably non - stick).
- Plates (at least 2 - prefer to get ones that are microwaveable).
- Glasses (2).
- Tea Cup/ Coffee Mug.

Most things are available here for cheap (\$1 to \$5 at the Dollar General Stores). However, the above stuff is recommended.

Miscellaneous Items

1. Copy of all certificates/documents (originals in hand baggage).
2. Necessary books/notebooks (some suggested books are - Clark's Tables, a good dictionary/thesaurus, a booklet for unit's conversion) [note: there should be no legal hassles taking photocopies of books - but don't flaunt them to around campus].
3. Copy of address book/telephone book/diary.
4. Some stationery and related items suggested (not absolutely necessary - just for the first few weeks) are : rubber stamp with house address, airmail covers, few Indian razor blades for cutting work, screw driver, Indian postal stamps for sending letters through someone coming to India.
5. Medical history file.
6. You may want to enquire with the travel agent regarding valuable items on which custom duty may be levied.
7. All Indian groceries, pickles and other food stuff MUST be sealed completely else they may be removed by the US customs.

Things to be kept in Hand Baggage

1. I-20, passport, ticket, financial documents (CA certificate, Bank Statements), admission letter, affidavit of sponsor, all college or school mark sheets and related certificates.
2. First aid medicines. For example, tablets for headache, nausea, fever, loose motion.
3. Novel/magazines/books for in-flight reading. Bring a sweater also, as usually it is cold inside the plane. If you are coming in fall or summer, the weather will be hot enough, thus you would NOT need to wear any warm clothing then. Else you MUST be prepared to face extremely cold temperatures.
4. Address book/phone book (Indian & US).
5. Copies of your photo (passport size).
6. Things to survive for a week in case luggage gets misplaced (two sets of clothes, valuables like addresses etc).

Things to be left at home

1. List of addresses/phone numbers at which info about you can be obtained.
2. One copy of all your important documents.
3. A copy of all relevant parts of Medical History files.
4. Arrange to collect/redirect mail from your room/hostel.
5. Arrange to apply/collect/mail your transcripts (about 10 in number preferable).
6. Your tailoring measurements.
7. Few blank signed papers - so that your parents can be authorized to look after anything on your behalf.

Step Five:-Time to get Ready

Things to be done in the last week before the flight

1. Call up & find if there is any delay or change of schedule of the plane (inform the people coming to pick you up of any such change).
2. Rest well - ready to face the long journey / jet lag and bid bye to all concerned.

On the day of the flight, in-flight and later

1. As it is going to be a long flight wear something comfortable preferably cotton full hand shirt and trousers. Wear your shoes.
2. Be at the airport at least one hour before check in time.
3. Relax during flight, sleep as much as possible.
4. For vegetarians, watch out before you eat for you may get non-vegetarian food even if you had asked for vegetarian. Veg. food is generally bland - fruits/juices are good choices.
5. Never hesitate to ask questions.
6. Once out of India be very careful (from sheer experience of seniors). Don't trust anyone. Don't hire a taxi (unless emergency) till you reach your destination. If required don't hesitate to spend money.
7. Don't hesitate to talk to people to ask questions. Usually people will answer all your queries satisfactorily.
8. Drink adequate amount of fluids to get over with the jet lag as soon as possible upon arrival.

Step Six:- You are in the United States of America

Port of entry procedures

1. Before landing the flight attendant will distribute customs declaration forms & immigration forms as mentioned below. Fill these out on the plane (you will submit them to the appropriate authorities when you land). Do not hesitate to take the flight attendant's help.
2. You can indicate that you have nothing to declare & total value of all goods you carry is less than \$100 on the customs form.
3. Fill form I-94 in the plane. After seeing your documents, immigration officer will indicate length of stay, university, etc. This will be attached to your passport. You must retain this I-94 form; else you will face trouble in leaving USA later.
4. Just before you land the correct local time will be announced set your watch.
5. Once you are out of the plane go straight to the immigration counter rush for them to beat the queue. It might take half to one hour here.
6. Keep your I-20, passport, admission & aid letters ready. They might ask few questions like - is this your first time in the US? Are you a student on F-1 visa? Which University are you joining?
7. The immigration officer will attach an I-94 card on one of the pages of your passport usually against the visa page.
8. Be very relaxed and answer all the questions that the officer will ask. Sometimes the officer may ask you to present financial documents or letters from your sponsors. Thus it is advisable to carry these along with you in your cabin baggage.
9. Then go to the conveyor belts to fetch your luggage. Pick up a cart to carry the bags. Then pick up your bags as they come out on the conveyor (suitable eye-catching labels help here). If you don't get your baggage inform the enquiry section.
10. Cart your baggage to nearby Customs. If asked, tell the officer that you are a student on F-1 visa, school, department and coming to USA for the first time. If asked to open the baggage do so slowly but do not mess up the place. Note: In most cases you will NOT be asked to open your boxes at all & will be simply waved through.
11. Then go & wait at the nearest exit for the volunteers who are supposed to receive you. They will always be standing and waiting for you in the passenger pickup area. Be relaxed, ISA will ALWAYS make an arrangement to receive you. NEVER keep ISA volunteers as backup. If you have asked a relative or a friend to receive you then DON'T make an attempt to call ISA for pick up.
13. Never leave your baggage unattended. Don't go out of the airport until somebody comes to receive you. If you have doubt the person who has come to receive you, don't hesitate to ask for his/her identification paper.
14. Once you reach your house (or other destination) call home & inform them of reaching safely.