



How to Apply for F-1/M-1 Student Visa

Many students around the world aspire to study in the United States. In general terms, a citizen of a foreign country who holds a visa can enter the U.S. Students who wish to study in the U.S. must possess either an F-1 or M-1 student (non-immigrant) visa, depending on the type of school and course of study.

If you are planning to attend a college or university, high school, a private elementary school, a conservatory, a seminary, or an academic institution, including language training programs, you should apply for an F-1 visa. Students who wish to attend a recognized non-academic institution or vocational school, excluding language-training programs, should apply for an M-1 visa.

Since the school system in the U.S. is different from other countries, your academic credentials must be evaluated before a school can accept your application. **If you need a free instant translation quote, please call us on 1-800-969-6853, or send an email to contact@daytranslations.com, and we will reply within minutes.**

It is important to note that foreign students cannot travel to the United States with a visitor visa or as part of the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). Citizens of countries participating in the VWP who wish to study in the U.S. cannot travel using the VWP or a visitor (B) visa, unless recreational study is undertaken as a component of a tourist visit.

A visitor (B) visa can be used when the visitor only intends to enroll in a short recreation course unrelated to an academic certificate or degree. Even students enrolled in distance learning, whereby the student is required to spend a period of time on a U.S. campus, will need to secure an F-1 visa.

Steps for acquiring a student visa

Before you can apply for a student visa, you need to be accepted by a Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-approved school. You can search for a school at this [website](#) or download the updated list from there.

Once your school enrollment is confirmed, you will be registered in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) after you pay the SEVIS I-901 Fee. Detailed instructions on how to access the "Form I-901" to pay the SEVIS fee are available from the [SEVP website](#).

The school will furnish you with a "Form I-20," which you then present to the consular officer when you attend the visa interview.

Applying for a student visa

Applying for a student visa involves many steps, and the order of the steps and how you complete them might vary at the particular Consulate or U.S. Embassy where you apply. You should visit the consulate or embassy website in your country to obtain the full instructions.

The "Student or Non-Immigrant Visa Application – Form DS-160" is processed online. Complete the online application and print the confirmation page after submission. You must also present this confirmation page at your visa interview.

You must upload your photograph together with your online student visa application. Your photograph must meet the Photograph Requirements.

Schedule a visa interview

If you are 13 years and younger, the consular officer will generally not require an interview, although, the interview requirement is still subject to their discretion. If you are between 14 and 79 years of age, a visa interview is required. You should schedule the interview at a U.S. Consulate or Embassy in the country where you reside.

The waiting period for visa interview appointments vary by visa category, season, and location. It is preferable to schedule your visa interview as early as possible so you will have ample time to prepare for the school term. Check with the embassy or consulate regarding the waiting period for your location.

Important notes

1. If you are a new student, both the F-1 and M-1 student visas can be issued by the embassy up to 120 days in advance of the start date of your school/course term. However, you can only enter the United States 30 days before the start of your course or school year.
2. If you are a continuing student, you can renew your student visa anytime, as long as you have maintained your student status, and your SEVIS records are updated. A continuing student is allowed to enter the United States at any time before the start of classes.

Preparing for the student visa interview

Prior to the visa interview, you must pay the non-refundable visa application fee. You should also have paid the SEVIS fee. Depending on your nationality, you might also be required to pay a visa issuance fee.

Required documents

Aside from the evaluation of your academic credentials and being accepted into the school of your choice, you must prepare numerous documents prior to the scheduling of your visa interview.

- Your passport should be valid for six months beyond your projected time frame in the United States. You should also have photocopies of the first, last, and remarks pages of your current passport.
- The F-1 and M-1 student visas fall under the non-immigrant category, so you should use the "Non-immigrant Visa Application – Form DS 160," which is completed online. While completing your application, you should also upload the required photograph - again, it must meet the Photograph Requirements. It is sensible to carry extra copies of your photograph with you when you appear for the interview, just in case the upload fails. You also need a "Certificate of Eligibility for Non-immigrant (F-1) Student Status – For Academic and Language Students (Form I-120A-B)," or a "Certificate of Eligibility for Non-immigrant (M-1) Student Status for Vocational Students (Form I-20M-N)."

- The school will send you the SEVIS-generated Form I-20 after your information has been entered into the database of SEVIS; in addition to the school official's signature, you must sign the form. If there are family members traveling with you, such as your spouse and minor children, each member must also be registered with SEVIS and will each be issued a Form I-20.

Additional documents that might be required

It is likely that you will also be requested to provide evidence of your academic preparation to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate, including:

- Previous certificates, degrees, diplomas and transcripts
- Scores from tests that your U.S. school required, such as GMAT, GRE, SAT, or TOEFL. Submit an official letter from the school if you were not required to take any of these tests.
- Documents showing your intent to leave the United States after you complete your studies
- Documents showing how you will pay for your travel, living, and educational costs
- Evidence of financial resources could be proof of liquid assets that show sufficient funds for you to support your first year of education and your living expenses. You should also have proof of readily available funds to cover the remaining years of your study in the U.S.

To establish sufficient financial resources, you should bring the following to the Consulate or Embassy:

- Original copies of tax returns for the past three years
- Original bank records, such as a bankbook, passbook, or bank statements, covering the past three years, and/or a fixed deposit statement of your sponsor/parents. (It is more favorable if a close family member or your parents finance your study in the U.S.)
- Employment letters or pay slips
- Statements from chartered accountants
- Proof of scholarship (recorded in your Form I-20), which is considered favorably by consular officers

Proof of your ability to afford a U.S. school

- "Form I-20 Part 7" indicates the amount of funding that should be available to cover your first year's expenses, which includes your total fees and tuition, your living expenses (as well as your dependents, if applicable), and other expenses that might be applicable. Likewise, you must show proof that there are sufficient funds to cover the entire period that you intend to be a student in the United States.

- If you are supported by someone living in the U.S., you should submit a notarized "Form I-134" or an "Affidavit of Support," together with your sponsor's tax returns and bank statements for the past three years.
- If you obtained a bank loan to cover your U.S. educational expenses, present the official statement of the loan approval and the loan application, as well as proof of liquid assets if the bank loan is not sufficient.
- Although you are not required to pay your tuition in advance, doing so is a good way to show proof of funds.

Note: If you are applying for an M-1 visa, the required documentation is the same as that for the F-1 visa application; however, you are not allowed to work when you are on an M-1 visa.

Attending the visa interview

The visa interview process is the same for all types of U.S. visas. Bring all the required documents with you and some cash, just in case you will be required to pay the visa issuance fee. As part of your visa application process, ink-free digital fingerprint scans will be taken. A consular officer will inform you if your application needs further administrative screening.

If your visa is approved, you may need to pay a visa issuance fee. You will be informed of when and how your passport with the visa will be returned to you - it could be via courier delivery, or you can pick it up. Make sure you check the visa processing time with the embassy.

Importance of Form I-20

- You do not have to place Form I-20 in an envelope although it is a very important document. You will use Form I-20 (provided by the school of your choice) to pay for your Form I-901 SEVIS fee. You will also use it when you apply for the non-immigrant visa at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your country.
- Be sure to check the date listed on your Form I-20. You must apply for a visa 120 days (roughly four months) before the date stated on the form. Also, check to ensure that you have the right type of visa: F-1 or M-1 on your form.
- You will present your Form I-20 to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers at the port of entry upon your arrival in the United States. You can also use Form I-20 as proof that you are legally enrolled in a course in a U.S. school if you are applying for a Social Security Number or a driver's license.

All of the documents that you submit when applying to an educational institution and for a non-immigrant visa should be in English. **Day Translations, Inc.** has worked with students

from various countries and other non-immigrant visa applicants, as well as countless language pairs. We are known for our fast, efficient, and thorough [translation services](#). We understand the number of documents involved in the process and we are here to help.

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