CPT is only available while still enrolled. If you qualify, you are only allowed to gain work experience in a job that’s part of your program of study. You can apply once you’ve been enrolled at school for at least a year. You have the option of working full or part-time and even taking on unpaid internships if you wish. You need to have an offer for employment or an internship before applying. Otherwise, your application won’t be accepted.

Apply for OPT after CPT. If you want to do that, you’ll need to limit your full-time work to less than 12 months during the CPT program. If it’s a year or longer, you will no longer be eligible for OPT. Some students switch between full and part-time throughout the year. They work part-time when they attend classes and full-time during the summer. That allows them to make extra money while maintaining their OPT eligibility.