

THE STUDENT VISA INTERVIEW: PREPARATION TIPS

At The Culinary Institute of America, we gratefully welcome students from all over the world to enrich the college with their cultures and ideas—so we're happy to share this resource regarding the student visa interview process.

Below you'll find information and links provided by NAFSA, the leading organization committed to international education and exchange. We hope you find it helpful, and wish you all the best in your education pursuits.



Applying for a Student Visa—10 Points to Remember

1. Ties to Your Home Country and Residence Abroad

Under U.S. law, people who apply for nonimmigrant visas, such as F-1 or J-1 student visas, are viewed as “intending immigrants” who want to live permanently in the U.S. until they can convince the consular officer that they are not. You must show that your reasons for returning to your “residence abroad” (usually in your home country) are stronger than reasons for remaining in the United States, and that you intend to depart the U.S. at the conclusion of your studies. “Ties” to your home country can include job, family, owning a house or apartment, financial prospects, and investments.

For further details, visit the State Department’s Foreign Affairs Manual [\[9 FAM 402.5-5\(E\)\]](#).

2. English

The interview will generally be conducted in English and not in your native language. One suggestion is to practice English conversation with a native speaker before the interview, but do not prepare speeches! Expect to have an interactive conversation with the consular officer about your plans and goals.

For further details about this topic, view the State Department’s Foreign Affairs Manual [\[9 FAM 402.5-5\(F\)\]](#).

3. Speak for Yourself

The consular officer wants to interview you, not your family, and a more positive impression is created if you are prepared to speak on your own. If you are a minor and need your



parents present in case there are questions (for example about funding/finances), they should check with the consulate about the consulate’s waiting area and any special rules or procedures.

4. Know the Program and How It Fits Your Career Plans

You should be able to explain *why* you will study in a particular program in the United States, or you may not succeed in convincing the consular officer that you are indeed planning to study, rather than work or stay, in the United States. You should also be able to explain how studying in the United States relates to your career goals and employment prospects when you return home.

5. Be Brief and Maintain a Positive Attitude

Because of the large number of applications they receive, consular officers are under considerable time pressure to conduct a quick interview. They must make a decision, for the most part, on the impressions they form during the first minute of the interview. The first impression you create is critical to your success. Keep your answers short and to the point, and do not argue with the officer. If you are denied a student visa, try to get the reason in writing.

For more information about responding to a visa denial, visit the [U.S. Department of State’s webpage explaining visa denials](#).

6. Supporting Documentation (Know Your Specific Situation or History)

It should be immediately clear to the consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they mean. Remember that you will have 2–3 minutes of interview time, if you are lucky. Supporting documentation depends on your situation, so it is best to review the consulate’s website. Be prepared to present all documentation proving your financial ability to stay in the United States; the financial information indicated on your Form I-20 or DS-2019 should match the evidence provided to the consular officer.





7. Different Requirements for Different Countries

Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or where many students have remained in the U.S. long-term often have more difficulty getting visas. They are also more likely to be asked about job opportunities at home after their study in the United States.

Review your country's specific requirements on the U.S. consulate's website. Several U.S. consulates have YouTube videos explaining the visa process at their specific posts. You'll find average wait times for specific consulates at the U.S. Department of State's [Visa Appointment and Processing Wait Times webpage](#).

8. Employment

Your main purpose for coming to the United States should be to study, not work before or after graduation. You must be able to clearly explain your plan to return home at the end of your program. If your spouse or children are also applying for an accompanying F-2 visa, be aware that F-2 dependents cannot, under any circumstances, be employed in the U.S. If asked, be prepared to address what your spouse intends to do with his or her time while in the U.S.—volunteering in the community and attending school part-time are permitted activities.



9. Dependents Remaining at Home

If your spouse and children are remaining behind in your country, be prepared to explain how they will support themselves in your absence. This can be especially difficult to explain if you are the primary source of income for your family. If the consular officer gains the impression that you intend to support your family with money you may earn during your studies in the United States, your student visa application will almost certainly be denied.

10. Other Special Considerations

Some students may experience delays in obtaining a visa because of "administrative processing." This commonly occurs if:

- Your name is similar to another individual and the consulate needs to check with other government agencies about your status or background.
- Your area of study is thought to be in a field of sensitive or critical technology, or involves sensitive research materials. You may be required to provide additional letters from program directors or academic advisers explaining your research and/or access to sensitive technology. To see if this applies to you, check with your specific U.S. embassy or consulate.

For more information, visit the [U.S. Department of State's Administrative Processing Information webpage](#).

Updated September 2016 by members of the NAFSA International Student and Scholar Regulatory Practice Travel Subcommittee.



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