

Tips & Tricks: From Entry to Work Authorization



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Learning Outcomes

- Dive into U.S. Admissions foundations for international students
- Understand in-depth how the U.S. visa application and interview process works
- Learn the benefits for the F-1 student visa as it relates to work authorization and internships opportunities





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Who We Are?



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A view from an airplane window looking out over a vast landscape of clouds under a dramatic, colorful sky. The sky transitions from a deep blue on the left to a bright orange and yellow on the right, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The clouds are thick and white, with some darker patches. The wing of the airplane is visible in the foreground, extending from the bottom left towards the center.

Admissions for International Students

Admissions

Understanding the Admissions Landscape

Different types of institutions
(Public vs. Private, Liberal Arts,
Research Universities,
Community Colleges)

Deadlines

Early Decision (ED): Binding

Early Action (EA): Non-binding, usually Nov 1 or Nov 15th, decision released on rolling or on a set date, usually early to mid-December.

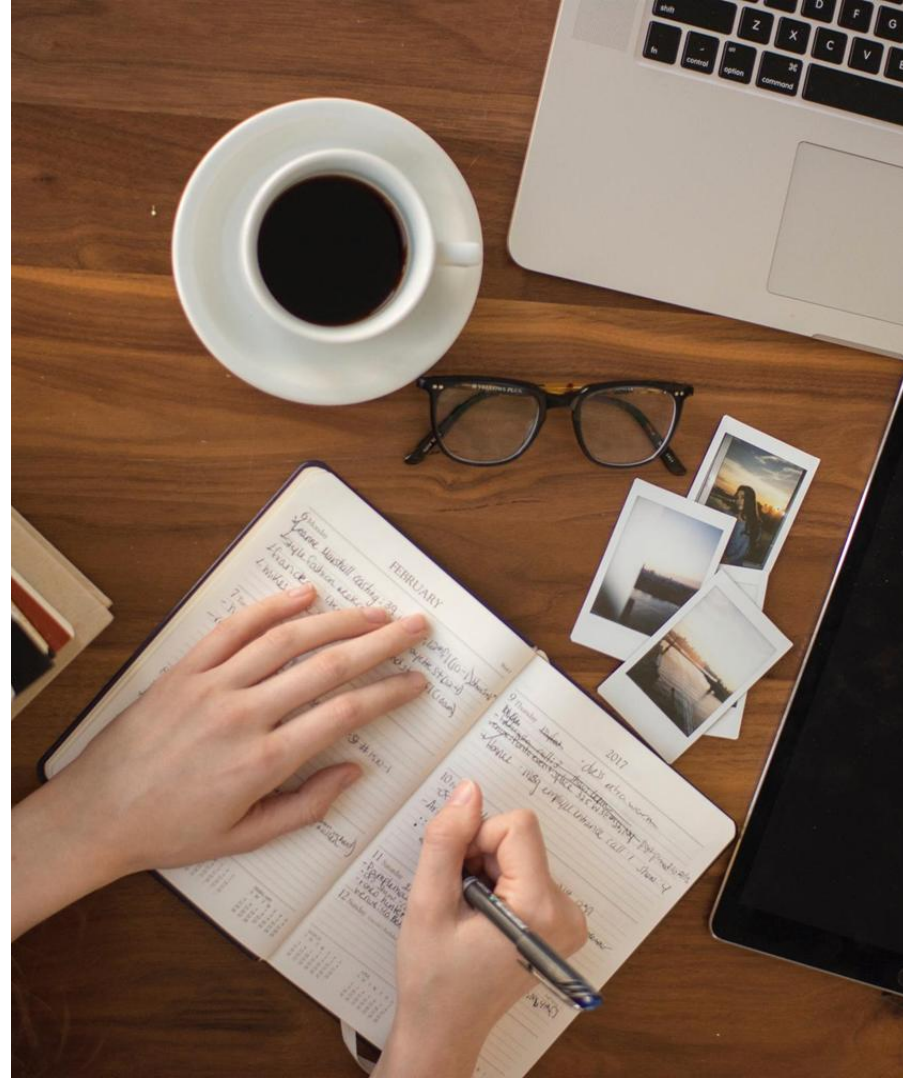
Regular Decision

Testing

SAT: Electronic, 1 English/Reading and 1 Math ACT: electronic, 1 English/Reading section, 1 Math, 1 science
2015+ ACT/SAT Optional institutions. Resource
<https://fairtest.org/test-optional-list/>

EPT: English Language Proficiency Test

Check with individual universities for
qualifying waivers



U.S application systems and components

- Common Application

- Coalition

- State wider applications (California for the UC system, Texas for Public Universities in Texas)

- Independent applications



Application components

Application form: basic information about themselves, their school and their family

Supplemental essays: short answer questions designed to help student demonstrate fit.

Financial information: if applying for financial aid (CSS profile, FAFSA or individual school form)

Optional: portfolios, resumes. Talent based applications and auditions

Standardized Tests: Some schools require SAT/ACT, but many are now test-optional. Proof of Language Proficiency Test

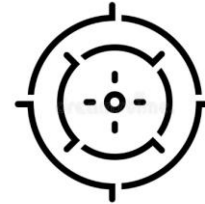
Transcript and school profile: students academic record. Many universities require the last year of middle school (ensino medio)

Letter/s of recommendation



Understanding what is important for U.S. universities

- Academic rigor and grades. Brazilian students may need to convert their GPA and submit official translations
- Testing: SAT/ACT, DET, TOEFL
- Extra Curricular - Leadership, Initiative and Dedication (L.I.D)
- Letters of recommendation
- Interviews, portfolios
- Demonstrated interest



Best practices and useful resources

- Building Partnerships with Universities
- Staying Updated with Admissions Trends
- Encouraging Students to Start Early
- Join counselor Networks & Professional Development Opportunities
- [Big Future](#) (*College Search, Career Search, Financial Resources, College Applications*)
- Unifrog / Maia Learning / BridgeU
- [College Niche](#) (*student perspective*)
- [Unigo](#) (*student perspective*)



F-1 Student Visa

F-1 Student Visa

- F-1 visa is the primary visa for academic or English language studies in the U.S.
- F-1 visa must work together with an active I-20 from your intended college or university
- F-1 visa contains many benefits, not just for studies



Visa Application Process



Receive I-20

- Student can receive I-20s from multiple schools
- Can only use and enter with I-20 from their final school
- Must pay the I-20/SEVIS fee



Submit Visa Application

- I-20/SEVIS Number is used to submit the Visa Application DS-160
- Pay appropriate fees



Schedule Visa Interview

- Every Consular post has unique instructions
- Must schedule appointment in advance



Preparing for the Visa Interview

Understand Intent of the Interview

Prove your intent is to study in the U.S.

Prove your intent to return home after
your studies end

Prepare for the Interview

Anticipate potential interview questions

Identify areas of doubt

Prepare responses to clear doubts

Practice your Responses

Practice responses to potential questions

Responses are conversational and
normal, not rehearsed and memorized



Language

Interviews are
conducted in English

Documents

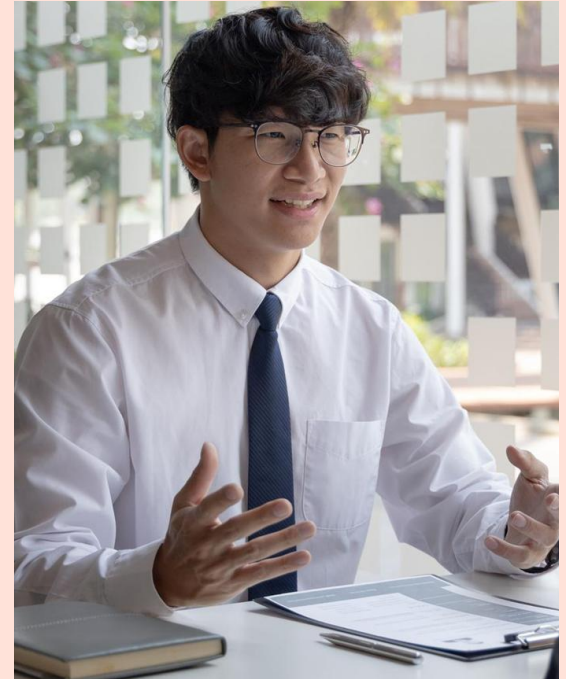
Some Consulates will
ask for additional
documents, such as
copy of financial
documents, academic
transcripts, English
language test scores,
etc.

Duration

Interviews only last a
few minutes
Some last less than 5
minutes

Individual

Only the student will
go into the interview
Parents or guardians
are not allowed



Prove Intent

- What are your economic, family, and social ties in your home country?
- Are your ties strong enough that you will leave the U.S. at the end of your studies?
- Are you coming to the U.S. to study?

English

- Interview is conducted in English so practice your responses
- Do not prepare a speech.
- Responses are natural and not rehearsed



Critical Visa Interview Points

Adapted from NAFSA

Critical Visa Interview Points

● *Why this school and why your major?*

- Learn more your school and why did you pick this school.
- Why this university or college and not another?
- Why did you choose your major or program of study and how does it tie back to your future career goals?

DON'T: "PCC was the easiest school I applied to"

DON'T: "PCC was the fastest school that I got admissions"

DON'T: "I chose this major because it is easy"

DON'T: "My friend told me to apply to PCC"



Critical Visa Interview Points

Some Countries are More Difficult

- Countries that are suffering economic hardship, or countries where a large number of students have stayed, will have a more difficult time for visa approvals.
- Many students from these countries may have, statistically, intended to immigrate.

Your Interview Starts at the DS-160

- The DS-160, or visa application, is the first information that the consulate officer will have of you.
- They will know about your education, work history, whether you have traveled to the U.S. or not, any family or relatives in the U.S.



Identify areas of concern

- What are some areas of concern? Be prepared to share that information in your responses to the consular officer.
- If you graduated secondary school some time ago and are now trying to study for college, when an officer asks what or why you plan to study in the U.S., you may share some additional information of why there is a gap and how that has contributed to your decision to study in the U.S.

Avoid Yes or No Answers

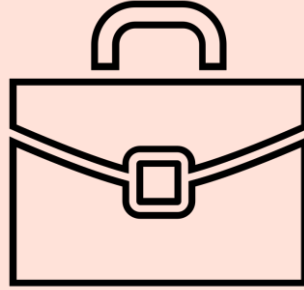
- Avoid answering with yes or no.
- The officer is trying to learn more about you and your motivation to study in the U.S. Provide detailed, but to-the-point and brief explanations.





Officers are trained to evaluate you

How you're dressed, how confident you present
yourself, your facial expressions, whether you are
rehearsing a memorized answer, whether you are telling
the truth



Employment

F-1 visa students can legally work, but this is not the primary reason and is only incidental to your studies.

Be prepared to share your career plans when you return to your home country.

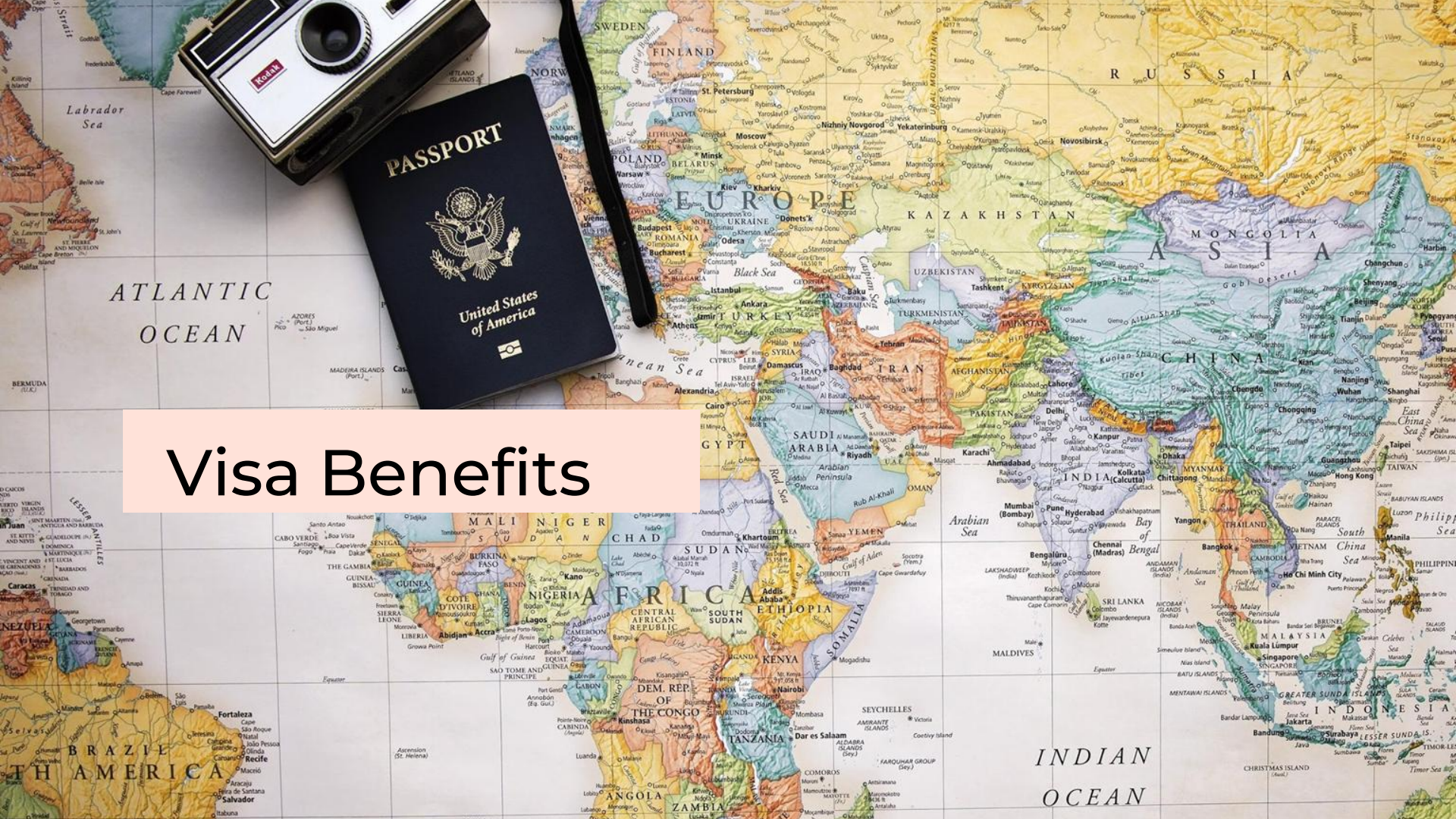
Common Interview Questions

- Who are you and what are your ties to your home country?
- Why are you studying in the U.S. or What will you study in the U.S.?
- Why did you choose this school?
- How are you paying for your education?
- What do you want to do when you finish your studies?

If you have been denied a visa before:

- What has changed since your last interview?





Visa Benefits

Visa Benefits

Study and Travel

- Can legally study in the U.S.
- Can travel outside the U.S. with signature

Multiple Schools

- Known as Concurrent Enrollment, students can enroll in another approved institution to maintain their F-1 visa
- Commonly: Speed up transfer or graduation, classes not offered at current school

Extensions

- Duration of studies can be extended
- Compelling academic or medical reasons, such as extensive prerequisites

Transfer

- Students have the right to transfer their I-20 record to another school
- Save money this way
- Commonly: Transfer students



Visa Benefits

On-Campus Work

- Can legally work on campus
- Part-time work during regular terms; full-time during off terms

1

Off-Campus Work

- Can legally work after 1 year of study
- Internships, Co-Ops, Other types of training
- Must be related to major

2

Hardships & other protections

- Employment based on economic hardship
- Special Student Relief (SSR): assigned by U.S. for countries with emergent circumstances
 - Natural disasters
 - Political strife
 - Economic fluctuations

3

Employment Authorization



Curricular Practical Training

Pre-Degree

Internship and Experiential Learning
Opportunities



Optional Practical Training

Pre-Degree

Post-Degree

Related to Major/Field of Study
1 year



STEM Optional Practical Training

24-month extension beyond 1 year OPT

Bachelor's and degrees above

Can retroactively use STEM OPT for previously
earned STEM degree





Thank you!



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