

The VISA Interview

How to prepare

An embassy official may interview 200 people in one day. He or she must make a quick decision about each application. If you are well prepared, your chances for a good decision are much better.

Your interview will be very short, probably just a minute or two. During that time, you must convince the interviewer that:

- Your choice of study and schools meets your educational goals.
- You have a residence and family ties in your home country, and future plans to return to live, work, or study in your home country.
- You intend to leave the US when your course of study is finished.

Folder

Prepare a folder for your documents (I-20, financial support information, admission letter, etc.) and title it **MY EDUCATIONAL GOALS**. Write a short explanation of your future plans (1/2 -1 page). Conclude the list or essay with a statement of what you plan to do after you return from study. Put this sheet on top of all your other documents. Present the folder to the interviewer.

Present Educational Goals

Express yourself firmly about how English will help you reach your goals. Mention other reasons for studying English in the US.

- Talk about your **professional future**: how will you use English after you return home? Why is it useful or important for you to know English? If learning English will help you in your career plans, explain this to the official. In some fields (international business or tourism), English is almost a necessity; tell the official your career plans, and how English can help you achieve your goal.
- Talk about your **plan of study after completing an English program**: will you study in the US or back home? If at home, explain why you need English. Perhaps research papers are published in English, or conferences given in English in your field of study. Tell the interviewer!
- Tell them that it is **faster and more efficient** to learn English while living in an English-speaking culture. Explain that language

learning includes cultural education.

Interacting with native speakers outside the classroom is very helpful in language-learning. Immersion in a language can be the fastest way to learn.

- Describe the **Academic English Studies program** and explain what you know about Lewis & Clark. Be ready to explain your choice of schools. Mention that the AES uses modern teaching methods and has qualified faculty and outstanding facilities. Take a brochure with you or print information from our website.

Proof of Return

The interviewer will want to see evidence of your intention to return to your home country after studying in the USA.

- Have you visited the US as a tourist or student in the past? Show your old passport and visa, or school records or certificates, as proof that you returned home in the past and that you plan to do so again in future.
- Has a brother or sister studied or traveled in the US? Bring proof (copy of diploma or certificate; passport with visa). If a family member has studied in the US and returned to work or attend school, bring a letter from the employer or school stating that the person returned from study in the US.
- Do you work, or does your family own a business where you will work when you return home? Ask for a letter to say that English will be helpful in your job. Best of all is a letter offering you a job after you return home, or saying that you will be considered for a better job when your English skills have improved. However, **do not** resign from your job before you go for your visa visit. The official may assume you have resigned because you will not return home.
- Are you married, but traveling to the US without your spouse? Show your marriage certificate. Explain to the interviewer that your spouse will remain behind; this is especially helpful if your spouse has a good income or a job.
- Does your family own a home, a farm or other land, or a business? Photographs, property deeds, tax records, or legal documents can prove that you have good prospects for the future and have no reason to remain in the US.

- Do family members hold important positions in your government or private corporations? Mention them and, if possible, bring documents to show their position. Explain how this proves your family has a good life at home and you have excellent reasons to return after studying. *Be sure the official does not think you are using family position to threaten or force him into approving your request!*

Financial Information

Be prepared to show how you will pay for school and living expenses.

- Will a business or family at home pay for your study? Bring letters from employers to explain the job, how long you or your sponsors have worked, how much money is earned; or bring copies of savings documents or bank letters.
- Will family members in the US support you? Will you live with them while you study? You must prove that the family can pay for you without difficulty. They may need to send an affidavit (a legal statement) or send copies of pay slips or tax documents to show they can easily pay for your classes and/or living expenses.

Remember

Embassy officials are required to assume that each visa applicant is secretly planning to remain in the US forever. If they think you may stay in the US permanently, they will reject your application. **If you can show convincing reasons to return home after studying, your application may be accepted. The F-1 visa is offered only to people who plan to study in the US, then return home and live in their own country.**

Do not say that you want to study in the US because your friends are there, or because you like American movies, or some other reason that the official might see as unimportant. You need to have strong reasons to go, and equally strong (or even stronger) reasons to return. For more information:

<http://usembassy.state.gov/>

http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1268.html

What To Do If Your Visa is Denied

Most visa requests are granted, but when a request is denied, the main reason (90% of denials) is that the official believes the student actually wants to go to the US to live and work permanently.

If you are denied a visa, ask politely for a reason. Ask if additional documentation would result in an approval. If so, what documents would be most useful?

You can re-apply for a visa, but you need more evidence to show you will return home after study. You may need to explain in a different way that your situation has changed since your earlier request. Always be polite, but try to make it clear that you plan to return home. Use additional documents and information to show the official that what you say is true.

Ask yourself if you explained your situation clearly the first time. Think about the first visit; perhaps you can give additional information that will help the official look favorably on your new request. It is not possible to say exactly what evidence will be convincing; every situation is different.

If you are refused a second time, you will have to wait for a period before you return. However, the probability of success on a third try is not very high. Each time you apply, you need to provide more documentation, so that you can say truthfully that there are new facts to review and more reason for approval.

Details are available at this Department of State web site:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/denials/denials_1361.html