

10 Points to Remember When Applying for a Nonimmigrant Visa

Source: NAFSA Association of International Educators

1. **Ties to Home Country.** Under U.S. law, all applications for nonimmigrant visas are viewed as intending immigrants until they can convince the consular officer that they are not. You must therefore be able to show that you have reasons for returning to your home country that are stronger than those for remaining in the United States. "Ties" to your home country are things that bind you to your hometown, homeland, or current place of residence: job, family, financial prospects that you own or will inherit, investments, etc. Each person's situation is different, of course, and there is no magic explanation or single document, certificate, or letter, which can guarantee visa issuance.
2. **English.** Anticipate that the interview will be conducted in English and not in your native language. One suggestion is to practice English conversation with a native speaker before the interview.
3. **Speak for Yourself.** Do not bring parents or family members with you to the interview. The consular officer wants to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf.
4. **Know the Program and How It Fits Your Career Plans.** If you are not able to articulate the reasons you will study in a particular program in the United States, you may not succeed in convincing the consular officer that you are indeed planning to study, rather than to immigrate. You should also be able to explain how studying in the United States relates to your future career when you return home.
5. **Be Concise.** Because of the volume of applications received, all consular officers are under considerable time pressure to conduct a quick interview. They must make a decision on the impressions they form during the first minute or two of the interview. Keep your answers to the officer's questions short and to the point.
6. **Supplemental Documentation.** It should be clear at a glance to the consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they signify. Lengthy written explanations cannot be quickly read or evaluated. Remember that you will have 2 - 3 minutes of interview time, if you're lucky.
7. **Not All Countries Are Equal.** Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or from countries where many students have remained in the United States as immigrants will have more difficulty getting visas. Statistically, applicants from those countries are more likely to be intending immigrants. They are also more likely to be asked about job opportunities at home after their study.
8. **Employment.** Your main purpose of coming to the United States should be to study, not for the chance to work before or after graduation. While many students do work off-campus during their studies, such employment is incidental to their main purpose of completing their U.S. education. You must be able to clearly articulate your plan to return home at the end of your program.
9. **Dependents Remaining at Home.** If your spouse and children are remaining behind in your country, be prepared to address how they will support themselves in your absence. If the consular officer gains the impression that your family members will need you to remit money from the United States in order to support them, your student visa application will almost certainly be denied. If your family does decide to join you at a later time, it is helpful to have them apply at the same post where you applied for your visa.
10. **Maintain a Positive Attitude.** Do not engage the consular officer in an argument. If you are denied a visa, ask the officer for a list of documents he or she would suggest you bring in order to overcome the refusal. Try to get the reason you were denied in writing.

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