

Successful Interview Tips

Here are some tips prospective students should consider when preparing for a visa interview.

1. TIES TO HOME COUNTRY

According to U.S. immigration law, every applicant is considered to be an intending immigrant until he or she can prove otherwise during an interview with a Consular Officer. 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.

These “ties” may include socio-economic, professional, and/or family ties (i.e., 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. If you are coming to the United States solely to study intensive English, be prepared to explain how English will be useful for you in your home country.

3. SPEAK FOR YOURSELF

Do not bring parents or family members with you to your 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 professional career in your home country.

5. BE CONCISE

Because of the volume of applications that are received, all consular officers are under considerable time pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. They must make a decision, for the most part, on the impressions they form during the first minute or two of the interview. Consequently, what you say first and the initial impression you create are critical to your success. 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.

7. SOME COUNTRIES ISSUE VISAS MORE READILY THAN OTHERS

Applicants from countries where many students have remained in the United States as immigrants may have more difficulty getting visas. Statistically, applicants from those countries are more likely to be asked about job opportunities at home after their study in the United States.

8. EMPLOYMENT

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

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. This can be an especially tricky area if you are the primary source of income for your family. 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 student visa, ask the officer for a list of documents he or she would suggest you bring in order to overcome the refusal, and try to get the reason you were denied in writing.