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#17-167 Pre-Departure Checklist

Before arriving in the United States, participants must ensure that they have plans for when they arrive in the country in order to facilitate a smooth transition into their program. Listed in this section are pertinent information that will help you plan for your arrival in the US.

Introduction

Pre-Departure Checklist

Before arriving in the United States, participants must ensure that they have plans for when they arrive in the country in order to facilitate a smooth transition into their program. Listed in this section are pertinent information that will help you plan for your arrival in the US.

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Part 1 Early planning

Pre-Departure Checklist

Participants may start planning for their trip upon receipt of their Form DS-2019. **Some of the information (e.g., travel plan, US address, etc.) will be required when completing Form DS-160.**

1 Flight tickets. While the majority of participants purchase their flight tickets after passing their visa interview, some purchase their flight tickets before the interview. If your airline offers “buy now, pay later,” then secure the tickets right before the visa interview and immediately pay for the tickets after passing the visa interview. If this option is not available, then purchase tickets with flexible options to accommodate possible changes.

- Purchase travel insurance for added protection
- Purchase tickets with flexible options
- Use a credit card that offers complimentary travel insurance, if available

2 Transit requirements. Find out whether the flights will transit via, or the participant plans to visit, another country. If so, check for special requirements and apply for the necessary visa(s) ahead of time.

- Obtain visa(s) for transit if applicable

4 Consecutive programs. Participants attending another J-1 or F-1 program immediately after the one sponsored by FUSIA note that they aren't allowed to possess two visas of the same type simultaneously. If the programs are in different visa types (e.g., J-1 and F-1), they may be allowed to apply for both visas before the trip provided that they have necessary documents available.

- Find out whether the participant may attend one interview for both visas

5 Temporary lodging. Participants are suggested to book a hotel or Airbnb for the first few days to settle down and finalize their short term housing after being able to meet the landlord and inspect the premises in person.

- At temporary address can be used to file Form DS-160

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Part 2 I got my visa approved, what's next?

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After a successful visa interview, finalize the initial housing, flight itinerary, etc. and complete the following tasks.

1 Health and travel insurance. The program requires "entry and exit" insurance coverage. If the health insurance initially purchased isn't aligned with the flight itinerary, update and resubmit proof accordingly. Health insurance generally doesn't cover trip cancellation/interruption, baggage/trip delay, loss/damaged luggage, adventure sports, etc. Consider purchasing travel insurance for added protection.

- Finalize flight tickets if haven't already been so
- Confirm that entry-to-exit insurance was purchased
- Purchase travel insurance for added protection

2 International Driving Permit. Participants may apply for a driver's license in the US, if such option is available. Note that some states prohibit foreigners from applying for a driver's license unless they have been living in the state for more than one year. Some states, e.g., New York and Massachusetts, permit driving on a foreign driver's license as long as it is in English.

- It is illegal to drive in the US without a driver's license

3 Mobile phone. Participants are required to possess a fully functioning phone with a valid US phone number and uninterrupted and qualified mobile plan (unlimited talk/text + 10GB+ or unlimited 4G/5G LTE speed) throughout their stay in the US.

- If the phone has a built in e-SIM, sign up for a US phone plan before arrival
- Or, purchase a temporary SIM card to use for the first few days

4 Plugs/voltage conversion. Appliances purchased outside the US may not work unless they are equipped with dual voltage. If any of the electronic devices do not convert voltage automatically, get some plug converter(s)/plug adaptor(s).

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Part 3 Right before departure

Pre-Departure Checklist

Make sure that you have everything you need for a safe trip and stay alert on the latest travel requirements.

1 Money matters. Make plans for your bank account opening in the US and alert your current banks and credit card companies of your travelled country and period.

- Sign up for overseas ATM withdrawal and set a max withdrawal limit for each day
- Find out the exchange rates and any overseas charges
- Take photos of equipment serial numbers, ID cards, credit cards, etc.
- Create a call list in case of loss/theft - leave one set with your parents
- Get a small amount of cash

2 Stay alert. Entry requirements and conditions may change at short notice. Check travel advisories for your intended destination (including transit countries).

3 Custom clearance. Complete **CBP Declaration Form 6059B** ahead of time or later on the plane. This form provides CBP with basic information about who you are and what you are bringing into the country. If the TSA officers deem that any of your checked bags needs to be physically inspected, they are permitted to break a lock unless you use TSA-approved locks for your luggage.

- Check out baggage restrictions
- Check out **CBP guidelines** and **TSA guidelines**
- Check out TSA's **medical guidelines**
- Comply with TSA's **3-1-1 liquids rule**
- Buy a TSA-approved lock

4 Stay healthy. Internships in the US commonly follow right after exams, which could make students prone to getting sick while traveling overseas. Pay extra attention to your health and hygiene, especially a week or two before departure.

- Take vitamins, eat healthy, get enough sleep, and do moderate exercise
- Get required vaccines before departure

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Part 4 Packing list

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Pack your luggage at least a week prior to your departure, and pack the items that you will need for the first few days in your carry-on bag in case your checked luggage is lost during flight connections. **Hand carry Form DS-2019 (original) and other travel documents. Do not pack anything valuable in your checked suitcase.**

Carry on bag

- 1 Passport with valid J visa
- 2 Form DS-2019 (original), and Form DS-7002
- 3 Flight booking confirmation and boarding pass
- 4 COVID-19 vaccination proof
- 5 Wallet with cash/credit/bank cards
- 6 Student ID, LPR ID, re-entry ID (nonlocals), and IDP driving permit (if applicable)
- 7 Documents for the visa interview, e.g., SEVIS fee receipt
- 8 Phone, power bank, laptop, power cord, and iPad
- 9 Ziploc bags for liquids, TSA locks, wipes/tissues, medicine with prescription/in its original container, and hand sanitizer

Checked bags

- 1 Clothes. Formal (1); business (5+ days); underwear, socks, and casual (7+ days)
- 2 Sneakers; dress shoes; sandals; belts; umbrella; glasses (if applicable)
- 3 Gym/outdoor. Swimsuit, caps and goggles; gym clothes
- 4 Winter. Coat/jackets (2); winter shoes; tights/warm socks; gloves; scarves/hats
- 5 Converters; plug adaptors
- 6 Toothbrush/paste; deodorant/perfume; makeup/skincare; shampoo; lotion; etc.

What else I can bring?

- 1 Name and contact information for the Responsible Officer (RO) at your program
- 2 Photo(s) of your family and friends to alleviate you when you feel homesick
- 3 A spare phone if you have one

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Part 5 Administrative duties

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Complete below listed administrative duties before departure to the US. Failure to do so may result your visa being cancelled on the grounds of "loss of contact."

What to note?

- Late arrivals, immediately report to FUSIA and apply for late permission
- OEM students may submit their school's physical exam form in place of this form
- Ensure that the flight itinerary is aligned "entry-to-exit" health insurance record and proofs
- The program requires "entry to exit" health insurance
- If PDF #14 is not aligned with the previously submitted PDFs #12 and 13, resubmit both

What to fill?

- US arrival and departure information
- Insurance coverage information
- US address and mobile number

What to upload?

- PDF #34 Stamped Form DS-2019 - Click [HERE](#)
- PDF #35 Visa Stamp - Click [HERE](#)
- PDF #36 Flight Tickets - Click [HERE](#)
- PDF #12 Physician Examination Form - Click [HERE](#)
- PDF #13 Health Insurance Verification Form - Click [HERE](#)
- PDF #14 Health Insurance Certificate
- PDF #41 Late Arrival Permission - Click [HERE](#)

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Part 6 Board, fly, and land

Pre-Departure Checklist

Arrive in the US at least 48 hours and within 30 days of your program start date, giving you enough time to settle down and prepare for your internship.

1 Board. Arrive at least three hours before your flight, allow ample time to pass through security, and arrive at the gate at least 30-45 minutes before your scheduled departure (especially for international flights).

- Check in and present the required documents
- After checking in, proceed to the security checkpoint
- Avoid walking barefoot through the metal detector (wear socks)
- Wash your hands after touching door handles, gate bench armrests, etc.
- Be interviewed when checking your luggage and right before boarding

2 Fly. CDC no longer requires masks on public transportation conveyances and at transportation hubs, but passengers are still recommended to wear masks in indoor public transportation settings. If transiting via another country, be sure to meet the country's entry requirements.

- While flying, remember to wear masks
- Before sitting down, use wipes to sanitize areas around your seat and airplane surfaces
- Sleep on your own neck pillow
- Before landing, complete Form 6059B if you haven't done so
- Ensure that you leave no belongings on your seat

3 Land. After landing, get off the plane, follow the line for non-citizens, and wait your turn for a brief interview given by the CBP. Expect an interview given by a CBP official who will ask you questions, review your documents, authorize your status in the I-94 system, and put an ink entry stamp in your passport. While most participants will clear US immigration after their documents are reviewed by a CBP officer, a few will be directed for a **secondary inspection**.

- When it is your turn, proceed to the counter
- Form DS-2019 (original) or proper signatures may be issued Form I-515A
- Hand the CBP Declaration Form 6059B to the CBP officer
- Luggage inspection may or may not be required
- Put your phone away until exiting the airport

4 Exit. Outside airports, off-boarding passengers may be approached by people who offer cab services. DO NOT USE these services as you can easily get scammed. Instead, take a real cab/taxi or Uber/Lyft. The medallion/driver's license should be clearly visible when entering the cab. If Uber/Lyft, wait inside the airport until the app shows that the driver has arrived.

- Take a legit taxi/cab or Uber/Lyft
- Avoid any persons approaching you offering taxi services
- If alone, text FUSIA the license plate and driver's badge information
- Pay what's on the meter plus a gratuity (e.g., 15%)
- Text FUSIA so we know that you are safe

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Part 7 What to note?

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1 CBP inspection. The CBP inspection is to validate the identity and confirm personal details, nationality, fingerprints, make sure the documents are of the visa type, that they are genuine, and that the visa is in line with the purpose of traveling, as well as detect fraud and security threats. Examples of questions asked by the CBP officer:

- What is the purpose of your visit to America?
- Where are you visiting in the US?
- How long is your duration of your stay in the US?
- Where do you plan to stay in the US?
- Can you give me a copy of your Form DS-2019 (and other documents)?
- Where is your internship?
- What do you plan to do in the US during your stay?

2 Admissibility. Passing the visa interview doesn't guarantee entry to the US. All participants attempting entry to the US are subject to inspection by CBP officers who determine the admissibility and duration of stay for travelers to the US. The CBP officers have the right to deny foreigners' entry to the US for various reasons. It is exchange visitors' responsibility to convince the inspecting CBP officer to grant entry by presenting necessary documents and answering questions properly. If the CBP officer is not convinced, they may deny entry and/or conduct a secondary inspection to determine admissibility to the US.

3 I-515A. Be sure to hand carry Form DS-2019 (original) and other documents presented at the visa interview. If missing Form DS-2019 (original), participants may be requested to go through the **Noncompliance Termination Procedure (I-515A)**. If the CBP officer has questions, participants may suggest them to contact their designated FUSIA officer's mobile for confirmation.

4 Admission stamp. Occasionally, CBP may write "F-1" instead of "J-1" on exchange visitors' entry stamp. Red eye flight passengers' admission stamp date may not be updated. Take a quick look when the passport is returned at the counter.

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Part 8 I wanna ask...

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How much money can I bring to the US?

While you can bring in as much money as you like, when you pass through customs, you must declare whether you are bringing more than \$10,000 in the US.

Can I bring medicines into the US?

Yes, carry what you will need during your stay and clearly label the medication to facilitate the screening process (check with state laws regarding prescription medication labels). Also, for medically necessary liquids, medications, and creams in excess of 3.4 ounces or 100 milliliters, keep them with the labels in your checked luggage.

Can I bring food into the US?

In general, packaged and processed food may be brought into the US and there are restrictions. Click [HERE](#) for more.

Do I need to test negative for COVID-19 before travelling to the US?

CDC will no longer require air passengers to show a negative COVID-19 viral test or recovery documentation, but passengers are still required to show [vaccination proof](#) before they boarding.

Should I buy an airport SIM Card?

Airports have stores/vending machines that sell prepaid SIM cards. Generally, these cards are from lesser-known brands that don't provide any bargain over other SIM cards. You may get one for temporary use. If there stores/vending machines directly run by major providers, e.g., AT&T and Verizon, you may purchase a SIM card from them.

Can I use my cell phone in customs/immigration?

You absolutely cannot use your cell phone until you've been cleared by customs. If you are seen using your cell phone, the CBP officer can arrest you or pull you out of line for inspection/interrogation, which can take hours.

Do I need tip the cab/rideshare driver? What if I don't tip or tip as I want?

It is not illegal to avoid tipping the driver, but it is customary practice to do so. The average tip rate is 15%, but this varies by location.

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