

## J-1 Visa Application & US Entry > #17-21 J-1 Visa Application

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# #17-21 J-1 Visa Application

A personal interview is a crucial step for the US Department of State in determining visa eligibility. After being accepted to the Exchange Visitor Program, BridgeUSA (J-1 visa) by FUSIA, prospective J-1 interns should apply for their nonimmigrant visa in the J-1 intern category from a US embassy or consulate abroad.

## Introduction

### J-1 Visa Application

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FUSIA is a designated sponsor in the J-1 intern category.



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### Part 1 Procedures

#### J-1 Visa Application

After being accepted into the BridgeUSA (J-1 visa) Exchange Visitor Program and paying the necessary program fee in full, participants will be issued the SEVIS ID and be sent Form DS-2019 (original) via UPS. They (except Canadian citizens) will then apply for an exchange visitor visa from a US embassy or consulate abroad by completing the required steps and presenting the necessary documents along with a personal interview.

#### Before program acceptance

- Step 1 Complete Form DS-160 up to the last step (while completing Part I)
- Step 2 Check out specific directives from individual embassies and consulates
- Step 3 Check out the **appointment wait times** of the respective embassy or consulate
- Step 4 Ensure that the program starts at least 1-2 weeks after the earliest appointment
- Step 5 Take a **photo** as per the DOS requirements

#### After program acceptance

- Step 1 Submit the program fee to confirm your acceptance of the admission offer
- Step 2 Complete Form DS-160, generate the Confirmation Page, and upload a copy
- Step 3 Obtain Form DS-2019 (original) by UPS, sign in blue ink, and upload a signed copy
- Step 4 If paying the SEVIS fee on your own, upload a copy of the receipt
- Step 5 Purchase "entry to exit" health insurance and upload **PDF #14**
- Step 6 Register an account with and complete the **USTRAVELDOCS profile**
- Step 7 Pay the **MRV fee**, then wait for ~48 business hours to activate the 19-digit VAN
- Step 8 Schedule your appointment and submit the interview date (Part D, VA panel)
- Step 9 Gather proofs and prepare for the interview at least 3 days before the interview
- Step 10 Contact FUSIA for a brief walkthrough before the interview (optional)

#### Attend the visa interview

- Step 1 Attend the interview with a small plastic folder, some cash, and documents
- Step 2 Temporarily surrender the smart phone at the security checkpoint
- Step 3 Be fingerprinted
- Step 4 Submit the "mandatory documents" (see page 4) at Window 1
- Step 4 Be seated - you may be handed the **Know Your Rights booklet** to read
- Step 5 Attend the interview and present additional documents upon request
- Step 6 If approved, pick up the passport in person (if possible); if **denied**, contact FUSIA
- Step 7 Submit the **reciprocity fee** and retake the photo (if required)
- Step 9 Submit the interview results (Part D, Visa Application panel)

NOTE: Upon receipt of your returned passport, upload a copy of the **visa stamp** and **Form DS-2019 (stamped)**, and find out whether the **two-year rule** applies to you.

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### Part 2 Important remarks

#### J-1 Visa Application

**1 Nonimmigrant J visa.** Generally, foreigners who wish to enter the US must first apply for and obtain a visa. An immigrant visa is for foreign nationals to reside permanently in the US. A nonimmigrant visa is for those seeking “temporary stay” to the States. There are more than 20 different sub-types of nonimmigrant visas. J is a nonimmigrant visa for travelers admitted to the Exchange Visitor Program.

**2 Special rules for Canadians.** Canadian nationals may secure “J status” from CBP at a US port of entry as they do not require a J visa to enter the US. They aren’t required to fill Form DS-160, pay the MRV fee, and attend the visa interview. However, they are still required to pay the SEVIS fee and attend an interview by a CBP officer when crossing the border. Click [HERE](#) for more.

**3 Admissibility.** A US visa simply indicates that a consular officer has reviewed the application and that officer has determined that the individual is eligible to enter the country for a specific purpose. Inspecting CBP officers at the borders determine admissibility of those seeking entry into the US.

**4 J-1 is not a dual intent visa.** Dual Intent is an immigration law concept that allows foreign nationals to enter the US with “nonimmigrant intent” while also maintaining the possibility of staying and qualifying for more permanent status. Dual intent is available in some nonimmigrant categories such as H-1B and L-1 but not for F-1 and J-1. Prospective exchange visitors (J) must show that they intend to enter the US temporarily and solely to participate in the approved program as per Form DS-2019.

NOTE: Current US law does not permit exchange visitors to communicate an interest in transferring to another legal status or staying in the US to build their career after the completion of their exchange visitor program.

**5 Rules vary by location.** Application procedures and instructions vary by embassy or consulate. For example, applicants in the UK schedule their interview appointment through [their own website](#), and applicants in India should have two appointments (an OFC appointment and a personal interview). Some embassies and consulates require exchange visa applicants to present proof of qualified health insurance coverage during the visa interview.

NOTE: Check out your respective embassy or consulate’s website for individual instructions.

**6 Timeline.** Visa applicants are reminded to apply early for their visa, well in advance of the anticipated travel date. Ensure that the program starts at least 1-2 weeks (preferably at least 30 days) after the earliest available appointment day. The bottom line is that exchange visitors should enter the US before the program start date or they should have the program period in SEVIS and necessary forms updated prior to their attempt entry to the US.

NOTE: Visa application timelines vary by location. Check out the appointment wait times of the respective US embassy or consulate ahead of time.

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### Part 2 Important remarks (con't)

#### J-1 Visa Application

**7 After the interview.** Even after approval of the visa applicant's passport, it takes a few days to place the visa stamp in their passport. Participants should not schedule any travel arrangements until their passport is returned to them.

**8 Two year rule.** Some exchange visitors are subject to Section 212(e) or a two-year home-country physical presence requirement. Read through it before the appointment. Click [HERE](#) for more.

**9 USTRAVELDOC profile.** First time US visa applicants should create a new USTRAVELDOC profile. Previous US visa applicants may be requested to merge their existing and new USTRAVELDOCS profiles when registering a USTRAVELDOCS profile (allow additional time for such processing).

**10 Visa interview waiver.** Repeat J-1 participants may be eligible to apply through interview waiver by dropping off the required documents at specified drop-off locations. If eligible to apply for a visa without an in-person interview, they would be prompted to pay the MRV fee and print out the Interview Waiver Confirmation Letter which must be included in the application submitted. If opting to apply through interview waiver, be sure to include the correct supporting documents in the visa application by referencing the checklist on the confirmation letter and sign it to confirm.

NOTE: Generally, an in-person interview allows for better control of the time. The use of such service does not guarantee visa issuance. In some cases, applicants may still be required to appear for an in-person visa interview which will cause delays in visa processing. As such, interview waivers may not be an ideal option for participants who want to be in full control of the timeline.

**11 Visa Waiver Program (VWP).** Citizens from VWP countries may be allowed travel to the US for tourism or business without a visa. To intern or receive training in the US, they must apply for an exchange visitor (J) visa in the intern or training category. Click [HERE](#) for more.

**12 Be honest and complete.** Throughout the entire visa application and interview process, applicants must tell the truth and give complete and accurate information. Failure to do so may result in the visa processing being delayed or rejected, revoking US-entry eligibility.

**13 Questions.** For questions, send emails via the Request Form or contact the Call Center of the participant's respective embassy or consulate. If contacting via email, be specific with regards to the question and account information. It generally takes 48 hours to receive a response.

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### Part 3 Required documents

#### J-1 Visa Application

On the scheduled date and time of the interview appointment, go to the US embassy or consulate with the required documentation. NOTE:

#### Mandatory documents

Original or certified copy civil documents and certified translations (if applicable) are generally required. Failure to present all required documents at the interview may cause delays in visa processing or denial of the visa application. Health insurance is required by some embassies and consulates. Some also require foreign students (or nationals) to prove their local residency. As rules vary by location, check out your respective embassy or consulate's website for individual instructions.

- **Form DS-2019 (original)** signed in blue ink and in US date format
- **DS-7002** signed by all parties (download from the VP panel)
- **DS-160 receipt** bring the right one if you filled it out more than once
- **SEVIS receipt** download from the VP panel
- **Current passport** plus all expired and other passport(s)
- **Photo** bring cash in case retaking is required
- **Appointment letter**

#### Essential

Original documents (except the passport upon a successful interview) will be returned to the applicant when the interview has been completed. Any photocopies provided may be kept.

- **Bank statements (3 latest months) or passbooks**
- **Postsecondary transcript (current)**
- **English proficiency transcript**
- **Permanent Resident Card(s)**
- Local ID, student visa, or equivalent
- **Certificate of insurance**
- Evidence that the participant intends to return home after the program **Final year students and graduates especially; OEP students, use the school letter and OEP acceptance letter; others consult with us**

#### Just in case

A consular officer may request any information and supporting documentation they deem relevant to establish the applicant's qualification for the visa. There is no definitive number of documents one must have. As a general rule, the more documents, the better.

- Relationship proof of financial supporters
  - **Postsecondary transcript (previous)**
  - **Student ID**
  - **School letter OEP students please also bring your OEP acceptance letter**
  - Support letter by designated sponsor **Download from Part D of the Visa Application panel**
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### Part 4 Useful tips

#### J-1 Visa Application

The goal of the visa interview is to elicit information to help determine individual applicants' eligibility for a visa. Below are some tips to help ace the interview.

**1 General rule.** Be prepared (study and practice beforehand), ensure no errors, and bring all required documents.

**2 Basic interview skills.** Officers commonly put emotions aside and grant visas to deserving applicants who can answer the questions with confidence. Answer the questions clearly, directly, and confidently. Be natural, be honest, stay calm, and avoid lengthy or wishy-washy answers. Practice beforehand but don't attempt to recite the answers. Do not argue with the officer.

**3 Do your homework.** It's common that the consular officer asks questions by referring to the participant's DS-160 and DS-7002 forms. Examples of questions include the applicant's travel/housing plan, internship/training activities, etc. It is also common that the officer asks questions from **Know Your Rights booklet** and important rules (e.g., **two-year rule**) that applicants should know.

**4 Dress proper and carry light.** First impressions can mean a lot. Dress properly and be on time. Bring only a purse or small plastic folder with the required documents and some cash - for lockers (if available), retaking the photo (if required), and paying the reciprocity fee (if applicable).

**5 Be well prepared.** There is no algorithmic approach to passing an interview. Some officers ask detailed questions; some ask simple questions. Don't be less prepared because another student tells you that the interview is easy.

**6 Keep it simple and organized.** Each officer only has a minute or two to greet you, ask you a few questions, flip through your passport, and write down a few words to describe why your visa is issued or refused. That's a lot to do in a limited time. If a denial decision is made, it will be too late to explain. Hence, bring all the original documents but organize them properly. Use color tags, a cover checklist, dividers, etc. - so that you can promptly pull it out when asked and keep your answers concise.

**7 Think from the interviewer's perspectives.** Put yourself into the interviewer's shoes. Think about the interviewer's intent and focus on what they want to discover - as examples, they would want to confirm that the applicant can speak proficient English (speak clearly), is not lying (speak confidently and concisely), is knowledgeable about the program (study Form DS-7002), is well prepared for the trip (study Form DS-160, present where you plan to reside), is aware of their rights (study the Know Your Rights booklet), is eligible for a J-1 internship program (e.g., college student studying at or recently graduated within one year from an accredited school outside of the US), is eligible for the nonimmigrant J visa type (e.g., has no dual intent, sufficient funds to cover the trip, etc.). Adjust based on your own situation.

**8 Use the right terms.** Familiarize yourself with the terminology and language used, e.g., you are an "exchange visitor," "BridgeUSA intern," or "J-1 intern" for a "work-based learning or internship program." The J-1 intern visa is a "nonimmigrant" visa. J-1 internships are not for ordinary employment purposes. The company you intern for is your "host." Avoid words such as "work" or "employment" (there is another visa category for employment).

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### Part 5 Mock interviews

#### J-1 Visa Application

The following “mock interview” questions are for rough reference only. Don’t memorize the questions blindly, put yourself into the interviewer’s shoes, and adjust based on your own situation. [Generate this PDF via the online panel to show populated data.](#)

#### Introduction

- What school do you go to?
- What do you study? **I study**
- Why are you applying for the visa? **I want to intern in the US to ... “intern” instead of “work”**
- How do you know FUSIA? **Through my school...**
- What is your relationship with FUSIA? **FUSIA is my program sponsor**
- What visa are you applying for? **J-1 visa in the intern category**

#### Internship [See Form DS-7002](#)

- What will you be doing? **I will be interning at ...**
- How do you know your host? **Through my school**
- What does it do? **It is a company...**
- Where is it located? **It is located in ...**
- Do you receive a stipend? **Yes. per ...**

#### Host/supervisor [See Form DS-7002](#)

- Why did you choose this organization?
- How is your internship related to your study and career goals?
- What is the name of your supervisor?
- What is his/her title?
- What do you do there? **I will be...**

#### Other questions [See Form DS-160](#)

- Tell me about your previous visits in the the US.
- Where will you live in the US?
- What do you plan to do after (or aside from) your internship?
- Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend?
- What is the three-digit emergency code in the US? **911**
- What is the human rights booklet about?
- Can you summarize the booklet in 1-3 lines?

#### Financial and supporting documents

- Who pays for your internship?
- What do your parents do?
- Show me their financial statements.
- Do you have their tax statements?
- Can I see your transcripts?

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### Part 6 Visa stamp explained

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Commonly referred to as a “visa stamp,” a US visa is a travel document (a machine-readable visa foil placed in a passport or travel document) issued by a US embassy or consulate that permits the bearer to travel to a US port of entry to request permission to enter the US under a specified visa type and for a specific timeframe following a successful visa application.

Upon return of the passport and stamped Form DS-2019 from the US embassy or consulate, participants should immediately inspect the visa and ensure that all information is correct. Mistakes or discrepancies can jeopardize their entry to the US and cause other immigration related issues.

#### Left

- Issuing post name - Where the visa was granted
- Surname - As per the participant’s Form DS-2019 and passport
- Given name - As per the participant’s Form DS-2019 and passport
- Passport number - As per the participant’s Form DS-2019 and passport
- Entries - The number of times the participant may apply for entry to the US on this visa while programs are in effect; “M” means “multiple”
- Annotation - The participant’s SEVIS ID and Program ID

#### Middle

- Sex - As per the participant’s Form DS-2019 and passport
- Birth Date - As per the participant’s Form DS-2019 and passport
- Issue Date - When the passport was issued
- Expiration Date -When the passport expires

#### Right

- Control Number - control number assigned by the DOS
- Visa - The travel document type, e.g., “R” means “regular” for a standard passport
- Type/Class - Classification of the visa type, e.g., “J1” for exchange visitors
- Nationality - Passport country of the participant, e.g., “CHIN” for China passport holders

#### Bottom

- Program sponsor’s name, FUSIA COMMUNICATIONS, INC.
- BEARER IS/IS NOT SUBJECT TO SECTION 212E: CHIN - See [two-year rule](#) for more
- FROM XX-XXX-XXXX to XX-XXX-XXXX - Program period as per Form DS-2019

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### Part 7 I wanna ask...

#### J-1 Visa Application

##### May I get an earlier appointment date?

Yes, but it depends on the location. Expedite requests can be made on a case-by-case basis but based on experience will rarely be granted. Click [HERE](#) for details.

##### How early should I get there?

If you plan to bring any large items to the interview, arrive 30 minutes ahead of schedule as you will be asked to walk over to a nearby area to store your items in a locker for a small fee. Otherwise, arrive early, but not too early, as you may not be allowed entry before your scheduled appointment.

##### What if my parents can't provide qualified proof of income?

If original tax forms are unavailable, bring original or certified copies of paystubs or the equivalent. If qualified proof of income, i.e., paystubs or tax forms, are unavailable, bring documents that serve similar purposes, e.g., an employment letter, investment account statements, proof of asset ownership/rental income, etc. Whether or not substitutes are acceptable is at the discretion of the consular officer who interviews you.

##### Are PRC students studying in Macau interviewed in Hong Kong?

Yes. They apply for their visas at the US consulate in Hong Kong. Have the proper visas to travel to Hong Kong at least one or two times.

##### What is an OFC appointment?

After paying the MRV fee, visa applicants in India who don't qualify for the Drop Box program will schedule/attend two appointments (an OFC appointment and a personal interview). An OFC appointment (at an OFC facility) takes place BEFORE the personal interview (at the US embassy or consulate). During an OFC appointment, visa applicants submit some of the required documentation ahead of the actual interview. Applicants who are unable to provide the required documents at an OFC appointment will be sent back home and be asked to reschedule their appointment(s) which will jeopardize their visa application timeline.

##### Should I apply for my visa at my home country or a third country?

Some US consulates and embassies allow third country nationals to apply for visas under some circumstances. However, the general rule is to apply for their visa in the applicant's home country (or school country for foreign students). However, note that if your visa application is delayed or denied, you may be required to wait until the visa is approved or return to your home country directly to reapply for a visa there.

##### Should I specify my passport to be delivered or picked up?

Pick-up in person is safer than home delivery while the latter is convenient. If you select **home delivery**, ensure that someone is present when the courier comes to you home.

##### Should I apply for my visa with or without an interview?

Permission to waive interviews for repeat J-1 visa applicant is subject to the discretion of the specific embassy or consulate. According to past experience, an in-person interview allows better control of the timeline.

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### Part 7 I wanna ask... (con't)

#### J-1 Visa Application

##### May I intern in the US through ESTA or using a B visa?

Foreign nationals studying or interning in the US do not enjoy the benefits of visa-free travel. They aren't allowed to study or exchange through the Visa Waiver Program (ESTA) or using a visitor (B) visa. Canadian citizens seeking to study or intern in the States may skip the visa interview and secure F/M/J status at a US port of entry.

##### May I concurrently apply for two J-1 visas as the same time?

You may have more than one nonimmigrant visa in your passport, e.g., J-1 and F-1 or B-2 and J-1 as long as they are in "different" types. Note that you can only enter the US with one nonimmigrant visa at a time.

##### Can I immediately follow a J-1 program with an F-1 program?

Since they are in two different categories, you may apply for both visas (and pay the MRV and SEVIS twice) **before** both programs. Note that you must exit and reenter the US between the two programs.

##### Can I join another J-1 program before or after completing a J-1 program or can I apply for both J-1 visas at the same time?

Since they are in the same category, you must finish the first program, exit the US, and apply for your second visa at an embassy or consulate abroad, before returning to the US to start the second J-1 program. Do **not** apply for both visas at the same time because once your second J-1 visa is approved, it will automatically cancel your first one.

##### What are the top reasons why a visa request may be denied?

- Appearing nervous, dishonest, or absent-minded
- Failure to appear for the interview
- Failure to answer questions or vagueness about the answers
- Inability to show a strong intent to leave the US after the program
- Intentionally/unintentionally lying or giving inconsistent answers
- Incomplete application or lacking supporting documentation for verification
- Previous violations of US laws or being found guilty of a criminal offense
- Ties to terrorist/criminal organizations, nationals from US-sanctioned countries, and/or individuals with flagged immigration records

##### Does FUSIA support a change of status (from one J-1 to another J-1 or F-1 program)?

No, FUSIA does not process or support a change of status application. If you are currently in the States, you must exit the US, apply for your visa at a US embassy or consulate of your home country or a nearby country outside of the US, and reenter the US with your second J-1 visa.

##### May I work in another company during my stay in the US?

No, you are restricted to the activity in the United States according to your visa type.

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