

Your 5 Steps to U.S. Study



UNDERGRADUATE



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Your 5 Steps to U.S Study

WANT TO LEARN MORE

ABOUT STUDYING

IN THE UNITED STATES?

Join the [EdUSA Connects Webinar Series](#), offered by EducationUSA, to hear directly from U.S. college and university representatives. Topics range from admissions, financial aid, student visas, and beyond. Mark your calendar today to [join an upcoming webinar](#).

Can't attend a live webinar? Access recorded sessions anytime, along with the questions and answers provided during the events.

"In the United States, you have the opportunity to customize your educational program. This flexibility is not available in other places."

- Student from Libya



"The U.S. campus is like a global village where you meet people from so many places. You'll be amazed at how much you have in common and excited to learn about the differences."

- Student from Trinidad



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WHAT
DO YOU
WANT TO
STUDY?



UNDERGRADUATE

12 - 18 months prior to U.S. study:



Get Started Today!

The first step to studying in the United States is researching your choices to find a college or university that best fits your needs.

"Don't try to match yourself to a university, rather try to pick a university that matches you."

- Undergraduate student from the United Kingdom



 **EdUSA Connects Session –**
Researching Undergraduate Choices
Watch Now - <http://bcove.me/nw7301fn> >>

Have you thought about what is most important to you?
To help you decide, ask yourself the questions listed within **Define Your Priorities (Pg. 7)**.

No official ranking system exists for colleges and universities in the United States. The best college or university is the one that is best for you and meets your requirements—academic, financial, and personal.

12 to 18 months prior to the academic year in which you hope to enroll, begin your research.

- Why do you want to study in the United States?
- Where will you fit in best?
- Which colleges or universities will meet your needs?
- Will you need financial assistance?
- What are the application and financial aid deadlines?
- Which **standardized tests** are required?

GOOD TO KNOW

Application and financial aid deadlines affect when you take standardized tests because test results must reach admissions offices no later than these deadlines.



"I consider my U.S. university to be a global village. You meet people from other places and are amazed at how much you have in common. It's also exciting to learn about your differences."

- Student from Barbados



Undergraduate

Step 1 - Research Your Options

12 - 18 months prior to U.S. study:



Who is an Undergraduate Student?

An undergraduate student in the United States is seeking one of two higher education degrees—an associate degree or a bachelor’s degree.

The Associate Degree:

- Usually takes two years to complete.
- Is offered at two-year colleges known as **community colleges or junior colleges**.
- May be earned in a **terminal program** or a **transfer program**.

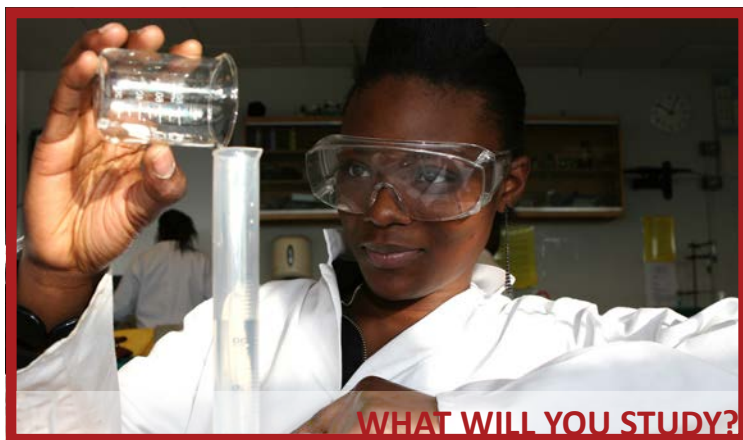
The Bachelor’s Degree:

- Usually takes four years to complete.
- Is offered at degree granting institutions known as **colleges, universities**, or specialized **institutes**.
- Is highly flexible and students can choose from a wide variety of courses or create their own unique programs.

U.S. undergraduate education is based on the concept of **liberal arts and sciences**. You can take classes in a wide variety of subjects in addition to your **major** field of study.

GOOD TO KNOW

*In the United States, the word school is sometimes used instead of **college** or **university**.*



- Community Colleges or Junior Colleges:** A postsecondary institution that offers associate degree programs, as well as technical and vocational programs.
- Terminal Program:** Associate degree program leading to a specific career upon graduation. Example programs include allied health, tourism, graphic design, and culinary arts.
- Transfer Program:** Associate degree program allowing the student to transfer into the third year of a four-year bachelor’s degree program.
- Colleges:** A postsecondary institution that provides an undergraduate education and, in some cases, master’s and doctorate degrees. College, in a separate sense, is a division of a university; for example, College of Business.
- Universities:** A postsecondary institution that offers both undergraduate and graduate degree programs.
- Institutes:** A postsecondary institution that specializes in degree programs in a group of closely related subjects; for example, Institute of Technology.
- Liberal Arts and Sciences:** Academic studies of subjects in the humanities, the social sciences, and the physical sciences with the goal of developing students’ verbal, written, and reasoning skills.
- Major:** The student’s field of concentration.





Undergraduate

Step 1 - Research Your Options

12 - 18 months prior to U.S. study:



The Associate Degree and Community Colleges



YOUR UNIQUE EXPERIENCE

$$2 \text{ Years of Community College} + 2 \text{ Years of Additional College or University Study} = 4 \text{ Year Bachelor's Degree}$$

Community colleges offer two-year programs usually leading to the associate of arts (AA) or associate of science (AS) degree. These colleges also offer technical and vocational programs and have close links to secondary/high schools, community groups, and employers in the local community. You can find large community colleges with multiple campuses in an urban/suburban setting or small campuses in a rural setting.



EdUSA Connects Session – Community Colleges in the USA
 Watch Now - <http://bcove.me/g8njwoq0> >>

Community colleges 4-year colleges and universities develop special agreements so that credits and degrees transfer between the institutions. In this “2+2 process,” you can earn a bachelor’s degree with two years of community college followed by two years of university study.

GOOD TO KNOW

Enrollment at community colleges is typically open to all students who have completed secondary/high school.

Students should carefully design their programs of study and pay close attention to agreements between the institutions to make sure the courses completed at a community college transfer to the university program.



What are the top 10 reasons for attending a community college in the U.S.?



EdUSA Connects Session – 2 + 2 Community College Transfer

Watch Now - <http://bcove.me/0e8jcbeu> >>

1 Lower cost - Tuition and fees at community colleges are significantly lower than at 4-year colleges and universities.

2 Excellent transfer opportunities - Most community colleges have agreements with 4-year colleges and universities that allow students to transfer their community college credits toward a university degree. Community colleges offer programs in all major fields of study that can transfer to 4-year colleges and universities. Some community colleges even offer four-year degrees.

3 Flexible English proficiency requirements - Because community colleges provide their own assessments and offer Intensive English Programs (IEPs) to students who require additional English proficiency, TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores are not always required for the admissions process.

4 Focus on teaching and student success - Community college students enjoy a great deal of personal attention from their professors; extra help and support are available when you need it.

5 Small class sizes - The average community college class size is between 15 and 20 students, which allows professors to devote more time to individual students and for students to interact with each other.

GOOD TO KNOW

Students can lower the overall cost of a bachelor's degree by taking the first 2 years of course credits at a community college.

Programs especially popular among international students include business, computer science, computer graphics, internet technology, multimedia, hotel management, restaurant management, psychology, accounting, early childhood education, and environmental conservation.

Many community colleges will accept an IELTS (International English Language Testing System) or PTE (Pearson Test of English) Academic score in place of the TOEFL score.

Community colleges seek out faculty with work experience in their subject areas, adding a real-world perspective to students' studies.

Small classes are highly beneficial for international students who may need to adjust to the pace of U.S. academic life and practice their English-language skills.



What are the top 10 reasons for attending a community college in the U.S.?

6 **Additional practical training opportunity** - International students with F-1 visa status are eligible to complete one year of Optional Practical Training (OPT) in their fields of study immediately following completion of an associate degree, and a second year of OPT immediately following completion of a bachelor's degree.

7 **Use of the latest technologies** - Because of their strong ties with business and industry, most community colleges have state-of-the-art technologies, classrooms, and facilities.

8 **Flexible admissions requirements** - Many community colleges do not require standardized admissions tests, only a test of English for international students, and many have **rolling deadlines** for admissions.

9 **Opportunities to experience U.S. culture** - Because community colleges have strong ties to their surrounding communities, they offer international students both a rich academic environment and a unique opportunity to experience many aspects of life in the United States—both on and off campus.

10 **Excellent student support services** - Community colleges are committed to attracting a diverse student population and ensuring that all students succeed.

GOOD TO KNOW

Community colleges lead the United States in educating students in cutting-edge fields such as biomedical technology, biotechnology, robotics, laser optics, internet and computer technologies, and geographic information systems.

Programs especially popular among international students include business, computer science, computer graphics, internet technology, multimedia, hotel management, restaurant management, psychology, accounting, early childhood education, and environmental conservation.

These colleges offer a variety of support services and cross-cultural programs, including tutoring, advising, career planning, study skills, and counseling—many designed specifically for international students.

How can you learn more?

Refer to the [Community College Finder](http://www.aacc.nche.edu/pages/ccfinder.aspx) (www.aacc.nche.edu/pages/ccfinder.aspx) from the American Association of Community Colleges

Have you thought about what is most important to you?

To help you decide, ask yourself the questions listed within [Define Your Priorities \(Pg. 7\)](#).

Rolling Deadlines: Institutions accept applications and admit students at any time during a specific time period until all available spots are filled.



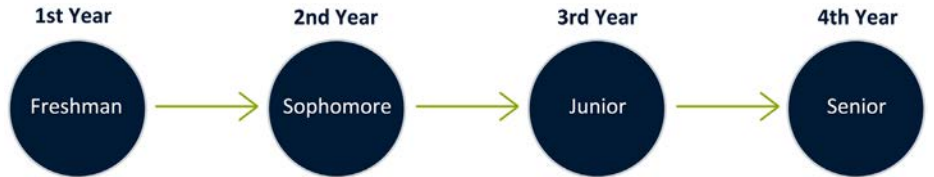
Undergraduate

Step 1 - Research Your Options

12 - 18 months prior to U.S. study:



The Bachelor's Degree



GOOD TO KNOW

Think about credit hours as the number of hours spent per week in a classroom. Most undergraduate students take 15 credit hours as a full-time student.

The bachelor's degree is awarded after completing a specified number of **credits** in a major field of study. Every course earns a certain number of credits, and each institution has its own requirement for the number of credits needed to graduate. The bachelor's degree is usually completed in four years of full-time study.

Courses within the degree program can be divided into one of four types:

Core Courses	Provide the foundation of the degree program and are required of all students seeking that degree.
Major Courses	The student's field of concentration. Major courses represent 25-50% of the total number of courses required to complete a degree. Most students pursue one major, but some pursue double majors.
Minor Courses	The student's secondary field of concentration. Students who decide to pursue a minor will usually complete about five courses in this second field of study.
Elective Courses	Courses that may be chosen from any field of study. Electives give students an opportunity to explore other topics or subjects of interest.

The academic year varies slightly for each college or university. It usually runs from late August/early September through May and is divided into two **semesters**. Six- to eight-week summer terms may be offered as an option for students to:

- Complete their degrees faster.
- Decrease their course loads during the regular term.
- Retake courses not completed successfully during the regular term.

Credits: Units that most colleges and universities use to record the completion of courses (with passing grades) that are required for an academic degree.

Semester: Units that most colleges and universities use to record the completion of courses (with passing grades) that are required for an academic degree.

Have you thought about what is most important to you?
To help you decide, ask yourself the questions listed within **Define Your Priorities (Pg.7)**.





Define Your Priorities

When searching for an undergraduate program in the United States, it is important to first decide what is most important to you. This will help guide you through each of **Your 5 Steps to U.S. Study**. Please answer the following questions with as much information as possible.

Why do you want to study in the United States?

Every student is different, and it is important to think about your own reasons to study at a college or university in the United States. These reasons may change over time, but they will help guide your search for a U.S. college or university.

As you begin to search for a U.S. college or university, you should think about:

Your Short-term Goals

- Which subjects interest you the most? For example, art, music, science, technology, etc.

- Which degree will you seek in the United States?
 - Associate degree (2-year)** - A degree awarded after a two-year period of study; it can be either *terminal* or *transfer* (the first two years of a bachelor's degree).
 - Bachelor's degree (4-year)** - A degree awarded upon completion of approximately four years of full-time study.
 - Undecided**
- During which time of the year do you want to begin your studies in the United States?
 - August/September**
 - January**
 - May/June**
 - Undecided**

Your Long-term Goals

After you finish this degree in the United States and return to your home country, what type of job or employment do you plan to seek? For example, doctor, engineer, social worker, teacher, etc.

- Do you plan to begin a graduate or other academic program after completing your bachelor's degree in the United States?
 - Yes, What is your plan?**

 - No**
 - Undecided**



Undergraduate | Step 1 - Research Your Options

- What skills do you want to improve while in the United States?
- How will studying in the United States help you improve these skills?

Your Past Experience

- Have you taken any classes or earned any degrees beyond secondary/high school?

How will you pay for your studies in the United States?

Tuition, fees, and living costs vary greatly between institutions, making U.S. higher education affordable to hundreds of thousands of international students each year. [Click here \(www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors/Data/International-Students/Primary-Source-of-Funding\)](http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors/Data/International-Students/Primary-Source-of-Funding) to learn more about the different ways other international students have funded their U.S. studies.

As you begin to find your own funding sources, you should think about:

Your Financial Contribution

Your financial contribution can come from family, personal, and/or other sources.

- How much money, in U.S. Dollars, can your own source(s) contribute each year?
 - Less than \$5,000
 - \$5,000–\$10,000
 - \$10,000–15,000
 - \$15,000–\$25,000
 - More than \$25,000

Financial Aid

When seeking financial aid, you may qualify for many options at the undergraduate level.

- From this list, which financial aid options interest you?
 - U.S. College or University Scholarship** - Many U.S. institutions offer scholarships for a number of reasons. These financial awards are given to the most highly qualified applicants.
 - Financial Need** - Financial need is usually determined by low income, economic hardship, or other factors.





Undergraduate

Step 1 - Research Your Options

- List reasons why a college or university should consider your financial situation, or “financial need.”
 - Academic Merit** - Think about your academic achievements, typically earned in a classroom through good grades, high test scores, and other successes.
 - List any achievements and/or awards you have earned.
 - Sports** - Think about your special talents in a sport, typically displayed during competitive events.
 - List any achievements and awards you have in a sport.
 - Musical Talent** - Think about your special talents in music, typically displayed during musical performances.
 - List any special achievements and awards you have in music.
 - Leadership Skills** - Think about your leadership skills, typically displayed during participation in a club or organization.
 - List any special achievements and awards you have in leadership.
 - Other Reasons**
 - List any other personal attributes, skills, and/or talents that you feel should be considered for financial aid. For example, community service, volunteerism, or other types of activities.
 - On-campus Employment**
 - Current U.S. immigration regulations allow international students to work up to 20 hours per week on campus while school is in session, and up to 40 hours per week during school vacations or breaks.
 - You will need to learn more about job opportunities and specific requirements for international students on your college or university campus. On average, students can earn between US\$2,000-\$3,000 per year for personal expenses.
 - Student Loan**
 - You might be able to find a loan to pay for part of your educational costs from a bank or lender in your home country. Some U.S. loans may be available, but they may have added requirements.
 - U.S. Government or Private Sponsor**
 - A very limited amount of funding is available from U.S. government sources to undergraduate students.
 - Sources in Your Country**
 - Funding may be available in your home country, either from the government, a university, or a private sponsor such as your employer or a private organization.



Which type of U.S. institution is best for you?

There are thousands of accredited colleges and universities in the United States.

As you begin to narrow down your choices, you should think about:

Type of Institution

Both 2- and 4-year institutions in the United States offer undergraduate students several options based on your individual needs.

- From this list, which type of institution interests you?

2-year Institution

Also known as community colleges, these institutions are for undergraduate students who want:

- An associate degree.
- Academic credit towards a bachelor's degree. Earning academic credit at a community college, which is usually less expensive, can help lower the overall cost of a bachelor's degree. Community colleges may also offer a more flexible admissions process.

4-year Institution

Undergraduate students at four-year colleges and universities may pursue:

- Short-term exchange.
- Bachelor's degree.
- Graduate level study after completing a bachelor's degree.

Both

- Think about both two-year and four-year institutions if you are looking for specific academic programs or financial assistance.

Selectivity

The selectivity of an institution is the total percentage of applicants who are accepted. This can vary depending on how competitive the applicants are. Some highly selective institutions accept less than 10% of applicants, and other less selective institutions accept more than 80% of applicants.

How competitive you are will often depend on your academic grades and test scores. Think about your secondary/high school performance and answer each question in this list.

High School Performance

How does your local school system measure academic performance in secondary/high school? This could be a grade point average (GPA*), percentile average, national test score, or other type of measure. * The combined average of a student's grades for all academic coursework completed. In the United States, high school grades are usually assigned in letters and are based on a 4.0 GPA scale.

Grade	GPA
A	4.0 (excellent)
B	3.0 (good)
C	2.0 (satisfactory)
D	1.0 (needs improvement)
F	0.0 (fail)



Undergraduate

Step 1 - Research Your Options

- How did you perform in secondary/high school based on this GPA measure?
 - Your performance was excellent.**
 - Your performance was good.**
 - Your performance was satisfactory.**
 - Your performance needed improvement.**
 - You did not perform well in school.**
- Which of the following standardized U.S. college or university admission tests have you taken?
 - SAT Reasoning Test** (www.sat.collegeboard.org/home) (or practice test) A primarily multiple-choice test of mathematics and English that is used for admission into an undergraduate program.
Score
 - SAT Subject Tests** (www.sat.collegeboard.org/about-tests/sat-subject-tests) (or practice test) A multiple-choice test that measures your knowledge in specific subject areas.
Score
 - ACT + Writing Test** (www.actstudent.org) (or practice test) Multiple-choice test of English, mathematics, reading, and science reasoning (plus an optional writing component) used for admission into undergraduate programs.
Score
 - TOEFL** (www.ets.org/toefl) Test of English as a Foreign Language—An English language proficiency examination of applicants whose native language is not English.
Score
 - IELTS** (www.ielts.org/) International English Language Testing System—An English language proficiency examination of applicants whose native language is not English.
Score
 - Other
Score

Size

The size of a college or university campus can impact many things, such as the number of students in a classroom, which courses or subjects are offered, the ease of meeting new friends, and the overall environment. Imagine yourself going to a small, medium, or large campus.

- Which of the following would be best for you?
 - Small (less than 2,000 students)**
 - Medium (2,000–15,000 students)**
 - Large (more than 15,000 students)**
 - No Preference**



The number of international students enrolled at the institution may be important to you as well. This number can vary between a low, medium, or high international-student population.

- Which of the following would be best for you?
 - Low international-student population**
 - Medium international-student population**
 - High international-student population**

Public and Private Institutions

The U.S. government does not own or operate academic institutions. Instead, you have the option to choose between state- or privately-operated institutions. Some of the best colleges and universities in the U.S. are state-operated, and some are private.

- Do you prefer to study at a public institution, a private institution, or do you not have a preference?
 - Public**
 - In the United States, each of the 50 states operates public institutions that are funded in part by people who live in that state and pay taxes. More than 650 public four-year and more than 1,100 public two-year institutions are in the United States.
 - Public state-run institutions usually have lower tuition and fees, but financial assistance may be more limited.
 - Private**
 - Private institutions operate as not-for-profit or for-profit. More than 2,000 four-year and more than 1,000 two-year institutions are privately owned and operated in the United States.
 - Private institutions have, on average, higher tuition and fees, but more financial assistance may be available.
 - No preference**
 - If you are looking for specific academic programs or financial assistance, you may have to choose between public or private institutions.
 - If you are not looking for specific academic programs or financial assistance, you may want to think about both public and private institutions.



Undergraduate

Step 1 - Research Your Options

Other Types of Institutions

U.S. colleges and universities may also be known for other reasons, such as having a special subject focus like science or art, a religious affiliation, or an all-male or all-female campus.

- Are you looking for a U.S. college or university with a specific characteristic that is important to you?

Yes:
Explain

No

How easily will you adjust to your new community and environment?

The United States is a very diverse country, offering a variety of climates, cultural heritage, and landscapes from coast to coast. Imagine yourself studying in the United States and think about the environment you want.

As you imagine the environment you want, you should think about:

Region

The United States is often divided into four distinct regions. Refer to the map below to see the different regions.

- Which region would be best for you?

West

- The largest region of the United States covering more than half its land area, making it the most geographically diverse area. It is known for mild and damp climates to very dry and hot ones, with greater access to mountain ranges, desert areas, forests, and the Pacific coastline.

Midwest

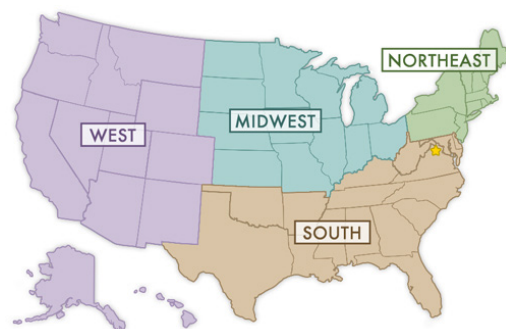
- Also called “Middle America,” it is known for low-lying plains, small hills, and access to large freshwater lakes bordering Canada. Seasonal climate change, ranging from mild summers to cold winters with heavy snowfall, is also common in the Midwestern states.

South

- A region known for its sub-tropical climate with humid summers and mild winters. Southern states have diverse landscapes, including mountains, wetlands, arid deserts, and the Gulf of Mexico coastline.

Northeast

- Comprised of the New England and Middle Atlantic states, this region is known for its forested interior and rocky Atlantic coastline. Seasonal climate change, ranging from mild summers to cold winters with heavy snowfall, is also common in the Northeastern states.





Undergraduate

Step 1 - Research Your Options

Setting

Virtually every U.S. state includes a setting that can range from an urban city, suburban residential area, or a rural countryside. U.S. colleges and universities may be located in any one of these settings.

- Which setting would be best for you?

Urban

- Cities with larger populations providing convenient access to banking, stores, the arts, entertainment, public transportation, and international airports. Urban areas may have higher average living costs.

Suburban

- Residential areas close or farther from cities, with moderate populations and more spread-out restaurants and shopping areas. Suburban areas may have more moderate average living costs.

Rural

- Countryside areas with smaller towns of fewer people and areas of land used for mining and agriculture. Rural areas may have lower average living costs.

Housing

The type of housing you choose will depend on your personal needs and the options available.

- Which housing option is best for you?

On-campus Housing

Residence Halls and Dormitories

- Furnished with basic needs such as a bed, closet, desk, and chair. Rooms are usually shared with other students and can be a great place to meet new friends quickly.
- Some dormitories may be for men only or women only, and some may allow both men and women in the same dormitory residence.

Married Student Housing

- Demand for housing for married couples is usually high, so you should ask about this as early as possible.

Off-campus Housing

Apartments

- The student finds his/her own apartment and typically pays a deposit, monthly rent, and utility fees.
- 'Co-op' Housing

- Co-ops are usually large houses where a group of students live together, sharing the costs and taking turns to do the cooking and cleaning.

American Host Family

- Living with an American family can be an enriching experience and can be less expensive than other off-campus housing options.
- Host family options may not be available at all colleges or universities, so it is important to check with the campus adviser if you are interested.



Campus Life

Activities available in the local area may also be an important part of your U.S. experience. Will you be in a location that offers activities that interest you?

- Which activities will you want to be able to access?

Sports

Which ones?

Arts

Which ones?

Clubs and organizations

Which ones?

Hobbies

Which ones?

Other



Undergraduate

Step 1 - Research Your Options

12 - 18 months prior to U.S. study:



Research and Narrow Your Choices



After you define your priorities and identify the factors most important to you, use other resources to narrow down your choices.

Refer to college and university websites. Almost every college and university in the United States has a website with detailed information about degree programs, application procedures, academic departments, on-campus facilities, and other topics. Often, you can also find a copy of the course catalog to read online or download to read later.



"E-mail students from your home country and find out about their experiences at a particular school."

- Computer Science Student from Russia

Use search engines. Independent websites allow you to search for institutions by the subject you are interested in studying, by geographic preference, or by a range of other criteria that you specify.

- National Center for Education Statistics—College Navigator
- College Board—College Search
- CollegeNET—College Search
- CollegeSource® Online
- National Association for College Admission Counseling—International Student Resources
- Peterson's College Search
- The Princeton Review
- ThinkEducationUSA
- Hot Courses Abroad
- Cappex
- American Association of Community Colleges—Community College Finder
- Center for Global Advancement of Community Colleges

Attend educational fairs. If you cannot visit the United States, colleges and universities may come to visit you. Talk to an EducationUSA Adviser to learn about upcoming higher education fairs or other opportunities for you to meet with admissions officers face-to-face.

Visit your nearest EducationUSA Advising Center.

EducationUSA Advisers work in more than 400 advising centers in 170 countries. Contact an adviser today to learn more about how to access educational opportunities in the United States.

GOOD TO KNOW

Start your research early—many of these educational fairs take place in the spring or fall of the year before you intend to begin your studies.





12 - 18 months prior to U.S. study:



How are U.S. degrees recognized in my country?

A U.S. degree is highly valued in many countries. However, in some countries, particularly those with educational systems that are very different from the United States, U.S. graduate degrees may not be officially recognized or they may be recognized at a different level. Seek guidance from your nearest EducationUSA Advising Center or with the ministry of education or other appropriate authority before you begin your applications.

U.S. higher education is different from many other systems around the world as it is not subject to a central government authority and institutions are free to design curriculum. Regional and national accreditation is given to U.S. colleges and universities to ensure institutional standards. If the school you attend is not properly accredited, you may find that your degree is not recognized in the United States or other countries, or by other universities, professional associations, employ and government ministries and departments. To verify that an institution is properly accredited, visit the [Council on Higher Education Accreditation \(www.chea.org/\)](http://www.chea.org/).



EdUSA Connects Session – *The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)*

Watch Now - <http://bit.ly/pONsQV> >>



EdUSA Connects Session – *Types of Accreditation: What's the Difference?*

Watch Now - <http://bit.ly/ral7xq> >>



EdUSA Connects Session – *Degree Mills and Accreditation Mills*

Watch Now - <http://bit.ly/q9BQzC> >>

Accreditation: Approval by nationally recognized professional associations or regional accrediting bodies.



12 - 18 months prior to U.S. study:



Identify Types and Sources of Financial Aid

What is the difference between a scholarship and financial aid?

- A scholarship is a grant of funding, which may take the form of a waiver of tuition and/or fees. This **merit-based aid** is based on your achievement in a particular area; for example, outstanding academic performance, special talent in sports or performing arts, community service or leadership. Are you student athlete who wants to know more about athletic scholarships?
- Financial aid is a general term that includes all types of funding, loans, and work/study programs offered to a student to help pay tuition, fees, and living expenses. This **need-based aid** is based on the student's financial need, as documented by family income, assets, and other factors.

GOOD TO KNOW

Work with an EducationUSA Adviser early in your financial planning process to ensure you have a strong application.

Can you get a job on campus to help cover educational expenses?

Current U.S. immigration regulations allow international students to work up to 20 hours per week on campus during their first year of study. On-campus jobs may include working at the cafeteria, bookstore, library or health club, or within the institution's administrative offices.

GOOD TO KNOW

You will likely not earn enough at a campus job to pay your major expenses, such as tuition or housing. However, by working 10 to 15 hours a week you could earn enough to pay for books, clothing, and personal expenses. This income also cannot be used as a source of income for any official financial statements.

After your first year of study, you can apply for employment as a resident assistant (RA) in an on-campus dormitory. An RA serves as the first point of contact for students who need assistance or have questions about campus life. In return, RAs receive free accommodation and sometimes a small salary and/or meal plan.

Under current U.S. regulations, after your first year of study, you may apply for permission to work off campus for up to 20 hours a week. You should note, however, that there is no guarantee that this request will be granted.

GOOD TO KNOW

You should always check with your international student adviser before considering any form of employment.



"Getting an on-campus job is one way to pay for part of your expenses."

- Student from El Salvador



12 - 18 months prior to U.S. study:



Where Can You Find More Information about Financial Aid Opportunities?

General funding resources

- IIE Funding for US Study Online
- EducationUSA Financial Aid
- International Scholarships.com
- Scholarship Help

Loans for international students

- Global Student Loan Corporation
- International Student Loan.com
- Access Group

Undergraduate funding

- International Education Financial Aid

Undergraduate merit scholarships

- Guaranteed Scholarships
- MeritAid.com

Sports scholarships

- National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)
- NCAA Clearinghouse
- NCAA Eligibility Center
- National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA)
- National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA)
- College Coaches Online
- beRecruited



Because of my scholarship, I can focus on my studies and career goals, not how I will pay for school."

- Undergraduate student from Ecuador



Undergraduate

Step 1 - Research Your Options

12 - 18 months prior to U.S. study:



Make a Short List of Your Top Choices



How many institutions should you consider?

- If you have an idea of exactly which colleges or universities you will be applying to, visit the websites of only those institutions to learn more.
- You may choose to find information for 10 to 20 colleges or universities that meet your needs. Then narrow down your list once you have conducted additional research about each one.

GOOD TO KNOW

Most students only apply to between three and seven institutions because of the work and cost involved in submitting a good application.

How do you find out more information about a particular institution?

- **Check college and university websites.** Many U.S. colleges and universities have their course catalogs online.
- **Use local resources.** Contact your nearest EducationUSA Advising Center and ask for help with your search. An EducationUSA Adviser may also be able to put you in touch with alumni from your schools of interest.
- **Do additional homework.** Use social media and take virtual tours of U.S. campuses to learn even more. If possible, visit the campus in person to get the best sense of the atmosphere and setting.
- **Send an email.** You should only contact admissions representatives directly to ask specific questions that are not addressed on the institution's website.



"A visit to the school you are considering helps a lot—whether during an exchange year, a vacation trip, or a sports contest."

- Theater performance student from Finland

GOOD TO KNOW

Start looking at individual college or university websites approximately 12 months before you plan to enroll.

Be sure to ask specific questions, and don't ask anything that you can read on the institution's website.



Undergraduate

Step 1 - Research Your Options

12 - 18 months prior to U.S. study:



Prepare for Standardized Tests

As part of the application process, most undergraduate programs require one or more U.S. standardized test scores. Your test scores, academic record, and other factors are used to predict how well you will do as a university student. The test scores are one way to compare students from the United States and international students from different educational systems.



"Be sure you are well prepared for the standardized tests you need to take."

- Fine arts student from China

GOOD TO KNOW

Standardized test scores are only one part of the application—good test scores alone do not guarantee you admission. Not all U.S. colleges and universities require that international students take standardized tests. Make your plan, select your institutions, and find out which tests are required.

English Language Ability Tests

- Being able to communicate in English is a basic requirement for successful study in the United States. If English is not your native language, U.S. colleges and universities will ask you to take an English language proficiency test before admission.
- The most common tests for English language ability are the Test of English as a Foreign Language (**TOEFL**), the International English Language Testing System (**IELTS**) and the Pearson Test of English (**PTE**) Academic.

Admissions Tests

- Three main tests play a role in the admissions review— the **SAT Reasoning Test**, **SAT Subject Tests**, and the **ACT**.
- Most colleges and universities in the United States require the SAT or ACT for admissions. Remember, application requirements vary, so be sure to confirm which test(s) you must take with the institutions to which you plan to apply.

TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language—An English language proficiency examination of applicants whose native language is not English.

IELTS: International English Language Testing System—An English language proficiency examination of applicants whose native language is not English.

PTE: Pearson Test of English Academic—An English language proficiency examination that measures English ability through tasks that reflect real-life settings.

SAT Reasoning Test: A primarily multiple-choice test of mathematics and English that is used for admission into an undergraduate program.

SAT Subject Tests: A multiple-choice test that measures your knowledge in specific subject areas.

ACT: Multiple-choice test of English, mathematics, reading, and science reasoning (plus an optional writing component) used for admission into undergraduate programs.



Undergraduate

Step 1 - Research Your Options

12 - 18 months prior to U.S. study:



English Language Ability Tests

Being able to communicate in English is a basic requirement for successful study in the United States. If English is not your native language, U.S. colleges and universities will ask you to take an English language proficiency test before admission.

Individuals with disabilities can learn about requesting disability-related accommodations for English proficiency tests by visiting Mobility International USA.

If you are a non-U.S. citizen and non-native speaker of English who has been educated in English for most of your school life, English language testing requirements may be waived. This decision is made by the college or university admissions office, and is usually stated on the international admissions section of the website.

GOOD TO KNOW

You may be granted conditional acceptance with the understanding that you will attend English language classes at the institution before beginning your degree program.

GOOD TO KNOW

Allow time in the application process to communicate with institutions in the United States about this issue. U.S. colleges and universities are unlikely to accept secondary/high school English language examination results as proof of your language ability.

The most common tests for English language ability are the:

- Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)
- International English Language Testing System (IELTS)
- Pearson Test of English (PTE) Academic.



EdUSA Connects Session – TOEFL

Watch Now - <http://bcove.me/opogbv3v> >>



EdUSA Connects Session – IELTS

Watch Now - <http://bcove.me/2hjgwem8> >>



EdUSA Connects Session – PTE Academic

Watch Now - <http://bcove.me/hqplj35v> >>





12 - 18 months prior to U.S. study:



English Language Ability Tests

TOEFL	PTE Academic	IELTS
<p>The TOEFL measures the ability of non- native English speakers to communicate in an academic setting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The TOEFL internet-based test (iBT) has four sections: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. • The paper-based TOEFL (TOEFL PBT) provides testing in areas where the TOEFL iBT is not available. It does not include a speaking section. • For more information about the TOEFL, visit the TOEFL website or contact your nearest EducationUSA Advising Center. 	<p>The PTE Academic is a computer-based English proficiency test that measures the test takers’ language ability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The test is designed for non-native English speakers who wish to study in an institution where English is the primary language of instruction. • For more information about the PTE Academic, visit the PTE Academic website. 	<p>The IELTS is a paper-based test that measures English language ability in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reading and writing portions are available in two versions: <i>Academic</i>, for students interested in entering higher education programs or pursuing a license in the healthcare professions. The “academic” version is the one that most international students who want to study at the undergraduate or graduate level will take. <i>General Training</i>, for test takers who need to use English daily for functional activities, secondary education, vocational training, work purposes, or immigration. • The listening and speaking modules are the same in both versions. • For more information about the IELTS, visit the IELTS website.



Undergraduate

Step 1 - Research Your Options

12 - 18 months prior to U.S. study:



Admissions Tests

Three main tests play a role in the admissions review— the SAT Reasoning Test, SAT Subject Tests, and the ACT.

Most colleges and universities in the United States require the SAT or ACT for admissions. Remember, application requirements vary, so be sure to confirm which test(s) you must take with the institutions to which you plan to apply.

For more information about:

- **The SAT**, full-length practice tests, and sample questions, visit the SAT website.
- **The SAT Subject Tests**, including free practice questions, visit the SAT Subject Test website.
- **The ACT** and free test preparation materials, visit the ACT website.

Or contact your nearest EducationUSA Advising Center.

GOOD TO KNOW

The National Center for Fair and Open Testing (FairTest) lists four-year colleges and universities that place less emphasis on standardized tests for admissions decisions.



EdUSA Connects Session – SAT
Watch Now - <http://bcove.me/8bbvl5ex> >>



EdUSA Connects Session – ACT
Watch Now - <http://bcove.me/1g0r4wio> >>

GOOD TO KNOW

Be sure to check with the institutions to which you are applying to see if they require the ACT writing section.

Which test is right for you?

First, find out which test is required by the schools where you plan to apply. If both the SAT and ACT are accepted, you can choose which test to take. Take an SAT practice test and an ACT practice test, and compare your scores using this table. Then, you can make plans to take the test that you will score best on.

GOOD TO KNOW

Most college and university catalogs and admission materials quote average scaled scores for each institution.

Also think about:

- What are your best subjects? Students stronger in science and math may benefit from taking the ACT because it tests science reasoning and trigonometry.
- What format do you prefer? The SAT has shorter, more varied sections, and the ACT has longer sections.
- What is the availability and location of testing centers?
- What testing dates are available?





12 - 18 months prior to U.S. study:



Admissions Tests

SAT Reasoning Test	SAT Subject Test	ACT
<p>The SAT Reasoning Test is a multiple-choice test that measures your critical reading, writing, and mathematical abilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SAT is divided into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A reading section that includes reading passages and sentence completions. A writing section that includes a short essay and multiple-choice questions on identifying errors and improving grammar and usage. A math section that includes questions on arithmetic operations, algebra, geometry, statistics, and probability. Each of the three sections is scored on a scale from 200 to 800. The highest possible combined score on the SAT is 2400. 	<p>SAT Subject Tests are multiple-choice tests that measure your knowledge in specific subject areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SAT Subject Tests currently offered are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English: Literature History: U.S. History and World History Mathematics: Level 1 and Level 2 Science: Biology, Chemistry, Physics Languages: French, German, Spanish, Modern Hebrew, Italian, Latin, Chinese, Japanese, Korean The SAT Subject Tests are also scored on a 200-800 scale. 	<p>The ACT is a curriculum-based multiple-choice test that measures knowledge on subjects typically taught in U.S. high schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ACT measures student achievement in English, math, reading, and science reasoning, and also has an optional writing section. Students receive a “raw score”—the total number of correct responses—for each of the four subject areas. That number is converted into a “scaled score” from 1 to 36. Then, the scaled scores are added together and divided by four to calculate a “composite score.” Overall composite scores range from 1 to 36.

GOOD TO KNOW

Register early and plan to take your admissions tests at least 12 months prior to the date you plan to begin your studies in the United States.



Notes



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2 Complete Your Application

Education Just Ahead

UNDERGRADUATE

6 - 12 months prior to U.S. study:



Plan Ahead!

Plan adequately for the time and effort involved in preparing your application package.

"Don't be afraid to pour your heart out—if something is really important to you, talk about it in your essay, because that is what admissions officers want to know about you."

- Molecular biology student from Romania



Know the Application Requirements

Application packages require a great deal of preparation and planning. You will benefit by starting this process and applying early.



EdUSA Connects Session –
Apply & Be Admitted: Undergraduate Study
Watch Now - <http://bcove.me/g357uaf6> >>

In the United States, application requirements can vary greatly from one institution to another. It is very important to check the specific requirements on the website of each institution's international admissions office.

What are some general application requirements?

- **Educational credentials.** This is typically your secondary/high school diploma and **transcripts**, as well as any final national exams required in your country.
- **Standardized test scores.** Scores may be required to assess your academic ability and English proficiency level.
- **Recommendation letters.** The head or principal of your school, your school counselor, your personal tutor, teachers, sponsors from extracurricular activities, coaches, or supervisors from professional experiences may write recommendation letters. Your recommenders must be able to write about your work and be able to assess your potential to do well pursuing a higher education degree. Be sure to choose someone who knows you well. View a sample recommendation letter.
- **Essay.** This is your chance to write about your interests and strengths. It is often considered one of most important aspects of your application.

GOOD TO KNOW

An original transcript or certified copy sent by your secondary/high school is required for each institution.



EdUSA Connects Session –
Writing Your Personal Statement
Watch Now - <http://bcove.me/88u3e7e0> >>

Transcripts: A certified copy of a student's educational record.



Undergraduate

Step 2 - Complete Your Application

6 - 12 months prior to U.S. study:



Plan Your Application Timeline

12 months prior to enrollment, complete the following (months indicated are estimates, based on enrollment in August/fall semester):

August

- Look online for application and financial aid forms and college or university catalogs.

September—December

- Request official transcripts of your academic performance.
- Request letters of recommendation.
- Submit completed application forms (for admission and financial aid, as necessary).
- Take the necessary standardized tests and send official score reports to each institution.
- Confirm that transcripts and references have been sent and received.

GOOD TO KNOW

Applications are available online. If there is an online application, use it. Several U.S. colleges and universities also use the Common Application for undergraduate admissions.

January—April

- Confirm that all applications are complete and all deadlines are met.

April—May

- Receive letters of acceptance or rejection and financial aid decisions. Decide which college or university to attend, notify the admissions office of your decision, and complete and return any required forms.
- Send letters of regret to those colleges or universities you decline.
- Organize finances and show proof of funds for your first year of study so that the international student office's designated school official (DSO) can prepare your immigration form.
- Finalize arrangements for housing and medical insurance.
- Receive required immigration forms from your college or university to apply for your student visa.

GOOD TO KNOW

Make sure you have funds for travel and expenses on arrival.

May—August

- Apply for your student visa
- Make travel arrangements.
- Contact the international student office at your college or university with details of your arrival plans. Confirm details of new student orientation.

GOOD TO KNOW

This should be as far in advance of your departure date as possible. Make your interview appointment as soon as you get the visa application form from your U.S. institution.





Undergraduate

Step 2 - Complete Your Application

6 - 12 months prior to U.S. study:



Mark Your Calendar for Admissions Options

Do you know the options and timelines for the college and university admissions process?

Early Decision	October-December , prior to upcoming fall semester If admitted, a commitment is required.
Early Action	October-December , prior to upcoming fall semester If admitted, no commitment required.
Regular Deadline	December-February , prior to upcoming fall semester If admitted, no commitment required.
Rolling Admissions	Applications are accepted at any time before the start of classes for a particular semester, but students should apply as early as possible.

Learn about Credit Transfer

The U.S. higher education system allows students to transfer between institutions midway through a degree. It is also possible to transfer from a non-U.S. institution to a U.S. institution. The flexibility of the credit system at U.S. colleges and universities allows credits earned at one institution to be recognized by another, if certain criteria are met.

GOOD TO KNOW

In general, most transfer students are in their sophomore (second) or junior (third) year when they arrive at a new college or university.

Most colleges and universities prefer students to have completed one year of study before they enroll at the new institution, but this requirement varies. Most universities also have a one- to two-year residency requirement prior to graduation. This means that you must spend at least one to two years studying at that institution in order to graduate and receive its degree.

GOOD TO KNOW

Depending on the institution's policy, you could earn between 3 and 12 credits with a satisfactory score on your CLEP exam. To learn more, download a free study guide, or register for an exam, visit the CLEP website.

Take Advantage of Credit by Examination

The College-Level Examination Program® (CLEP) gives you the opportunity to save up to an academic year of study by earning college or university credit for work you have already done—thus saving time and money! Colleges and universities in the United States have varying CLEP policies, so be sure to find out if the institutions where you plan to apply offer credit for satisfactory CLEP exams.



Notes



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UNDERGRADUATE

3 - 9 months prior to U.S. study:

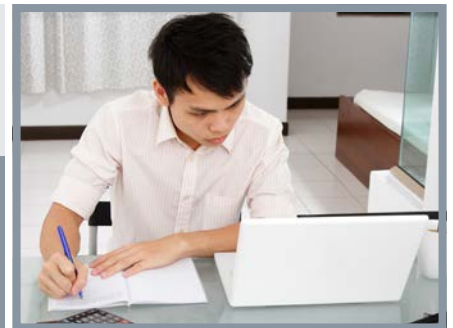


Invest in Yourself!

The cost of living and studying varies across the United States. With the right amount of planning and research, it can be made affordable with high returns on your investment.

"If you are doing well academically and have good grades, think about applying for an international student scholarship."

- Student from Morocco



EXPLORE THE MANY OPTIONS



EdUSA Connects Session –

Finance Your Studies: Undergraduate

Watch Now - <http://bcove.me/uwkzy7q0> >>

Finance Your Studies

It is important to start your financial planning as early as possible. Each year international students receive significant amounts of financial assistance toward their studies. Applications for financial aid go together with applications for admission.

GOOD TO KNOW

Each year, hundreds of thousands of international students enter the United States to pursue higher education. Many of these students receive significant amounts of financial aid from U.S. colleges, universities, and other sources.



3 - 9 months prior to U.S. study:



Make Your Budget



As you work to develop a budget for your studies, keep in mind that your overall costs are comprised of **tuition**, **fees**, and **living expenses**.

How much should you budget?

Your actual costs will depend on your institution and program. Refer to the institution's website for specific costs. When budgeting, you should estimate that tuition costs increase 6-10% each year.

GOOD TO KNOW

Location matters! Depending on where you live and study, costs for housing and food vary greatly in the United States. Suburban or rural areas in the South and Midwest of the United States generally have the lowest cost of living.

How can an EducationUSA Adviser help you plan your expenses?

- Advisers can help you distinguish yourself in a highly competitive applicant pool so that you have a better chance of competing for admission with financial aid.
- Advisers have access to resources that help you learn about scholarships and new programs.
- Advisers share unbiased information about financial aid opportunities.

Tuition: The money an institution charges for instruction and training (does not include the cost of books).

Fees: An amount charged by colleges and universities, in addition to tuition, to cover costs of institutional services.

Living Expenses: Expenses such as housing and meals, books and supplies, transportation, personal expenses, health insurance, etc.



3 - 9 months prior to U.S. study:



Where Can You Find More Information about Financial Aid Opportunities?

General funding resources

- IIE Funding for US Study Online
- EducationUSA Financial Aid
- International Scholarships.com
- Scholarship Help

Loans for international students

- Global Student Loan Corporation
- International Student Loan.com
- Access Group

Undergraduate funding

- International Education Financial Aid

Undergraduate merit scholarships

- Guaranteed Scholarships
- MeritAid.com

Sports scholarships

- National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)
- NCAA Clearinghouse
- NCAA Eligibility Center
- National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA)
- National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA)
- College Coaches Online
- beRecruited





3 - 9 months prior to U.S. study:



Reduce Educational Costs

Assess Personal Funds

As you begin developing your budget, ask yourself this question: How much money can your family afford to pay for your education each year for four years? You cannot qualify for need-based financial aid until you know the answer to this question, because financial aid amounts are based on differences between the college or university cost and what your family can afford.

GOOD TO KNOW

Though some undergraduate international students receive financial aid, the majority rely on personal and family funds to pay for their U.S. education.

Try to raise as much money as you can from family sources. Most scholarship awards, if available, cover only part of the total educational and living costs and may not be available to first-year international students.



Develop your budget early in the application process and find creative ways to reduce costs—you could be one of the hundreds of thousands of international students who are able to afford higher education study in the United States.

How can you reduce your educational costs?

- **Find best buys.** Look for colleges and universities that offer you the highest quality education at the lowest cost, such as state universities.
- **Think about your location.** Apply to colleges or universities in areas of the United States that have a lower cost of living, such as in the South or the Midwest.
- **Take advantage of accelerated programs.** Completing a four-year bachelor's degree in three years saves thousands of dollars. Accelerate your program by:
 - Earning credit for college-level studies completed in your country.
 - Taking courses at a nearby community college if tuition is lower and credits are transferable.
 - Attending classes or completing online courses during the summer, if available.
 - Taking one additional course each semester.
- **Work hard for tuition waivers.** Based on your first-year grades, some colleges and universities award partial tuition waivers. A superior academic record could save you thousands of dollars.
- **Don't forget about community colleges.** Many students save thousands of dollars in tuition by attending community colleges for their first two years and then transferring to four-year institutions to complete their degrees.

4 Apply for Your Student Visa



3 - 5 months prior to U.S. study:



Be Prepared for the Student Visa Process!

Become familiar with the student visa requirements in your country and allow plenty of time to prepare your application.

"Because interviews are short, do your best to explain why you want to study in the United States, how you plan to support yourself while in school, and what your plans are for when your studies are finished."

- Vice Consul, U.S. Consulate Monterrey, Mexico



EdUSA Connects Session –
International Students Demystify the Visa Process
Watch Now - <http://bcove.me/9qcywo3s> >>

Did you know that the U.S. Department of State issues student and exchange visitor visas at a worldwide acceptance rate of about 85%? You will first need to receive an admission letter and a certificate of eligibility for nonimmigrant student status from your U.S. institution before you can begin the visa application process.

GOOD TO KNOW

Information about the student visa process is accurate as of print date and is subject to change. Visit www.travel.state.gov for more information, or consult your nearest U.S. embassy/consulate or EducationUSA Advising Center.

Identify Student Visa Types

The U.S. Department of State issues visas in U.S. embassies and consulates abroad.

- A visa **does not** guarantee entry into the United States.
- A visa **does** allow a foreign citizen to travel to a U.S. port-of-entry and request permission from a U.S. immigration officer to enter the United States.



3 - 5 months prior to U.S. study:



What are the different types of visas for non-U.S. citizens who study in the United States?

- **F-1 Student Visa.** The most common visa for those who want to study in the United States. It is for individuals who want to study at an accredited U.S. college or university or study English at a university or intensive English language institute.
- **J-1 Exchange Visa.** This visa is for people who will be participating in an exchange program, including those programs that provide high school and university study.
- **M-1 Student Visa.** This visa is for those who will be engaged in non-academic or vocational study or training in the United States.

GOOD TO KNOW

Is your spouse, or child under the age of 21, joining you in the United States? Learn more about the F-2 visa, J-2 visa, and M-2 visa.





Undergraduate

Step 4 - Apply for Your Student Visa

3 - 5 months prior to U.S. study:



Follow the Step-by-Step Visa Application Process

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is a program within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that manages the **Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)** (www.ice.gov/sevis/). SEVIS is the internet-based system that maintains records of foreign students and exchange visitors before and during their stays in the United States.

STEP 1: Receive your certificate of eligibility for nonimmigrant student status: either Form I-20 (for F or M visa) or Form DS-2019 (for J visa).

- To apply for a visa, you must first have received a Form I-20 or Form DS-2019. The U.S. academic institution or program sponsor will provide you with the appropriate form only after you have:
 - Been admitted to a SEVP-approved institution or accepted in an exchange program.
 - Provided evidence that you can meet all the costs of the program.
- The academic institutions that admit you will send you a Form I-20 (for F or M visa) or Form DS-2019 (for J-visa) depending on the visa that matches your study status.

GOOD TO KNOW

Once you receive the required documentation, you can make an appointment with the U.S. embassy or consulate to apply for a visa. Even if you do not intend to begin your program for several months, it is best to apply as early as possible. Your visa can be issued up to 120 days before your arrival in the United States.

STEP 2: Pay SEVIS fee

- You must pay a SEVIS fee and fill out other visa applications forms prior to your visa interview. Go to the **SEVIS I-901 fee processing website** (www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.jsp) for complete information about paying your SEVIS fee. Follow the instructions carefully. For more information, you may also visit the Study in the States website for students.

STEP 3: Schedule Your Interview and Apply for Your Visa

- Refer to the **U.S. nonimmigrant visa website** (<https://ceac.state.gov/GENNIV/>) to complete the required application forms.
- It is best practice to ensure your passport is valid for at least six months beyond the end of your study in the United States and that your name is spelled correctly and appears the same on all documents.
- Be sure to have your Form I-20 or Form DS-2019 and your SEVIS receipt.
- Confirm you have the required documents and schedule your visa interview following the instructions on the website of your nearest U.S. embassy or consulate (www.usembassy.gov).
- During the interview, be prepared to answer questions regarding ties to your home country, your English language skills, your academic background, the program in the United States to which you have been admitted, and proof of your financial ability. **Consult an EducationUSA adviser who can help you to understand visa requirements, prepare for your interview, or answer other questions about the student visa process. Your answers to the questions asked in Step 1: Research Your Options will also help you prepare for your visa interview.**

GOOD TO KNOW

Any inconsistencies can delay the issuance of your visa.

Visa interview scheduling is done online or by phone at most U.S. embassies and consulates.



3 - 5 months prior to U.S. study:



Learn about Visa Considerations for Students with Disabilities



Students with disabilities who require personal assistance should refer to **International Participants with Disabilities and Community Resources** (www.miusa.org/ncde/tipsheets/communityresources) for more information. It is also important for students with disabilities to **learn more about finding a health insurance policy** (www.miusa.org/ncde/tipsheets/insurance) with enough coverage for their time in the United States. Individuals who may need to return to their home countries periodically for medical care should be aware of program and visa requirements regarding leaving and reentering the United States.

Remember, individuals who enter the United States on a student visa must maintain a full course load. U.S. disability laws sometimes provide accommodations to students with chronic illnesses or other disabilities that allow them to take a reduced course load due to random or recurring health episodes. However, international students are only allowed a total of 12 months of less than full-time status for illness or medical conditions.

GOOD TO KNOW

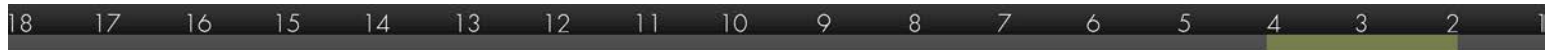
Individuals with disabilities can petition for an extension, but the process can take several months to complete and entails a fee.

5 Prepare for Your Departure



UNDERGRADUATE

2 - 4 months prior to U.S. study:



The Journey of a Lifetime!

Studying in the United States is a memorable and rewarding experience—congratulations on taking this exciting step towards your future!

“Find out about airline and immigration policies and procedures so you do not panic if something strange happens—luggage, passports, what you can and what you cannot bring. It’s always better to know everything beforehand.”

- Computer Science student from Brazil



**EdUSA Connects Session –
Pre-Departure Orientation**

Watch Now - <http://bcove.me/5xmcpef8> >>



In planning your move to the United States, you may want to ask for assistance from an EducationUSA Advising Center in your home country and from the international student adviser at your chosen U.S. college or university.

Attend Pre-departure Orientation

Pre-departure orientations are offered by EducationUSA Advising Centers to students making final preparations to depart for their studies in the United States.

EducationUSA Advisers and students who have returned from the United States provide information and resources that will help prepare you for new experiences and skills to adjust to new challenges. Topics discussed include cultural differences, motivation, changes from your home environment, academic systems and expectations, housing, and coping in a new cultural setting.



2 - 4 months prior to U.S. study:



Gather Pre-departure Materials and Important Documents

Before you leave your home country, take the time to double-check that you have gathered all the documents you will need for your travel and stay in the United States.



- **Passport and nonimmigrant visa.** Hand-carry your passport and certificate of eligibility (I-20 or DS-2019) with you at all times during your travel. On the plane before you land, you will complete the Arrival-Departure Record (I-94 form) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection will take your biometric fingerprints and photograph. Part of the I-94 will be stapled into your passport. **Do not lose it!** The stapled portion will be removed when you leave the United States.
- **Certificate of eligibility.** Confirm you have the I-20 or DS-2019 issued by the school or program you will be attending.
- **Contact information.** Have the name and phone number of your international student adviser on campus, in case you need to call him/her upon arrival in the United States.

- **Birth certificate and marriage certificate,** if applicable. Be sure to obtain notarized translations of these certificates if they are not in English.
- **Medical documents.** Bring certificates of immunizations and vaccinations, prescriptions and medical and dental records.
- **Academic transcripts.** Bring your official transcripts, outlines, or descriptions of courses you have taken, and contact information for your U.S. campus.
- **College or university acceptance letter.**

GOOD TO KNOW

Many U.S. colleges and universities have specific immunization requirements you must meet before you can enroll in class. Keep track of your immunizations using the standard International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis, or "yellow card," issued by the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](http://www.who.int/ith/en/) (<http://www.who.int/ith/en/>.)



2 - 4 months prior to U.S. study:



Make Travel Arrangements and Depart for the United States

Before you make travel arrangements, confirm with your international student adviser when you are expected to arrive on campus.

GOOD TO KNOW

You should not make your travel reservations until you have received your U.S. visa. You are not allowed to enter the United States earlier than 30 days prior to the beginning date on your I-20 or DS-2019.

Be sure you know how to get from the airport to your college or university.

Arrive On Campus

Once you arrive on campus, you should report to the office responsible for assisting international students. It is helpful to bring your passport and other immigration documents with you on your first visit.

GOOD TO KNOW

Your international student adviser is your friend! Keep in close touch with this person during your university experience to help you with visa issues, adjustment to life in the United States, and anything else you may need.

Ask your international student adviser for specific information regarding health insurance at the college or university you will be attending. Nearly all international students purchase health insurance through their universities.

Students with disabilities can refer to Mobility International USA for more information about community resources in the United States.



Additionally, you will need to make plans to:

- **Obtain health insurance.** This insurance provides coverage for medical care. The United States does not have a government medical plan of health care service that covers the whole population. Most people have private health insurance.
- **Attend on-campus orientation.** All colleges and universities in the United States offer new student orientation programs that ease your transition to a new place.

Orientation programs give you a chance to meet other students, receive information about immigration regulations, learn about your institution's expectations, get to know the campus and community, speak with professors and academic advisers, and register for courses.



Undergraduate

Step 5 - Prepare for Your Departure

2 - 4 months prior to U.S. study:



For a brief glimpse of U.S. campus life, refer to:



EdUSA Connects Session – Pre-Departure Orientation

Watch Now - <http://bcove.me/k9edhvj0> >>



EdUSA Connects Session – Campus Life: Community Colleges

Watch Now - <http://bcove.me/lyr17zoi> >>



EdUSA Connects Session – Campus Life: Liberal Arts Colleges

Watch Now - <http://bcove.me/dta6w7jc> >>



EdUSA Connects Session – Campus Life: Large University

Watch Now - <http://bcove.me/r9tnrax> >>



“Your on-campus orientation gives you the chance to meet many new students and make new friends. You will realize you are not alone.”

- Student from India

Move into your housing. Most U.S. colleges and universities give students the option to live in residence halls or dormitories (“dorms”). This is a great environment to meet U.S. students and make new friends rapidly. Depending on the regulations at your institution and your budget, you may be able to live off-campus. One option to explore is living with a family in the community.



“Before I left for the United States, I knew that as a first-year student I would have to live in the university dormitory in a shared room. At first it was strange to share my room with another person, but I soon got used to it. My roommate and I eventually became good friends.”

- Student from Sweden

GOOD TO KNOW

On-campus housing may be in great demand. Apply early.

If you decide to live in off-campus housing, talk to the housing office on your campus for guidance regarding your options.

A large, stylized red star with a thick dark blue outline is centered on the page. The star has five points and is set against a white background. The word "GLOSSARY" is written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the red star.

GLOSSARY



Glossary

academic adviser (AA): A member of a college faculty who helps and advises students solely on academic matters.

academic year: The period of formal instruction, usually September to May; may be divided into terms of varying lengths—semesters, trimesters, or quarters.

accreditation: Approval of colleges and universities by nationally recognized professional associations or regional accrediting bodies.

ACT: A multiple-choice test of English, math, reading, and science reasoning (plus an optional writing component) used for admission into undergraduate programs.

add/drop: A process at the beginning of a term whereby students can delete and add classes with an instructor's permission.

advance registration: A process of choosing classes in advance of other students.

affidavit of support: An official document proving a promise of funding from an individual or organization.

assistantship: A study grant of financial assistance to a graduate student that is offered in return for certain services in teaching or laboratory supervision as a teaching assistant, or for services in research as a research assistant.

associate degree: A degree awarded after a two-year period of study; it can be either terminal or transfer (the first two years of a bachelor's degree).

attestation: Official affirmation that a degree or transcript is genuine. Usually signed by a recognized expert or witness.

audit: To take a class without receiving credit toward a degree.

authentication: Process of determining whether something is, in fact, what it is declared to be. Incoming students are often required to provide a document of authentication for academic transcripts or previous degrees when applying to a program of study in the United States.

bachelor's degree: A degree awarded upon completion of approximately four years of full-time study.

campus: The land on which the buildings of a college or university are located.

CGFNS: Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools.

class rank: A number or ratio indicating a student's academic standing in his or her graduating class. A student who ranks first in a class of 100 students would report his or her class rank as 1/100, while a student ranking last would report 100/100. Class rank may also be expressed in percentiles (for example, the top 25 percent, the lower 50 percent).

coed: A college or university that admits both men and women; also refers to a dormitory that houses both men and women.



Glossary

college: A postsecondary institution that provides an undergraduate education and, in some cases, master's and doctorate degrees. College, in a separate sense, is a division of a university; for example, College of Business.

college catalog: An official publication giving information about a university's academic programs, facilities, entrance requirements, and student life.

community college: A postsecondary institution that offers associate degree programs, as well as technical and vocational programs.

core course: Courses that provide the foundation of the degree program and are required of all students seeking that degree.

course: Regularly scheduled class sessions of one to five hours (or more) per week during a term. A degree program is made up of a specified number of required and elective courses and varies from institution to institution.

credits: Units that most colleges and universities use to record the completion of courses (with passing grades) that are required for an academic degree.

day student: A student who lives in accommodations that are not administered by the college and are off the campus grounds. He or she travels to campus every day for classes.

degree: Diploma or title conferred by a college, university, or professional school upon completion of a prescribed program of studies.

department: Administrative subdivision of a school, college, or university through which instruction in a certain field of study is given (such as English department or history department).

designated school official (DSO): A Designated School Official (DSO) is the person on campus who gathers and reports information on international students to the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and assists international students in the visa and employment authorization process. Your DSO's name will be listed on your I-20 or DS 2019.

dissertation: Thesis written on an original topic of research, usually presented as one of the final requirements for a doctoral degree (Ph.D.).

doctoral degree (Ph.D.): The highest academic degree conferred by a university to students who have completed graduate study beyond the bachelor's and/or master's degree. Students should demonstrate their academic ability through oral and written examinations and original research presented in the form of a dissertation.

dormitories: Housing facilities on the campus of a college or university reserved for students. A typical dormitory would include student rooms, bathrooms, common rooms, and possibly a cafeteria. Also known as "dorms" for short.

ECFMG: Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates.

ECFVG: Educational Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates.



Glossary

electives: Courses that may be chosen from any field of study. Electives give students an opportunity to explore other topics or subjects of interest.

ERAS: Electronic Residency Application System for obtaining a residency position in the field of medicine in the United States.

extracurricular activities: Nonacademic activities undertaken outside university courses.

faculty: People who teach courses at U.S. colleges and universities. Faculty members may include professors, associate professors, assistant professors, and instructors.

fees: An amount charged by universities, in addition to tuition, to cover costs of institutional services.

fellowship: A form of financial assistance, usually awarded to a graduate student. Generally, no service is required of the student in return.

final exam: Often referred to as a “final,” a final exam is a cumulative exam on a particular course subject encompassing all material covered throughout the duration of the course.

financial aid: A general term that includes all types of money, loans, and work/study programs offered to a student to help pay tuition, fees, and living expenses.

fraternities: Male social, academic, and philanthropic organizations found on many U.S. campuses.

freshman: A first-year student at a secondary school, college, or university.

full-time student: One who is enrolled in an institution taking a full load of courses; the number of courses and hours is specified by the institution.

Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT): A standardized test for MBA applicants that measures basic verbal, mathematical, and analytical writing skills that have been developed over a long period of time through education and work.

grade/grading system: The evaluation of a student’s academic work.

grade point average (GPA): The combined average of a student’s grades for all academic coursework completed. In the United States, grades are usually assigned in letters and are based on a 4.0 GPA scale.

Grade	GPA
A	4.0 (excellent)
B	3.0 (good)
C	2.0 (satisfactory)
D	1.0 (needs improvement)
F	0.0 (fail)

graduate: A student who has completed a course of study, either at secondary school or college level. A graduate program at a university is a study course for students who already hold a bachelor’s degree.



Glossary

Graduate Record Examination (GRE): A standardized test of verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, and analytical writing that measures readiness for graduate-level study.

high school: The U.S. term for secondary school.

higher education: Postsecondary education at colleges, universities, professional schools, technical institutes, etc.

honors program: A challenging program for students with high grades.

institute: A postsecondary institution that specializes in degree programs in a group of closely related subjects; for example, Institute of Technology.

International English Language Testing System (IELTS): An English language proficiency examination of applicants whose native language is not English.

international student adviser (ISA): The person at a university who is in charge of providing information and guidance to international students in areas of government regulation, visas, academic regulations, social customs, language, financial or housing problems, travel plans, insurance, and legal matters.

junior: A third-year student at a secondary school, college, or university.

language requirement: A requirement of some graduate programs that students must show basic reading and writing proficiency in a language other than their own to receive a degree.

Law School Admission Test (LSAT): A standardized test that provides a standard measure of acquired reading and verbal reasoning skills that law schools can use as one of several factors in assessing applicants.

lecture: Common method of instruction in college and university courses; a professor lectures in classes of 20 to several hundred students. Lectures may be supplemented with regular small group discussions led by teaching assistants.

liberal arts and sciences: Academic studies of subjects in the humanities, the social sciences, and the physical sciences with the goal of developing students' verbal, written, and reasoning skills.

living expenses: Expenses such as housing and meals, books and supplies, transportation, personal expenses, health insurance, etc.

maintenance: Refers to the expenses of attending a university, including room (living quarters) and board (meals), books, clothing, laundry, local transportation, and incidentals.

major: The student's field of concentration. Major courses represent 25-50% of the total number of courses required to complete a degree. Most students pursue one major, but some pursue double majors.

major professor/thesis adviser: For research degrees, the professor who works closely with a student in planning and choosing a research plan, in conducting the research, and in presenting the results. The major professor serves as the head of a committee of faculty members who review progress and results.



Glossary

master's degree: Degree awarded upon completion of academic requirements that usually include a minimum of one year's study beyond the bachelor's degree.

Medical College Admission Test (MCAT): A standardized, multiple-choice examination designed to assess problem solving, critical thinking, writing skills, and knowledge of science concepts and principles prerequisite to the study of medicine.

midterm exam: An exam administered after half the academic term has passed that covers all class material up until that point.

minor: The student's secondary field of concentration. Students who decide to pursue a minor will usually complete about five courses in this second field of study.

notarization: The certification of a document (or a statement or signature) as authentic and true by a public official (known in the United States as a "notary public") or a lawyer who is also a commissioner of oaths.

NRMP: National Resident Matching Program.

Pearson Test of English Academic (PTE): An English language proficiency examination that measures English ability through tasks that reflect real-life settings.

placement test: An examination used to test a student's academic ability in a certain field so that he or she may be placed in the appropriate courses in that field. In some cases, a student may be given academic credit based on the results of a placement test.

plan of study: A detailed description of the course of study for which a candidate applies. The plan should incorporate the objectives given in the student's "statement of purpose."

postdoctorate: Studies designed for those who have completed their doctoral degree.

postgraduate: Usually refers to studies for individuals who have completed a graduate degree. May also be used to refer to graduate education.

prerequisites: Programs or courses that a student is required to complete before being permitted to enroll in a more advanced program or course.

qualifying examination: In many graduate departments, an examination given to students who have completed required coursework for a doctoral degree, but who have not yet begun the dissertation or thesis. A qualifying examination may be oral or written, or both, and must be passed for the student to continue.

registration: Process through which students select courses to be taken during a quarter, semester, or trimester.

residency: Clinical training in a chosen specialty.



Glossary

resident assistant (RA): A person who assists the residence hall director in campus dormitories and is usually the first point of contact for students who need assistance or have questions about campus life. RAs are usually students at the college who receive free accommodation and other benefits in return for their services.

Responsible Officer (RO): A Responsible Officer is the exchange program staff person who gathers and reports information on exchange visitors to the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and assists in the visa process. The RO's name is listed on the DS-2019.

rolling deadline: Institutions accept applications and admit students at any time during a specific time period until all available spots are filled.

sabbatical: Leave with pay granted to give a faculty member an extended period of time for concentrated study.

SAT: A primarily multiple-choice test of mathematics and English that is used for admission into an undergraduate program.

SAT subject test: A multiple-choice test that measures your knowledge in specific subject areas.

scholarship: A study grant of financial aid, usually given at the undergraduate level, that may take the form of a waiver of tuition and/or fees.

school: A term that usually refers to elementary, middle, or secondary school. Also used in place of the words "college," "university," or "institution," or as a general term for any place of education; for example, law school, or graduate school.

semester: Period of study lasting approximately 15 to 16 weeks or one-half the academic year.

seminar: A form of small group instruction, combining independent research and class discussions under the guidance of a professor.

senior: A fourth-year student at a secondary school, college, or university.

Social Security Number (SSN): A number issued to people by the U.S. government for payroll deductions. Anyone who works regularly must obtain a Social Security Number. Many institutions use this number as the student identification number.

sophomore: A second-year student at a secondary school, college, or university.

sororities: Female social, academic, and philanthropic organizations found on many U.S. campuses.

special student: A student who is taking classes but is not enrolled in a degree program.

Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS): An Internet-based system that maintains records of foreign students and exchange visitors before and during their stay in the United States. It is part of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) managed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.



Glossary

subject: Course in an academic discipline offered as part of a curriculum of an institution of higher learning.

syllabus: An outline of topics covered in an academic course.

teaching assistant (TA): A graduate student who acts as an instructor for an undergraduate course in his or her field, in return for some form of financial aid from the university.

tenure: A guarantee that a faculty member will remain employed by a college or university until retirement except in the case of very unusual circumstances. Tenure is granted to senior faculty members who have demonstrated a worthy research and publication record. Its purpose is to preserve academic freedom.

terminal program: Associate degree program leading to a specific career upon graduation.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL): An English language proficiency examination of applicants whose native language is not English.

thesis: A written work containing the results of research on a specific topic prepared by a candidate for a bachelor's or master's degree.

transcript: A certified copy of a student's educational record.

transfer: The process of moving from one university to another to complete a degree.

transfer program: Associate degree program allowing the student to transfer into the third year of a four-year bachelor's degree program.

tuition: The money an institution charges for instruction and training (does not include the cost of books).

university: A postsecondary institution that offers both undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

USMLE: U.S. Medical Licensing Examination.

withdrawal: The administrative procedure of dropping a course or leaving an institution.

zip code: A series of numbers in mailing addresses that designates postal delivery districts in the United States.





EducationUSA is a network of hundreds of advising centers in 170 countries supported by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, which strives to foster mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. EducationUSA Advising Centers actively promote U.S. higher education around the world by offering accurate, comprehensive, and current information about educational institutions in the United States. To find an advising center, visit www.educationusa.state.gov.