

F1 Visa Guide

Hello! This is a small guide for all those applying for an F1 visa. The requirements mentioned here are latest as of March, 2025. This is NOT an official document. We have made this using our experience of obtaining a visa. **For security purposes, We have not shared exact links. You are better off Googling the website names (like US TravelDocs) and visiting them from Google. We are NOT responsible for any security breaches on your behalf.**

Key terms:

1. **I-20 form** – This will be provided to you by your university after you have accepted an admission offer. It basically just shows that you are eligible to study in the US and can finance your education (based on whatever financial resources you show to the university after accepting the offer)
2. **I-901 form** – Issued after you have paid the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVIS) fee to the Department of Homeland Security for processing your enrollment and everything else. As of March, 2025, this fee is \$350¹. You need your I-20 to pay this.
3. **DS-160** – This is the actual Non-Immigrant Visa (NIV) visa application.

Pre-Requisites

Here is a list of stuff I am assuming you have already done. If you haven't, make sure you complete all these steps before proceeding.

1. Accepted an offer from a university
2. Signed a Statement of Legal Residence (university will inform you whether you need to sign it or not)
3. Requested an I-20 form from your university
4. Received the I-20 form, printed it out and **signed it**.

Next Steps:

If you have completed the steps above, this is what you need to do next:

Get your I-901 Form

To do this, visit fmjfee.com and click on “Pay I-901 Fee”. Fill in the details and proceed to payment options. Once you have paid it, you will get a receipt. Save this receipt in a folder because you will need it later on.

¹ This fee is separate from the visa interview scheduling fee that you have to pay later

Fill out the DS-160

The next step in your journey to obtain a visa is to fill out the DS-160 non-immigrant visa form. The process for this form is split over multiple sites, so I am linking the [US Travel Docs](#) website. I will be referring to sections and links from this website, so make sure you visit it once.

Go to this link and select your location. This will open a new page with visa categories shown. You need to choose “**Non-Immigrant Visa**”. This will open a page with a few details (make sure you read them). Once you are done reading the details, click on **Step 2 “Complete your Application”**. This will open a new page with a few dropdowns. Click on the Step 2 dropdown and read the text. You will find two links. The first is the link to the official website, and the second link contains guidelines.

Make sure to save your DS-160 ID. If you leave your application midway you can use it to continue where you left off (if you saved your progress along the way).

How to apply

Step 1: Know your visa type	+
Step 2: Complete your application	
Complete the Nonimmigrant Visa Electronic Application (DS-160) form . Be sure to read the Guidelines for Completing the DS-160 Form carefully. All information must be correct and accurate. Once the form is submitted, you cannot make any changes. If you need assistance, please consult an immigration lawyer or translator. The call center cannot help you complete your DS-160. You will need your DS-160 number to book your appointment. Note: If denied a visa previously please complete a new Nonimmigrant Visa Electronic Application (DS-160) form .	
Step 3: Pay your visa fees	+
Step 4: Schedule your appointment	+
Step 5: Attend your interview	+
Step 6: Track your passport	+

Paying DS-160 Fee

Once you have filled out the DS-160 form, you will need to pay a fee. As of March, 2025, the fee is 55,500 PKR. To get your challan for payment, go to the US TravelDocs website again, select your location, select “**Non-Immigrant Visa**” and click on “**Schedule your appointment**”. This will open the following page. Click the “online using this website” link.

Scheduling your appointment

Applicants for U.S. visas are required to appear in person for visa interview at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. You can schedule an appointment [online using this website](#).

Supporting documents	+
Restrictions to changing appointments	+
Visas for applicants under age 14 or age 80 and over	+
Out-of-District Applicants	+

This will lead you to the official website. Create an account here. Once your account has been created, you will be able to see a dashboard. From the dashboard, you can schedule a new appointment by filling in your details, just like you did for the DS-160 form.

Then it will ask you to pay your fees. Following are the fee payment options listed on the official website:

“There are several options to pay your Consular visa fee. See all payment options below:

1. Cash at Bank Alfalah Branches
2. Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)
3. Credit\Debit Card
4. Online Payment via Elavon with Credit/Debit Card in USD.”

You can find more details by going to **Step 3** of the Non-Immigrant Visa page of USTravelDocs: <https://www.ustraveldocs.com/pk/en/step-3>

For 2024:

It will take a few hours (minimum of 6 hours, up to 36 hours) for your payment to be realized in the system, so relax for a bit. Check back in later. Your receipt will automatically be filled and you will be able to select an interview slot.

NOTE: I submitted it in February of 2025 and there was no payment processing delay for me.

Selecting the Interview Slot

Just select a slot that suits you. Congratulations!

What documents should I take? (Listed on DS-160 page as well)

Here is a list of documents that are required (Keep extra copies of everything):

1. Your signed I-20 form
2. I-901 form / SEVIS payment receipt
3. Your DS-160 confirmation page
4. Your Appointment Confirmation page (you need this to enter Diplomatic Enclave and for the shuttle service as well)
5. Your passport (obviously)
6. 2 (2inch x 2inch) photographs (as required for DS 160, should be the same)

Make sure to have the following documents as well for the shuttle service:

1. A copy of your passport
2. A copy of your Appointment Confirmation page
3. Shuttle fare of 1500 PKR

NOTE: If you have heard different information about the shuttle service fare and required documents, it's because the service was recently acquired by CDA, resulting in some changes. Previously, applicants were required to bring two copies of their CNIC, a copy of the DS-160 confirmation page, and 3000 PKR for shuttle fare. I highly recommend keeping backup copies of all necessary documents, as requirements can change. It's best to verify the latest details with someone who recently attended their interview before you go for yours.

Other nice-to-haves are:

1. Your CNIC (with photocopies)
2. Your CV (Highly recommended; the officer asked me for it)
3. Your advisor's CV (if you have one)
4. Your research plan (if you are going for a PhD or MS)
5. A bank statement showing the required funding (if your I-20 does not show enough funding for your degree)

Keep your documents organized before your interview to avoid having to search through multiple copies at the last minute.

On Interview Day

Show up to the shuttle transport early. It starts at 7:00am. You will inevitably be late to your time-slot, so don't worry. **Currently** the US embassy operates on a first come, first serve basis. So try to show up as early as possible. Make sure you leave all your electronics at home since you won't be allowed to enter. For the interview, be calm, honest and truthful. The people there are nice.

Commonly asked questions

(This isn't a complete list—just a few examples based on what my friends and I have experienced. Your questions might be different)

1. Where are you going?
2. What is the purpose of your visit?
3. What are you going to study?
4. What did you study before?
5. Why did you pick XYZ university?
6. How are you paying for your studies?
7. What's your research about? (Keep your answer short and easy to understand)
8. What are your plans after graduate school?
9. Do you have any family members/relatives in US?

Good Luck!