

Preparing for your visa interview

(1) Bring the following documents with you to the visa interview:

- DS-160 confirmation page
- Passport
- Proof of consular district residency
- Proof of your relationship to your spouse and children if they are accompanying you to the US
- Completed visa application forms
- I-20 from the Georgia Tech Language Institute
- SEVIS fee receipt
- Letter of Acceptance from the Georgia Tech Language Institute
- Financial Support Document
- Information about the Georgia Tech Language Institute Intensive English Program
- Information about your future plans

PASSPORT: Every applicant must have a passport that is endorsed for travel abroad and valid for return to their home country or re-entry into another country. Business travelers, tourists, and other visitors must have a passport that is valid for at least six months from the time they arrive at the port of entry in the United States. Travelers who arrive at a U.S. port of entry with less than six months of validity remaining on their passports will be denied entry to the U.S.

RESIDENCY: Every applicant must be able to prove that he or she works in and/or is a resident of the consular district.

SPOUSE AND CHILDREN: Your spouse and children will apply for an F-2 visa if they will be accompanying you to the United States. Every applicant must show proof of their relationship to their spouse and children. You should bring your marriage license/certificate and also birth certificates for your children.

APPLICATION FORMS: Bring with you the completed forms from your visa application.

I-20 FORM: This is the document you received from the Language Institute at Georgia Tech. You should sign the I-20 form at the bottom of page 1.

LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE: You received your acceptance letter from the Language Institute with your I-20.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT DOCUMENT: You will need to have the sponsorship letter from your university indicating that they will pay your tuition, fees, and living expenses during the program. You will need a bank statement showing that you have sufficient funds. It is best to show a 6-month history of your bank account rather than just one statement. Here is a summary of the expenses you will need to cover during the program.

Estimated On-Site Expenses for the Intensive English Program	
Tuition and Fees:	\$2,747
Living Expenses:	\$3,554
Total Estimated Expenses:	\$6,301 USD

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTENSIVE ENGLISH PROGRAM: Before you go for your appointment, study the information about the program you will be participating in. Be prepared to answer questions about the program. Read through the Program Description on our website at: <https://esl.gatech.edu/intensive-english-program>

You should know the following information:

- The names of courses you will take and their course descriptions – All Intensive English Program students study 4 core courses: grammar, reading, writing, and speaking/listening. Detailed information about each course can be found at: <https://esl.gatech.edu/current-students/course-catalog>
- Program includes 20 hours a week of in-class instruction
- Where you will be living in Atlanta – Information about housing options can be found at: <https://esl.gatech.edu/intensive-english-program/housing>
- You will get CEUs (Continuing Education Units of credit) and a certificate upon completion

FUTURE PLANS: Applicants must show that they have the intent to depart from the United States after the completion of their studies. Applicants should show evidence that they have strong economic, social, family, and/or career ties to their home country.

(2) How to prepare for your visa interview

NAFSA: Association of International Educators has put together **10 Points to Remember When Applying for a Nonimmigrant Visa** to help you prepare for your F-1 visa interview. It is very important to be well-prepared and to know what to expect from your interview. We strongly encourage you to carefully read NAFSA's 10 point below and familiarize yourself with the basics of the interview process to help improve your chances of being granted an F-1 visa.

1. Ties to Your Home Country

Under U.S. law, all applicants for nonimmigrant visas, such as student visas, are viewed as intending immigrants until they can convince the consular officer that they are not. You must therefore be able to show that you have reasons for returning to your home country that are stronger than those for remaining in the United States. "Ties" to your home country are the things that bind you to your home town, homeland, or current place of residence: job, family, financial prospects that you own or will inherit, investments, etc. If you are a prospective undergraduate, the interviewing officer may ask about your specific intentions or promise of future employment, family or other relationships, educational objectives, grades, long-range plans and career prospects in your home country.

Each person's situation is different, of course, and there is no magic explanation or single document, certificate, or letter which can guarantee visa issuance. If you have applied for the U.S. Green Card Lottery, you may be asked if you are intending to immigrate. A simple answer would be that you applied for the lottery since it was available but not with a specific intent to immigrate. If you overstayed your authorized stay in the United States previously, be prepared to explain what happened clearly and concisely, with documentation, if available.

2. English

Anticipate that the interview will be conducted in English and not in your native language. One suggestion is to practice English conversation with a native speaker before the interview, but do NOT prepare speeches! If you are coming to the United States solely to study intensive English, be prepared to explain how English will be useful for you in your home country.

3. Speak for Yourself

Do not bring parents or family members with you to the interview. The consular officer wants to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf. If you are a minor applying for a high school program and need your parents there is case there are questions, for example about funding, they should wait in the waiting room.

4. Know the Program and How It Fits Your Career Plans

If you are not able to articulate the reasons you will study in a particular program in the United States, you may not succeed in convincing the consular officer that you are indeed planning to study, rather than to immigrate. You should also be able to explain how studying in the United States relates to your future professional career when you return home.

5. Be Brief

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

6. Additional Documentation

It should be immediately clear to the consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they signify. Lengthy written explanations cannot be quickly read or evaluated. Remember that you will have 2-3 minutes of interview time, if you are lucky.

7. Not All Countries are Equal

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

8. Employment

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

9. Dependents Remaining at Home

If your spouse and children are remaining behind in your country, be prepared to address how they will support themselves in your absence. This can be an especially tricky area if you are the primary source of income for your family. If the consular officer gains the impression that your family will need you to remit money from the United States in order to support themselves, your student visa application will almost certainly be denied. If your family does decide to join you at a later time, it is helpful to have them apply at the same post where you applied for your visa.

10. Maintain a Positive Attitude

Do not engage the consular officer in an argument. If you are denied a student visa, ask the officer for a list of documents he or she would suggest you bring in order to overcome the refusal, and try to get the reason you were denied in writing.

Additional advice:

- In addition to the documents you present, you need to *listen carefully* to any questions the embassy official might ask you.
- Even if the official asks you a question that you think is strange, you *must answer* it. The official is usually trying to decide whether you intend to stay in the United States after you have completed your program. If the official thinks you plan to stay in the United States, he or she must deny your visa.
- In addition, you can prepare **reasons** why you want to study in the United States. Here are some possibilities:
 1. **To promote your professional development:** How will you use English when you return to your country? Why is it important for you to know English?
 2. **To support further your academic studies:** Do you intend to study another subject once you complete your English program? Which subject?

3. **To obtain personal knowledge of American language and culture:** English can be learned more efficiently through interaction with native speakers.
4. **To experience high-quality instruction:** Talk about your choice of English program: show that you *know about* the university or college you have applied to and be able to explain your choice if you can. Mention that some of the most advanced teaching methods and technical help in language learning can be found in the United States.

□ **You should not** give reasons such as:

1. your friends are there
2. you have family in the United States
3. you like American movies
4. Other *unimportant* reasons

Note: The most frequent reason for a visa refusal is that the official thinks you may not return to your home country. Additionally, it is not possible to say exactly what evidence to bring to convince the official you will return home. Applicant circumstances vary greatly. Remember an official sees as many as 200 people a day. Officials do not have a lot of time to discuss your application; they must make a quick decision. Help them by being completely prepared.

(3) What to do if your visa is denied

- Before leaving the embassy or consulate, ask for a written explanation of why your visa was denied.
- Notify the Language Institute by sending an email to apply@pe.gatech.edu and tell us the reason for the refusal.
- Consular officers have the responsibility for issuance or denial of visas. If your visa is denied, you can re-apply.
- If you decide to re-apply, you should be prepared to show *additional* evidence or *explain in a different way* how your situation has changed since the first application.
- The most frequent reason for a visa refusal is that the official thinks you may not return to your home country. Before your next interview:
 1. Think again about your ties to your home country: family relationships, job, home or farm ownership, and other commitments.
 2. Is there any **additional evidence** that you could present?
 3. Did you explain your situation clearly the first time?
 4. Did you answer all the questions?
- The typical waiting time to reapply for a visa is six months. You should try to apply at least twice. If you are refused a second time, the probability that a third try will work is not very high.
- Additional information about U.S. visa policies and obtaining a visa is available at <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en.html>