HOW TO GET YOUR F-1 (STUDENT) VISA
You need an F-1 (student) visa to enter the United States in order to pursue a full course of study at the English Language Institute. To obtain your visa, you must apply at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate. For the F-1 visa procedures and requirements, contact the U.S. Embassy in your country. You may also go to the U.S. Department of State Web site (usembassy.state.gov), where there are links to the Web sites of the U.S. Embassies and Consulates.

If you are applying for a student visa for the first time, an in-person interview is usually required. June, July, and August are usually the busiest months, so it may be more difficult to get an appointment during this time. Don’t wait until the last minute! Apply for your visa as soon as you know when you will travel. Allow several weeks for planning and getting an appointment for the visa. You can call the embassy or go to the embassy Web site for information and instructions.

Required documents for the F-1 visa:
- Passport (must be valid for at least 6 months when you get the visa)
- SEVIS I-20 form (A student visa will not be issued unless a SEVIS I-20 is presented at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate.)
- Your letter of acceptance from The University of Alabama English Language Institute
- Bank letter or letter of financial support verifying the funds to cover your expenses while you study in the United States
- SEVIS Fee receipt (Information on paying the SEVIS Fee is included on the other side of this form.)

Consuls (embassy officials) also want to see evidence that you have strong economic, social, family, or career ties to your home country. As an applicant for an F-1 or any non-immigrant visa, you must convince the official that:
- You have a residence in your home country.
- You intend to return to that residence.
- You intend to leave the U.S. when your course of study is completed.

How to prepare for your visa interview:
- In addition to the documents you present, listen carefully to the 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 U.S. after you have completed your program. If the official thinks you plan to stay in the U.S., he or she must refuse your visa. Remember, the F-1 visa is for people who intend to return to their home country. Tell the official when you are going to go home.
- In addition, you can prepare to discuss reasons why you want to study English in the U.S.
  - Talk about your professional development – How will you use English when you get back to your country? Why is it important for you to know English?
  - Do you intend to study another subject once you have finished your English program? Which subject? Why do you need English?
  - Talk about how you hope to learn English more quickly and efficiently by first-hand knowledge of the American culture and interaction with many native speakers.
  - Talk about your choice of English program. Show that you know about the university or college that you have applied to, and be able to explain your choice if you can. Mention that some of the most advance teaching methods and technical help in language learning can be found in the U.S.
  - Do NOT say you want to go the the U.S. just because: (a) your friends are there; (b) you like American movies or some unimportant reason; (c) you have family in the U.S.
- Remember that an official has to talk with 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.
What to do if the official refuses to give you a visa:
The most frequent reason for a visa refusal is that the official thinks you may not return to your home country. It is not possible to say exactly what evidence you should take to convince the official that you will go home because applicants' circumstances vary greatly. Think again about your ties to your home country: family relationships, job, home or farm ownership, other commitments. Is there any additional evidence that you could present? Did you explain your situation clearly? Did you answer all the questions?

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.

You should try at least twice. If you are refused a second time, the probability that a third try will work is not very high.

SEVIS FEE PAYMENT
Beginning September 1, 2004, a new United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) rule went into effect. This rule requires F-1 and J-1 visa applicants to pay a one-time fee of US$200. The fee (I-901 Form) may be paid by check drawn on U.S. funds, by mail, or on-line with a credit card. You can go to the SEVIS Web site at www.FMJfee.com to download a payment form or pay the fee on-line. Be sure to complete the form with your name EXACTLY as it appears on your I-20 form.

If you complete the form and pay on-line, you will need to print a copy of the on-line receipt to take with you to your visa interview.

To pay the fee by mail, you should send the payment in the form of a check, international money order, or foreign draft (drawn on U.S. banks only) in the amount of $200 USD and made payable to The Department of Homeland Security. Mail the completed form and payment to the address listed on the I-901 form. You should receive a receipt notice within three days of processing the fee. Proof of payment will be required before a visa is issued.

In general terms, the fee is paid by those who wish to enter the United States either as a student or exchange visitor with a SEVIS-issued I-20 form or DS-2019 date on or after September 1, 2004. F-2 and J-2 visa holders are not subject to the fee.

If your visa application is denied, the SEVIS fee will NOT be refunded. However, if you reapply for a new F-1 visa within 12 months of the denial, you will not have to pay the fee again.

ARRIVING IN THE UNITED STATES
When you arrive in the United States, you need to present the following to the Immigration officer:
• Your passport
• Sealed envelope with the SEVIS I-20 inside
• I-94 card (white card distributed by the flight attendants on the plane)
• Financial support documents
• Letter of acceptance
• Paper receipt for the SEVIS fee
• Any other documents the U.S. Embassy or Consulate indicated you should bring to the U.S.
• The name and contact information of your designated school official or sponsor

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

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Website: eli.ua.edu
Email: info@eli.ua.edu

U.S. Department of State website: usembassy.state.gov

SEVIS website: www.FMJfee.com