# F/J Travel Visa Information

## Visa Requirements

The term "visa" refers to the visa stamp in your passport, not your I-20 or DS-2019 form. All non-immigrants (except Canadians) entering the U.S. in F or J status are required to obtain the appropriate entry visa.

When you re-enter the U.S., the visa stamp in your passport must reflect your current visa status (F or J) and must be unexpired. Also, if the visa has a limited number of entries, it must have a remaining valid entry available on the intended date of re-entry to the U.S.

If there are entries left on the visa, the visa should remain valid for re-entry until the date of expiration. However, students and scholars should consider the chance of unexpected need for a later re-entry, for example, due to weather delay.

If the visa stamp in your passport has expired and/or does not have a remaining valid entry available, and automatic revalidation of visa is not possible, you *must* be granted a new visa in order to re-enter the U.S.

Canadian citizens generally are not required to possess a visa stamp to enter the U.S. and may enter the U.S. with valid I-20 or DS-2019 and proof of Canadian citizenship.

## Automatic Revalidation of Visa

For non-immigrants with expired visas, trips to Canada or Mexico may not require a new visa application. This benefit is called "automatic revalidation of visa." Currently, the automatic revalidation of visa benefit allows certain non-immigrants with expired visas to reenter the U.S. after a 30-day or less visit to "contiguous territory".

Contiguous territory is considered Canada, Mexico, or adjacent islands including Saint Pierre, Miquelon,

the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Bermuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica, the Windward and Leeward Islands, Trinidad, Martinique, and other British, French, and Netherlands territory or possessions in or bordering on the Caribbean Sea.

Citizens of countries currently designated by the [U.S. Department of State as State Sponsors of Terrorism](#) [2] are not eligible for the automatic revalidation benefit and would be required to have a valid visa for re-entry from contiguous territory.

Any non-immigrant who applies for a new U.S. visa while traveling in "contiguous territory" is not eligible for automatic revalidation benefit. Thus if you apply for a visa in Canada and are denied, you are ***not allowed*** to re-enter the U.S. under automatic revalidation benefit.

To re-enter the U.S. under the benefit of automatic revalidation of visa, you must:

- Only travel to Canada/Mexico/adjacent islands for less than 30 days and not travel elsewhere
- Maintain and intend to resume your nonimmigrant status within the authorized period of admission
- Carry your paper or print-out of electronic [Form I-94](#) [3] (please click on the link for instructions), your currently valid I-20 or DS-2019, and valid passport with expired visa
- ***Not*** apply for a new visa during this trip
- ***Not*** be from a country that is currently designated by U.S. as a State Sponsor of Terrorism
- For more information, refer to [the website of the U.S. Department of State](#) [4].
- We recommend that if you choose to travel under the "automatic revalidation of visa" rule, that you print and carry with you the [U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) website](#) [5] which discusses Automatic Revalidation, in case the CBP official is not familiar with the details of the rule.

# Applying For a New Visa

If you need to obtain a new visa to re-enter the U.S., you should be prepared for a potentially lengthy wait and complex visa application procedures which require an in-person interview at a U.S. consulate abroad. Depending on your particular circumstances, you may decide not to travel and avoid the risk of a visa delay or a visa denial.

Students and scholars are recommended to apply for visas at the local U.S. consulate with jurisdiction over the home residence. Although it is possible for students and scholars to apply for visas at U.S.consulates in Canada, Mexico, and other countries worldwide, the risk of denial may be higher in these cases.

If a visa denial is received when a student/scholar applies in another country, the applicant is required to return directly to the home country to reapply at the local U.S. consulate. If denial or visa delay occurs, the applicant may not return to the U.S. before receiving a new visa.

The most common reason for visa denial is "failure to demonstrate ties to the home country." For more information, refer to [Non-Immigrant Intent](#).

## Resources and Tips

- It is a good idea to read about the procedures at the local consulate where you plan to apply for your new visa before you travel. See the U.S. Department of State's [Web Sites of U.S. Embassies, Consulates, and Diplomatic Missions](#) [6].

- View the estimated [U.S. visa wait time](#) [7] to get a visa appointment and the estimated visa processing time to receive a visa at a specific consulate or embassy. Keep in mind that this time period does not include a security check.
- We encourage you to apply for your visa as early as possible during your trip and allow ample time for the visa approval process to return to the U.S. Students and scholars beginning new I-20 or DS-2019 programs may be issued visas up to 120 days before the program start date.
- The following resources will provide you with a list of generally required documents for your visa application at a U.S. consulate.
  - [U.S. Department of State F-1 visa application information](#) [8]
  - [U.S. Department of State J-1 visa application information](#) [9]

All F and J visa applicants must complete and submit form [DS-160 (Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application)](#) [10]

# Non-Immigrant Intent

All applicants for an F or J visa are required to demonstrate their intent to return to their home country following the completion of their academic programs. The burden is on the visa applicant to prove ties to the home country and establish "non-immigrant intent". There are several ways you can be prepared to support your intent to return home in your visa interview:

- Have a few sentences in mind that express how you intend to use your degree or research at home after your finish your program
- Bring copies of deeds to any property (land, house, apartment) that you or your family owns in your home country
- Bring bank statements of any accounts that you or your family maintain in your home country
- If you have an employer who intends to employ you when you return home, bring a letter from that employer

You can read information from U.S. Department of State about the [requirement to demonstrate ties to your home country](#) [11].

# Security Checks

During any visa application to the U.S., you may be subject to additional security and background clearances due to your citizenship, ties to specific countries, field of study, or other reasons. These additional clearance checks may take several weeks to several months to process. There is no way to circumvent or expedite this process.

Citizens of certain countries may be subject to increased scrutiny and security clearances. Although the U.S. Department of State has declined to release the list of countries on national security grounds, it is thought to include Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Nationals or citizens of Cuba and North Korea are being subjected to increased scrutiny as well.

In addition, the U.S. Department of State may be required to conduct a security clearance if you work in high technology, engineering, or the sciences. You should be prepared to be questioned closely about the

details of your research. If you are working in such fields, we recommend that your department advisor or supervisor writes a letter briefly detailing, in simple terms, the nature of your research. If applicable, this letter should note that the technology is not for military use. This letter will not deter a security clearance, but it may expedite the clearance.

The U.S. Department of State's list of sensitive technology fields requiring security clearance (called the Technology Alert List) is no longer public. You can get an idea of what may be on the list by using the Technology Alert List [12] version from 2002. Use this as a guideline only.

You may also Visa Reciprocity and Country Documents Finder [13] for country-by-country security procedure information from U.S. Department of State.

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**Source URL:** https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/travel-visa

**Links**
[1] https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/10-points-remember-when-applying-student-visa
[2] https://www.state.gov/state-sponsors-of-terrorism/
[3] https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/i-94
[4] https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/visa-expiration-date/auto-revalidate.html
[5] https://help.cbp.gov/s/article/Article-1218?language=en_US
[6] https://www.usembassy.gov/
[7] https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/wait-times.html
[8] https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/student-visa.html
[9] https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/exchange.html
[10] https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/forms/ds-160-online-nonimmigra-t-visa-application.html
[11] https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/visa-denials.html
[12]
http://www.nafsa.org/Resource_Library_Assets/Regulatory_Information/Archived_Copy_of_2002_DOS_Cable_on_Technology_Alert_List/
[13] https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country.html