

Guide for F-1 Students

Review this document carefully to ensure you enter the United States in F-1 visa status for participation in your Middlebury program.



→ Review I-20

→ Go to U.S. Consulate

→ Apply for F-1 Visa

→ Travel

→ Middlebury!

Step 1: Read your Form I-20

- Your **NAME** and **DATE OF BIRTH** must match your passport. If this is not correct, please contact ISSS.
- Check your **PROGRAM START DATE** in the **PROGRAM OF STUDY** box to make sure it is correct. You may enter the U.S. up to 30 days before this date.
- Check your **PROGRAM END DATE**. You may stay in the U.S. to prepare for departure for no more than 60 days after this date. *If there is any change to your program or arrival date, contact ISSS, as we may need to update your I-20.*
- If your I-20 is correct, please print pages 1 -3 of the I-20 document.
- Sign your name in black ink on the printed copy of the I-20 in the STUDENT ATTESTATION box at the bottom of the form, and date the form. Use black ink only; digital signatures/dates are not authorized.

Step 2: Pay the SEVIS I-901 Fee Online

- The SEVIS I-901 fee is required of all students applying for F-1 status based on an I-20 issued for **initial attendance** (FORM ISSUE REASON on your I-20). Proof of fee payment must be presented at the visa interview and/or when you arrive at a U.S. port of entry. Citizens of Canada or Bermuda must also pay the SEVIS fee and show proof of payment at the U.S. port of entry even though they do not require a visa.
- You can access the SEVIS Form I-901 online at <https://fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.html>.
- Detailed instructions and tips related to paying the SEVIS fee, please access our website: <https://www.middlebury.edu/office/international-student-and-scholar-services/students/student-visa-information/sevis-payment-and>.
- If your F-1 Student record was transferred to Middlebury from another U.S. institution, you should have paid your SEVIS I-901 Fee already. You can obtain a receipt through <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee>.

Step 3: Check that your Passport is Valid

- Your passport should be valid for at least six (6) months *beyond the date* you intend to enter the U.S.
**** Citizens of Canada and Bermuda do not need to present a visa at the U.S. border. ****
****Citizens of Canada and Bermuda may skip ahead to Step 5. ****

Step 4: Obtain an F-1 Visa



- Citizens of all countries (except Canada and Bermuda) must have a F-1 student visa to enter the U.S. Apply for an F-1 visa well in advance of your planned travel to the U.S. To find the U.S. embassy or consulate nearest to you, please consult: <https://www.usembassy.gov/> . To monitor visa appointment wait times, please see: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/wait-times.html> .
- You must schedule a personal interview for the visa application at a U.S. Consulate or Embassy. It may take a few weeks to secure an appointment, so please initiate your visa application as early as possible. Secure an appointment even if it is well into the future, as you may be able to request an earlier date. Before your interview, practice answering questions in English about your plans in the U.S., and your plans after you return home. Remember that F-1 status is a *nonimmigrant* status with intent to return to your home country. Be positive and respond to questions with clear, concise answers.
 - U.S. embassies are authorized to continue to waive in-person visa interviews on a case-by-case basis for certain first-time and/or renewing applicants. This authorization is valid through December 31, 2023, with the potential for it to be extended again. As a result, you may receive guidance from the U.S. embassy that does not require you to attend an in-person interview. You are encouraged to monitor embassy and consulate websites for more detailed information about this development.
- After your visa interview, your application may require further administrative processing, which may take several weeks. The consular officer will notify you if further processing is necessary for your application. If your application is subject to administrative processing, you must simply wait until the Consulate makes a decision.
- **If your visa is approved:**
 - As soon as you receive your passport with the visa sticker from the Consulate, please look at the visa type to confirm that an F-1 visa was issued.
 - If another visa type was granted in error, you should inform the Consulate immediately. It should be easy to correct the visa type if you inform them as soon as you receive the visa.
 - Be sure to double-check that your name and birthdate are correct on the visa stamp. They should match the information on your passport and I-20.

If you leave the Consulate without correcting the visa type or other biographical data, it is extremely difficult or impossible to correct it later. Failure to correct an error like this may prevent you from participating in your program with Middlebury.
- **If your visa is denied:**
 - Ask for the reason for the denial in writing.
 - Contact ISSS so we can determine next steps together with you.

For more information, please visit the following U.S. Department of State website at:
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/visa-denials.html>.

Obtaining a Visa



To apply for a visa, there are several steps. The order of these steps and the way you complete them may vary at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate where you will apply. Therefore, please consult the instructions available on the website of the consulate or embassy where you will apply.

The basic steps are:

1. Complete the Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application (Form DS-160)

2. Schedule a Visa Interview, if required

3. Prepare for Your Interview, if required

- a) Pay the non-refundable visa application fee, if required to do so before your interview.
(See: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/student-visa.html#overview>.)
- b) You may also be required to pay a Visa Issuance fee. This “reciprocity” fee varies by country. To determine if you have to pay a Visa Issuance/Reciprocity fee, ask the Consulate or see: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country.html>.
- c) Gather required documentation:
 - 1) Passport (valid 6 months into the future from your intended date of entry to the U.S.)
 - 2) Form DS-160 (visa application) Confirmation Page
 - 3) Application fee payment receipt(s), if required to pay before the interview
 - 4) Photo – you will upload a photo while completing the DS-160. However, if the upload fails, you must bring a photo with you. For photo requirements, see: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/photos.html>.
 - 5) Form I-20—*Certificate of Eligibility for F-1 Student Status*
 - 6) SEVIS (I-901) Fee receipt
 - 7) Acceptance Letter from Middlebury
 - 8) Original Financial Documents, showing proof of funding.
- d) Additional documents that may be required include, but are not limited to, evidence of:
 - i. The purpose of your travel;
 - ii. Your intent to depart the United States after your travel;
 - iii. Your ability to pay all travel costs; and/or
 - iv. Other documents the consular officer may request.

Evidence of employment and/or your family ties may be sufficient to show the purpose of your travel and your intent to return to your home country. You may show evidence that another person will cover some or all costs for your travel.

4. Attend Your Visa Interview

For the most current and accurate information regarding applying for a F-1 visa, please consult: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/student-visa.html#overview>

Step 5: Travel to the U.S.

*****Do not enter the U.S. on a Visitor/Tourist Visa or through the Visa Waiver Program. *****

Carry with you:

- Passport (valid for at least 6 months into the future)
- Form I-20
- SEVIS fee receipt
- Acceptance letter for your Middlebury program
- Original financial documents that show proof of funding
- Scholarship letter or financial aid award letter (if applicable)

Place these documents in a folder or envelope that you will always have with you during your travel.

The U.S. Customs & Border Patrol (CBP) Official may ask you questions upon your entry.

- If you are asked about your source of funding or your “intentions,” show your Middlebury contract, invitation letter, or admission letter along with your Form I-20.
- The border official will “admit” you to the U.S. by scanning your passport to generate an electronic I-94 arrival record.
- Most ports of entry no longer stamp the passport. If they do, they should write: “**F-1 D/S**” (Duration of Status) on the stamp.
- **Before leaving the U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) area, be sure that you presented your Form I-20 to the official and if they did stamp your passport, check that it was date stamped with “F-1 D/S” written on the stamp. Failure to correct an error at the border could prevent you from participating in your program with Middlebury.**

If the officer admits you to the United States, an **I-94 Arrival/Departure Record** will be created in an electronic format and will NOT be provided to you at the port of entry. You may receive a hard copy, paper version of the Form I-94 in special circumstances.

You will be able to generate a paper version of the Form I-94 at www.cbp.gov/I94 should you need a copy before applying for immigration or public benefits, such as a Social Security number.

The screenshot shows the U.S. Customs and Border Protection website. The header includes the agency name and logo. Below the header, there are tabs for 'Get I-94 Information' and 'I-94 FAQ'. The 'Get I-94 Information' tab is selected. The main content area is titled 'Most Recent I-94' and contains fields for 'Admission (I-94) Record Number', 'Most Recent Date of Entry', 'Class of Admission: F1', and 'Admit Until Date'. There is a 'Print' button next to the record number field. Below these fields, there is a section for 'Details provided on the I-94 information form:' which includes fields for 'Last/Surname', 'First (Given) Name', 'Birth Date', 'Passport Number', and 'Country of Issuance'. A 'Get Travel History' button is located below these fields. At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with links for 'For inquiries or questions regarding your I-94, please click here' and 'Accessibility | Privacy Policy'.

LEFT: Electronic Form I-94 is available at www.cbp.gov/I94. Upon entering the U.S., you will receive instructions to access this website.

BELOW: Paper version of the Form I-94. This will only be issued in special circumstances.

The image shows a paper version of the Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record. The form is titled 'I-94 Departure Record' and includes fields for 'Departure Number' (624833440 12) and 'OMB No. 1651-0111'. The form is divided into sections for '14. Family Name' (STUDENT), '15. First (Given) Name' (Example), and '16. Birth Date (Day/Mo/Yr)' (09/06/82). There is a circular stamp that reads 'ADMITTED' and 'F-1 D/S'. The form also includes a section for '17. Country of Citizenship' (CUBA) and a 'STAPLE HERE' instruction. The bottom of the form has a 'See Other Side' instruction.

SPECIAL NOTES

Grace Period

You may enter the U.S. up to 30 days prior to the start date on your I-20. If you enter the U.S. during this 30-day entry prior to your program start date, you will be responsible for your own living costs and arrangements until your program begins. Middlebury is unable to grant early access to campus.

Upon completion of your program, you have a 60-day grace period to remain in the United States and prepare for departure. Employment is NOT allowed during these grace periods.

If you have any questions, please contact:

International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS)

Email: iss@middlebury.edu

Phone: (802) 443-5858

(All calls to ISSS are directed to our main office in Vermont.)

ISSS provides service to Middlebury College, the Institute, and our U.S.-based Schools.

This guide was prepared by ISSS.

(Information updated as of October 2022.)

***Please continue to the next page for
“F-1 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT GUIDELINES.”***



F-1 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT GUIDELINES

Prepared by International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) at Middlebury.

To maintain your legal F-1 status, follow these guidelines and consult ISSS with your questions.

- **Always enter the U.S. with a valid F-1 visa and Form I-20** while you are a student. (Citizens of Canada and Bermuda do not need to obtain a visa but need to enter with an I-20 for the duration of their academic program). **Do not use a tourist (B-2) visa or the Visa Waiver Program to enter the U.S., as these statuses do not allow for full-time study.** Your I-94 record/card should state “F-1 D/S” (duration of status). If it does not, please see ISSS immediately.
- **Have a passport that is valid 6 months into the future.**
- **Attend the school that you are authorized to attend** (the school listed on the I-20 that you used to enter the U.S.). If you last entered on an I-20 from another school or if you hold an I-20 from another school, you must comply with the mandatory SEVIS transfer procedure **within 15 days** of the program start date listed on your I-20 from Middlebury. Be sure to see ISSS within the 15-day timeframe.
- **Be enrolled full time.**
- **Have your I-20 signed by International Student and Scholar Services soon after your arrival to Middlebury.** ISSS will provide instructions to complete the “check in” process so we may complete your SEVIS registration.
- **Limit on-campus employment to no more than 20 hours per week while school is in session.**
- **Refrain from off-campus employment.** Earning any kind of compensation from an off-campus employer is considered unauthorized employment unless you apply to ISSS for off-campus employment authorization. *(Students in Middlebury’s summer programs are not eligible for off-campus work authorization.)*
- **If you voluntarily withdraw early from your program with prior approval from ISSS,** you will have a 15-day grace period in which to depart from the U.S.

SPECIAL NOTE about Unlawful Presence

When you enter the U.S. as an F-1 student, you are under the jurisdiction of the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and, in some cases, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Maintaining legal F-1 status is extremely important for international students, as it may not be possible to rectify the situation if you fall “out of status.” When a student falls out of status for any reason, they accrue unlawful presence. Remaining in the U.S. and accruing more than 180 days of unlawful presence may result in the student being barred from entering the U.S. for 3 years. Those who accrue more than 1 year of unlawful presence may be inadmissible for 10 years. To learn more, see: <https://www.uscis.gov/laws-and-policy/other-resources/unlawful-presence-and-bars-to-admissibility> .

Completion of Program – Options

Once your program of study at Middlebury is complete, you can pursue one of these options:

1. **Depart the U.S. within 60 days after your program completion date.** This 60-day grace period is to prepare to depart the United States. Employment of any kind is not allowed during this “grace period.”
2. **Apply for post-completion work authorization (Optional Practical Training—OPT), if eligible.**
(Note: Students who enter the U.S. only to attend Middlebury’s summer programs are not eligible for OPT.)
3. **Transfer your SEVIS record to another U.S. institution within the U.S.** You should discuss your plans with International Student and Scholar Services at least 2 weeks before your program end date.
4. **Change to another visa status within the U.S., if eligible.** Consult with ISSS for more information.

International Student and Scholar Services  Telephone: (802) 443-5858  Email: iss@middlebury.edu