

MSM UNIFY: STUDY IN THE
UNITED STATES
AN AGENT'S GUIDE IN THE US

The background of the entire page is a monochromatic red. Overlaid on this is a faint, semi-transparent image of the Statue of Liberty, shown from the waist up and facing slightly to the right. The statue's torch is raised high. In the center of the image, there is a logo consisting of two stacked rectangular boxes. The top box is white with the text 'MSM' in red. The bottom box is red with the text 'UNIFY' in white. The overall design is clean and modern, with geometric shapes like thin white lines and rounded rectangles subtly integrated into the background.

MSM
UNIFY

01

INTRODUCTION

02

**OVERVIEW
OF THE
UNITED STATES**

- 3 Climate and Weather
- 4 Culture and Languages

06

**THE UNITED STATES
AS A STUDY DESTINATION**

- 6 Academic Excellence
- 7 Quality of Life
Safety and Security
- 8 Cultural Diversity
- 9 Top U.S. Cities to Study In

14

US HIGHER EDUCATION

- 14 Types of Higher
Education Institutions
- 16 Types of Degrees
- 17 Pathway Programs

18

ADMISSION

- 18 Academic Requirements
- 19 Common Admissions Requirements of US
Institutions
GPA
Language Requirements
Standardized Tests
- 20 Prerequisite Programs
Application Deadlines

22

STUDENT VISA

- 22 Student Visa Categories
- 23 Steps in Applying for a Student Visa

26

**FINANCIAL COSTS
AND ESTIMATES**

- 26 Tuition Fees
- 27 Living Expenses and
Accommodations
Financial Assistance

28

WORKING IN THE UNITED STATES

- 28 Conditions and Eligibilities for F-1 and M-1 Students
- 30 On-Campus & Off-Campus Employment
- Post-Graduate Work in the United States

33

ARRIVAL IN THE UNITED STATES

- 33 Pre-Arrival
- 34 Upon Arrival
- 36 COVID-19 Regulations
- 37 List of Airports in the United States
- 38 Airport Transportation Modes

39

LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES

- 39 Accommodations
- 40 Transportation
- 42 Banking and Money Matters
- 45 Dining and Food Options
- Internet and Cellphones
- 47 Leisure and Sports
- Personal Safety

51

NEED TO KNOW:
PROMOTING
THE UNITED STATES

51

NEED TO KNOW:
PROMOTING EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS IN THE US

52

MAKING EDUCATION
ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

INTRODUCTION

"The land of the free and the home of the brave." The United States of America is one of the most powerful nations in the world in terms of economy, military, health, and education. The United States is the world's third-largest country in population and the fourth-largest in area, with an estimated population of 328.2 million individuals in roughly 9.834 million square kilometers. It consists of a federal district and 50 states.

The country (excluding Alaska and Hawaii) reaches from the Atlantic Ocean on the east to the Pacific Ocean on the west and from Canada on the north to Mexico and the Gulf of Mexico on the south through central North America.

The state of Alaska is located between the Arctic and Pacific oceans in extreme North West North America and is bordered to the east by Canada. Meanwhile, the State of Hawaii, an island chain, is located in the East-Central Pacific Ocean c.2,100 mi (3,400 km) southwest of San Francisco.

The U.S. economy is still the largest and most important in the world, despite facing domestic challenges along with a rapidly shifting global landscape. In fact, around 20% of total global production is represented by the U.S. economy.

The United States still has an important manufacturing base, which accounts for about 15% of output, even though the service sector is the main engine of the economy. The country is the world's second-largest producer and a pioneer in higher-value sectors such as vehicles, aerospace, machinery, telecommunications, and chemicals.

With more than 1 million international students choosing to expand their education and life experience, the United States has the world's largest international student population.

In this study guide, you'll understand more about the United States as a study destination and why more and more students are choosing the country in pursuing education.



OVERVIEW OF THE US

The United States, or officially the United States of America, is a federal republic consisting of 50 states. One major characteristic of the country is its variety. Be it in its diverse geography, climate, and culture, the United States is truly a melting pot of the biggest proportions.

The United States has a cultural diversity that can be attributed to immense and continued global immigration from the age of exploration to the modern era. No other nation in the world has a broader variety of racial, national, and cultural types than the United States. As a result, it creates a welcoming environment for international students, becoming one of the top study destinations in the world.



Climate and Weather

Much of the U.S. climate can be attributed to its geological features, from the steep Rocky Mountain to the vast Great Plains. The climate also varies depending on the state's geographical location in relation to its proximity to the oceans and to the North Pole and the equator.

Overall, the climate in the United States is temperate, with some notable exceptions. For example, Alaska has an Arctic tundra climate, while Hawaii and South Florida have a tropical climate. As for the Great Plains, the climate is dry, turning into arid desert in the far West.

There are very wide variations in terms of temperature and precipitation throughout the country. It is wet in the northwest, moderately wet in the southeast, and dry in the central part of America.

In the Northern Hemisphere, where most of the United States is located, the seasons begin on the first day of the months that include the equinoxes and solstices. For example:

- **Spring** runs from **March 1** to **May 31**;
- **Summer** runs from **June 1** to **August 31**
- **Fall** (Autumn) runs from **September 1** to **November 30**
- **Winter** runs from **December 1** to **February 28** (*February 29 in a leap year*).



Culture and Languages

AMERICAN CULTURE

Americans believe deeply in the notion of individualism and learn to be independent from a young age. The American Declaration of Independence notes that – and this belief is profoundly rooted in their cultural traditions – ‘all [people] are created equal.’ Americans assume that all persons are of equal status, and are therefore uncomfortable with shows of respect such as bowing. This belief leads Americans to be very informal in their actions toward other people.

Americans value their relationships with other people through frankness and openness. They believe that disputes and differences are best settled by means of direct debate among the individuals concerned. Americans agree that if anyone has a problem with someone else, they should tell the individual simply and directly to come up with a solution.

US Holidays and Customs to Know		
1 January	New Year's Day	Welcome the new year with parties starting the night before (New Year's Eve on 31 December)
3rd Monday in January	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Commemorate the birthday of the African-American civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.
14 February	Valentine's Day	Celebrate love and romance by exchanging tokens of love (usually cards, candy or gifts).
3rd Monday of February	President's Day	Honor past American presidents like George Washington (the nation's first leader) and Abraham Lincoln (Civil War hero who helped abolish slavery).
17 March	Saint Patrick's Day	Celebrate the patron saint of Ireland with parades and parties decorated in Irish green.
1 April	April Fool's Day	Play a clever (but harmless) trick or tell a joke to someone with a good sense of humor.
Last Monday of May	Memorial Day	Remember the men and women who died while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.
4 July	Independence Day	View public displays of fireworks as Americans mark the date when thirteen U.S. states declared their independence from England in 1776.
1st Monday in September	Labor Day	Honor the contributions and efforts of hard workers throughout the country.
2nd Monday in October	Columbus Day	Pay tribute to Christopher Columbus, who is traditionally thought of as the discoverer of the Americas in 1492.
Last Thursday in November	Thanksgiving Day	Feast on a traditional meal that commemorates the dinner shared by the Pilgrims (first settlers of the thirteen colonies) and the Native Americans.
25 December	Christmas Day	Celebrate the birth of Christ, leader of the Christian faith, by exchanging gifts with family and friends.

LANGUAGES

According to the U.S. government, there is no official language in the United States, however English is the most spoken language with [254 million native speakers](#). A Census Bureau report published in 2015 found that there are at least 350 languages spoken in the United States. Additionally, American English has various dialects that differ from region to region.

Aside from English, other major languages are Spanish with 43,200,000 native speakers, Chinese (including Cantonese, Mandarin and other varieties) with 2,900,000 native speakers, Tagalog with 1,610,000 native speakers, Vietnamese with 1,400,000 native speakers, and French and French Creole (including Cajun) with 1,281,300 native speakers.



THE UNITED STATES AS A STUDY DESTINATION



Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts

Academic Excellence

One of the biggest reasons students choose to study in the United States is the country's reputation for renowned higher education programs. The United States offers students the opportunity to get quality education from some of the highest-ranked universities and colleges in the world.

The country is also home to many prestigious universities and colleges that offer superior education and cutting-edge learning and research opportunities. With more than 4,500 U.S. universities offering undergraduate degrees, students have a lot of study options to suit their interests and aspirations.

American degrees are recognized and respected globally. International students can also choose to apply for work in the United States with a Practical Training F-1 visa, which makes them eligible for 12 months of work post graduation and 36 months of work if studying a STEM-designated program.

Quality of Life

According to the [OECD Better Life Index](#) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United States ranks highest in housing and above average in income and wealth, health status, employment and wages, education and skills, personal security, subjective well-being, environmental quality, social relations, and civic engagement.

In the United States, 91% of adults aged 25–64 have completed upper secondary education. As for employment, 70% of people aged 15 to 64 in the United States have a paid job. In terms of the quality of the educational system, the average student scored 488 in reading literacy, maths, and science in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment.



Safety and Security

The United States has developed a particularly strict homeland security network as a response to the terrorist attacks on the country during 9/11. The airports, especially those accepting international flights, have distinct security and safety measures for arriving and boarding passengers.

Cultural Diversity

The United States is considered a melting pot of cultures, races, and languages. Migration and diversity has been present from the very roots of America's history, reaching as far back as the first European settlers and colonists who landed on American shores in the late 15th Century. From then until the modern day, America has been a country of immigrants. Because of this, the United States is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world.

Almost all known religions are practiced in the United States. A majority of the adult population (65%) identify themselves as Christians, according to a [Pew Research Center study](#) in 2019. Others describe themselves as Mormons (2%), Jewish (2%), Muslim (1%), Buddhist (1%), and Hindu (1%). Three percent of the population identify with other faiths, while the rest describe their religious identity as agnostic, atheist, or simply religiously unaffiliated.

As for food, American cuisine is as diverse as the people who call the United States home. However, there are a variety of food, such as hamburgers, hot dogs, potato chips, macaroni and cheese, and meat loaf that are generally known as American.

There are also cooking styles and types of food unique to an area. "American comfort food," also called Southern-style cuisine, involves food such as fried chicken, collard greens, black-eyed peas and cornbread. Tex-Mex is a blend of Spanish and Mexican cooking styles, common in Texas and the Southwest, and includes food such as chili and burritos, and relies heavily on shredded cheese and beans.



Top U.S. Cities to Study In

According to the [QS Best Student Cities ranking](#) in 2019, the United States is home to the worlds' top 14 student cities. The Best Student City rankings are based on six indicators: university rankings, student mix, desirability, employer activity, affordability, and student view.

Here are the top 10 best student cities in the US:

RANKING IN THE US	WORLD RANKING	STUDENT CITY
1	12	Boston
2	19	New York
3	25	Los Angeles
4	35	San Francisco
5	41	Chicago
6	57	Atlanta
7	62	Philadelphia
8	63	Washington DC
9	67	Pittsburgh
10	76	San Diego



The house at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, AKA the **White House**, in **Washington, D.C.**

10 San Diego

San Diego is known for its perfect sunny weather and scenic sunsets, as well as a relaxing laid-back island vibe. It's also home to the world-famous San Diego Zoo, plenty of gorgeous beaches, and the 1,200 Balboa Park. The city's highest-ranking university is the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), placing 54th in the QS World University Rankings 2021.

9 Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh is a very picturesque city with a stunning skyline. It also has a variety of museums and theaters that students can choose from. The city is also home to two excellent universities: Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh, which placed 51st and 156th respectively in the 2021 QS World University Rankings.

8 Washington DC

Washington DC is the nation's capital and is filled to the brim with history. With its famous monuments and landmarks, acclaimed theatres and historic towns, it has earned the highest score in the desirability indicator. Washington DC is home to three universities featured in the QS World University Rankings 2021: Georgetown University, American University, and Howard University.



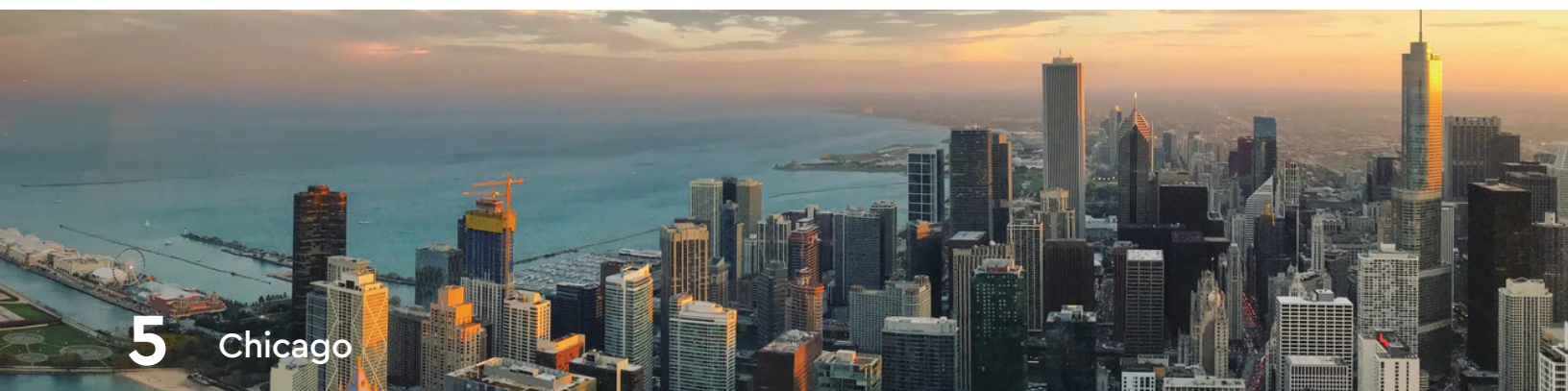
7 Philadelphia

Philadelphia is also a city of rich history – it's the place where the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776 and is also the location of the Liberty Bell. The city also contains three universities in the 2021 rankings, including the University of Pennsylvania in 16th place



6 Atlanta

Atlanta is home to lots of successful companies and it also offers plenty of employment opportunities for students studying at the city's universities. Atlanta is also home to the Georgia Institute of Technology or Georgia Tech, which is in 80th place for 2021.



5 Chicago

Chicago is famous for its tasty cuisine, efficient transportation system, and incredible night skyline. Many students enjoy the city's culture and friendliness and the abundance of tourist spots and restaurants. Chicago is also home to the University of Chicago, which placed 9th in the 2021 QS World University Rankings.



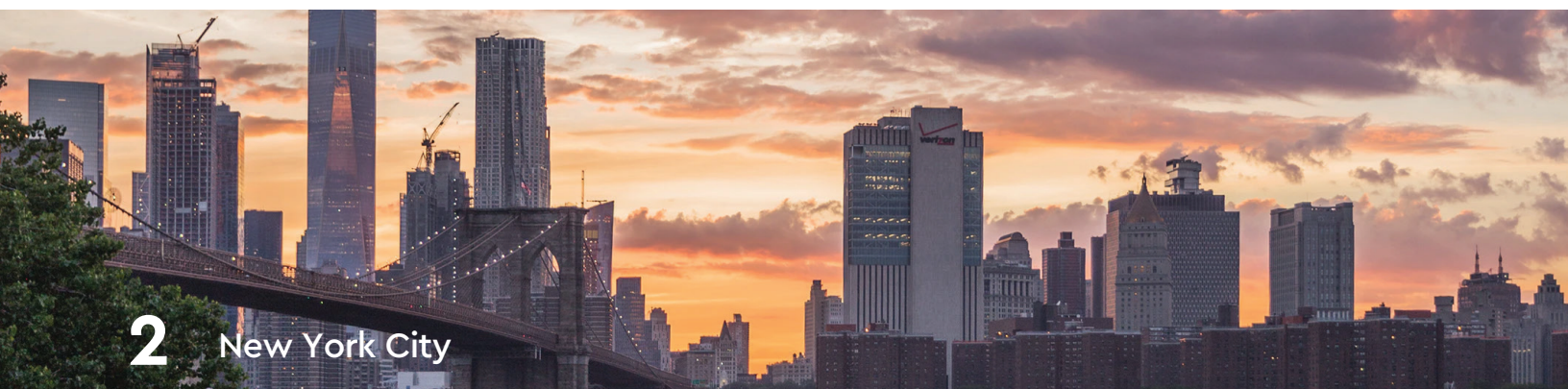
4 San Francisco

San Francisco is home to a multitude of successful companies, including Apple, Facebook, and IBM. The city is home to the University of San Francisco and is just 36 miles away from Stanford University, which ranked second in the QS World University Rankings 2021, and 11 miles away from the University of California, Berkeley, which ranked 30th.



3 Los Angeles

Los Angeles, also known as "*The City of Angels*," is the home of Hollywood. There is a broad variety of things to do, especially because the city is near the beach and the mountains. The city also has a vibrant nightlife that students can enjoy after school hours. It has two universities in the 2021 QS ranking: the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) is



2 New York City

New York City is all about city life. "*The City That Never Sleeps*" has a colorful American lifestyle and history, with iconic scenery and landmarks like the Statue of Liberty, the symbol of American freedom, democracy, and opportunity. The city also boasts a number of universities featured in the 2021 world rankings, including Ivy League university Columbia University at 19th place and New York University at 35th place.

1 Boston

Boston is one of the top 30 most powerful city economies in the world and the sixth largest economy in the United States. In Boston, students can also explore numerous world-class museums and historical architecture, including the Museum of Fine Arts, the Museum of Science, Harvard Square, the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, among many others. It is also home to Boston University (110th) and is very near Harvard University's Cambridge campus, which ranked third in the QS list, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), which took the No. 1 spot in the QS World University Rankings 2021, which ranked 30th.



the iconic Statue of Liberty



UNITED STATES HIGHER EDUCATION

Types of Higher Education Institutions

VOCATIONAL SCHOOL (TRADE SCHOOL)

Vocational schools or trade schools are generally for students who want to pursue higher education for career preparation, and only need a diploma or certificate. These schools offer a gateway into various careers without course requirements outside of the student's chosen career.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE (JUNIOR COLLEGE)

A community college is a school that offers two-year associate degree programs/certifications. Throughout the years, community colleges have begun to adopt vocational-oriented programs. In a community college, students can enroll in an academic transfer program or a direct-to-the-workforce program. ESL or intensive English language programs are available to help prepare international students for university-level courses.

INSTITUTES OF TECHNOLOGY

An institute of technology is a university that specializes in the applied and natural sciences, engineering, and technology. Students can attend a four-year program to receive a bachelor's degree. Some institutions offer short-term courses as well as graduate programs.

ART AND DESIGN SCHOOLS

Art and design schools focus on art programs. There are various types of art schools. A non-profit art school provides bachelor's and advanced degrees in fine arts and functions similarly to a liberal arts college, as students are required to engage in a wide variety of studies. For-profit art schools work more like trade schools in that they are based and career-oriented on art itself. From certificates to associate degrees to more advanced degrees, these schools offer a wide variety of academic credentials.

LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

Liberal arts colleges offer a wide range of disciplines, from the humanities including literature, philosophy, and languages, to the social sciences including psychology and sociology. There are also visual arts and hard sciences courses. Liberal arts colleges are great schools for those whose prospective careers require at least a bachelor's degree. Colleges of liberal arts are good places for intellectual development and acquiring a broader knowledge base in the social sciences.

PRIVATE OR PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

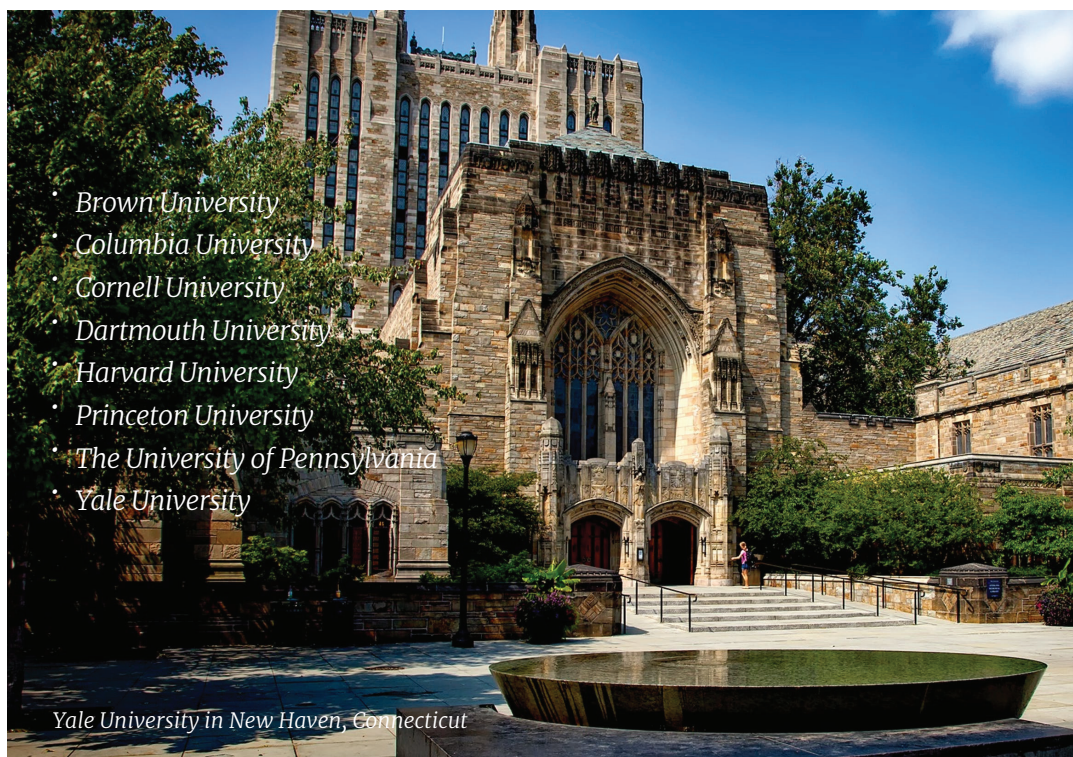
A state college or university is one that is financially supported by the state government. State colleges and universities offer a more affordable post-secondary route and have a wide range of degree programs available. Students can also experience a vibrant campus life filled with extra-curricular activities and have access to state-of-the-art teaching facilities. The largest state colleges in the United States have more than 60,000 students enrolled.

Meanwhile, a private college or university is one that is not funded or operated by the government. Private colleges usually have smaller class sizes that help the students build a relationship with their professors and advisors. Private institutions may have a shorter list of degree programs compared with state-funded colleges, but they may also offer students the option to customize their degrees and be part of more discussion-based classes. The Ivy League schools are prime examples of private universities.

Ivy League

The Ivy League is one of the most well-known groups of universities in the world. It comprises eight historic universities, which are all located in the northeast region of the United States. These schools are:

- *Brown University*
- *Columbia University*
- *Cornell University*
- *Dartmouth University*
- *Harvard University*
- *Princeton University*
- *The University of Pennsylvania*
- *Yale University*



Types of Degrees

There are four major categories of higher education degrees students can pursue in the United States. These are associate, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. Depending on the degree level and field of study, obtaining one of these degrees can take around 2–8 years.

Graduate-level university degrees can require students to complete one or more undergraduate programs. Students should determine which curriculum best suits their career objectives and academic goals when comparing different degrees. One must take note that all college degrees require a high school diploma first.

Degree Level	Average Completion Time <i>(full-time)</i>	Common Prerequisite
Associate degree	2 years	High school degree (<i>diploma</i>) or equivalent
Bachelor's degree	4 years	High school degree (<i>diploma</i>) or equivalent
Master's degree	1–2 years	Bachelor's degree
Doctoral degree	2+ years	Master's degree (<i>sometimes bachelor's degrees are acceptable</i>)

ASSOCIATE DEGREE

An associate degree is typically a two-year program designed to provide students with basic knowledge on subjects. Associate degrees prepare students for entry-level positions in fields including nursing, designing, and education.

BACHELOR'S DEGREE

A bachelor's degree is an undergraduate program that usually takes four years for students to complete. Enrolling in a bachelor's program requires that students choose a major area of study. Graduates are then qualified to work in entry- or management-level positions, depending on the field.

MASTER'S DEGREE

A master's degree is a graduate program that lets students specialize in a specific area of study. They usually take one to two years to complete and require a bachelor's degree. A student with an undergraduate degree who wants to enroll in a master's degree program would usually need to have a minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0 or 3.3 or higher and an acceptance score on a graduate entrance exam, such as the Graduate Record Examination or GRE.



DOCTORAL DEGREE

Doctoral degree programs, also known as PhD programs, are the highest degrees a student can earn. Admission to a doctoral degree program may require students to hold a master's degree, while applicants who only hold bachelor's degrees are approved by some programs. It typically takes several years to complete a PhD program, which also includes the completion of a dissertation and a major research project.

Actual requirements for admissions vary per program and institution, but graduate admissions committees usually expect PhD applicants to have a GPA from 3.3–3.5.

Pathway Programs

Students who wish to study in the United States may first need to attend a pathway program to help them meet the entry requirements to get into their desired program. These education pathways may include participating in intensive English programs, bridging courses, and undergraduate and graduate pathway programs.

Pathway programs help international students gain the knowledge and qualifications required to apply for a bachelor's or master's program in the United States. These programs are typically one year in length. By taking a pathway course, students are able to build the necessary language skills, narrow down a major, increase their chances of admission, and have additional time to adjust to life in the United States.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands signing a document. The person is wearing a light blue shirt. The document is white and has some faint text and a logo on it. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a desk and some other papers. In the top left corner, there is a red and white geometric graphic element.

ADMISSIONS

Academic Requirements

To gain admission, international students need to satisfy the academic requirements of the course and demonstrate the level of English language proficiency required by the institution. Exact admission requirements vary from institution to institution and from program to program. Requirements for the same programs can also change over time so it's best to always check the admission requirements.

Admission into a study course depends on the student's past academic performance. Each institution specifies the minimum grades/marks or cumulative averages (GPAs) it will accept. In some cases, students also need to have completed one or more required subjects previously, known as prerequisite subjects.



Common Admissions Requirements of UK Institutions

GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)

Grade Point Average or GPA is a system that ranks students' performance from 0 to 4. Higher education institutions mostly use GPA as their main grading system. The GPA is calculated by adding up a student's accumulated final grades and dividing that figure by the number of grades awarded.

- **4.0 - A** = 90-100% - *Excellent*
- **3.0 - B** = 80-89% - *Good*
- **2.0 - C** = 70-79% - *Average*
- **1.0 - D** = 60-69% - *Pass*
- **0 - F** = < 60% - *Fail*

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

International students looking to study in a university in an English-speaking country, including the United States, may need to take a TOEFL test. TOEFL is an acronym for the Test of English as a Foreign Language. Admission to undergraduate or bachelor's degree programs in the United States requires students to acquire English language ability between TOEFL iBT 68 and 80 for direct entry (no official TOEFL score needed for some programs).

STANDARDIZED TESTS

Most undergraduate and graduate programs in the United States may require the following standardized tests:

Undergraduate Admissions:

- *Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)*
- *Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT)*
- *American College Testing (ACT)*

Graduate and Professional Admissions:

- *Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)*
- *Graduate Record Examinations (GRE)* – for liberal arts, science, math
- *Law School Admission Testing Program (LSAT)* – for law schools
- *Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT)* – for business schools/study for **MBA (Master's in Business Administration)** programs
- *Dental Admission Testing Program (DAT)* – for dental schools
- *Medical College Admission Test (MCAT)* – for medical schools
- *Optometry Admission Testing Program (OAT)*
- *Pharmacy College Admission Test (PCAT)*



Prerequisite Programs

Admission into a study course depends on the student's past academic performance. Each institution specifies the minimum grades/marks or cumulative averages (GPAs) it will accept. In some cases, students also need to have completed one or more required subjects previously, known as prerequisite programs.

Prerequisite programs are courses in colleges and universities students need to take on the first two years where they will generally be required to take a wide variety of classes in different subjects. Prerequisite courses include literature, science, the social sciences, the arts, and history, among others.

Application Deadlines

Colleges and universities in the United States offer students one of the following options for applying to an institution:

- **Regular Decision (RD)** – A regular decision is for students who are not 100 percent sure where they would like to apply. This option allows students to take more time to complete their application or retake their ACT or SAT.
- **Early Action (EA)** – Early action is for students who are not yet sure which school in particular they want to go to. Students are allowed to apply to various institutions through early action.
- **Early Decision (ED)** – Early decision is for students who already know where they would like to study. If a student selects this option, it can be difficult to back out. The application is a binding contract and pulling out can lead to negative consequences.
- **Rolling Admission (RA)** – Rolling admission is an option for students who apply to a school through early action and decide they want to attend another one. This option is also available if students finish their application early. Schools can provide students with acceptance confirmation more quickly through rolling admission.

Students need to identify the school or course they are interested in and check out the application process and requirements for admission on the school's website. Students must also gather all the required documents and follow the application instructions.

Most full-time undergraduate and graduate programs in the United States require applications to be submitted by December or January each year. Schools usually send out admission notifications during March or April. The schools the students apply to must be approved by the Student Exchange and Visitor Program (SEVP).

STUDENT VISA

Student Visa Categories

International students who wish to study in the United States are required to obtain a student visa. There are three different student visas for international students: F-1, J-1, and M-1.

Degree Level	Average Completion Time <i>(full-time)</i>	Common Prerequisite
F-1 Academic Studies	Full-time students attending an academic program, language training program, or a vocational program in a school approved by the Student and Exchange Visitors Program (SEVP), Immigration & Customs Enforcement. International students must have sufficient funds for self-support during the course of study, and be enrolled in a program or course that culminates in a degree, diploma, or certificate.	Part-time on-campus employment that does not exceed 20 hours a week.
J-1 Practical Training	Students who need to obtain practical training they cannot get in their home country to complete their academic program	Part-time on-campus employment that does not exceed 20 hours a week, with permission from the exchange visitor program sponsor
M-1 Non-Academic / Vocational Studies	Students attending a non-academic or vocational school approved by the Student and Exchange Visitors Program (SEVP), Immigration & Customs Enforcement. International students must have sufficient funds for self-support during the course of study.	Not permitted to work during the course of study

Steps in Applying for a Student Visa

STEP 01 | Apply and get accepted to a U.S. school/institution

Most schools have a website where students can check their admission application status.

STEP 02 | Receive Form I-20 from school

Students should receive a confirmation letter or email saying the school has received their application. This letter would also contain the website login details so only the student can check their application status. They may also receive an email or letter that states they have been granted admission.

STEP 03 | Pay the I-901 SEVIS fee

Once the student receives their I-20 or DS-2019 form from their school, they must go online and pay the I-901 SEVIS fee. The SEVIS fee is \$350 for F-1 students.

SEVIS stands for Student and Exchange Visitor Information System, and is a web-based system used by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to maintain information on nonimmigrant students and SEVP-certified schools in the United States.

Most students can pay this fee online by credit card. Note that the I-901 SEVIS fee is separate from the visa application fee. Once the student has paid this fee, they must print out the confirmation page as they'll need to bring it to their visa interview.



STEP
04 | **Find the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate**

Students must be aware of the location of the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate in preparation for the visa application. Students can search for U.S. embassies and consulates online through the U.S. Department of State.

Be aware that U.S. student visa processes may differ slightly depending on the embassy through which students apply. This means that at some embassies, students may need to submit additional documentation along with their visa application.

STEP
05 | **Complete Form DS-160 online**

The DS-160 form is also known as Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form. On this application, the student will also select the U.S. embassy at which they intend to have their interview for their visa.

Note that the students must fill out the entire form in English, except when asked to input their full name in their native alphabet. There are translations available on the form for those who have difficulty in understanding the English instructions.

Once the student completes this form and submits it online, the student must print out their confirmation page and bring it with them to their visa interview.

STEP
06 | **Schedule the visa interview**

After the student has submitted Form DS-160, they must contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate to schedule their visa interview. Wait times for interviews vary depending on the embassy.

STEP
07 | **Pay the visa application fee (MRV)**

The date when the student is supposed to pay the U.S. visa application fee (also called the Machine Readable Visa or MRV fee) will vary depending on their embassy. Although many embassies require applicants to pay the application fee before their interview, not all do. The embassy should instruct the student as to when and how they'll need to pay their visa application fee.

If the embassy requires the student to pay this fee before their interview, the student should bring the receipt as proof of payment to the interview. The application fee costs 160 USD. This fee is the same price regardless of the student's country of origin and where they apply.

STEP
08 | **Attend the visa interview**

Students must be aware of the location of the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate in preparation for the visa application. Students can search for U.S. embassies and consulates online through the U.S. Department of State.

Be aware that U.S. student visa processes may differ slightly depending on the embassy through which students apply. This means that at some embassies, students may need to submit additional documentation along with their visa application.

- A passport valid for at least six months beyond the student's period of stay in the United States
- Signed SEVIS Form I-20 or DS-2019 (including individual forms for spouse/children)
 - Form DS-7002 (required for J-1 Trainee and Intern visa applicants only)
- SEVIS fee receipt
- DS-160 application confirmation page (including the barcode and application ID number)
- MRV fee payment confirmation receipt
- Printed copy of visa interview appointment letter
- 1-2 photographs in the format explained in the photograph requirements and should be printed on photo-quality paper

It's also best for students to prepare the following documents:

- Transcripts and diplomas from previous schools attended
- Scores from standardized tests required by the educational institution they applied to, such as the TOEFL, LSAT, GRE, GMAT, etc.
- Financial evidence showing the student or their sponsor (for example, their parents, guardians, or private or a government sponsor) has enough funds to cover the student's tuition, travel and living expenses during their stay in the United States

On the interview day, it's critical for the student to arrive on time, otherwise they may be subject to reschedule for another day. Only applicants with a scheduled appointment will be allowed inside the U.S. embassy or consulate with the exception of a parent for children under 18, translators, and assistants for the disabled.

The main purpose of the interview is for the consular officer to determine if the student is qualified to receive a U.S. student visa and which visa category (F-1, J-1, or M-1) is applicable to them. Questions about the student's home country, their academic background, English language skills, the program they applied to, and proof of their financial status are commonly asked.

After the interview, the consular officer will tell the student if their application requires further administrative processing, which would mean additional time to wait to receive the visa. Note that wait times vary from country to country. Students will also be informed of how and when their passport with the visa will be returned to them.

F-1 and M-1 student visas can be issued up to 120 days in advance of the student's study start date. However, students are not allowed to enter the United States earlier than 30 days before their start date. On the other hand, J-1 student visas can be issued at any time.

FINANCIAL COSTS AND ESTIMATES



The cost of living in the United States depends on the state and city where the student will be staying. For example, major cities like New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles have a higher cost of living compared to the city of El Paso in Texas or cities in Iowa or Missouri.

Tuition Fees

Tuition fees, including other required fees in schools, differ by institution, course, and state. The average annual cost of tuition in private higher educational institutions cost around \$30,000-\$41,411 and \$11,171-\$26,809 in public and state colleges.

For public two-year institutions, the average annual cost of tuition, including boarding cost, is around \$10,000 to \$25,000.

Living Expenses and Accommodations

Accommodation costs differ depending on the type and location. Below is a list of different accommodations and their estimated costs annually:

- *On-campus room and board* – **\$9,080 to \$13,120** (depending on the type of institution)
- *Off-campus rent* - **\$9,600 to \$30,504** (depending on the state)

Other living expenses and their estimated costs per month are listed below:

- *Food* (Groceries and Dining) – **\$200 to \$660**
- *Electricity* – **\$115 to \$168**
- *Phone and internet* - **\$15 to \$100**
- *Transportation* – **\$367 to \$561**
- *Entertainment* - **\$200**

Financial Assistance

The U.S. government does not provide financial aid such as scholarships, grants, or loans to international students. Instead, students can find other sources of funding from organizations or educational institutions in the United States, and their own home country's educational funding programs.

International students can use the [CareerOneStop website](#), sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, to look for scholarships or financial assistance in the country.

The following are the top universities in the United States that offered the most grants to international students during the 2019–2020 school year ([Source: U.S News](#)):

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • <i>Columbia University, NY</i> | • <i>Duke University, NC</i> |
| • <i>Skidmore College, NY</i> | • <i>Stanford University, CA</i> |
| • <i>Amherst College, MA</i> | • <i>Wesleyan University, CT</i> |
| • <i>Dartmouth College, NH</i> | • <i>Swarthmore College, PA</i> |
| • <i>Williams College, MA</i> | • <i>Harvard University, MA</i> |

WORKING IN THE UNITED STATES



One of the benefits of studying in the United States is the chance to work during and after studying. However, the conditions differ depending on the student's visa status.

Conditions and Eligibilities for F-1 and M-1 Students

F-1 students can only accept on-campus employment during their first academic year. After completing their first academic year, they may take on the following types of off-campus employment:

- *Curricular Practical Training (CPT)*
- *Optional Practical Training (OPT)*
- *Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Optional Practical Training Extension (OPT)*

F-1 students can only take on practical training after completing their studies and it should be related to their area of study.

Moreover, an F-1 student in a special situation such as a severe economic hardship due to unforeseen circumstances beyond their control, or special student relief, can take on off-campus jobs on a case-by-case basis.

What are the eligibility criteria of Severe Economic Hardship Caused by Unforeseen Circumstances?

- *Loss of financial aid*
- *Loss of on-campus employment*
- *Significant fluctuations in currency value/exchange rate*
- *Unwarranted increase in tuition and living costs*
- *Unexpected changes from the student's financial condition and source of support*
- *Medical bills*
- *Other unexpected expenses*

What are the eligibility criteria for Special Student Relief?

- *The student is a citizen of a country specified in a Federal Register notice*
- *The student has been legally present in the United States for the period specified in the Federal Registry notice*
- *The student is currently under F-1 status*
- *The student is experiencing economic hardship*
- *The student has already enrolled in a Student and Exchange Visitor Program-certified school since the special situation and had reported to their Designated School Official*

M-1 students, on the other hand, can only work through practical training, and after they have completed their studies.

On-Campus & Off-Campus Employment

There are two types of employment for international students eligible to work in the United States: on-campus and off-campus.

On-Campus Employment

Jobs that take place inside the campus, or in an off-campus location but are affiliated with the student's educational institution, fall under On-Campus Employment. Students under this employment can only work 20 hours per week when school is in session. Students should always inform their designated school official (DSO) of any changes with work.

How to apply for on-campus employment:

- *Ensure the student's status is active in SEVIS at least two days before applying for a Social Security Number (SSN)*
- *The student should talk to their designated school official (DSO) and get a letter of approval*
Apply for their SSN through the [U.S. Social Security Administration \(SSA\) website](#) and bring along the following documents to a local SSA office:
 - i. *Passport or other U.S. immigration document(s).*
 - ii. *Letter of approval from the DSO*
 - iii. *School identity card/record*

Off-Campus Employment

Work that occurs outside the campus falls under off-campus employment and is only available to F-1 students after finishing their first academic year. Students under this employment can only work 20 hours per week when school is in session.

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How to apply for on-campus employment

- The student should talk to the DSO and get an updated Form I-20
- File Form I-765 with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) within 30 days after receiving DSO approval
- Get form I-766 from USCIS
- Apply for their SSN through the Social Security Administration (SSA) and bring along the following documents to a local SSA office:
 - i. Passport or other U.S. immigration document(s).
 - ii. Letter of approval from DSO / Updated form I-20
 - iii. School identity card/record



Post-Graduate Work in the UK

Students who want to work and extend their stay in the United States can do so in two different ways, by getting an H-1B status, or an M-1 extension.

H-1B Status

An H-1B status is a temporary authorization for non-immigrants to perform services in a specialty occupation.

An F-1 student can get an H-1B status if a current or prospective employer petitions the USCIS for the status on behalf of the student.

M-1 students can also get an H-1B status if their prospective employer from a job that doesn't relate to their area of study petitions them to USCIS.

M-1 Extension

M-1 extensions only apply to M-1 students. M-1 students who need more than one year to finish their study program or practical training may talk to their DSO to request for an extension. Moreover, M-1 students can only be granted a cumulative time of extensions.





ARRIVAL IN THE UNITED STATES

Pre-Arrival

Before the student leaves for the United States, they should prepare the following immigration documents and make two copies of each:

- *Passport*
- *Visa*
- *Form I-20 (Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status)*
- *SEVIS fee receipt as proof of payment or Form I-901 (Remittance for Certain F, J and M Visa Nonimmigrants)*
- *Financial documents*
- *Letter of admission from their educational institution*
Prescription for medicine, or a written statement from the student's physician if applicable

Other documents that may be applicable to the student's situation can be found on the [Department of Homeland Security website](#).

Aside from the copies of the documents listed above, students should also have the original ones with them. Students should remember that they should put the documents inside their carry-on luggage, and not in their checked baggage.

Upon Arrival

If the student has all the documents above ready, arriving and going through the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will be smooth. Upon arrival, CBP officers will:

- *Check the student's documents*
- *Ask them questions related to their stay in the United States*
- *Check their luggage to check if they've brought any prohibited or restricted items*
- *Stamp their passport with an admission stamp that includes the date of admission, class of admission, and admitted-until date.*

Common Immigration Questions

Students should prepare to answer the following questions:

- *What's the purpose of your visit to the United States?*
- *How long are you planning to stay in the United States?*
- *Do you have accommodation?*
- *Do you have the means to support yourself financially?*

Restricted and Prohibited Items

Here is a list of prohibited items students cannot bring with them when they travel to the United States: t

- *Dangerous toys*
- *Illegal substances such as absinthe and Rohypnol*
- *Obscene materials showing child pornography*
- *Soil*

Below is a list of items with some restrictions in the United States:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| • <i>Firearms</i> | • <i>Alcohol</i> |
| • <i>Some fruits and vegetables</i> | • <i>Medication, unless the student has a prescription</i> |
| • <i>Animal products</i> | • <i>Some plants or seeds</i> |
| • <i>Animal by-products</i> | • <i>Trademark and copyrighted items</i> |

Secondary Inspection

In case the CBP officer cannot verify the student's information or the student has some missing documentation, they might get directed to a secondary inspection.

Secondary inspection allows officers to conduct a more thorough and additional research to verify the student's information.

Remember, students should also have with them the name and contact information of their school's DSO, in case the officer needs to verify the student's school and program.

In some cases, CBP officers might give the student Form I-515A (Notice to Student or Exchange Visitor), giving them 30 days to sort out the needed documentation with their school.



COVID-19 Regulations

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States has restricted some foreign nationals from entering the country if they've been in their home country for the past 14 days. As of Feb. 19, 2021, The countries included in the restriction are the following:

- *China*
- *Iran*
- *United Kingdom*
- *European Schengen area (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Finland, Greece, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Monaco, San Marino, Vatican City)*
- *Republic of Ireland*
- *Brazil*
- *South Africa*

As of January 26, 2021, travelers entering the United States are required to:

- *Get tested within three days before their flight to the United States and show they got a negative result.*
- *Wear masks at airport security checkpoints and throughout the transportation network*
- *Get tested again 3–5 days after their arrival*
- *Stay at home and self-quarantine for 7 days.*
- *Avoid being around people who have higher chances of getting severely ill (e.g. elderlies and people with medical conditions) for fourteen days.*
- *Follow state and local recommendations, restrictions, and guidance. Students can check the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) website](#) to check the state where they will be staying.*

Travelers traveling to the United States via air starting Feb. 2, 2021, are encouraged to:

- *Follow social distancing rule of 6 feet while at the checkpoint*
- *Avoid crowds as much as possible*
- *Practice good hygiene (washing of hands regularly before and after the security screening process)*
- *Arrive early at the airport, allowing adequate time for checking bags and completing security screening*

Remember that restrictions and recommendations related to COVID-19 might still change. To get the latest update on COVID-19, students can check the [CDC's website](#).

List of Airports in the United States

The United States has more than 5,000 airports, including airports with lighted and paved runways. Airports in the United States are some of the biggest and busiest in the world. These include:

- **DENVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**
Colorado [DEN/KDEN]
- **DALLAS FORT WORTH INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**
(London, England)
- **ORLANDO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**
(Manchester, England)
- **WASHINGTON DULLES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**
DC [IAD/KIAD]
- **GEORGE BUSH INTERCONTINENTAL AIRPORT**
Houston, Texas [IAH/KIAH]
- **CHICAGO O'HARE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**
Illinois [ORD/KORD]
- **SALT LAKE CITY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**
Utah [SLC/KSLC]
- **JOHN F. KENNEDY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**
New York, [JFK/KJFK]
- **SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**
California [SFO/KSFO]
- **DETROIT METRO AIRPORT**
Michigan [DTW/KDTW]



Airport Transportation Modes

Most educational institutions with programs for international students offer free airport shuttles to students arriving from the airport. In case the student's school does not offer this, there are other ways they can travel from the airport to their accommodation.

With the exception of public transportation, those using other types of transportation are expected to tip their drivers. Below are the most common ways students can travel from the airport to their accommodation.

SHUTTLE

Check the shuttle services available at the airport where the student will be arriving. Students opting to travel via shuttle can book for reservation on the website of the shuttle service. Riders of shuttles are expected to tip the driver at least \$5.

TAXI/CAB

Riding a taxi can be quite expensive but it offers comfort and convenience to a student who has a lot of things with them upon arrival at the airport. Taxi drivers expect to be tipped 10–15% of the total fare. Students can book their taxi online.

RIDE SHARING SERVICE

Students can download Uber or Lyft from their home country and book their transportation upon arrival at the airport. Compared to taxis and shuttles, ride sharing services are much cheaper.

BUS

Taking the bus is another cheap way to travel from the airport to the student's accommodation. Depending on the location of their accommodation, some may require bus transfers.

TRAIN/SUBWAY

Many airports are also near train or subway stations and offer another affordable way to travel from the airport to the student's accommodation. However, it won't be as convenient if the student has a lot of stuff and luggage with them.





LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES

Accommodations

Students can choose between two types of housing in the United States: on-campus and off-campus housing.

ON-CAMPUS HOUSING

On-campus housing in the United States includes residence halls/dormitories in student apartment buildings. Students usually share their rooms with other students. Moreover, most on-campus housing also has on-site staff (most often upperclassmen) serving as information resources, making it more convenient to stay. Also, students can quickly get used to their institution's community if they're in an on-campus setting.

International students can apply for on-campus accommodation through their educational institution's website.

OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING

Another type of housing international students can choose are off-campus housing. Most of the time, near the vicinity of university or colleges are apartment complexes that students can rent. Although it offers more freedom, it may also be more expensive. Moreover, most apartments require the student's SSN. To avoid scams, students should check if the space being rented is available or contact their international office adviser for advice.

ELECTRICITY CURRENT IN THE UNITED STATES

The standard voltage in the United States is 120 V, while its standard frequency is 60 Hz. Moreover, the country uses type A and B power plugs and sockets.

Transportation

The United States offers a variety of ways for students to go around their local cities or travel to another city or state. However, it also depends on the city what type of transportation they offer.

For public transportation, the most common are buses, subways, trains, ferries or water taxis. As alternatives, students can also go around their local areas by cycling, walking, riding taxis, or using ride sharing services.



BUSES

Riding a bus is always a great way to travel around the local area. It is cheaper compared with riding a taxi. Students can check the name of buses in their local areas and check their websites to know their routes, schedules, and bus stops. Students can also plan their trips through the bus company's website.

As a rule of thumb, students should always bring their school identity card with them, as many bus companies offer discounts or free rides for students.

In case the fare is not free, students can pay using coins, bills, a pass, or the bus company's app.

SUBWAYS

Most major cities have subways that people use to go around. Students studying in big cities such as New York or Boston should familiarize themselves with the subway system in their local areas. Students can check the website of their local subway to check its schedule and route, and plan for their trip. Most subway systems have reloadable transit cards. Also, students should check their local subway system as some offer discounts to students.

TRAINS

Riding a train is another good way to travel around the country. Although it is a bit more expensive than riding a bus, it is much quicker. Some train companies, such as AMTRAK, offer discounts to those traveling in groups, while some give discounts to students ages 18 and under.

FERRIES/WATER TAXIS

Riding a train is another good way to travel around the country. Although it is a bit more expensive than riding a bus, it is much quicker. Some train companies, such as AMTRAK, offer discounts to those traveling in groups, while some give discounts to students ages 18 and under.

Other Modes of Transportation**BICYCLE**

Riding a bicycle is a great and cheap way to go around the student's local area or campus. Students can buy their own bikes and can choose between new or used bikes, or they can rent one through a ride sharing service.

Bicycles are usually subjected to the same rules of a state's vehicle laws. Students should check the state's rules on owning and using a bicycle. Students should also buy their own heavy-duty lock for their bicycle to avoid it getting stolen. Lastly, students should wear a helmet when riding their bike.

WALKING

Another way to go around a local area or a campus is by walking. It costs nothing and is also a great way to become familiar with the area. Walking is a great way to exercise too.

TAXIS

Riding a taxi can be quite expensive, and most taxi drivers expect their passengers to give a tip of at least 10–15% of the fare. However, it is a convenient way to go to another place if students will travel in a small group.

RIDE SHARING SERVICES

Ride sharing services such as Uber and Lyft are cheaper compared to taxis. Students only need to download the ride sharing application onto their phones to book a ride.

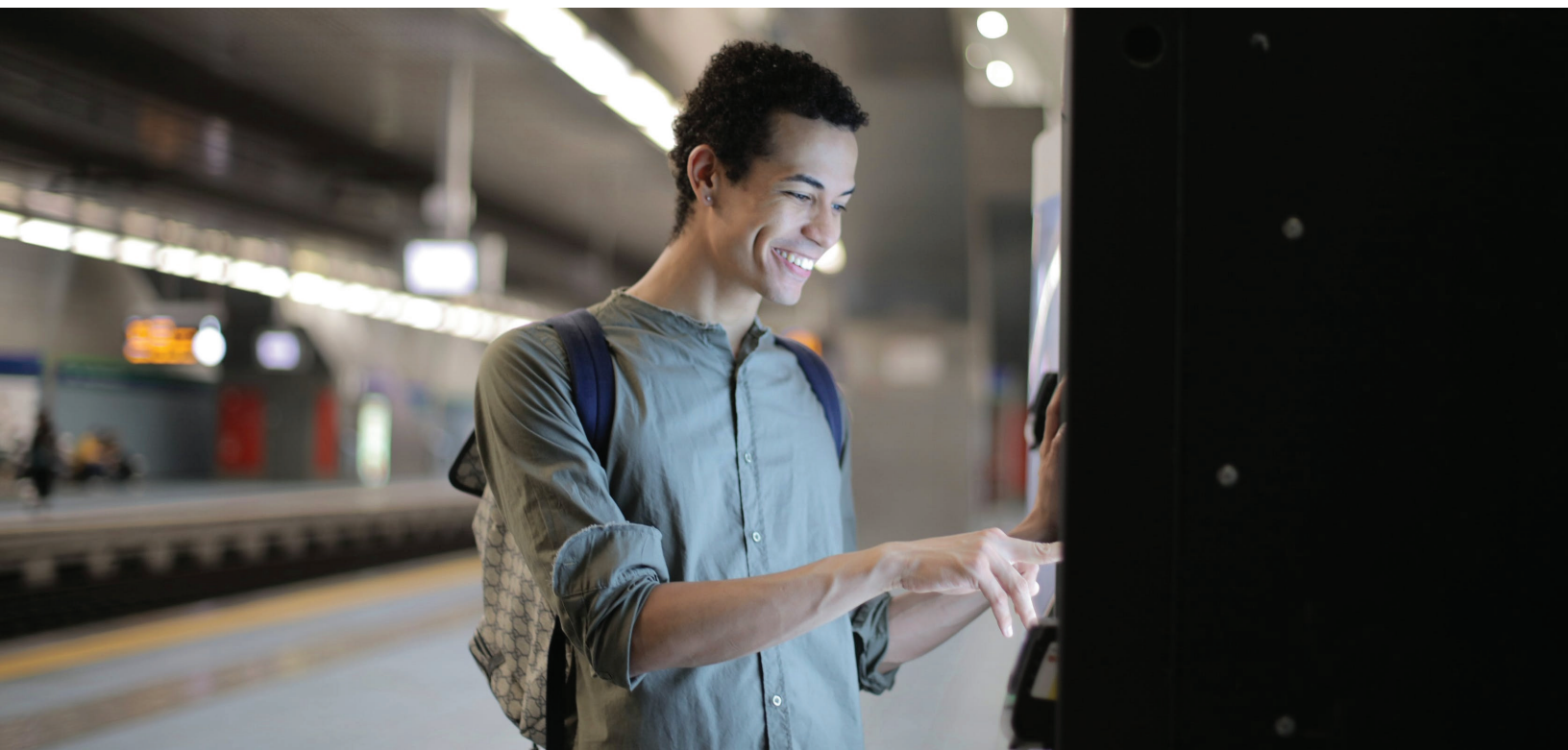
Banking and Money Matters

The United State's official currency is the U.S. dollar (\$, or USD). One dollar is made up of one hundred cents. U.S. bills come in denominations of \$1, \$2, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100. Coins, on the other hand, come in denominations of 1¢, 5¢, 10¢, 25¢, 50¢, and \$1.

- *JPMorgan Chase*
- *Bank of America*
- *Wells Fargo \$ Co.*
- *Citigroup*
- *U.S. Bancorp*
- *Truist Financial Corporation*
- *PNC Financial Services*
- *TD Bank*
- *Capital One*
- *Bank of New York Mellon Corp.*

Banks are usually open from Monday to Friday, with some opening until Saturday. Different banks also have different business hours. Banks usually open between 8:00 and 9:00 a.m. and close between 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.





How to Open a Bank Account

International students may wish to open a bank account for their entire stay in the United States because of the benefits it brings. Aside from eliminating foreign transaction fees, it is also easier for students to pay for their essentials such as food, rent, school materials, and other expenses when they have a U.S. bank account. To open a bank account, students need the following items:

- Two forms of identification (passport, driver's license, student ID)
- Letter of enrollment
- Form I-20 for F-1 students
- Form DS-2019 for J-1 students
- Proof of address
- Money or check to deposit

Remember, when choosing a bank, it would be easier if students can choose from the ones near their school. Also, students should check if the bank offers account benefits for students.

Types of Bank Accounts

The most common types of bank accounts international students can open are checking and savings accounts.

CHECKING ACCOUNT

Having a checking account is useful for expenses that are paid for regularly, such rent, utilities, and credit cards. Usually, checking accounts do not require a minimum balance to maintain the account.

SAVINGS ACCOUNT

If the student wants to earn interest, they should open a savings account.

Credit Cards and ATMs

The United States' credit card industry is a major business in the country. In fact, the number of accounts has already exceeded 400 million since 2016. VISA and Mastercard credit cards are the most common in the United States.

Students who have plans of obtaining a credit card may apply for a "secured credit card" to establish a good credit history.

Students who will open a bank account can also request for an ATM card for easier access to their money and account. When accessing their cash, students should ensure they are using their bank's ATM to avoid paying extra fees.

Saving Money in the United States: Tips for Students

- *If feasible, buy ingredients and cook your own food, and minimize eating in restaurants.*
- *Consider living off-campus to find a cheaper accommodation.*
- *Apply for an International Student Identity Card (ISIC) to avail of discounts in different establishments in the United States.*
- *Purchase public transportation reusable cards if you plan to travel a lot. Take advantage of student discounts, especially in transportation. Always bring your school ID and ISIC.*
- *Walk if feasible.*
- *Set up a bank account and deposit savings and your emergency fund there.*
- *Create a spreadsheet to monitor your expenditure including monthly rent, utility bills, groceries, transportation, study materials, toiletries, food, travel, and other expenses.*
- *Create a budget on how much you are allocating for each.*
 - *If you are living outside a school accommodation and renting a private property, share your living space with other students to save on rent.*
- *Buy second-hand books and other used items in flea markets.*
- *When traveling, book in advance.*
- *Earn extra money by getting a job.*

Dining and Food Options

The United States, being a culturally diverse country, is also home to various types of food from different parts of the world that students can access. Most of the time, most campuses have restaurants surrounding them that students can access if they choose to eat there.

However, eating in a restaurant on a daily basis can become expensive. Students living off-campus or those who can cook inside their dorms may find it cheaper to cook their own meals. The United States has a lot of big groceries and supermarkets where students can buy ingredients.

To get discounts, students can use coupons, buy items on sale, buy generic brands, use rebate apps, and bring their own bags. Aside from groceries and supermarkets, there are farmer's markets where students can buy fresh produce.

Another option is to eat in the school's cafeteria or dining hall.

Internet and Cell Phones

International students have two ways to get a U.S. number. One is by buying a U.S. SIM card they can just insert in their current phone, or purchase a new phone with a plan.

The United States is home to various telecommunications service providers, including big telecommunication companies and startups. The top telecommunication companies in the United States are the following:

- *AT&T*
- *Verizon*
- *T-Mobile US*
- *Sprint*

HOW TO GET A U.S. NUMBER

Students who want to have a U.S. number can do so by purchasing a prepaid plan, a contract plan, or plans specifically for students.

PREPAID PLAN

Prepaid plans give students the flexibility when it comes to budgeting. If the student doesn't have plans of buying a new phone, they can just buy a SIM card and set up their prepaid plan. Prepaid plans, unlike contract plans, do not require contracts, credit history, cancelation fees, and deposits.

To use their prepaid plans, students can pay for a monthly rate and reload through cash or debit card. Students can buy a U.S. SIM card in department stores, convenience stores, big gas stations, and retail stores. Phones can be bought from retailers (Best Buy, Target, Walmart, etc.), online shops (Amazon), and authorized resellers.

CONTRACT PLAN

Students who want to purchase a contract plan can also get a U.S. phone when they apply for it.

Most contract plans include a two-year agreement, thus students who have plans of studying in the United States for more than two years will benefit a lot from them. Moreover, students can also get discounts and a lot of perks from their chosen provider.

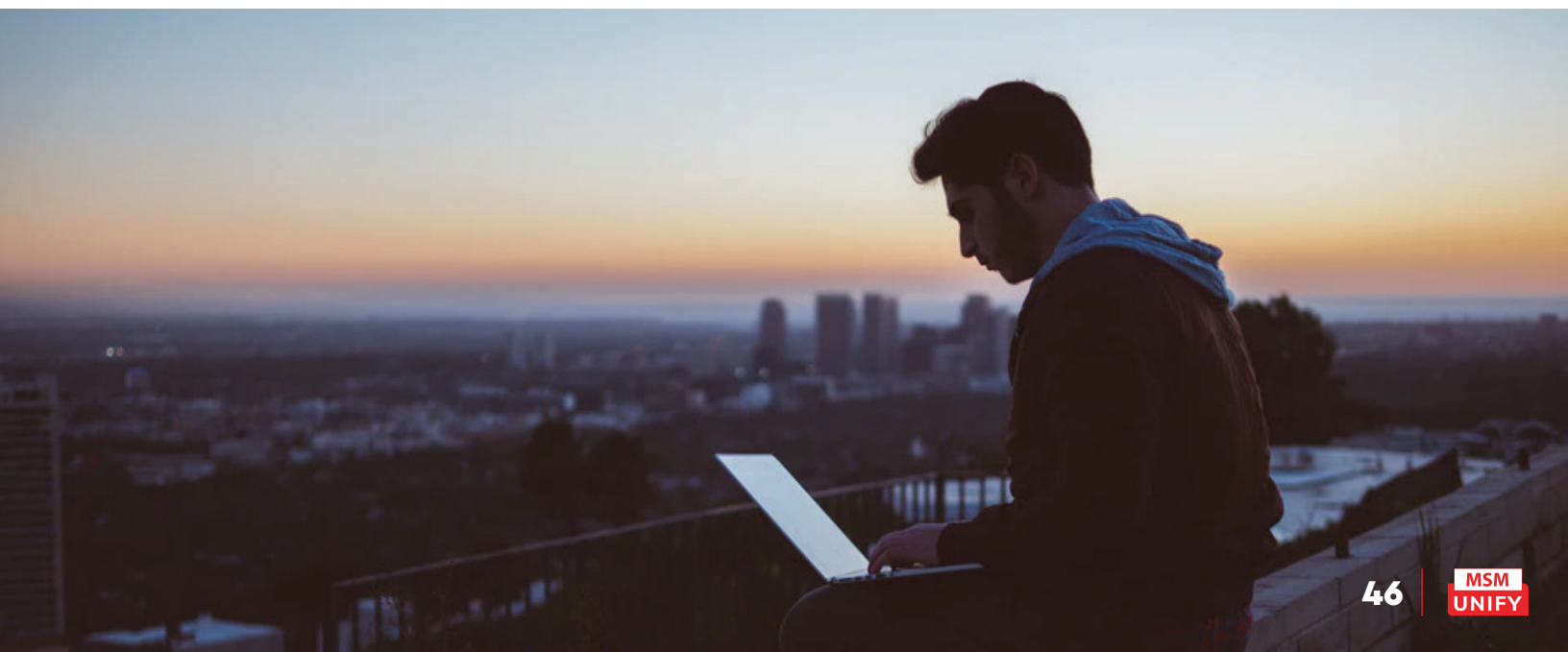
To apply for a contract plan, students need the following:

- SSN
- *Credit card and credit history of at least six months*
- *Passport*
- *Student ID*

Companies will also ask for a cancellation fee of at least \$250 to \$300 in case the student will have to leave the country before their two-year phone contract ends.

STUDENT-FOCUSED PLANS

Aside from the usual contract or prepaid plans, there are also plans that offer a cheaper alternative to students. Some examples of student-focused plans are those offered by CampusSims and US mobile. Those companies also offer discounts to students who will purchase from them and they do not require contracts.



ACCESSING THE INTERNET

One of the easiest ways to connect to the internet on the go is by buying a U.S. SIM card or phone. Most SIM card or phone providers offer their own data plan that students can use to access the internet.

Most establishments in the United States, like restaurants, public libraries, and coffee shops have access to WiFi.

Most educational institutions also have free Wi-Fi that students can access through a username and password their school gives them. Most students living on-campus can also access the internet in their dorms.

In case the student lives in an off-campus residence, they can apply for broadband internet.

The top internet providers in the United States as of 2021 are the following:

- *Xfinity Internet*
- *Verizon Internet*
- *AT&T Internet*
- *Spectrum Internet*
- *Cox Internet*
- *CenturyLink Internet*
- *Frontier Internet*

Students need to take into account that although most universities and establishments in the United States have access to the internet, some places, especially in the rural areas, still have problems accessing it.

Leisure and Sports

When you think about the United States, one usually thinks of sports, and the sports that usually come to mind are baseball, basketball, and American football. In fact, a huge percentage of Americans, both men and women, usually engage in leisure and sports activities.

Sports also play an important role in the country's culture. In fact, the sports listed above have their own leagues in the country and the United States is usually well-represented in sports leagues worldwide. Most higher education institutions also have their own teams competing in the said sports in different leagues.

Aside from baseball, basketball and football, many Americans also engage in running, fishing, and biking.

For those whose leisure activities include reading, the United States is also home to thousands of public libraries.

Personal Safety

With 50 states in the country, it is difficult to generalize the overall safety of the United States. No matter where they are studying, it is always important for students to remain vigilant and aware of the possible dangers around them.

HOW TO STAY SAFE IN THE UNITED STATES

Here are some helpful tips to follow and reminders for students so they can stay safe while studying in the United States:

- *Plan your route before traveling.*
- *Avoid walking alone at night and keep to well-lit main roads.*
- *Avoid isolated public transportation terminals and stops.*
- *Check transport timetables to avoid missing your bus or train and getting home late.*
- *If you feel uncomfortable traveling alone, ask a friend to accompany you.*
- *In the United States, people drive on the right hand side of the road, but make sure to look both ways when crossing the street.*
- *Wear a seatbelt in private vehicles.*
- *Wear a helmet when riding a bicycle or motorcycle.*
- *Secure your bicycle when leaving it on a bicycle rack or anywhere in public.*
- *Don't use your mobile phone while driving.*
- *Travel with friends or with a group.*
- *Keep your bags and valuables close to your body whenever you are out.*
- *Do not hitchhike.*
- *Do not carry a large amount of money when traveling. Students can just make use of the many ATMs in the United States or use cashless/online payment facilities.*
- *Know the emergency and security arrangements in your campus or your accommodation.*
- *Create your own emergency survival kit*
- *Always lock your residence and do not reveal private information to strangers.*
- *Avoid excessive consumption of alcohol.*
- *Get updates from the local news or your home country's embassy.*

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

In any type of emergency, students should call **911** in the United States. Students should also have a list of other important numbers they can call in different situations.

This is a list of numbers students should always have with them:

- *local police*
- *campus security number*
- *ambulance*
- *fire department*
- *local clinic or hospital*



NEED TO KNOW: PROMOTING THE UNITED STATES

As an **MSM Unify** agent, you are responsible for assisting students in making informed and wise decisions on their global study pursuits. A recruitment agent's task is simple: to guide students on their path to academic excellence and make their study dreams a reality, one application at a time.

MSM Unify agents should:

- Be knowledgeable of the programs, features, policies, and benefits of the institution they represent
- Be honest and sincere with their student clients
- Be able to present students the proper programs that match their objectives and qualifications
- Be able to extend assistance and service to students without bias or prejudice

Agents play an important role in increasing the enrollment rate of qualified students into higher education institutions. To further help in this, the EducationUSA has published various recruitment sources that agents can find helpful, and access them through its [website](#).

Agents should also follow the policies for promoting U.S. higher education, published by EducationUSA, such as incorporating them in important advising center activities. You can check the policies [here](#).

NEED TO KNOW: PROMOTING AMERICAN EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

- Ensure that all information provided is current, accurate, and comprehensive
 - Consider students' information as confidential
 - Find ways to make services more helpful to prospective students by providing additional assistance (*e.g., translating information to students who are having a hard time understanding*)
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- Provide false information or biased opinions when comparing institutions
 - Make overly idealized statements with regard to facilities and benefits of institutions, as well as employment opportunities after studies
 - Convince prospective students to choose programs or institutions that are not in line with their educational goals and interests for personal gain
 - Require payment for immigration services to students unless legally authorised to do so
 - Forward students' confidential information to third parties without approval of the students or recruitment partners

MAKING EDUCATION ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

The challenge in studying overseas lies in the pre-departure process as the student undertakes a series of choices, from deciding which institution to study in to which program will benefit their study goals the most.

With thousands of education providers across the globe, it can be challenging for students to determine the right study options that match their goals. This is where recruitment agents come in. They are the people who will bring light and wisdom into the students' decision-making to ensure that the students are on the right track, that they are getting the right study options, and that they are being provided with the best of opportunities.

MSM Unify is committed to providing education agents and partners a way to better serve and assist the students of today toward fulfilling their study goals. Through its AI-power platform that streamlines the entire student recruitment process, MSM Unify enhances the agent experience with all the tools and resources they need to give their students the best application experience possible.

Backed by an extensive network of international education providers in 20 countries, as well as market intelligence and management experience, MSM Unify agents will have the ability to lead their students towards a brighter future. They can work directly with institutions, receive direct commissions, and streamline applications on a self-service dashboard. By automating the process and giving agents access to over 1,000 program choices from leading institutions around the world, we are helping pave the way for students to make their study dreams a reality, one application at a time.



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