Packing for the United States

It is very important that you carry your immigration documents on your person when you travel to the U.S. Do not pack them in your suitcase!

The documents you want to make sure to keep with you include:

- Admission letter to Ohio State
- Current Passport
- Current U.S. Visa
- Form I-20 or Form DS-2019
- SEVIS fee payment receipt
- Proof of funding (financial documentation as listed on your Form I-20 or Form DS-2019)

Do not pack fresh fruit, produce, meat, prepared food, spices or plants. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers will not allow you to bring these items into the country.

Do pack photos or items that remind you of home, but not those that are irreplaceable.

Visit educationUSA for more information on traveling to and arriving in the U.S. and suggestions on what to pack and what not to pack.

Please also review the arrival process as described in this U.S. Customs and Border Protection document.

Weather in Columbus

Summer (June - August) high temperatures are usually between 75 and 95 degrees Fahrenheit (24 to 35 degrees Celsius). Winter (December - February) low temperatures usually range from 0 to 45 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 17 to 7 degrees Celsius). Spring (March - May) and fall (September - November) temperatures are in between.

The summers tend to be humid with occasional thunderstorms. During the winter, Columbus can get a mix of snow, sleet and freezing rain.

Additional weather information is available from The Weather Channel. Enter "43210" into the "ZIP" search bar.

Entering the United States

Prior to traveling from your home country to the United States, it is
important that you prepare for your inspection at the port of entry (first place of arrival in the U.S.).

Upon your arrival, an immigration official from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will review a variety of your immigration documents before allowing you to officially enter the U.S. This official must be satisfied that you intend to attend the school specified on your F-1 or J-1 visa and/or Form I-20 or Form DS-2019. The immigration official will inspect the documents you present to ensure their authenticity.

All of the information compiled regarding the port of entry comes directly from the Customs and Border Protection website, regarding what you can expect upon arriving at a U.S. port of entry.

**Advance Preparation Prior to Entering the United States**

Careful planning and preparation is important prior to traveling to the United States:

- Before leaving your country, confirm that your passport and nonimmigrant visa are still valid for entry into the United States. The passport should be valid for at least six months beyond the date of your expected stay.
- Check to see that your visa accurately reflects your correct visa classification (for example, F-1 student or J-1 student).
- If the visa states the name of the institution you will attend or identifies the exchange program in which you are participating, verify that this information is accurate as well. If your review indicates any discrepancies or potential problems, visit the U.S. Embassy or Consulate to obtain a new visa. In some cases, it may be possible for transfer students to enter the U.S. using a visa that lists the prior institution of study rather than the new university, if the SEVIS ID Number listed on the visa matches the SEVIS ID Number listed on the Form I-20 or Form DS-2019 for the new university.
- Students and exchange visitors entering the United States for the first time under their respective nonimmigrant visa classification may only be admitted up to 30-days prior to the program start date listed on your Form I-20 or Form DS-2019.
- When you receive your U.S. nonimmigrant visa at the Embassy or Consulate in your country, the consular officer may seal your immigration documents in an envelope and attach it to your passport. If the documents are sealed, you should not open this envelope! The Customs and Border Protection Officer at the U.S. port-of-entry will open the envelope. **Please note:** not all consular officers will put your immigration documents in a
sealed envelope, and it is okay if they have not done so.

- When you travel, you should carry your immigration documents on your person. Do not check them in your baggage! If your baggage is lost or delayed, you will not be able to show the documents to the Customs and Border Protection Officer and, as a result, may not be able to enter the United States.

Documents you should carry on your person:

- Passport (including attached envelope of immigration documents) with nonimmigrant visa
- Form I-20 or Form DS-2019
- Visa-exempt students presenting a Form I-20 or Form DS-2019, who are entering the United States for the first time, should have a Form I-797, Receipt Notice or Internet Receipt verifying Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) Fee payment. For additional SEVIS Program Information, refer to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement website.
- Evidence of financial resources, including the same financial support information indicated on your Form I-20 or Form DS-2019

In addition, it is recommended that you also carry the following:

- Evidence of Student/Exchange Visitor status (for first arrival, official university acceptance letter)
- In the case your admission/participation needs to be verified, we strongly advise that you have readily available the contact information of ISS at Ohio State. Immigration Coordinators at ISS may be reached Monday through Friday at (614) 292-6101 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time).

If you are traveling by air, the flight attendants on board will distribute CF-6059 Customs Declaration Forms before you land at your initial point-of-entry in the U.S. Complete this form while you are on the aircraft and submit it to the appropriate Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer upon your arrival. If you do not understand how to complete this form, ask the flight attendant for assistance.

Upon arrival at the port of entry, proceed to the terminal area for arriving passengers for inspection. As you approach the inspection station, ensure that you have: passport, SEVIS Form I-20 or Form DS-2019; and, CF-6059 Customs Declaration Form available for presentation to the CBP Officer.

Like all entering visitors, you will be asked to state the reason you wish to enter the United States. You will also be asked to provide information about your final destination. It is important that you
tell the CBP Officer that you will be a student or exchange visitor. Be prepared to include the name and address of the school or exchange visitor program where you will enroll/participate.

Make sure that your passport is stamped at the port of entry, showing the date and place of entry, non-immigrant status (F-1 or J-1), and the ‘admitted to’ notation (D/S). This information is recorded electronically by CBP, but instead of being given a paper I-94 at the time of entry, you will later be able to print the form yourself by visiting the CBP website at www.cbp.gov/I-94. Please make sure that your passport is stamped appropriately. You want to see "F-1 D/S" if you are an F-1 student, and "J-1 D/S" if you are a J-1 student. This is a necessary step to confirm your legal immigration status.

Remember to print your I-94 before coming to your check in appointment and each time after reentering the US.

Secondary Inspection Requirements

If the inspector cannot automatically verify your information or you do not have all of the required documentation, you may be escorted to an interview area known as "secondary inspection." Secondary inspection allows inspectors to conduct additional research in order to verify information. Verifications are done apart from the primary inspection lines so that an individual case will not cause delays for other arriving passengers.

In the case your admission/participation needs to be verified, we strongly advise that you have readily available the contact information of International Students and Scholars at Ohio State. Immigration Coordinators at ISS may be reached Monday through Friday at 614-292-6101 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., (Eastern Standard Time), except during University holiday when our office is closed.

Failure to provide proper documentation and to comply with entry/exit procedures is cause to refuse the student or exchange visitor admission into the United States. In limited circumstances, if a student or exchange visitor is mostly, but not fully in compliance, he/she may be issued a Form I-515A, Notice to Student or Exchange Visitor. This form authorizes temporary admission for 30 days into the United States and requires the student or exchange visitor to take immediate action to submit proper documentation. Noncompliance with the directions contained on these forms can result in future adverse action.

US-VISIT
On January 5, 2004, US-VISIT, a comprehensive entry-exit registration system was implemented at all international airports throughout the United States, pre-clearance inspection facilities and designated seaports servicing cruise ships. All nonimmigrant visitors holding visas (including students and exchange visitors) will participate in the program that involves obtaining a scan of two index fingerprints and a digital photograph. Race, national origin, and religion are not factors in the US-VISIT program, as it applies to all nonimmigrant visa holders. For more information, go to the US-VISIT web site.

Office of International Affairs Resources

- Immigration Check-In
- Orientation
- Visa information
- Global Engagement
- Facebook - Office of International Affairs Facebook
- Twitter - Ohio State International Affairs Twitter
- Instagram - OSUGlobal
- Tumblr - Ohio State Global Tumblr blog