

EMBASSY INTERVIEW PREPARATION

HPUSA strongly recommends that you begin preparing for your embassy interview by thoroughly reading the **IMPORTANT** information below and we encourage you to follow the suggested guidelines to the best of your ability to maximize your chances of securing your J1 Cultural Exchange Visitor Visa.

[PREPARING FOR YOUR INTERVIEW](#)

Qualifying for the J1 Cultural Exchange Program

One of the things the interviewing officer is looking for is you to show ties to return to your home country. You must convince the consulate officer that you intend to train **ONLY** at your Host Company during the dates on the DS-2019 form. **You MUST convince the consulate officer you intend to return to your home country after your program ends.**

Typically, you get a very short window to explain yourself, so try to remain calm and prepare diligently for your interview so you may answer all questions without hesitating. Bring any available documentation to your Embassy interview to show the consulate officer that **you have reasons to return to your home country** and you will **NOT** stay in the USA after your program.

Because the J-1 Intern/Trainee Visa is **NOT** a **WORK** or an **IMMIGRANT** visa, you must understand that the position offer by the host employer is **for training purposes only** and should not be considered as a step to future employment in the US, educational pursuits, or immigration to the U.S. Never use the word **“WORK”** when referring to your program. **You should only use the word “TRAIN” to describe your future activities at the Host Employer Company.**

The purpose of the Cultural Exchange J-1 Program is for participants to acquire new professional skills and learn U.S. business methods to enhance their careers when they return to their home countries. **Be prepared to convince the consulate officer that your Cultural Exchange Training position will allow you to acquire specific skills and professional training different from the skills you can acquire in your home country.**

It is essential you let the consulate officer know how much this training program will benefit your career once you return to your home country. We suggest you also mention your desire to gain cultural exchange experiences in the USA while gaining hands on experience in the American hospitality industry. **Also, it is strongly suggested that you thoroughly review and understand the different rotations and training content involved with your training plan.**

You may be asked about your previous visa applications and/or visits to the U.S. and you **MUST** be honest and truthful when answering any questions about previous visas or entries into the U.S.

QUESTIONS THAT MAY BE ASKED DURING THE INTERVIEW

You should be prepared to respond to questions such as:

- “What will you do during your training in the U.S.?”
- “In what field is your training?”
- “What specific skill is do you want to enhance?”
- “Why do you want to go to the U.S. for training?” or “What do you expect from your training?”
- “Why is this Training important for you?” or “Do you have your training plan with you?”
- “Who is your sponsor organization?” or “Who is your host company?”
- “Have you read the pamphlet?”

To answer the above questions, we suggest the following:

- Let the consulate officer know you will be on a J1 Cultural Exchange Program while in the USA.
- Inform the consulate officer why you want to be a part of the program by stating something such as “I want to enhance my customer service skills because I believe United States offers a 1st class career opportunity as an international trainee so that when I go back to my home country I have international experience to offer a company.” OR “I want to do my training in the United States for me to gain more knowledge and enhance my skills in an international setting.”
- Be very specific and mention various phases and departments of training as well as specific training activities from the Training Plan. Do not answer by telling the visa officer about the professional skills you already have or say that you will “work” at the Host Company.
- Explain how the Training will provide you with specific and new professional skills (skills from the Training Plan) and methods different from those you might gain in your home country.
- Pick two or three Training phases or activities you are particularly interested in and describe why you look forward to acquiring these skills.
- You should mention something about using some of the skills you will acquire to benefit your future career in your home country. For example, “*I look forward to learning more about (specific skills listed in your training plan) to benefit my future career here in (your home country)*”
- If you are asked about reading an pre-arrival, orientation information or pamphlets, make sure you let the consulate officer know you did receive this information and understand your rights in regards to having a healthy and safe environment, be paid fairly and be free from discrimination, sexual exploitation and harassment.
- Make sure you understand that HPUSA is NOT your host employer or your sponsor. For more details you can review the information here:
<https://www.hospitalityplacementsusa.com/interns-and-trainees/intern-trainee-faqs/>

IF YOU ARE ASKED ABOUT YOUR QUALIFICATIONS

INTERNS - If you have NOT graduated, you should state you are a current student pursuing a Hospitality related degree and will be taking the internship program in the field of studies as part of the school requirements.

If you HAVE graduated, you should state you are a recent graduate with less than a year since graduation and you will be taking the internship program to gain skills in your chosen field and at the same time experience cultural diversity.

TRAINEES - You should state that you are eligible for this program as you have a post-secondary degree plus experience in the field of training and you are applying for the trainee program to gain more advanced skills and to get a better position once returning to your home country.

You should not:

- Give vague answers such as, “I will do whatever the company wants.”
- Give one-word (“yes” or “no” only) answers instead of a complete response. Doing so would indicate you do not have enough English skills or knowledge about your training.
- Argue in any way with the consulate officer, show arrogance, disinterest, or boredom.
- Tell the officer that you are coming to the US to learn English or take English classes or mention the word “Work” at any time.
- Say you are only going to be a server or room attendant as you have several different rotations throughout the department.

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

We recommend you make a copy of all your documents before going to the Embassy. Take all original documents to the interview including:

- DS-2019 form or Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status (sent in DS kit from sponsor)
- DS-7002 signed training plan (sent in DS kit from sponsor)
- Passport valid for 3 to 6 months beyond the end date on your DS-2019
- DS-160 form or Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application (you must complete the application online, print it and bring it to the Embassy)
- DS-160/ Embassy Application Receipt / Proof of Payment
- (2) US-sized passport photos (please refer to your embassy website for specific instructions on all photos)
- SEVIS I-901 Receipt
- HPUSA Support Letter and Sponsor Support Letter (if provided in DS Kit)
- Proof of address and Property ownership (cars, land, houses, etc. in you or your family’s name)
- School documents to confirm current enrollment or successful graduation.
- Previous US DS-2019 or US Visa
- Any additional documents that may be required by your specific Embassy Office (please review your specific embassy website for any additional requirements)

Below are additional examples to help show strong ties to your home country and explain why training in USA would further your career:

- Bank account statements in your name and your family's name that shows financial stability and ability to return home after your program as well as enough funds to participate in your training program
- Evidence of ownership of property (real estate, vehicle, etc.)
- A family business you are taking over when you return
- A Religious and nonprofit organization that you belong to in your home country and that you intend on returning to help them.
- A fiancé, boy/girlfriend who will remain in your home country. Take proof of your relationship to convince the consul you still have loved ones in your home country you intend to return to.
- Enrollment in further studies once you return to your home country.

If you have close relatives living in the USA, or if you have been residing or working outside your home country for an extended time, or have previously been denied a US visa, we suggest you get a **letter of future employment**.

NOTE: This letter states you will be offered an advanced position at their hotel once you have completed your 12 months hands on training in the US and upon your return to your home country. This does not have to be a formal offer of employment—you can even get a friend who works at a hotel in your home country to write for you. It must be on hotel letterhead and signed and I have attached a sample for you to review. If you prepare it, you can email to HPUSA to check before getting on hotel letterhead and signed.

There is a sample future employment letter on the last page of this document for your reference.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Finally, you should understand that according to DOS regulations YOU are required to demonstrate to the US Embassy or consulate that you qualify for the J-1 visa. This guide is meant to help you, but YOU are responsible for preparing for your visa interview and for informing HPUSA immediately if there may be any delays in receiving your visa.

If you are granted the visa, the Embassy will keep your passport and return it to you with the visa stamped, within a week of your appointment. When booking your interview, you may be able to opt to pick up your passport – this means you will not have to wait on the embassy to courier your stamped passport.

Once you have the visa in hand, you may start making your travel plans. We do not recommend purchasing any non-refundable items or tickets before your visa is approved.

It is essential you update HPUSA on the status of your visa as soon as possible after your Embassy Interview so you can receive details on the next steps: [**CLICK HERE TO UPDATE HPUSA ON YOUR EMBASSY INTERVIEW DATE AND VISA STATUS**](#)

We understand this is a lot of information, however, following each of the steps will help ensure your arrival and start in the US will be a success!

[Hotel Letterhead]

[Date]

Dear Sir or Madam,

We write this letter in support of [insert name] in securing a 12 months traineeship in the US. We have informed [insert name] that upon completion of this 12 months traineeship with [insert hotel / company name], he will have a position as a [insert position here] at [insert your company name].

The training [insert hotel name] is providing to [insert name] will prove invaluable to our operations as such hands-on training is not as readily available in [your country name]. In addition to [his/her] oral and written mastery of English language and team-oriented attitude, the special skills and knowledge acquired by [insert name] from [his/her] 12 months traineeship in the U.S. will be of value to our company.

The in-depth knowledge that [insert name] will gain regarding American hospitality, restaurant operations and coordination cannot be acquired in [your country name].

As [your country name]'s expanding Hospitality market caters to a significant number of international clientele, such a trained person as [insert name] will be an asset to our company's growth and to the development of more opportunities within our company. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

[your name]
[position]
[company name]
[contact info]