

PREPARING FOR YOUR EMBASSY INTERVIEW

You **MUST** read the **IMPORTANT** information below and follow the suggested guidelines to the best of your ability to maximize your chances of securing your J1 Visa.

During your embassy interview, the consulate officer will be looking to confirm (2) very important factors. The first is that you need this training to benefit your future career in your home country. The second is that you have intentions 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**.

PURPOSE OF THE BRIDGEUSA CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM

The purpose of the BridgeUSA Cultural Exchange Program is to acquire new skills through participation in a structured training program; to understand and learn U.S. hospitality standards and to experience and enjoy the U.S. culture and society.

Be prepared to convince the consulate officer that this training program will benefit your career by allowing you to acquire specific skills and professional training different from the skills you can acquire in your home country. You also desire to gain cultural exchange experiences in the USA.

You MUST thoroughly review and understand the different rotations and training content in your training plan.

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 such as:

“I want to do a structured training program in the United States to enhance my customer service skills and hotel operations knowledge so that when I return to my home country, I have international experience to offer a company.” ***OR*** “I want to do a structured training program in the United States to learn American Service standards and hotel operations and enhance my skills in an international setting.”

You need to understand the different phases within your training plan. You are NOT simply training in one position for 12 months.

- Pick a few very specific goals/ tasks mentioned in your training plan that you are excited about and elaborate on how this will benefit your career after returning to your home country. You can also note you have an extended advanced phase; this means your training will progress into learning supervisory skills.

You must convince the consulate officer that a structured training program from the U.S.A. will further your career in your home country.

- 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 a pre-arrival, orientation information or pamphlets, ensure you let the consulate officer know you did receive this information and understand your rights regarding 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

Remember you are NOT interviewing for a job, you are proving you NEED this training experience to further your career.

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.

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 **ONLY** mention the relative experience that qualifies you as a trainee (at least 12 months of hospitality related work experience that directly relates to your J-1 program position). You should **NOT** mention any unrelated experience (even if it is your most recent experience), self-owned business experience or any advanced/management experience. You do not want to appear over-qualified for the program on your application.

Do NOT mention ANY prior management or supervisor experience.

IF you have ANY gaps in your resume or hospitality experience, explain that your passion is customer service, and you NEED this hands-on training in an international Brand hotel so you can secure a management position in your home country and further your career.

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. Remember that the Work and Travel Visa is **NOT** the same as the Cultural Exchange Visa. You can explain to the consulate officer that you will have a structured training program.

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.
- State you are going to return to your home country to do anything other than get a better position in the **hospitality industry**. Do not state you intend to go back to your present job.

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/ 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 the U.S.A. will benefit 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]