Preparing for your summer in Berkeley

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Get your passport ready

Renew your passport if it will expire in the next 6 months.

Photocopy the biographical page to carry with you after arrival in the U.S.
Understanding your I-20

SEVIS ID number
Log into VSIS to view the SEVIS number

You may enter the U.S. up to 30 days before the start date.

Expiration Date
You are allowed 60 days to depart the U.S. or transfer to a new school after the expiration date.

Carry the I-20 with you when you travel. Do not pack it away in your luggage!
Understanding your I-20

Make sure you keep all I-20 pages together.

Travel Signature
Located on page 2 of the I-20.
Pay the SEVIS fee

Pay SEVIS (i-901) fee at least 3 days prior to visa interview.

Visit the SEVIS fee web page for more details.

Make copies of the SEVIS fee receipt (i-797) & carry during travel.
Make a visa appointment

Read our Applying For A Visa webpage.

Visit the U.S. Department of State website for more details, at least one month in advance.
The visa is used only for **entering** the U.S. If it expires while you are here, there is **no need to renew it**. If you leave the U.S., your visa must be **valid for re-entry**.
Keep documents safe

- Photocopy ALL your documents.
- Store originals and copies in two separate and safe locations.
- Carry photocopies of all your documents at all times.
- Take your original documents when traveling out of the area.

Keep all original documents. You could be asked to present them at future visa interviews!
Arrange housing early

Housing in the Bay Area is very competitive. It is important to plan ahead.

Visit the Berkeley Summer Sessions website for more information about Options for Student Housing During Summer Sessions.
The US healthcare system is complex and can get extremely expensive.

**Health Insurance Requirement**

J1/J2 visa holders are held to strict, and higher, health insurance minimum requirements: **J1/J2 coverage details**

Overview of the US Healthcare System [video].
Health insurance options

The Berkeley International Office is aware of the following providers that have options for international students. BIO does not endorse any particular plans, and students should research and compare plans to determine if the coverage is sufficient for their needs.

- Compass Student Insurance
- Cultural Insurance Services International
- International Student Insurance
- International Student Protection
- ISO Insurance
- PGH Global
- PSI Health Insurance
Buy a ticket

Recommended Arrival: 1 week before classes

30-Day Arrival Limit:
New F–1 students are NOT allowed to enter earlier than 30 days prior to program start date.

Plan ahead! Refundable tickets are a good option should delays arise.
Plan transportation from the airport

Most students arrive at:  
San Francisco Airport  or  Oakland Airport

Here are some options for getting to UC Berkeley from the airport.

Airport Express Shuttle  
Bay Porter

Bay Area Rapid Transit:  
BART

Transit Trip Planner:  
http://511.org/
At the U.S. port of entry

• Follow **Arrival Procedures** as outlined by U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

• Don’t bring **restricted items** to the U.S.

• Be calm and answer any questions succinctly about your academic program and your activities in the U.S.

• Jokes about terrorism, breaking laws, drugs, etc. are never a wise choice.

• Be prepared in case of **Secondary Inspection**

• See the ACLU’s **Know Your Rights** resources for Rights at Airports & Other Ports
At the U.S. port of entry

• Customs & Border Protection may request to inspect your **electronic devices**. Read [tips](#) on how to prepare your device before you travel.

• Consider these questions: Are you presenting your best self in social media and messaging apps? How would you feel if U.S. immigration looked at all of your photos and messages? Does your online activity show academic dishonesty or anything that violates U.S. laws or your visa status?
At the U.S. port of entry

**IMPORTANT!**
Present your I–20 and show your F–1 visa to the officer. Say that you are requesting F–1 status.

Entering in a different status can cause problems for your immigration record and your studies. Berkeley International Office can only advise students who enter in F–1 status.
The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer places a stamp in your passport. This shows your immigration status as F–1 or J–1 and “D/S.”

D/S is an abbreviation for “Duration of Status.”

It means you are legal to stay in the U.S. until the expiration date on your I–20 and as long as you remain a full–time student.
At the U.S. port of entry

I-94: Arrival–Departure record. Your Proof of Legal Entry into the U.S.

You will be asked to complete the Form I-94 and present it at the port of entry.

Electronic Record

Preparing for your summer in Berkeley

Review the other Summer Tutorials!

- Arrival Essentials
- Finding your way on campus

internationaloffice.berkeley.edu/students/summer