



The Essential Study Abroad Checklist



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18 Months Before Departure: Define Your Academic Interests

- ☐ Determine your field of study
- ☐ Research schools and organizations that offer study abroad programs in your area of interest
- ☐ Request application material from your universities or organizations of interest



Resources:

- "What Should I Major In?" quiz from Loyola University Chicago
- "The Student's Guide to Choosing a Major" from BestColleges.com
- "The 50 Best Study Abroad Programs" from BestCollegeReviews.org



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15 Months Before Departure: Prepare for Exam and Track Deadlines



- ☐ Register for undergraduate (SAT, ACT, TOEFL) or graduate (GRE, GMAT, LSAT, TSE, TOEFL) entrance exams
- ☐ Note important deadlines (either in your phone or calendar) to ensure you submit everything on time

Resources:

- "How to Prepare for the TOEFL Test the Right Way" from [Fluentu.com](https://www.fluentu.com)
- "How to Study for the GRE in Two Months" from [Kaptest.com](https://www.kaptest.com)
- "How to Study for the GMAT" from [Kaptest.com](https://www.kaptest.com)
- "How Should I Prepare for the LSAT" from [Dus.psu.edu](https://dus.psu.edu)



12 Months Before Departure: Complete Testing, Research Schools, and Secure Financial Aid



- ☐ Take your required exams
- ☐ Narrow down your universities of interest
- ☐ Research scholarship and financial aid opportunities thoroughly
- ☐ Apply for scholarships and grants early on to secure funding and maximize your chance of being chosen

Resources:

- "What Should Students Know About Studying Abroad" from USNews.com
- "Four Steps to Choosing the Right Study Abroad Program for You" from Experience.com
- "40 Study Abroad Scholarships & Grants to Apply for Now" from GoOverseas.com
- "How to Spot and Avoid Scholarship Scams" from WorldTrips.com
- "11 Secrets to Winning Study Abroad Scholarships" from GoOverseas.com



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10 Months Before Departure: Complete and Submit Your Applications

- ☐ Retake your exams, if necessary
- ☐ Collect your references and transcripts
- ☐ Write application essays
- ☐ Submit your applications with transcripts, entrance exam scores, and references

Resources:

- ["The Study Abroad Application"](#) overview from StudyAbroad.com
- ["How to Write an Outstanding Study Abroad Application Essay"](#) from SchoolMoney.org
- ["Tips for Asking for a Letter of Recommendation"](#) from TheBalanceCareers.com
- ["Credit Transfer and Approval"](#) from CEASTudyAbroad.com



6 Months Before Departure: Prepare to Travel

- ☐ Apply for your passport
- ☐ Review your travel options
- ☐ Book your flights



Resources:

- "What Papers Do I Need to Get a Passport?" from TravelTips.USAtoday.com
- "The Complete Beginner Guide to Travel Hacking" from PersonalProfitability.com
- "How to Find Cheap Flights and Get the Best Airline Ticket Deals" from MoneyCrashers.com
- "Airfare Deals and Money-Saving Tips" from AirFareWatchDog.com



5 Months Before Departure: Review School and Program Requirements



- ☐ Speak to an academic advisor about your study abroad interests
- ☐ Check to see if your school has a minimum GPA requirement
- ☐ Check to the requirements of the program you are applying to
- ☐ Select classes for your semester abroad
- ☐ Research the language you will be exposed to while abroad
- ☐ Research housing options

Resources:

- "How to Find Study Abroad Housing" from [GoOverseas.com](https://www.gooverseas.com)
- "How to Get by in a Foreign Country When You Don't Speak the Language" from [WorldTrips.com](https://www.worldtrips.com)
- "Dealing with Culture Shock" from [WorldTrips.com](https://www.worldtrips.com)

4 Months Before Departure: Organize a Packing List

- ☐ Create a packing list
- ☐ Buy anything you need from your list
- ☐ Consider luggage restrictions and packing organization

Resources:

- "The Ultimate Study Abroad Packing List" from [WorldTrips.com](https://www.worldtrips.com)
- "How to Pack Your Bags Before You Study Abroad" from [USAC.edu](https://www.usac.edu)
- "What NOT to Pack for Study Abroad" from [StudentUniverse.com](https://www.studentuniverse.com)
- "What Can I Bring" A-Z list from [TSA.gov](https://www.tsa.gov)



3 Months Before Departure: Secure Documentation and Living & Travel Arrangements

Living and Travel Arrangements

- ☐ Confirm acceptance to a study abroad program
- ☐ Arrange your accommodations and travel
- ☐ Enroll in classes

**You will need to fill out Form I-20 and Form DS-160 if you are an international student studying abroad in the U.S.*

Required Documentation

Forms and Visas

- ☐ Visit the website or consulate of the country you are visiting
- ☐ Fill out *Form I-20, *Form DS-160, and other application forms
- ☐ Pay the SEVIS 901 fee that allows you to apply for a visa
- ☐ Apply for your visa
- ☐ Schedule an appointment with a local embassy or consulate
- ☐ Research to find out what documents to take to your appointment
- ☐ Ensure your passport is up to date
- ☐ Take a 2x2 colored photo (white background and neutral facial expression) and submit it with your forms



Health Insurance

- ☐ Determine whether your university and/or visa requires international student health insurance
- ☐ Understand the insurance requirements
- ☐ Research plans and purchase a **student health insurance policy** that meets your requirements and budget
- ☐ Obtain a visa letter from your insurer that provides proof of coverage (if necessary for your visa)
- ☐ Obtain a *waiver form from your insurer that provides proof of comparable coverage (if necessary for your university)

*Many universities offer their own health insurance plans. However, schools will oftentimes let you purchase your own **student health coverage** elsewhere if your insurer provides them with a waiver form that includes proof of coverage which meets their school requirements.

Vaccines

- ☐ Visit the "**Travelers' Health**" page from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website to see the required and recommended vaccinations for travel to your destination country
- ☐ Schedule a doctor's appointment for 4-6 weeks before your departure to receive required or recommended vaccinations

Resources:

- "Everything You Need to Know About Getting an F-1 Visa" from WorldTrips.com (for international students to the U.S.)
- "What Questions Should I Ask When Buying Study Abroad Insurance" from WorldTrips.com
- "Travelers' Health" page from CDC.gov
- "Your Health Abroad" from Travel.State.Gov
- "Smart Traveler Enrollment Program" from Step.State.gov

2 Months Before Departure: Plan for Technological Needs

- ☐ Update your cell phone plan or order a cell phone that works abroad
- ☐ Purchase power adapters and converters
- ☐ Download useful apps

Resources:

- "11 Tips to Find the Best Study Abroad Phone + Plans" from GoAbroad.com
- "The Top 50 iPhone Apps for Study Abroad" from TheStudyAbroadBlog.com
- "Study Abroad Parent Guide-Communication Tips" from StudyAbroad.com
- "Study Abroad: Technology Tips" from Pearsoned.com



1.5 Months Before Departure: Attend Doctor's Appointment

- ☐ Get required/recommended vaccinations and ensure you are healthy enough for travel

Resources:

- "Health Concerns for Study Abroad Students" from WorldTrips.com
- "16 Tips to Stay Healthy While Traveling" from HuffingtonPost.com
- "What to Pack in Your Travel First-Aid Kit" from TravelandLeisure.com



1 Month Before Departure: Confirm All Arrangements are Final



- ☐ Create your budget
- ☐ Ensure you understand exchange rates
- ☐ Convert some of your money to the foreign currency before leaving in case you want some spending money when you arrive
- ☐ Confirm that your apartment, dorm, and other accommodations are set
- ☐ Arrange transportation from the airport to your school or accommodations
- ☐ Make copies of important documents
- ☐ Do last-minute packing and shopping

Resources:

- "How to Create a Realistic Study Abroad Budget" from WorldTrips.com
- "5 Transportation Options for International Students in the U.S." from WorldTrips.com
- "Exchange Rates and Currency Calculator" from X-Rates.com