

Port of Entry

What to expect at a U.S. Port of Entry

Upon arrival to a U.S. port of entry, proceed to the terminal area for arriving passengers to begin inspection. As you approach the inspection station, you should have the documents listed in the section below. A Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer will ask why you wish to enter the U.S. You should explain that you're traveling to WashU to study, conduct research, teach, or work, as appropriate.

The CBP officer may ask for your final destination, living address and WashU's address. They may also inquire about how you will fund your stay; be ready to show financial documents. If asked about your "intentions," be sure to remind the officer that you plan to return home after completing your academic activities.

Land border entry

If you're entering the U.S. through a land border, you must request an I-94 prior to your arrival. Visit our [I-94 Guide](#) for steps to request the I-94.

Once your inspection is complete, the inspecting officer:

- will return your passport and I-20 or DS-2019 or I-797 (and other documents that they took for inspection)
- may stamp your passport with your immigration details (admission status, date of entry, status end date)

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Secondary Inspection

Sometimes international visitors are required to go to secondary inspection. Secondary inspection is necessary when the CBP officer cannot verify your information, or if you do not have all of the required documentation. Secondary inspection allows officers to conduct additional research to verify information without causing delays for other arriving passengers. If you are asked to go to secondary inspection, you should remain calm and follow the directions of the CBP officer. You may be asked for contact information for your Designated School Official (DSO) – see list below.

For more information on entering the U.S., visit the [Customs and Border Protection](#) website.

Required documents at U.S. Port of Entry

Carry printed copies of all documents

Carry **physical paper copies of all documents** and be prepared to present the documents to the CBP officer at the U.S. Port of Entry. Remember to have back-up electronic copies accessible on your phone without the use of wifi. However, note that presenting your phone to a CBP officer could lead to a search of your electronic device.

- **Passport valid for at least six (6) months from the date of entry**
- **U.S. visa entry stamp**
 - Stamped into your passport by the U.S. consulate or embassy after your visa is approved
 - Must be valid at the time of entry
 - Use the appropriate visa stamp that corresponds with the intended status (e.g., F-1, J-1 or H-1B)
 - Not applicable for Canadian citizens
- **Eligibility document**
 - Form I-20 (for F-1)
 - Form DS-2019 (for J-1)
 - I-797 Approval Notice (for H-1B or O-1)
- **[I-94 Record](#)**
- **SEVIS fee payment receipt** (for F or J only)
- **Centenary transcripts** (for current students only)
[Request your transcripts](#) from the Office of the Registrar; carry a printed copy
- **Admission letter** (for incoming students only)
- **Printed evidence of financial resources** proof of funding per requirements of your visa type (students can find more information on our [Office of Financial Aid](#) page)
- **Printed letter from your department confirming employment** (for scholars and employees)

CBP gathers travelers' arrival/departure information automatically from their electronic travel records. Learn more about the [I-94 Guide](#). Be sure to print your I-94 record after arrival. You will need it to verify immigration status and/or employment authorization.

Note: CBP will still issue a paper I-94 at land border ports of entry (i.e., Canada and Mexico). You must pre-request and pre-pay for your I-94 in this case.

It is also important to [Know Your Rights](#).

Disclaimer Statement

This document is designed to provide resources and content for general informational and educational purposes only. This information does not constitute legal advice. The information provided is subject to changes in the law. For specific legal questions or guidance, students and scholars are encouraged to seek personalized legal advice from a qualified attorney at their own discretion and expense.
