



## Information for international students

This document contains instructions and advice for international students who have been accepted to Canada/USA Mathcamp. Please read it carefully and start the visa process early!

**IMPORTANT: For the purposes of US immigration, you are a visitor, not a student.** Mathcamp is not a degree-granting institution, but a "self-improvement conference". You are not receiving course credits or a diploma, nor paying fees to a school or university.

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If you have any questions about the visa process, please don't hesitate to contact us ([info25@mathcamp.org](mailto:info25@mathcamp.org)).

**Suggestion for all international travelers:** We recommend that you include your name and the Mathcamp office number, (888) 371-4159, in a label on each checked bag. (If the airline misplaces your luggage, it will be easier for them to call the office than to reach an international phone number.)

# 1. The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative

**Who is eligible?** Citizens of Canada and of the British Overseas Territories of Bermuda will be able to travel to the US without a visa through the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI).

**What will I need?** A valid passport.

**Where can I get more information?** Visit the WHTI website for more details on acceptable travel documents: <http://www.cbp.gov/travel/us-citizens/western-hemisphere-travel-initiative>.

## 2. The Visa Waiver Program

The Visa Waiver Program (VWP) allows nationals of certain countries to come to the US for temporary business or pleasure (that includes Mathcamp!) for up to 90 days (and camp is 35 days). As the name indicates, citizens of those countries will not need a visa, however they **will** need to obtain authorization from the “ESTA” before they travel (read on for details).

**Who is eligible?** Citizens of participating countries are exempt from US visa requirements. As of April 2025, the participating countries are: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Chile, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom. For an up-to-date list of participating countries, see <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/tourism-visit/visa-waiver-program.html>

**What will I need?** You will need two things:

1. Make sure your passport meets these requirements:
  - You will need a **valid e-passport** that is compliant with the Department of Homeland Security requirements. See <http://www.dhs.gov/e-passports> for specifics about the requirements for passports.
  - You must have a passport that is valid for at least 6 months after your planned departure from the United States (unless exempted by [country-specific agreements](#).)
2. You will need authorization to travel under the Visa Waiver Program through the **Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA)**. The ESTA is an online system that determines your eligibility for travel. You need to receive ESTA approval before you travel, so go ahead and apply as soon as you have been accepted to Mathcamp: <https://www.cbp.gov/travel/international-visitors/esta> . There is a processing fee and authorization charge totaling \$21, which must be paid by debit/credit card.

The application will ask for your travel plans; if you have not yet made arrangements for plane tickets, then you may leave that section blank. It will also ask for your address in the US. Your address will be:

Mathcamp  
% Lewis & Clark College  
615 S. Palatine Hill Road  
Portland, Oregon 97219 USA

Most travelers entering the United States under the Visa Waiver Program who have an approved ESTA will no longer need to fill out the I-94W form, nor will a green I-94W departure card be placed in their passport. You *may* need to fill out a white Customs declaration upon arrival in the U.S. (which you will receive at the airport when you arrive).

### 3. B-2 Visitor Visas

If you are **not** a citizen of any of the countries listed in the previous two sections (i.e, the countries covered by the WHTI or the VWP), you will need a **B-2 visitor visa** to enter the United States to attend Mathcamp.

#### What documents do I need to enter the US?

You will need a passport that is valid for at least 6 months after your planned departure from the United States. You will also need a **VISITOR (B-2) VISA**.

#### Step 1: The visa application forms

Every visa applicant must complete a visa application form **DS-160: Nonimmigrant Visa Electronic Application**. Fill out the visa application form as soon as you receive these instructions! At this stage, you will also need to pay the **\$185 visa application fee**.

The forms are available at <https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/>.

Here are the answers to some questions on Form DS-160:

**Purpose of Trip to US:** Temp Business/Pleasure Visitor (B)

**Specify:** Tourist / Personal Travel Visitor (B2)

**Arrival city:** Portland, OR (The airport code is PDX.)

**Address where you will stay in the U.S.:** Lewis & Clark College, 615 S. Palatine Hill Road, Portland OR

**Who will pay for your trip:** In your answer, include the statement that “Food and lodging for the duration of the program are included in the camp tuition.” If you’re getting a scholarship from us, say so (the Mathematics Foundation of America will be paying for your trip).

**Contact Person Name in the US:** Maya Saran

**Organization name in the US:** Mathematics Foundation of America

**US Contact Address:** Mathcamp, c/o Lewis & Clark College, 615 S. Palatine Hill Road, Portland OR

**US Contact Phone Number:** (888) 371-4159

**US Contact Email Address:** [mc@mathcamp.org](mailto:mc@mathcamp.org)

**Primary Occupation:** Student

**Briefly describe your duties:** You can just write “Student”.

There is lots of guidance online about filling out the form. You should also see the official FAQ's at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/forms/ds-160-online-nonimmigrant-visa-application/ds-160-faqs.html>. And of course, feel free to write to us with questions.

## Step 2: Scheduling your interview

Your next step is to schedule an interview at the most convenient US Consulate. You can find links to all US consulates at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas.html>. In order to schedule your appointment, you will need your Passport Number, your visa application fee payment receipt number, and the 10-digit barcode number from your DS-160 confirmation page.

Scheduling the appointment is often the hardest part of the visa application process: at some consulates, the waiting time can be weeks or months. You may even find that no appointments are available; in that case, check back every day until you are able to make one! On the bright side, once you have your interview, it generally only takes a day or two to process your visa (though it could take longer).

**If you cannot get an appointment in time for the start of Mathcamp, schedule one for as early as you can, then email us immediately!** Don't panic: this has happened in the past and we have always been able to convince US consulates to move our students' appointments earlier.

## Step 3: The visa interview

Budget at least 4-5 hours for your visa appointment. The interview itself should only take about 15 minutes, but they're almost certain to make you wait around for a long time.

What to bring to your interview:

- A printed copy of your **appointment letter**.
- The confirmation page from your **DS-160** visa application.
- A **passport** valid at least six months past the intended departure from the US.
- A recent 5cm x 5cm color **photograph**, showing full face, against a light background. (See <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/photos.html> for details.) Write your name and birth date on the back of the picture.
- A **Mathcamp invitation letter** from the Mathcamp director. (These will be emailed to all accepted international students.)
- A photocopy of the **payment** that you sent us as your deposit, and/or a letter from Mathcamp awarding you a **scholarship** (this information is included in your invitation letter).
- If you have reserved or purchased flights before your visa appointment, then bring a photocopy of the **air ticket and itinerary** showing your date of departure and your date of return. If you prefer to wait until the visa is approved before making travel plans, bring a sample itinerary.
- A copy of **your parents' tax returns** or **employment certification** (they often ask for this).
- **"Proof of your economic, social, family and other ties"** to your home country. There are no official requirements for these documents, yet they are in some sense the most important part of your visa application. This is how you convince the visa officials that you are not trying to immigrate illegally to the US, but simply plan to go to Mathcamp and then come back. Here are some suggestions for what you might bring:
  - a letter from your parents, saying how thrilled they are at the opportunity for you to attend Mathcamp, but making it clear that you live with them and are returning home afterwards;

- a letter from your math teacher or school principal, saying that you are an excellent student, and that they hope your Mathcamp experience will enrich the whole school community when you return. (The point here is not only to praise you, but to casually mention that they expect you back.)
- your school transcript and/or a resume listing all your mathematical (and other) awards and accomplishments;
- a form showing that you are enrolled or have been accepted to a school/university for next year; evidence that you have paid for school/university for next year
- **Other: check at your local US consulate!** Some places require birth certificates; others require your parents to come with you if you are under 16. Be sure to check in advance on your local US consulate's webpage!

Things to remember for your interview:

- **What is The Purpose of Your Trip:** "I will be attending Canada/USA Mathcamp, a summer conference for mathematically talented high-school students."
- **Do you intend to study in the US:** This is important! **Answer "NO"**. For the purposes of US Immigration, you will *not* be a student! You are not receiving course credits or a diploma, nor paying fees to a school or university.

### Don't let the process intimidate you!

Mathcamp has international students every year, and we have never had a student denied a visa. It's a complicated process, but it's worth it! Please keep Maya ([maya@mathcamp.org](mailto:maya@mathcamp.org)) up to date on your visa application status, and feel free to consult her on anything you're unsure about.

## **4. Transiting through Canada (or other countries)**

If your flights involve transiting through Canada (i.e., you are first flying to an airport in Canada and then taking another flight to the US), you may need a **transit visa**. Check here whether you need one: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/visit-canada/transit.html>

Similarly, if you are transiting through any other country, check whether you need a transit visa for that country – you don't want any surprises on the day you are traveling!

*Good luck, and see you at Mathcamp!!*