



About the Foreign Service

1. What is the entry-level salary for a Foreign Service Officer?

The entry-level salary for Foreign Service Officers ranges from the mid-thirty to the high-sixty thousand dollar range, depending on education level and prior work experience. Junior officers generally serve their first two tours overseas, for a total of four years, and can benefit from overseas allowances, including housing and financial incentives (e.g., hardship differential), which make for an attractive overall compensation package.

2. Are there employment opportunities for spouses overseas?

Yes. Employment opportunities for spouses vary by country of assignment. The Department's Family Liaison Office maintains a listing of job opportunities at most posts and may be contacted directly once an assignment is known. The Department also has a growing number of "tandem couples" in which both spouses work for a foreign affairs agency of the U.S. government.

3. Will my family get to travel and live overseas with me?

Spouses, children under age 21, and, in rare cases, dependent parents may accompany Foreign Service employees abroad at Government expense. However, even though family members are not required to be medically cleared before an offer of employment is extended, family members must be medically cleared before traveling overseas at U.S. Government expense to accompany Foreign Service Officers on assignment. This means employees could be assigned overseas unaccompanied by those family members who do not have clearances. Further, the rules for claiming your parent or parent-in-law as a dependent are strict, and involve showing proof that they have been more than 51% dependent on you for an extended period of time. Security concerns and lack of adequate educational or health facilities at certain posts may dictate against eligible family members accompanying the officer to such posts.

4. Do many FSOs bring their own vehicles on assignment?

Yes, certainly. They might opt to bring their own car, or they might buy one from a departing colleague when they arrive at post. There are a number of possibilities. Just keep in mind though that you are limited sometimes by certain restrictions - right-hand drive cars, sometimes limitations on retractable headlights, emissions, etc. All of this information about a particular country is readily available to you as part of the assignment bidding process so you can be well informed.

5. Are there programs that help JOs (Junior Officers) adjust to their new duty station?

Yes - each overseas post and American Embassy has an Orientation Program for all new arrivals at post. You are also assigned a "sponsor," an official sponsor and a community sponsor who matches your interests and family composition.

6. What household items do you recommend a JO store and which do you recommend they bring to their new duty station?

Good question. Of course it depends on your state of life, i.e., married, single with kids, etc. It also depends on whether the post is a limited or full shipment post. You should always bring things that will make your home overseas your personal home. Contact the [Family Liaison Office](#) prior to departure.

7. Does the Department of State consider lesbians and gays for employment? What if I have a live-in partner?

It is the policy of the Department of State to provide equal opportunity and fair and equitable treatment in employment to all persons without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap, political affiliation or marital status, or sexual orientation.

8. How much exposure/experience in the local culture do you have an opportunity to enjoy?

You have lots of opportunity to enjoy the local culture - compare it to the time you have available right now when you go home after work. The host country is your home - after work every day and on weekends. You are a U.S. government representative - but you are also a resident and a tourist.

9. If I decline an offer of employment, will my candidacy continue? Am I likely to get another offer of employment in the future?

A candidate may decline two appointment offers before his/her name is removed from the Register, even if the 18 month eligibility period has not expired. If a candidate declines an offer, there is no guarantee that his/her name will be reached again and another employment offer made.

10. My situation has changed. Can I defer my candidacy for entry into the Foreign Service?

The appointment process to become a Foreign Service Officer requires strong commitment. Occasionally, candidates request deferral of their candidacy. Active or reserve military personnel serving abroad, or U.S. civilian government employees serving abroad, including Peace Corps, may request deferrals for the period of their overseas service, up to a maximum of two years. Requests for deferrals from any other candidates will be considered on a case-by-case basis; however, candidates should be aware that only truly compelling deferral requests can be approved. A deferral does not result in additional time for a

name to remain on a register. A deferral merely "stops the clock;" at the end of the deferral period, the candidate's name will be re-added to the Register for the period of time remaining from their original candidacy.

11. Do I have to accept every assignment that is offered?

Foreign Service personnel can express their preference for postings, but must be willing to serve worldwide according to the needs of the Service.

12. Does the system tolerate dissent?

As public servants, Foreign Service Officers must publicly defend U.S. government policy, despite personal reservations. There is an internal channel through which an employee may present dissenting views on specific foreign policy issues. If an officer cannot publicly defend official U.S. policy, he or she has the option to resign.

13. Will the Federal government repay my college loans?

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has implemented a program for the repayment of student loans under certain conditions. By law, the maximum any federal agency can award is \$10,000 a year, or \$60,000 over a lifetime. In each of the first three years of our program, the Department approved payments of \$4,700. In return, an employee must agree to remain with the paying agency for at least three years.

14. Are veterans given hiring preference?

Veterans who pass the Oral Assessment and qualify as preference eligible are entitled to .175 for a 5 point preference or to .35 for a 10 point preference, based on a seven point scale. Specialist candidates, who are assessed on a 100 point scale, and who pass their oral assessment are entitled to an additional 5 to 10 points added to their competitive rating. In all other situations, veterans' preference is not a factor.

15. Are non-citizens eligible for Foreign Service employment?

Only U.S. citizens may apply for an appointment to the career Foreign Service, i.e., you must be a U.S. citizen by the day you submit your registration package (for generalists), or upon your application to fill a vacancy announcement (for specialists).