



5 KEY STEPS **TO PREPARE FOR** **YOUR STAY IN FRANCE**



OVERVIEW OF THE CHECKLIST

First things first: what to check before anything else

- ☐ A passport valid for your entire stay
- ☐ A valid student visa
- ☐ Admission letter or proof of enrollment from a French institution
- ☐ Temporary accommodation letter (if required)
- ☐ Budget check: make sure you meet the minimum financial requirements

What to pack in your suitcase

- ☐ Paper and digital copies of all important documents
- ☐ International driver's license (if applicable)
- ☐ Recent ID photos
- ☐ European power adapter
- ☐ Some euros in cash

Get ready for your arrival in France

- ☐ Download the Study in France checklist
- ☐ Health insurance
- ☐ Look for accommodation (CROUS, shared flat, private residence, etc.)
- ☐ Find a guarantor
- ☐ Plan temporary housing
- ☐ Prepare for currency exchange
- ☐ Get a French (e)SIM and mobile plan

Once you've moved in

- ☐ Get home insurance
- ☐ Set up your utilities and subscriptions
- ☐ Complete your admin task
- ☐ Open a French bank account
- ☐ Order your local transport card
- ☐ Check if you're eligible for housing aid (APL)
- ☐ Pick up your student card

Want to meet other students?

- ☐ Join student associations on campus
- ☐ Sign up for the Buddy System
- ☐ Connect with the Study in France community



CHECKLIST **DETAILS**



Read This Before You Begin

To help you make sense of your preparations, we've broken down each step of your checklist: visa, housing, health insurance, budget, and more.

Once you've read through everything, **we recommend creating a free account on the [Student Hub](#)** – it's our dedicated platform to help you get ready before you arrive in France.

You'll find all the key info and useful resources in one place. And if you have questions, our community helpers are here to help you and connect you with students in your future city!

First things first: Essentials to check

► Valid student visa

Visa requirements depend on your nationality and how long you're staying. To find out exactly what you need to do, head over to the official French visa website [France-Visas.gouv.fr](https://france-visas.gouv.fr) and fill out a quick online form.

If you're not a citizen of the EU, EEA, or Switzerland, the most common visa for stays longer than 3 months is the VLS-TS. We explain everything in this article, and we also recommend checking [Campus France](#) – it's one of the most reliable sources out there.

► Admission letter from a French higher education institution

This document proves that you're officially enrolled and is required for several steps:

- Applying for your visa (via Campus France)
- Registering with French social security (Ameli)
- Applying for housing aid (CAF)

It must come from a French institution recognized by the government (a public university, grande école, or accredited private school). It should include your full name, the name of your program, and the start/end dates of your studies.

► Temporary accommodation letter

You may be asked for this in the following cases:

- When applying for a student visa (if you don't yet have a rental contract or housing reservation)
- As proof of address (for CAF, your bank, Ameli, or certain prefecture procedures)

Your letter should include:

- Your full identity (name, date and place of birth, passport number)
- The host's full name and contact info (address, phone number)
- The exact address of the accommodation
- Start and end dates of your stay

Here's [an example](#) of what it should look like. You can also generate one on the [official government website](#).

Additional documents often requested:

- Proof of address in the host's name
- A copy of the host's ID

► Financial proof: Make sure you meet the minimum budget requirement

For long-term stays, you'll need to prove you have at least €615/month to cover living expenses in France.

You can show this through:

- A letter of financial support from a guarantor (often a parent), plus their bank statement
- Your own recent bank statements showing enough funds
- A scholarship certificate if you're receiving one
- Your last three payslips if you're working (internship, apprenticeship, etc.)



Get ready for your arrival in France

➤ Health insurance

If you're from the EU, your European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) will cover you in France. If you're from outside the EU, there are two situations:

- **Staying less than 3 months?** A private insurance (like [Heyme](#)) will do.
- **Staying more than 3 months?** You must register with the French public health insurance system [through the official portal](#) for international students. It's free and covers basic care.

For better coverage, we also recommend signing up for complementary health insurance (called a "mutuelle" in France).

It might sound a bit complicated at first — but don't worry, [we break it all down for you here](#).

➤ Finding accommodation

This is definitely one of the most stressful steps on your checklist — especially if you're moving to a big city! The demand is high, especially between June and August when all students are searching at the same time.

You have several options: university residences (CROUS or private), rentals from individuals, or via real estate agencies. No matter what you choose, you'll need to prepare a strong rental application — and that usually means one or two guarantors.

We share our favorite platforms and tips for finding student housing [in this article](#).

➤ Finding a guarantor

As mentioned above, having a guarantor is one of the keys to securing a place to live. Most landlords — and all agencies — will ask for one.

The good news? There are solutions, even if you don't know anyone in France who can help.

- **Visale:** A free service provided by the French government. Check if you're eligible on their site.
- **Garantme:** A paid option, popular with international students.
- **SmartGarant:** A solid alternative to Garantme..

► Booking temporary housing

Haven't secured long-term housing yet? No stress — you can book a place for your first few days using platforms like **Airbnb** or **Booking.com**. Don't forget about **hostels** too — they're often cheaper and a great way to meet people when you arrive.

► Currency exchange

Consider opening a multi-currency account (like **Wise**) to convert your money into euros and transfer funds without high bank fees.

► French (e)SIM card and mobile plans

You can choose between a prepaid card or a no-contract phone plan. For your first few days, we recommend using an eSIM with a prepaid plan — that way you'll have internet as soon as you land.

Once you've found a place to live, you can switch to a cheaper plan. Most providers will ask for a French address to send the physical SIM card and activate your contract.

We've listed the best mobile options for international students [right here](#).

What to Pack in Your Suitcase

► Printed and digital copies of all important documents

Make sure to scan all your important documents: ID card, passport, birth certificate (and its translation, if needed)... it's always smart to keep digital copies safely stored in the cloud.

► International driver's license

Useful if you plan to drive while in France.

► Recent passport photos

You'll need them for things like your student card, transport card, or campus paperwork.

► European power adapter

► Some cash in euros

Once You've Moved In

➤ Get housing insurance

This is mandatory for all housing in France, so it should be one of your first steps. We explain everything in this article.

➤ Set up your utility contracts

In France, tenants usually take care of electricity, gas, and internet contracts themselves. If you're in student housing, these might already be included in your rent. We go over all the housing-related costs and the best providers here.

➤ Complete your admin tasks

[Validate your VLS-TS visa online](#), [register for French health insurance](#) (if not done yet), and finalize your university enrollment if needed.

➤ Open a French bank account

Some banks require a permanent address, so you may need to wait until you've moved in. Not sure which one to choose? Online banks like **N26** and **Bunq** are super convenient — easy to open, international support, user-friendly apps. Prefer something in-person? Crédit Agricole and BNP Paribas also have student-friendly offers.

➤ Get your public transport card

Order a transport pass to get around easily. Whether it's metro, bus, tram, or shared bikes, most public networks offer special student discounts.

➤ Check if you're eligible for APL

The APL (Aide Personnalisée au Logement) is a monthly housing subsidy that many students in France can apply for. It ranges from €70 to €320 depending on your income, your city, and whether you live alone or in a shared apartment.

Not all international students are eligible — it depends on your visa type (like the VLS-TS) and how long you're staying.

You can run a simulation on the official CAF website (the public body that manages this aid) or use a service like EasyAPL, which handles the application for you.

➤ Pick up your student card

Don't forget to collect your student card from your school's administrative office! It gives you access to discounts (museums, public transport, cafeterias, etc.) and is sometimes required for other formalities.

How to Meet Other Students?

➤ Student associations on your campus

Many associations focus on welcoming international students. They organize events all year round to help you settle in and meet people. We've [listed them here](#) so you can find the ones near you.

➤ The buddy system

This is a mentorship program supported by most French universities and schools. We highly recommend it! You'll be paired with a French student who can help you navigate your first days in France. Signing up is super easy — just fill out the form on [the Buddy System website](#).

➤ The Study in France community

Our community is here to support you every step of the way — from preparing your trip to settling into life in France.

Join our Discord server (coming soon!) and [create your free account](#) on the Student Hub. You'll find useful info, resources, and a great place to meet other students heading to the same city!





FREQUENTLY ASKED **QUESTIONS**

Frequently Asked Questions



Who's behind Study in France?



We're a small team based in France, driven by a mission we care deeply about: **helping international students feel welcome**. We've been through this journey ourselves, and our goal is simple: make it easier for you to settle in, meet new people quickly, and enjoy your time in France to the fullest.

What tools are available to help you complete this checklist?

You're not alone! We've created several free resources to support you every step of the way:

- The **Student Hub**: your go-to space to track your checklist, plan your move, and ask questions.
- **Our practical guides**: free to download, covering major topics like housing, visas, healthcare, and more.
- **Study in France's Blog**: packed with short, clear, and helpful articles for every stage of your journey.

Still have questions?

No stress! You can email us at **community@studyinfrance.org** — our team (and our community helpers) will do their best to get back to you quickly!

FINAL NOTE

We hope this guide helped you see things more clearly! Don't forget to join our community to stay updated and connect with other students.

Good luck with your preparations — and see you soon on **Study in France!**

