

English Language Programs



A variety of English language courses are available to foreign students at U.S. academic institutions as well as at independent language schools and other institutions. Enrollment in an English language course is often the first step in a student's academic, vocational or technical training.

TYPES OF ESL PROGRAMS

English language programs (ESL programs) may be part of a college or university, or they may be private, independent programs which are sometimes located on a college or university's campus, but are independent. University-based programs usually follow a semester or quarter system. Private programs are usually more flexible, often starting a new course every week and usually offering shorter courses as well as longer programs. Both types of institutions offer intensive and semi-intensive courses for beginners to more advanced levels, and professional and summer programs all of which may be with or without optional extra-curricular activities. Before you apply to a language school, you should make sure it meets accepted minimum standards and is accredited (see more below)

Intensive ESL courses

Intensive English courses generally require more than the average 20 teaching hours per week in the classroom and are academic oriented. Many programs are designed to prepare students for admission into an American college or university.

Semi-intensive ESL courses

Semi-intensive courses generally include several hours per day of classroom instruction and may offer numerous additional out-of-class activities and programs for the remainder of the day.

Professional English Courses

Many English language programs are designed to fit the needs of professionals. Universities may have business English courses or special certificate programs in different subjects. Other schools offer English courses specific to individual fields such as law, medicine, computer science, hospitality, dental hygiene, etc. Both university-based and individual programs may also offer internships or work experience with American businesses as part of their program.

Additional Activities and Programs

Many English language programs provide additional activities and programs to ESL students. They can add a cultural aspect, offer additional instruction in a

sport or other skill and help students to meet American families and apply the language skills they are learning. Some of these special services include:

- Possibility to take academic courses while enrolled in ESL classes
- Educational counseling
- Assistance with college and university applications
- Field trips, excursions and cultural activities
- Home-stays (lodging and meals) with American families
- Training or instruction in specific fields (i.e. a sport, dance, etc)
- Organized recreational and sports activities

While not all of these services may be available, they can add another dimension to what you are learning in the classroom and will make you feel much more a part of the school and city where you are studying. You should ask about these activities when choosing a program.

Cost

Cost varies greatly with each program. Tuition fees for English language programs can range between \$150 and \$300 per week and room and board ranges between \$125 and \$350 per week depending on the location of the school. Other fees such as insurance, athletic fees, health care, optional field trips and books can total up to \$800 per session. Financial aid is extremely rare.

Visas

Visa requirements have changed in the past two years and are still changing. Contact the Consular Section of the US Embassy about current requirements (<http://www.usembassy.de/germany/visa/index.html>). Be sure to tell them what type of program you wish to study in and for how long. Also contact the school or program you wish to attend and ask them which visa you will need.

If you are studying full time (more than 18 hours a week) you need to apply for the F-1 visa for full-time academic study at a university or other academic institution in the U.S. To apply for this visa you will need to submit a completed I-20 form from the language program. This will be sent to you by the language school or university once you have confirmed your acceptance for the course and submitted proof of your financial status.

Accreditation

In order to be able to send I-20 forms to international students who want to study English in the U.S., all Intensive English Language Programs (IEPs) in the U.S. are required to apply for accreditation by an agency recognized by the US Department of Education. Accreditation guarantees certain minimum standards. IEPs that are not part of university programs and therefore do not have accreditation through the university, must be independently accredited by a recognized accrediting body. There are two specialized accrediting bodies for Intensive English Programs in the United States: the Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training (ACCET) and the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA).

In addition there are two national organizations that recognize (but do not accredit) IEPS that go through a self-study process: *the American Association of Intensive English Programs* and the *University and College Intensive English Programs*. Most schools list their accreditation and their professional association membership in their information brochures.

How to Choose

You will need to do plenty of research when choosing an English Language Program. What type of program best fits your needs? Are the courses in which you wish to enroll appropriate for your language proficiency? In addition you will need to consider the following:

- cost and possible financial aid availability
- accreditation issues
- the qualifications of the faculty
- housing (dorm, hotel, hostel, home-stay etc.)
- class size and cultural diversity of the student body
- any additional services offered

How to Apply

Obtain the application materials from the institutions you are interested in attending. To do this, write, e-mail, fax, or phone the institution. Some institutions may have their application materials on their web sites. When requesting information, also inquire about admission deadlines. Admission is generally open. This means that the institution will accept all applicants, providing they meet minimum criteria, such as financial ability and perhaps a minimum proficiency in English if you will be applying to a professional English course.

Complete the application and return all required documents by the admission deadline if applicable. After you have been admitted or in some instances, as part of the application process, the institute will ask you to provide proof of finances. This is necessary before they can provide you with the I-20 form, which you will need to get your visa.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

The TOEFL is a standardized exam that tests English proficiency. It is required of non-native English speakers for admission into a degree program at almost every college or university in the U.S. and some specialized English Language programs. The exam measures reading comprehension, listening comprehension, speaking and writing skills. It is not a language qualification in itself. However, many of the English language programs available in the US offer courses to prepare you for the TOEFL exam.

We strongly recommend reading the more detailed guide *If you want to study in the United States (Book 3): Short Term Study, English Language Programs, Distance Education, and Accreditation* which can be downloaded online at <http://www.educationusa.state.gov/study/pubs/iywts3.pdf>.

Online Resources

- American Association of Intensive English Programs: www.aaiep.org
- University and College Intensive English Programs: www.uciep.org
- Language Course Finder: www.language-learning.net
- Commission on English Language Accreditation: <http://www.cea-accredit.org/>
- English Language Courses in the US: <http://www.fulbright.co.uk/eas/studyus/otherstudies/english.html>
- Directory of ESL Programs online: <http://www.globalstudy.com/esl/us/map/>
- More external links and information at the US Mission in Germany website: <http://www.usembassy.de/germany/exchanges/shortterm.html>

Adapted from "English Language Courses in the US", U.S. Embassy, Bern http://bern.usembassy.gov/english_program.html.

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