

Korean Language Learning Guide

Introduction

Congratulations on your interest in a federal career that uses your Korean skills! Korean is a critically important language that holds strategic political and economic value for the United States. Korean is spoken by over 75 million people living on the Korean peninsula. South Korea's economy is the 12th largest in the world, and its global influence has increased in the 21st century through the spread of Korean popular culture.

As you prepare for the workforce, you may have language-specific questions about the opportunities available to you. This guide will present an overview of language learning opportunities, including scholarships, summer learning programs, and university classes, and guidance for further developing your Korean language skills through independent study to help you prepare to use these skills in a federal job. The links here reflect high-quality government and university resources, which you may use as a starting point for doing your own research to find the resources that work best for you.

As you continue to learn the language, you may find it helpful to consult the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (in [English](#) or [Korean](#)) to track your progress. You may also want to refer to the government's [Korean Roadmap](#) to find a list of resources grouped by level.

Language Learning Opportunities

Scholarships

There are many scholarships available for Korean study, including scholarships for study abroad. You can even begin in high school with the [National Security Language Initiative for Youth](#) program, which awards scholarships to high school students to participate in summer and academic year immersion programs. Undergraduate and graduate students can apply for the [Boren Awards](#) to help fund study abroad with an intensive language study component. If you are specifically interested in summer language study abroad, consider the [Critical Language Scholarship Program](#). College seniors, graduate students, and young professionals can apply for [Fulbright U.S. Student Program](#) grants to pursue graduate study, conduct research, or teach English abroad in South Korea. In addition to these government-sponsored scholarships, there are many private and school-specific scholarships, so be sure to search for other funding opportunities.

Pell Grant recipients can apply for the [Gilman Scholarship](#) to fund study or internships abroad, and you can enhance this scholarship with a [Critical Need Language Award](#) for Korean. ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) students can apply to [Project GO](#) to enhance your language and intercultural communications skills. Your school may also have specific scholarships for language or area studies, so it may be helpful to talk to professors or financial aid officers to see what opportunities are available.

Additional Opportunities

Approximately 150 colleges and universities in the United States offered Korean classes as of [2016](#). Even if your school doesn't offer classes, you can explore [summer learning opportunities](#) and the individual learning resources listed in this guide. If you are in high school through sophomore year of college, you may want to participate in a [STARTALK](#) program.

If you are still thinking about where to apply to college, you may want to consider the University of Hawaii, Manoa, which hosts the only [Korean Flagship Program](#). The Flagship program offers students from various majors the opportunity to pursue advanced level language study, including an overseas study and internship experience, culminating in certification as a Flagship Certified Professional. Other colleges offer specific tracks for heritage learners, so be sure to look for these programs, too.

Guidance for Developing Your Skills

As a heritage speaker, you may want to focus on practicing your reading and writing skills to help your literacy skills match your speaking and listening skills. You may also want to study Korean vocabulary for a specialized field, such as your major, to help you apply your language skills more broadly. Having a basic understanding of *hanja*, a traditional writing system consisting of Chinese characters, may be beneficial as it will allow you to infer the meaning of any new Korean words or idioms derived from Chinese. Although standard varieties of Korean are frequently used in professional settings, there are several [regional dialects](#) that can mostly be understood by speakers of a different variety.

The internet is full of resources that can help you practice Korean. The [National Institute of Korean Language](#) provides a variety of language learning resources and information about the Korean language. Their [Korean-English Learner's Dictionary](#) is searchable by theme, classification, and level and has a new Korean word of the day each day to increase your exposure to new vocabulary. They also have an interactive [webpage on Hangeul](#), which includes a thorough linguistic and historical background on the creation of the Korean writing system. If you are looking for more opportunities or useful links, the [Korean Language Flagship Center](#) is a great place to discover additional resources. The [National Foreign Language Center](#) at the University of Maryland offers a [portal](#) with higher level reading and listening materials, which you can select based on their level on the ILR (Interagency Language Roundtable) scale, the language proficiency scale used by the U.S. government, as well as [Lectia](#), a free language learning app.

Several Language Resource Centers (federally funded programs at universities that provide language-learning research and resources) also offer materials for practicing Korean. The [National Foreign Language Research Center](#) at the University of Hawaii, Manoa offers learning materials like [role-play cards](#) designed with East Asian cultural norms in mind and [task-based learning resources](#). The [Center for Advanced Language Proficiency Education and Research](#) at Pennsylvania State University offers several [lessons on Korean discourse and culture](#) which can be downloaded for free. These are a great way to deepen your cross-cultural understanding while practicing reading and writing in Korean.

Many other universities provide lists of resources for practicing your Korean skills. A small sample includes resources from the [University of Michigan](#), [Wellesley College](#), and [Duke University](#). The University of California, Los Angeles' [Center for Korean Studies](#) has a list of links to [other Korean Studies websites](#) if you are looking for a path to more resources. Some of these websites include links for Korean media, such as newspapers and TV channels. You may enjoy consuming Korean-language entertainment as well, such as music, movies, or K-dramas.