



Russian Language Learning Guide

Introduction

Congratulations on your interest in a federal career that uses your Russian skills! Russian is a critically important language that holds strategic political value for the United States. Russian is spoken by over 260 million people, with about 150 million native speakers. Russian is used in many countries, and it is one of the official languages of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, as well as one of the official languages of the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Space Station.

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 Russian 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 [Russian](#)) to track your progress. You may also want to refer to the government's [Russian Roadmap](#) to find a list of resources grouped by level.

Language Learning Opportunities

Scholarships

There are many scholarships available for Russian 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 countries where Russian is spoken. 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 Russian. 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

Over 400 colleges and universities in the United States offered Russian 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 a school with a [Russian Flagship program](#). The Flagship programs offer 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 Russian vocabulary for a specialized field, such as your major, to help you apply your specialized skills more broadly. There are several regional dialects of Russian that can mostly be understood by speakers of a different variety, and Russian is written using the Cyrillic alphabet and has a complex system of declension that you may want to focus on when developing your language skills.

The internet is full of resources that can help you practice Russian. The [resource list](#) from the [American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages](#) provides a variety of language learning resources and information about the Russian language. Middlebury College's [Russian modules](#) are a series of free, mini online modules for independent learning. Duke University's [Russian Grammatical Dictionary](#) is a searchable database of full-word paradigms with grammatical information, English translations, and audio pronunciations by native speakers. If you are looking for more opportunities or useful links, the websites of the [Russian Flagship Centers](#) are a great place to discover more 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. This will not only allow you to practice your skills but can also help you assess your current proficiency level.

Several Language Resource Centers (federally funded programs at universities that provide language-learning research and resources) also offer materials for practicing Russian. The [Center for Advanced Language Proficiency Education and Research](#) at the Pennsylvania State University offers several [lessons](#) on advanced Russian vocabulary and metaphors which can be downloaded for free. These are a great way to deepen your cross-cultural understanding while practicing reading and writing in Russian. The [Center for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning](#) at the University of Texas at Austin offers [Rockin' Russian](#), a collection of Russian music videos supplemented with exercises to improve grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The [Slavic and East European Language Resource Center](#) at Duke University has several media-based learning [resources](#), such as [Russian Language and Culture Through Film](#), [Russian cartoons](#), [Contemporary Russian Through Documentary Film](#), and more. They also offer [readings](#) for advanced learners of Russian.

Many other universities provide lists of resources for practicing your Russian skills. A small sample includes resources from the [University of Chicago](#), the [University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#), and [Princeton University](#). Some of these websites include links for Russian media, such as newspapers and TV channels. You may enjoy consuming Russian-language entertainment as well, such as music, movies, or literature.