



The Intensive English Center: What to Expect

The Intensive English Center (IEC) at St. Cloud State University (SCSU) offers six (6) levels of English instruction for international students. Students who successfully complete Level 4 may matriculate to an undergraduate degree program. Students who successfully complete Level 5 may matriculate to a graduate degree program at St. Cloud State University. See the level descriptions on pages 2 and 3.

1. Arriving

On arrival, students attend orientation, complete check-in, receive student ID cards, pay tuition and health insurance, and learn about campus services and immigration regulations. They also learn about different activities and student organizations that are designed for student success. Finally, students take an English Language Placement Test. The test helps determine the English language proficiency of the students, allowing the IEC to place the students in the level where they will be most successful.

2. English Language Placement Test

The English Language Placement Test is in two parts. The first part is an essay. Students are given 40 minutes to write an essay on a given topic. The second part of the test is a 45-minute multiple choice section which evaluates listening, grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension skills.

3. Classes

Fall and spring semesters are 15 weeks. The summer semester is 11 weeks. Every semester includes 300+ hours of instruction. Students study English 5 days a week, Monday through Friday. They take classes in Reading, Writing, Listening & Speaking, Grammar, Vocabulary, and Conversation. Depending on their level, they may also have classes in American Culture, Pronunciation, Oral Presentation, and Computer Technology. Some of the classes may have a language laboratory component for additional practice in pronunciation and spoken grammar. Students register for their classes after the required international student health insurance has been paid.

4. End of Semester

At the end of the semester, students take an Exit Test. This test measures the progress each student has made over the semester. It is similar to the English Language Placement Test given during orientation week.

5. Awards Ceremony

At the end of each semester, the IEC holds an Awards Ceremony. During the Awards Ceremony, students are encouraged to give speeches, perform a short skit, sing a song, or do something else as a way of showing others how much English they have learned. At the Awards Ceremony, students receive IEC transcripts. Students who pass their level receive certificates of attendance and letters of success.

6. Activities and Student Organizations

IEC students are encouraged to get involved with campus life. This is one of the best ways for students to improve their English skills and to learn more about American culture. Also, students who get involved in campus life are often more successful in their classes. The IEC offers several trips a year to points of interest in Minnesota, such as the Mall of America, the State Capitol, Native American museums, and more. The Center for International Studies (CIS) also offers cultural programs and activities. Students should check with the IEC and CIS for announcements about upcoming activities and trips.

Level Descriptions

Pre-Level (CEFR A1¹)

Goal: Beginning students must meet simple communication and learning tasks.

Objectives: Beginning students are expected to be able to...

- Ask and answer questions about personal details and immediate surroundings, use everyday expressions
- Understand simple messages and basic phrases in predictable contexts if people are speaking slowly and clearly
- Read short texts and learn basic reading strategies
- Acquire a basic vocabulary of 500 words
- Learn basic grammar structures
- Write short sentences using appropriate grammar structures, capitalization, and punctuation.

Level 1 (CEFR A1-A2)

Goal: Upper-Beginning students must meet simple communication and learning tasks with increasing accuracy.

Objectives: Upper-Beginning students are expected to...

- Interact in routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities
- Understand clear standard speech on familiar matters
- Read relatively simple texts and practice basic reading strategies
- Enrich vocabulary, guess the meaning of words from context and use vocabulary learning strategies
- Master basic grammar structures
- Write short, simple notes and messages about everyday matters and everyday needs

Level 2 (CEFR A2)

Goal: Low-intermediate students must meet more varied communication and learning tasks with increasing fluency.

Objectives: Low-intermediate students are expected to...

- Understand most spoken English in social settings.
- Speak fluently on everyday topics, lead a small talk and use language functions
- Increase reading speed and fluency and elaborate reading strategies
- Have a working vocabulary of approximately 1,000 words from the New General Service List
- Begin developing a working vocabulary in the New Academic Word List (100 words)
- Master high-frequency grammar structures
- Write a paragraph describing experiences and impressions.

Level 3 (CEFR A2-B1)

Goal: Intermediate students must meet varied communication and learning tasks with accuracy and fluency.

Objectives: Intermediate students are expected to do the following...

- Handle successfully most communicative tasks and situations
- Understand long stretches of speech and follow academic lectures
- Read authentic texts on general topics and acquire good skills of careful and expeditious reading
- Have a working vocabulary of approximately 2,500 words from the New General Service List
- Have a working vocabulary of 250 words from the New Academic Word List
- Demonstrate a good command of the intermediate grammar structures
- Write a simple 5-paragraph essay

¹ The CEFR is the Common European Framework and as a guide for measuring foreign language proficiency levels. A1 is rank beginner and C2 is considered to be native-like or near native. The scale is used for any language, not just for English language learners. For more information on the CEFR please refer to the following:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_European_Framework_of_Reference_for_Languages

Level 4 (CEFR B1-B2)

Goal: Upper-intermediate / Low-advanced students must be ready to use academic English as a means for studying and learning in content areas at the undergraduate level.

Objectives: Upper-intermediate / Low-advanced students are expected to...

- Speak clearly and fluently about a great number of topics and give a presentation with preparation
- Follow academic lectures, discussions and debates with relative ease
- Understand texts with specialized language and develop strong skills of careful and expeditious reading
- Demonstrate a good command of general vocabulary
- Demonstrate a working vocabulary of 350 words from the New Academic Word List
- Display a strong working knowledge of all grammar categories and apply it to college writing assignments
- Write well-organized 5-paragraph essays

Level 5 (CEFR B2-C1)

Goal: Advanced students must be ready to use academic English as a means for studying and learning in content areas at the graduate level.

Objectives: Advanced students are expected to do...

- Communicate effectively with various audiences on a wide range of familiar and new topics, debate and discuss different academic topics
- Understand without difficulty spoken English in a variety of contexts
- Understand texts with specialized language and demonstrate excellent skills of careful and expeditious reading
- Develop increased knowledge of and working command of the Academic Word List (400 to 450 words)
- Have a sound command of grammar and apply advanced grammatical structures to university-level academic writing
- Write at least one academic research paper with references