

Student Handbook



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTITUTE

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WELCOME

Welcome to the English Language Institute (ELI) in Knoxville, Tennessee, USA at the University of Tennessee (UTK)! We believe that the ELI is the best place for you to study English.

For almost 50 years, ELI has been a "home away from home" for international students learning English. We provide opportunities for you to learn, be challenged, make friends, and have fun. Our staff and instructors are here to support your journey toward English proficiency and guide the next steps on your academic path.

This handbook will help you understand our institute, campus resources, and your academic and regulatory guidelines. It also provides information to navigate life at a university in the USA.

PREPARING FOR LIFE AT ELI

Pre-Departure Information

F-1 students must complete the application process and receive a valid I-20 and visa before traveling to the United States.. Additionally, the online English placement test must be completed before arrival to the English Language Institute. This ensures we can place you in the appropriate level before orientation.

Arrival Information

Plan to arrive in Knoxville 1-2 days before your orientation date. Please note that you are allowed to travel to the United States up to 30 days before the program start date listed on the Form I-20.

We offer airport pickup through the International House. You must make the reservation by [clicking here](#).

Orientation

New students must attend orientation. Orientation occurs a few days before the start of term. Attendance is essential so you can get your student ID, housing information, and your check-in with our immigration office (ISSS). You will be enrolled in the appropriate class for your language level and assign you a program of study.

Late Arrivals

F-1 students are not allowed to arrive to the ELI more than 5 calendar days after the start of term. If you are unable to attend the in-person orientation, additional orientation must be done upon arrival. Transfer-in students are allowed to enroll after 5 calendar days but within the drop/add period of 7 calendar days.

Drop / Add

A drop/add period of 7 calendar days after the start of term is allowed for students to add or drop from enrollment in the English Language Institute. Students who transfer out within the drop/add period will forfeit their tuition deposit.

Transfer In / Out

F-1 students are allowed to transfer into ELI within the drop/add period. F-1 students are allowed to transfer out to a different institution, if the drop/add period has not passed. Students will not be allowed to transfer out after the drop/add period.

Student ID

Full-time ELI students will be issued a NetID. You can use your Net ID and Volcard to access UTK resources such as email, library materials, online resources, as well as all the resources on the university's campus. As a full-time ELI student, you are a UTK student.

We will help you set up your Net ID online during orientation. You will be required to create a password for the Net ID given to you.. Ask ELI staff for the required information for creating a Net ID password.

After you set up your Net ID, you will create a Volcard (your UTK identification card). You will need to take a photo of yourself and upload it. Instructions for this process are on the Volcard website.

Your instructors may also require you to use your NetID to access online course materials (such as Canvas or Google Classroom). The Office of Information Technology (OIT) has staff located in Hodges Library to help you with NetID and connection issues. You can call OIT at 865-974-9900, or email them at oit@utk.edu, or you can chat via <https://oit.utk.edu/help/chat/>.

Tuition and Fees

The tuition rate for full-time Intensive English Program students is listed on our website at eli.utk.edu. Tuition rates are subject to change.

All students must pay tuition, fees, and insurance before you attend classes. Students who do not pay the full tuition and fees by the first day of class will incur a late fee. If full payment is not received within 5 business days of the start of class, students will be subject to dismissal from the program. Payments can be made in person or online through our website (Touchnet) by credit or debit card, personal check, cash, or wire transfer.

All full-time F1 students must have health insurance, as required by UTK. Our preferred provider offers affordable rates that can be paid in advance through an online portal. If you already have insurance through another provider, it must meet the standards required by UTK and sign a UTK-approved waiver. It is not the responsibility of ELI to manage refunds once you have paid for your insurance.

Financially sponsored students must complete all required actions to ensure payment will be made promptly. This means submitting an active financial guarantee letter that is current before classes begin.

Tuition refunds are determined by the date of withdrawal from the ELI. Before a refund is issued, the student must submit any textbooks or ELI-owned resources. Additionally, they must

have a zero balance with the Bursar's office and no other outstanding balance at UTK. The table below shows the refund timeline for tuition.

Days after first day of class	Amount of Refund
By the end of day 3	100%
By the end of day 7	50%
After 7 business days	No Refund

Tuition Deposit

Prospective students who apply and pay a tuition deposit to The English Language Institute may request a refund up to 12 months from the date of initial tuition deposit payment. Refunds can only be made to the original form of payment (via TouchNet). It is the responsibility of an applicant to request a refund. If no request is received within 12 months, the tuition deposit amount is forfeited. Refunds can take 7-10 business days for processing, depending on how you paid your fees. Students who transfer out within the drop/add period will forfeit their tuition deposit.

CLASSES AND EXPECTATIONS

Placement

Before your arrival, all students take an English language placement exam. This test is used to determine your course level. Placement is individualized according to each student's placement results. Your classes may be all the same level, or you may be placed in a different level for different skills. Only High Advanced students must have all classes at the same level.

Notes about the advanced level:

- To be placed in High Advanced in all the core classes, you must pass all Low Advanced classes.
- For those pursuing entry to a college or university in the USA, and in order to receive a recommendation letter from ELI, you must take and pass the advanced level as a full-time student.

Your instructors will assess your skills during the first few days of class to make sure that you are at the appropriate level. If you need to move up or down a level, this decision will be made in consultation with the instructor and ELI administration. No changes to placement will be made after the first week of classes.

Core Academic Curriculum

The Beginning through Low Advanced core curriculum consists of the following courses daily:

Grammar	1 hour
Reading	1 hour
Writing	1 hour
Listening/Speaking	1 hour

The ELI core curriculum courses are aligned to CEFR levels as follows:

<A1	Low Beginning	B1	High Intermediate
A1	High Beginning	B2	Low Advanced
A2	Low Intermediate	B2+	High Advanced / Pre-Academic

Elective Courses

Every term, the ELI offers elective classes. The topics for electives are scheduled based on instructor availability and/or student interest. The electives normally begin the second week of each term. In addition to your regular classes, F-1 students are required to attend 1 elective class per term. If you are a part-time student you may take an elective class for an additional fee of up to \$250 for each elective..

Classroom Expectations

Your instructor will give you a variety of assignments to improve your English language proficiency. You will use your textbooks, materials that the instructor gives you, and computers for research and writing. Sometimes you will work independently. At other times, you may work with a partner or with a small group for exercises, discussions, or class projects. You will probably have homework every day and may have bigger assignments or projects, too.

Communicating with your classmates is an equally important way to learn English, so be sure to socialize. Don't be shy. Everyone is here to learn, and you'll find that your classmates are friendly and easy to talk to. We only use English in our classes. This allows everyone to learn, grow, and provide an equitable learning environment. Students who practice a 1:1 ratio of studying to speaking will improve their skills faster. For example, if you study for one hour, speak to someone for one hour.

Schedule and Textbooks

Your schedule will be given to you on the first day of class. The schedule will show your classes, instructor name, and room number. You will also receive textbooks that have been reviewed and approved for each class. You should take your textbooks to each class every day.

Please do not write in your textbook(s) or use any online book codes until you receive your class placement for the term is finalized.. Final placement occurs the first week of classes.

Additional Materials

You will need a pen or pencil and writing paper for each class. You should keep your class materials organized. Some instructors allow the use of electronic devices in class. Mobile phones should not be used during class unless your instructor allows it for educational purposes. Instructors will consider you absent to class if you cause disruption or are disengaged during class.

Preparation

Be prepared and focused for class. Complete any assignments on time. Ask questions in and out of the classroom.

POLICIES

Attendance Policy

All students are expected to attend all their classes on time, and attendance is vital to your success. Your grade will be affected if you are late or you miss class. If you receive a failing grade due to attendance, you will not be permitted to move up to the next level and risk probation or dismissal.

- Absences will impact your grade and course progression
- Failing grades and/or unexcused absences will result in academic probation or dismissal

There are no excused absences. In the event that you are unable to attend class, you must notify your instructor via e-mail. ELI does not grant "excused absences" for medical appointments, funerals, court appearances, etc. We count any reason for missing a class as an absence. Be sure to schedule external events such as medical appointments outside of class hours.

Late arrival to class is a form of an absence. If you are 10 minutes (or more) late to class, you will be counted as absent. However, you should still attend class even if you are late.

If you know that you are going to be absent due to illness or an appointment, communicate with your instructors as soon as possible. Though you may be counted as absent, you will stay up-to-date with assignments.

If you miss class unexpectedly, communicate with your instructor(s) about why you were absent and submit your missing work as soon as possible so that you are not missing graded assignments. Do not communicate illness or tardiness (late to class) via WhatsApp™.

If you are seriously ill, have a severe cough, a fever, or you have a communicable illness, please do not attend classes in person. Call us at 865-974-3404 or email us at eli@utk.edu. For medical emergencies, dial 911 from a phone.

F-1 students

You must attend classes and take a full course of study in order to maintain status. If you are unable to study full-time, contact ELI and the ISSS office immediately. If you are unable to complete your program by the end date listed on your Form I-20, contact ISSS about requesting a program extension at least 14 calendar days before your program end date. If you have any questions regarding the legal requirements if you stay in the United States, contact the ISSS.

Student visa regulations and immigration compliance are complex. International students on a visa sponsored by UTK-ELI must keep their address information current. Any changes to your living address must be reported within 10 days to the ELI and/or ISSS office.

You must speak with ISSS if you are planning to do any of the following:

- Move to a new address
- Travel outside of the U.S.
- Request a program extension

- Take a leave of absence
- Take a break from school (authorized vacation)
- Transfer to a new school

Break Policy

F-1 students are allowed to request an authorized vacation (break) after completion of four (4) consecutive terms at the English Language Institute. Transfer students must be in good standing as students for at least 2 consecutive terms at ELI before an authorized vacation can be requested. Any authorized vacation must be requested to ELI / ISSS offices at least 14 days in advance of the end of term and can only be granted by an immigration compliance officer in ISSS. Students must plan to return to ELI in the subsequent term that follows the authorized vacation period. Students on probation are not eligible for an authorized vacation.

Dismissal Policy

Students may be dismissed from the English Language Institute. There are four main reasons for dismissal:

- misconduct or violation of student handbook(s)*
- attendance (ongoing late or absence issues or non-attendance)
- academic probation / performance
- past due account balance

Students who are dismissed may not re-enroll at ELI. Students who have one failing grade will be put on academic probation for the subsequent term. If a student fails a class in the subsequent term, the English Language Institute may dismiss the student from the program.

*The UTK Student Handbook and ELI Student Handbook

Probation Policy

Students who receive failing (F) grades in one or more core classes during the term will be placed on Academic Probation for the following term. A student who is on Academic Probation MUST NOT receive ANY failing grades in the following term of enrollment. If the student receives one or more failing (F) grades, they will be dismissed from the ELI, meaning that they will no longer be allowed to enroll in ELI classes. If an F-1 student goes on probation a second time, they will be dismissed from the program. If a student is an F-1 visa holder, they must find a new school to be accepted to or return to their home country within the immigration grace period. The deadline to return to your home country can be 15 days or 60 days depending on the end of program date listed on your I-20.

Grades

You earn your grades through participation, work in class, attendance, and assignments. Grades can show the progress that you have made, and they can show where you need improvement. We encourage you to communicate with your instructor about your grades so you can be aware of your progress.

Grading Scale for F-1 Visa Students

The ELI awards grades on the following scale for F-1 visa students:

LETTER GRADE	DESCRIPTION	NUMBER GRADE	RESULT
A	Excellent	90-100	Advance to next level
B	Good	80-89	Advance to next level
C	Average	70-79	No promotion
D	Below Average	60-69	No promotion
F	Fail	Below 60	No promotion

Grading Scale for non-F-1 visa students is the same as above, except there are no failing grades (F).

Grades and attendance are collected from the first day through the final day of class. Therefore, attend class on the first day and submit your work until the end of your last class.

End of Term

At the end of the term everyone participates in a ceremony to celebrate the work that you have completed and the progress that you have made. Instructors may also recognize the contributions of outstanding students. Students receive a certificate of completion from the ELI.

A grade report will be available for pickup seven (7) business days after the end of the term. For example, if the last day of class is Wednesday, grades will be available for pickup on the following Friday. If you are not able to pick up your grades in person, your grades can be shared to your UTK email address. Your grades cannot be shared verbally or via text message. Your grades can only be shared individually with you, the student. ELI cannot send or share your grades with friends or family members. Courses at the ELI are non-credit courses and do not count toward a major or an undergraduate or graduate degree.

Legal Status

If you are an F-1 visa holder, you have been given rights by the USCIS to live and study in the U.S. During your time in the U.S., you must remain "in status." That is, you must maintain the conditions of your visa during your time in the U.S. To stay in status, keep your documents up-to-date. You must notify the ISSS office if you change your physical address, e-mail address or if your I-20 is expiring. Be aware of your "end-of-study" date on your I-20. It is your responsibility to communicate with ISSS regarding your I-20 expiration date. If you leave the United States during a holiday break, you must have a valid travel signature from the ISSS office so that you are allowed to re-enter the country. It is your responsibility to coordinate this.

Employment

F-1 visa holders are permitted to work on-campus (but not off-campus). While ELI is in session, F-1 visa holders are only permitted to work up to 20 hours per week, and up to 40 hours when ELI is not in session. Please ask ELI staff about your individual status about employment.

If you get a part-time job, you will need to apply for a Social Security Number (SSN). To apply for an SSN, you will need to do the following: Get a letter from your new employer, have ELI

mail you an enrollment letter, make sure you have a valid I-20, and print out your I-94. You can download your most recent I-94 on the USCIS website.

Once you have all these documents, you should bring them to the Social Security Office located at 8530 Kingston Pike, Knoxville, TN 37919.

Parking

Parking is available for students at official university parking lots and in downtown Knoxville. There are a couple of options available for ELI students: First, you can use free or metered street parking (as available). You may choose to purchase a UT parking tag. If you do, you must park in the specified parking area as indicated on your parking tag. Otherwise, you risk a parking ticket and/or towing at your expense. UT Parking tag can either be purchased in person at the UT Parking Office (2121 Stephenson Dr., Knoxville, TN 37996) or online at <http://parking.utk.edu>. Please note that each option has varying prices.

Problems or Complaints

Direct communication is welcome, expected, and appreciated in North American culture. To discuss a problem or complaint, your first option is to talk to someone at the ELI. For example: If you are having problems in class, talk to your instructor first. If there are other problems, you can talk to any ELI staff. They may be able to answer your question or give you another resource.

If you have a problem, please communicate with someone about it as soon as possible. The ELI staff like to help you solve problems as quickly as possible. You will not be turned away or receive punishment for talking to someone about a problem. Don't wait for a simple problem to become a complicated problem. Ask for help by talking to your instructor, the assistant director, or director. However, sometimes, student problems can be better addressed by other professionals on the university campus, such as the Student Health Center or the Counseling Center, where you can speak to a licensed expert in private.

If you have an issue that cannot be resolved, you are first encouraged to make an appointment with the ELI director. If you feel that your issue cannot be resolved by the ELI director, you can make an appointment with the director of the Center for Global Engagement (CGE).

LIVING IN KNOXVILLE, TN

You will learn a lot about living in Knoxville and the United States in the time that you live here. The following information answers some questions that you may have at the beginning of your time here. You will soon have questions that are not answered in this section, too. Always feel free to ask ELI faculty and/or staff any questions that you may have.

Safety

Knoxville, like any city, has places and times that are less safe than others. If you do not feel safe on campus, you can use the "blue light phone" on campus to call the police. You can call the UTK Police at 865-974-3111 if you have a problem. In an emergency, dial 911. UTK also has an emergency messaging service called "UT Alert." With your Net ID, you can sign up for UT ALERT at <http://www.utk.edu/utalert>. The LiveSafe™ app is available for download to receive emergency communications, etc. We recommend that you use both resources.

American police forces are usually helpful; you do not need to be afraid of them. This is true of both the UT campus police and Knoxville police. If you do have a problem with the police, remain calm and follow the officer's instructions. If you have a problem while you are in a car, remain in the car (with your hands visible) until the police officer comes to the car to speak with you. It is best to cooperate with law enforcement.

Even though you may not be a U.S. citizen, the laws of the U.S. apply to you. You have the same rights as citizens to protect you. If you are arrested, you have the right to make two phone calls, for example: to the ELI and to your embassy or a lawyer. Make sure to contact us if you need our help. During Orientation, the Director will provide you with a personal phone number in case of an emergency.

Social Life

You can socialize (go out and have fun with people) in several ways. The ELI has social activities throughout the term, and UTK offers many campus events. Each term, the ELI's social events and outings are listed in the ELI calendar and posted in the ELI. You can also view the ELI Facebook page at <http://facebook.com/utkeli>.

The International House at UTK usually has interesting events for you to attend, so check on the I-House's web page frequently at ihouse.utk.edu.

You can also explore UTK campus activities, such as programs offered through the International House or with the clubs and associations listed on the Center for Student Engagement Page (<http://go.utk.edu>).

In addition, there are many community programs/activities in Knoxville. A great resource for finding things to do is at the website [*Inside of Knoxville*](#), where you can find interesting articles about the city and an updated calendar of events. The [*Visit Knoxville*](#) website is also a good resource with a full calendar of local events.

By socializing, you can learn and practice English, learn about culture, and make friends and develop friendships. Remember that while Americans smile easily and are not shy to talk, this friendly attitude does not mean automatic commitment to a close relationship. Making close friends requires time and effort. Joining activities on a regular basis can help you develop friendships over time and through shared experiences.

Sales Tax

Businesses in the US charge sales taxes that you must pay when you buy something. In Knoxville, the sales tax is 9.75%. This tax goes to the State of Tennessee and to the city to help pay for all services the state government provides. Most U.S. states have sales tax. Do not try to bargain or negotiate about sales taxes or prices for things you buy; it is not the custom in the US. Sometimes coupons may be used to reduce prices, but they must be in-date and valid at the specific location.

Tipping

In the US, we "tip" servers a little extra money for serving us in restaurants, hair salons, and for food delivery or taxi (Uber) services. The amount can vary, but 15% is common for services. Except for fast-food restaurants, where we do not tip, we tip servers in "sit-down" restaurants 15-20% of the cost of the meal; but if you choose to tip more, it is perfectly acceptable. Servers

are not paid much in their jobs, so they depend on their tips to make a living. Be sure to tip your server.

Drugs and Alcohol

Persons under the age of 21 years cannot legally drink alcohol in the state of Tennessee, and it is also against the law to give alcohol to any person under the age of 21. Therefore, if you are under the age of 21, if someone gives you alcohol, they are breaking the law. If you are over the age of 21, and you give an under-age person alcohol, you are breaking the law. Stores, restaurants, and nightclubs will check your ID for your age before selling you alcohol. Drinking before or while driving is against the law.

The only drugs (medications) that are legal for you to take in the state of Tennessee are those sold in a pharmacy or prescribed by a doctor FOR YOU. People can be arrested for possession of illegal drugs. Using drugs differently from the doctor's instructions can be VERY dangerous.

Smoking

The University of Tennessee is a smoke-free campus. No cigarette smoking is permitted on UT campus, even in personal vehicles. The city of Knoxville also has smoking regulations, so pay attention to signs that tell where you are permitted to smoke.

Weather

In severe weather such as snow or ice, ELI follows UTK policy on closing. You can sign up for [UT Alert](#), a free emergency messaging service. You can also look at the [UTK website](#) for weather-related information. Note: UTK rarely cancels classes because of weather.

Banking

As in most cities it is not a good idea to carry large sums of cash. Instead, most people use a bank. There are many banks within walking distance of the ELI. For example, The Bank of America, US Bank, and others will allow international money transfers; you also can get a debit or credit card with your account. You can purchase food, clothing, pay for activities, tickets, etc. with a credit or debit card.

E-Communication

Email is the primary method of communication by the University of Tennessee and the English Language Institute. Full-time students will be assigned a UT student email account. Your email address will be your NetID@vols.utk.edu. You should use this account while you are studying at the ELI and at the University of Tennessee. If you also use a personal account, you must also share that with ELI staff.

ELI also uses a WhatsApp™ group for quick communication. You can download WhatsApp™ onto your phone and be sure to check your UT email and your WhatsApp™ every day. Do not communicate illness or tardiness (late to class) or personal situations (financial or other sensitive topics) via WhatsApp™.

DEGREE PROGRAM INFORMATION

Students come to the ELI for many different reasons. Some wish to gain admittance to a university at the undergraduate or graduate level, while others simply wish to improve their English for professional or personal purposes. Whatever their aim, ELI students discover that their time at ELI has advanced them toward their goal. Courses at the ELI are non-credit courses and do not count toward a major or an undergraduate or graduate degree.

Language Assessments

The TOEFL iBT is a web-based assessment used by admissions offices in most U.S. colleges and universities for evaluating the English proficiency of applicants for academic study. The TOEFL iBT results can be sent to UTK undergraduate and graduate admissions offices upon request. TOEFL iBT scores are mailed to individual schools by the Educational Testing Service (ETS).

ELI does not administer the TOEFL iBT, but a testing center is conveniently located near Knoxville. You can also choose to take the "at home" version online. A TOEFL iBT preparation is frequently offered as an elective course at ELI for those interested in preparing for the exam. IELTS and Duolingo English Test also offer language proficiency assessments that are accepted at universities in the United States.

Undergraduate / Graduate Admissions

If you want to study as an undergraduate at a university, you must apply for admission. This is a separate process from an application to the English Language Institute. All students in the U.S. must complete an application and pay an application fee. International students must submit transcripts of previous schooling, evaluations, complete required paperwork regarding finances and immigration, and demonstrate their English proficiency. The university will use this information to determine if it will accept the student.

If you are applying for undergraduate or graduate school, remember that you can start your application at any time, even before all the required documents are available. You can add documents as you complete them. Some processes, like transcript evaluation, can take a lot of time. Also, keep in mind that universities have strict deadlines for their applications.

Applicants to the University of Tennessee (Knoxville) whose native language is not English are required to provide evidence of language proficiency. Scores for undergraduate and graduate admission to UTK are listed below:

UNDERGRADUATE		GRADUATE	
TOEFL (iBT)	79	TOEFL (iBT)	80
IELTS	6.5	IELTS	6.5
Duolingo	110	Duolingo	120

For more information about each, please click the hyperlink on the program type:

[Undergraduate Admissions](#)

[The Graduate School](#)

If you wish to apply to the University of Tennessee for undergraduate studies once you have achieved the required language proficiency score, you should first apply to [International](#)

[Admissions](#). If you have completed the High Advanced level at ELI, you may be eligible for conditional admission.

If you already have a bachelor's degree and desire admission to the Graduate School, it is a two-step process. First you must apply to the UT Graduate School at <https://gradschool.utk.edu/admissions/>, and then you must apply to the department in which you wish to study. Check both the Graduate School website and the department's website for application deadlines. We recommend that you apply far in advance of your desired start date.

Conditional Admission

Through the conditional admission program, the ELI can help you be admitted to an undergraduate program* at the University of Tennessee (Knoxville). The ELI can verify that a student's English proficiency is sufficient for academic study, even if the student has not met the TOEFL requirement, through a letter of recommendation.

Here are requirements for a recommendation letter:

- 1) a student has studied intensive English for at least one full term (8 weeks) at the ELI
- 2) successfully completed all the courses at High Advanced level
- 3) instructor recommendation to the director
- 4) a letter of recommendation from the director to UTK admissions office

*This is not available for graduate conditional admission.

CONTACT US

Final Message

We believe that your experience learning English is transformative and life-changing. We hope that you are challenged to grow and achieve your goals. Whether you are studying the English language to begin your academic journey in the United States, working on improving your English proficiency for your career, or simply learning English for recreation, we strive to give you a positive learning experience. We encourage you to work hard, ask questions, and keep an open mind to new cultural experiences. Welcome to the English Language Institute: the place to learn English in Knoxville and Tennessee!

If you have any questions about the topics in this handbook or on other topic that has not been covered here, feel free to contact the ELI staff at:

Phone: 865-974-3404
Email: eli@utk.edu
Website: <http://eli.utk.edu>
600 Henley St. Suite 120
Knoxville, TN 37902

If you need to contact another person or department at UTK, call 865-974-1000 and an operator will connect you.