

**Flow Language Institute
Atlanta GA**

ESL Student Handbook

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I. Welcome & Mission

Welcome to Flow Language Institute

Hey there, we know how you feel, and we're glad you're here!

At Flow, our goal is to help you improve your English in a practical, respectful, and engaging environment. Whether you're here for personal growth, work, school, or immigration, we want your time with us to be useful, challenging, and positive.

This handbook will help you understand what to expect from us—and what we expect from you. Please read it carefully, and ask us if anything is unclear.

Our Mission

Our mission is to provide students with a solid foundation in the current usage of American English and insight into American Culture and Values by:

- 1. Being operationally and ethically sound.*
- 2. Providing an environment that respects the various cultural backgrounds of our students.*
- 3. Engaging in frank and open discussions when the moments arise.*

II. Student Conduct & Expectations

Basic Code of Conduct

- Respect your classmates and instructors
- Use English as much as possible while you're here
- Follow all classroom policies (phones, tech use, assignments, etc.)
- Keep a positive and focused attitude
- Be open to feedback—it's how you grow

Scent and Hygiene Policy

Everyone comes from different cultures, with different ideas about what is an attractive scent — but strong scents can affect other students. So :

- Please bathe daily and wear clean clothes
- Use only light or unscented lotion, perfume, or cologne
- If we can smell it from two feet away, it's probably too strong
- If hygiene becomes an issue, we will let you know privately

Dress Code

There is a standard for a casual academic setting :

- Dress in a way that's comfortable, clean, and respectful
- No offensive graphics or slogans
- Instructors and staff may ask you to change if needed

Harassment & Discrimination

There will be NO bullying, no harassment, no discrimination — period.

This includes anything related to race, religion, gender, language, culture, age, sexuality, or disability. If you feel uncomfortable or mistreated in any way, talk to a staff member immediately. We will take it seriously.

Boundaries with Staff

By Georgia law (Georgia Code § 16-6-5.1), it is illegal for any school employee or agent who has authority over a student to have sexual contact with that student. This rule applies no matter the student's age or if they agree.

This law covers all schools—public, private, and language institutes like Flow.

If you ever feel uncomfortable or think a staff member is crossing a line, please tell the Director right away. We take these situations very seriously and will handle them with care.

Disruptive Behavior

We want Flow to feel safe and focused. If your behavior makes it hard for others to learn or feel comfortable, we'll address it. Continued problems can lead to warnings, probation, or dismissal.

III. Admissions & Placement

Who Can Join Flow?

Flow is designed for adult learners who want to improve their English. We don't require a specific test score or background—but you do need to:

- Be at least 18 years old
- Be serious about learning
- Be respectful to staff and classmates

We welcome students from all backgrounds, cultures, and language levels.

Registration & Paperwork

When you join, we'll ask you to complete a few things:

1. An application form
2. A basic registration and agreement
3. A short placement test (unless you're starting at Level 1)
4. A quick interview to talk about your goals
5. A signed confirmation that you've read this handbook

Placement Test

We use a short test and a one-on-one conversation to place you in the right level. If you already know you want to start in Level 1, and the Director agrees, you can skip the test.

The goal is to make sure you're in a class that fits your current skill level—not too easy, not too hard.

IV. Curriculum & Levels

What You'll Study

Each class at Flow includes a mix of skills:

- Speaking & Listening
- Reading & Writing
- Grammar
- Vocabulary
- Real-life English for work, school, or everyday use

You'll learn through conversation, group work, games, writing, presentations, and other interactive activities. We use textbooks, websites, videos, and teacher-created materials to keep things useful and up to date.

Levels at Flow

We offer five (soon to be six) core levels of English:

1. *(Intro / Basic English (coming soon))*
2. **Level 1**
3. **Level 2**
4. **Level 3**
5. **Level 4**
6. **Level 5**

Each level includes different grammar, vocabulary, and skill-building tasks. Your teacher will follow a clear syllabus, but they'll also adjust based on how the class is doing and what students need.

Listening & Speaking

You'll work on your speaking and listening skills through:

- Discussions and debates
- Group work
- Listening exercises
- Role plays and real-life situations
- Pronunciation practice

Every level includes speaking time in class—you'll never just sit and listen all day.

How Long Is the Program?

The full program is designed to take about 3 years. Some students move faster, and some take more time—it depends on your attendance, effort, and consistency.

V. Grades & Academic Progress

How You're Graded

Your grade comes from the work you do in class. This includes:

- Tests and quizzes
- Speaking and writing tasks
- Any other assignments your teacher gives

Each assignment is part of your total grade. **Missed work will be counted as a zero** unless your teacher gives you permission to make it up.

Academic Integrity

- Flow Language Institute requires that all student work reflect the student's own understanding and effort.
- Repeated or serious violations may result in academic probation, failure of the course, or dismissal from the program.

Grade Scale

Flow uses the following grading scale:

- 97-100 % = A+
- 93-96 % = A
- 90-92 % = A-
- 87-89 % = B+
- 83-86 % = B
- 80-82 % = B-
- 77-79 % = C+
- 73-76 % = C
- 70-72 % = C-
- 60-69 % = D
- < 60% = F

You need a C- (70%) or higher to pass the level.

Progress

- At the end of each session, you'll receive a report card with your final grade.
- When you complete a level, you may receive a certificate of completion.

Learning Plans

If you're struggling with the material, your teacher or the ESL Coordinator may create a **learning plan** for you. This can include extra practice, tutoring, or changes to how you're working in class.

Learning plans are meant to help—not punish. But they do require effort on your part.

Academic Warnings & Suspension

If you fail a class, you may be given an **academic warning**.

If you fail the same level again, you may be placed on **academic probation** or asked to take a break from the school before trying again.

You can always talk to the Director if something is affecting your ability to succeed. We're here to help—but you have to meet us halfway.

Appealing a Grade

If you believe your final grade is incorrect or unfair:

1. Talk to your teacher first.
2. If you can't resolve it, speak to the ESL Coordinator or Director.
3. If needed, you can submit a written appeal.

We'll review your case and give you a clear answer.

VI. Attendance

Why Attendance Matters

Flow is a full-time program. That means you are expected to attend **every class**, be on time, and stay the full time.

If you're an F-1 student, this is not optional. The U.S. government requires you to be in class. If you miss too much, we have to report it—and that could affect your visa.

Even if you're not on a visa, showing up matters. You can't improve your English if you're not in class.

Minimum Attendance Requirement

You must attend **at least 75%** of your classes each session.

This is the minimum for staying in good standing, moving up to the next level, and receiving a certificate.

Lateness & Leaving Early

- If you arrive **15 minutes or more late**, or leave more than **15 minutes early**, it counts as **¼ of an absence**
- Four of these = **one full absence**

We track this, and it affects your attendance percentage.

Excused vs. Unexcused Absences

There is **no difference** between excused and unexcused absences in our system. All missed classes count.

We understand life happens—but we also expect you to manage your time and make school a priority.

If You Miss Too Much

Here's what happens if your attendance drops:

1. You'll get a verbal or written warning
2. If it continues, you may be put on probation
3. Continued absences can lead to **failing the level, not receiving a certificate, or being dismissed**

This applies to all students, no exceptions.

VII. Tuition, Fees, and Refunds

Tuition Payments

Tuition is due before your first day of class.

If you do not pay on time, you will not be allowed to attend class until your balance is paid. No exceptions.

Fees

Some fees (like registration, transfer, or testing fees) are **non-refundable** once paid.

Refund Schedule

If you withdraw from the program, you may be eligible for a refund—depending on when you withdraw and how much of the session has passed.

When You Withdraw	Refund % (for that session)
Before first day of class	100% (minus non-refundable fees)
Week 1	75%
Week 2	50%
Week 3	25%
Week 4 or later	No refund

Refunds apply only to unused tuition for future sessions. Any refund will be calculated based on your official withdrawal date and only if you follow the correct procedure.

Special Exceptions

Some refund requests may be reviewed on a case-by-case basis if you provide proof:

- Medical or Family Emergency: Must provide documentation
- Natural Disasters / Pandemic Closures: Will follow school policy and applicable law

Transfers to Another School

If you decide to transfer before completing your current session:

- The refund schedule still applies (see table above)
- All admission, transfer, and registration fees are non-refundable
- You must complete all paperwork before your transfer can be processed

How to Request a Refund

1. Submit a written Refund Request Form to the school
2. Wait while the Director reviews your request
3. If approved, your refund will be processed within 45 days

Refunds will only be issued to the person who originally paid. If you paid through an agent or sponsor, the refund will go back to them.

Requests submitted without proper forms or documents will not be processed.

Important Notes

- Refunds are not available if you are dismissed due to misconduct or violating school policy
- We do not offer refunds for missed days or skipped classes
- All refund decisions follow the written policy above

Visa Denial and Tuition Credit Policy (Effective June 1, 2025)

- If a student is denied an F-1 visa after receiving an I-20 from Flow Language Institute, the prepaid tuition (excluding nonrefundable application and processing fees) will be held as a credit for future enrollment.
- Students may request reissuance of their I-20 without additional charge while reapplying. Tuition credit is valid for up to 12 months from the date of payment. After this period, if the student has not reapplied or maintained communication, the case will be administratively closed and tuition credit forfeited.
- It is the student's responsibility to notify Flow of any visa status updates (denials, delays, reapplications). **Failure to maintain communication for more than 180 days may result in forfeiture of credit.**

- Students who paid tuition before June 1, 2025 retain credit indefinitely under our prior policy.

VIII. Transfers & Withdrawals

Withdrawing from Flow

If you decide to leave the program—either to stop studying or transfer to another school—you must complete the proper withdrawal process.

You will need to:

- Fill out a Withdrawal or Transfer Request Form
- Make sure all fees and tuition are paid
- Submit any required documentation
- Receive approval from the Director

You cannot “just stop coming.” You must formally withdraw.

Transfer to Another School

If you're transferring to a different school:

1. Tell us in writing that you plan to transfer
2. Pay any outstanding balances (you must be paid in full)
3. Submit your acceptance letter from the new school
4. Complete all Flow paperwork for transfer release

Your transfer will not be processed until all steps are complete. This is especially important if you're an F-1 student—SEVIS will not allow your transfer unless we release your record.

Fees and Refunds

- A withdrawal or transfer fee may apply
- Refunds follow the standard refund schedule (see previous section)
- All registration and transfer fees are non-refundable

IX. Complaints & Grievances

We want your time at Flow to be positive. If something isn't right, we want to hear about it—and fix it if we can.

Here's how to handle a problem :

Step 1 : Talk to the Person Involved

If you're having an issue with a teacher, classmate, or staff member, start by talking to them directly. Most problems can be solved with a simple, respectful conversation.

Step 2 : Speak to the Director

If you've tried Step 1 and the problem continues—or if you don't feel comfortable approaching the person—you can go directly to the Director. We'll listen, take it seriously, and try to help resolve the issue.

Step 3 : File a Formal Grievance

If the issue is still not resolved, you can submit a written complaint.

Send your grievance to admin@flowlangins.edu Subject Line: "Formal Student Grievance"

Include:

- A short description of the issue
- What steps you've already taken
- What you're requesting

We'll respond after reviewing your case. All formal complaints are handled confidentially.

X. Privacy & Student Records (FERPA)

Even though Flow is not a government-funded school, we follow the same general privacy rules used by most U.S. schools. This includes parts of the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**.

What That Means

Your student records—grades, attendance, test scores, immigration info—are private.

We will **not share your information** with anyone unless:

- You give written permission
- We are legally required to release it
- It's necessary for internal school operations

Who Can See Your Records

- **You**, the student
- **Flow staff**, when needed to help manage your progress
- **Authorized government officials**, when legally required
- **Sponsors or parents**, only if you've signed a release form

Want Someone Else to Access Your Info?

You'll need to submit a written statement giving that person permission. You can change or cancel this permission at any time.

XI. Counseling and Advising

Flow does **not** provide professional counseling services.

We're not licensed to offer therapy, mental health support, or legal advice. If you need professional help, we'll try to connect you with the right resources in the community—but we can't provide that support ourselves.

What We Can Do

We're always here to listen. If you're struggling with school, culture shock, motivation, or other personal issues, you can speak with the ESL Coordinator or Director. We'll help however we can—but we'll also be honest if something is outside our limits.

Academic and Personal Advising

Academic and personal advising services are available to all students through the Director and Administrative Assistant. Students can access advising support by:

- Contacting advisors through our messenger app for quick questions or urgent concerns
- Requesting appointments at the front desk or by phone
- Asking for emergency meetings when needed

Academic advising includes checking your progress and connecting you with extra academic support when necessary.

Personal advising covers everyday topics like housing, banking, transportation, and local resources.

Immigration advising is only provided by the Director, who stays up-to-date with all SEVP rules and requirements.

XII. Health & Insurance

Health Care in the U.S.

If you're new to the U.S., here's what you need to know: **health care here is expensive.** There is no free public health system for visitors or international students.

A single emergency room visit can cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars if you don't have insurance.

Does Flow Provide Health Insurance?

No. Flow Language Institute does **not** provide health insurance to students. You are fully responsible for your own health care and coverage.

What Should You Do?

We strongly recommend you buy private health insurance while you study here. It can help cover medical costs if something unexpected happens.

You can visit www.healthcare.gov to explore options—or search for “international student health insurance” online.

If you need help understanding your options, feel free to ask—we’ll try to point you in the right direction.

XIII. Immigration Documents (F-1 Students Only)

If you're in the U.S. on an F-1 visa, you are responsible for keeping your immigration documents current and accurate. Flow can help—but **you are the one held accountable** by immigration authorities.

1. Passport

- Your passport must be **valid at all times** while you're in the U.S.
- If it's expiring soon, contact your country's embassy about renewing it.
- Don't wait until the last minute.

2. I-20 (Certificate of Eligibility)

- Your I-20 is issued by Flow Language Institute
- It shows you are legally enrolled in a full-time ESL program
- You must sign it when you first receive it
- If you travel, the school must sign page 2 before you leave the U.S.

3. Visa (F-1)

- Your F-1 visa is in your passport
- It allows you to enter the U.S.—**but it does not control how long you can stay**
- If it expires while you're in the U.S., that's okay as long as your **I-20 and I-94 are valid**
- If you leave the country, you must renew your visa before coming back

4. I-94 (Arrival/Departure Record)

- This is your **official record of legal stay in the U.S.**
- You can print it from: www.cbp.gov/i94
- It must show “D/S” (Duration of Status) for F-1 students

Summary

- **Visa** = your permission to enter the U.S.
- **I-94** = your permission to stay
- **I-20** = your school-based eligibility

- **Passport** = your national ID
You must keep all four in order.

XIV. Maintaining Your F-1 Status

If you are in the U.S. on an F-1 visa, staying “in status” is your legal responsibility. Flow will help guide you, but **you are the one held accountable by immigration authorities.**

Here’s What You Must Do:

✔ Attend Full-Time

- You must study at least **18 hours per week**
- You must maintain **at least 75% attendance**
- Too many absences = out of status

✔ Keep Your I-20 Valid

- Don’t let your I-20 expire
- If you need more time to finish your program, talk to the school **before it expires**

✔ Talk to Us First

- If something serious happens (illness, emergency, family issue), speak to the Director or ESL Coordinator
- We may be able to help or report it properly so you stay in status

✗ Don’t Trust Friends for Immigration Advice

- Always speak to school staff or an immigration attorney
- Bad advice can cost you your visa

Falling out of status can lead to termination of your SEVIS record, losing your ability to transfer, and even deportation. **Take this seriously.**

XV. Immigration Procedures (F-1 Students Only)

If you're studying at Flow on an F-1 visa, there are some specific steps you must take when things change—like your address, school, or travel plans. These are legal requirements.

1. Updating Your Address

If you move, you must tell the school **within 10 days.**

We are required to update your SEVIS record with your new address.

Not updating your address = violation of status.

2. Extending Your I-20

If your I-20 is going to expire and you still need more time to finish your program:

- You must request an extension **before the expiration date**
- You must show new **financial documentation**
- The Director will review your request and update your I-20 if approved

Do **not** wait until your I-20 is already expired. It will be too late.

3. Transferring to Another School

To transfer your SEVIS record to a new school:

1. Tell us you want to transfer
2. Submit a copy of your **acceptance letter** from the new school
3. Pay any outstanding tuition or fees
4. Complete all **Flow transfer paperwork**

We will then release your record to the new school on your requested transfer date. **We cannot release your SEVIS record until all steps are complete.**

4. Travel Outside the U.S.

If you plan to leave the U.S. and return:

- Bring your I-20 to the school for a **travel signature**
- This signature is valid for **six months**
- Do not leave without it, or you may not be allowed to re-enter the U.S.

XVI. Transcripts

If you need a transcript or record of your classes at Flow Language Institute, you can request one through the school office.

What's on a Transcript?

- The levels you've completed
- Your grades and final scores
- Dates of attendance
- Your full name as it appears on your registration

How to Request a Transcript

- Submit a written request or a Transcript Request Form or email the school
- Make sure your account is paid in full—**no transcripts will be released if you owe money**
- Processing takes up to **10 business days**

Transcripts can be sent directly to another school, to an employer, or given to you in a sealed envelope. Just let us know what you need.

XVII. Practical Information for Living in the U.S.

This section covers everyday topics international students often ask about. It's not legal advice—but it will help you stay safe, follow the rules, and avoid unnecessary problems while studying at Flow.

Vacations & Breaks

- Flow Language Institute follows a scheduled year-round calendar with official school breaks. These are your vacation periods:
 - January Break (between sessions)
 - July Break (between sessions)
 - Spring Break (one week, aligned with local school districts)
 - Thanksgiving Break (one week)
 - Christmas Break (usually 1–2 weeks, depending on the year)
- If the school is closed, that is your break. There is no need to request a separate vacation after one year. You must return on time after each break to maintain your status.
- If you do not return, it is considered a withdrawal—not a vacation.

Leave of Absence

Flow does not offer formal Leave of Absence status.

If you stop attending without an approved vacation or medical reason, your I-20 will be terminated. If you have a serious medical or family emergency, speak with the Director immediately. We may be able to help—but only with official documentation.

Taxes

All F-1 students must file at least one tax form every year, even if they did not work.

The form is called **Form 8843**. It's simple, free, and required. You can find it at [irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov). Failing to file may cause problems if you ever apply for a visa or green card in the future.

Housing

Flow does **not provide housing**.

You are responsible for finding and paying for your own apartment, room, or host family. Ask other students or staff for tips—we're happy to share suggestions.

Money & Banking

We strongly recommend opening a U.S. bank account. Do not carry large amounts of cash.

To open an account, most banks will ask for:

- Passport
- I-20
- U.S. address
- School letter (ask us)
- Initial deposit

Jobs & Social Security Numbers

F-1 students are **not allowed to work off-campus** without government approval. Unauthorized work is a serious violation of your visa.

If you are approved to work (on-campus or OPT/CPT), you will need a **Social Security Number (SSN)**. We can help guide you through that process.

Do not attempt to work for cash or “under the table.” It is illegal and could lead to loss of status.

Alcohol & DUI Laws

In Georgia:

- You must be **21 or older** to drink alcohol
- You cannot drink and drive—**at all**
- A DUI (Driving Under the Influence) can result in **fines, arrest, jail, or deportation**

Don't risk it. Use Uber or get a ride.

Driving in Georgia

Driving with a Foreign License in Georgia:

Short-Term Visitors: If you're in Georgia temporarily (such as tourists or business visitors), you may drive using a valid foreign driver's license. It's advisable to carry an International Driving Permit (IDP) alongside your foreign license to assist with language translation and recognition by local authorities.

For International Students:

As an international student residing in Georgia for extended periods, you are considered a resident after 30 days and are therefore required to obtain a Georgia driver's license.

Important Note:

Relying solely on a foreign driver's license beyond the initial 30-day period without obtaining a Georgia driver's license may result in legal complications. It's essential to adhere to Georgia's Department of Driver Services regulations to ensure compliance and avoid potential penalties.

Getting a Georgia Driver's License

If you want to apply for a Georgia license:

- Go to dds.georgia.gov
- You'll need documents: passport, visa, I-94, I-20, proof of address
- You must pass a written test, eye exam, and driving test
- You must show you've been in status for at least 10 days

Ask the school if you need help preparing documents.

XVIII. Health, Safety, And Emergency Procedures

This section covers everyday topics international students often ask about. It's not legal advice—but it will help you stay safe, follow the rules, and avoid unnecessary problems while studying at Flow.

Fire Evacuation

In the event of a fire alarm, all students and staff must exit the building immediately using the nearest marked exit. Do not use elevators. Proceed to the designated outdoor meeting point away from the building entrance. Do not re-enter the building until authorized by emergency personnel.

Severe Weather

In the event of a severe weather warning, students and staff should move away from windows and exterior walls and proceed to an interior hallway or interior room on the lowest floor. Remain in place until the warning is lifted.

Medical Emergency

In the event of a medical emergency, call 911 immediately. Notify the Owner/Director. The nearest urgent care facility is located in the surrounding area ; staff maintain current emergency contact information for all enrolled students.

Lockdown

In the event of a lockdown directive, students and staff should remain inside, secure the classroom door, move away from windows and doors, and await instructions from the Owner/Director or emergency personnel. Do not open the door until law enforcement clears the building.

Reporting Safety Concerns

Any safety concern, incident, or injury must be reported to the Owner/Director immediately. An incident report will be completed and filed.

Appendix A : Achievement Scale and Academic Progress Information

Achievement Scale

Flow Language Institute uses the following grade scale :

- 97 - 100% = A+
- 93 - 96% = A
- 90 - 92% = A-
- 87 - 89% = B+
- 83 - 86% = B
- 80 - 82% = B-
- 77 - 79% = C+
- 73 - 76% = C
- 70 - 72% = C-
- 60 - 69% = D
- Below 60% = F

A final grade of **70% or higher** is required to pass the level.

Attendance Requirement

Students must maintain at least **75% attendance** to remain in good academic standing and to qualify for successful completion of the session.

Grading Breakdown

Final grades are based on the following components :

- **40%** quizzes and tests
- **30%** participation and homework
- **30%** final exam or final project

Interpretation of the Scale

A grade of **C- or higher**, together with the required attendance, indicates satisfactory achievement of the learning outcomes for the level and qualifies the student for progression to the next level, where applicable.

A grade below **70%**, or failure to meet attendance requirements, may result in academic warning, probation, repetition of the level, or other academic action under institutional policy.

Communication to Students

Students receive their final grade and progression decision at the end of each session through the report card process.

Interpretation of the Achievement Scale by Instructional Level

Level 1 — Beginner

Reading / Writing : Students have basic-to-little ability to comprehend reading passages and basic-to-little ability to write simple sentences.

Speaking / Listening : Students have basic-to-little ability to understand and respond to simple statements and questions.

Level 2 — High Beginner

Reading / Writing : Students have basic vocabulary, can read simple texts, and can write simple sentences.

Speaking / Listening : Students can understand and communicate some everyday language on common topics and questions.

Level 3 — Intermediate

Reading / Writing : Students can read middle-school-level paragraphs, essays, articles, and books with teacher support and can use simple academic structures in writing.

Speaking / Listening : Students can understand classroom instructions and discussions on introduced topics and can speak about those topics, their experiences, and their opinions with greater clarity.

Level 4 — High Intermediate

Reading / Writing : Students can read lower-level high school essays and articles somewhat independently and use more complex academic structures in writing.

Speaking / Listening : Students can understand classroom instructions and higher-level introduced topics with clarification when needed and can speak about them with minimal-to-moderate need for clarification.

Level 5 — Advanced

Reading / Writing : Students can read high-school-level essays, NPR-level articles, and young-adult-level books more independently and can write complex academic sentences with higher-level vocabulary.

Speaking / Listening : Students can understand classroom instructions and discussions with minimal need for clarification and can speak fluently about classroom topics with minimal-to-no need for clarification.

Appendix B : Methodologies

Teaching Methodologies

- Flow Language Institute uses a blend of proven methodologies to support adult English language acquisition in a student-centered environment. Core instructional approaches include:
 - The Direct Method – Emphasis on English-only communication and contextual learning
 - Task-Based Learning – Language acquisition through activities and real-world problem-solving
 - The Natural Approach – Focus on comprehension and stress-free language production
 - The Structural Approach – Attention to grammatical forms and sequencing
- Instructors are expected to follow the methodologies outlined in approved textbooks and teacher’s guides. Supplemental methods may be used when appropriate and with approval from the Director.
- Student-centered instruction is the foundation of classroom teaching. Teachers are expected to:
 - Actively monitor student work and provide direct support during in-class activities
 - Encourage learner autonomy and promote self-directed learning habits
 - Manage technology use (e.g., phones, online tools) to ensure it supports, rather than distracts from, the lesson
- Any teacher-created methods or materials must align with the instructional goals of the program and are subject to review or adjustment by the Director.

There are actually five stages that our students might go through on their language acquisition journey:

1. Silent or Receptive Stage: During this stage students may be silent or use non-verbal communication, like pointing or nodding their head. The focus is on building the confidence it takes to actually speak and on learning basic vocabulary. There’s no language fluency at this stage in the game.

2. Early Production: Students might begin speaking in one- to two-word responses or short phrases and could acquire upwards of 1,000 new vocabulary words during this stage. Confidence grows even though a student might not be comfortable with the language yet.

3. **Speech Emergence:** This is where the real communication begins. Sentences and phrases become longer and more complex, though the rules of grammar might still be foggy. Greater comprehension is gained in this stage and students might begin reading or writing in the acquired language.

4. **Intermediate Fluency:** Learners begin thinking in the second language during this stage. Take, for instance, a French student to whom you're teaching English. Previously when they had encountered a small, furry rodent gathering nuts they would think *ecureuil*. At this point they might see that same furry rodent and think "squirrel." Comprehension and fluency greatly increase at this level.

5. **Advanced Fluency:** This is full mastery of the language. It can take between two and 10 years to get to this stage. The work doesn't stop once the language has been mastered, either. There must be ongoing opportunities to engage in the language to keep sharp.