

Odessa Language Study Centre

Students Guide

2005

Welcome

Congratulations! You have just made a major decision to take a Russian language course at The Odessa Language Study Centre (OLSC) in Odessa, Ukraine. This guide will give you useful information about Ukraine. It will prepare you to make the most out of your language course experience. You probably already have a picture in your mind of the life in Ukraine. This picture may have come from films or television. Or you may expect Ukraine to be similar to your own country. After reading this booklet, you will know what to expect when you attend OLSC. Hopefully, your expectations will be realistic and you will be able to take advantage of the many opportunities ahead.

In this booklet, we have tried to answer the questions you may have about living and studying in Ukraine. Certainly, there may be more questions you would like to ask. Please feel free to talk to your OLSC Manager when you arrive. They look forward to helping you adjust to the life in Ukraine and seeing that you have an enjoyable, rewarding stay at OLSC.

Social concerns

Adjustments and Culture Shock

In addition to the usual stress and fatigue of adjusting to living in a different time zone (or “jet lag”), which may last several days, most people who go to live in foreign countries experience “a culture shock”. Culture shock is a normal reaction to confronting a strange culture and affects people in different ways. You may feel uneasy or exhausted. Meeting new people and speaking Russian all day requires a lot of energy and you will probably need more sleep than usual.

Some other signs of culture shock are: disorientation, fatigue, irritability, self-doubt, homesickness, nervousness, and lethargy. You may dislike the new culture or feel disappointed. If you experience these feelings, remember that they are natural and will pass. You may sometimes think that if you have these feelings you shouldn't be here and should go home. But don't make any sudden decisions. Most students experience these feelings. Talk to your Manager at the school or to your host family if you are in homestay. They understand what you are feeling.

The most successful students are those whose attitudes towards people, new cultures, and new experiences are open-minded and positive. These students are likely to pass through culture shock with little difficulty and enjoy their stay in Ukraine. The difference between one's expectations and reality contributes to culture shock. The following information tells you what to expect from your course.

Accommodation

A range of living options

OLSC offers several housing options. But whichever you choose, you can count on a clean, comfortable, safe environment in which to relax, socialize, and study.

Host Family

Most OLSC students choose to stay with one of our carefully-selected local host families (all of whom receive regular visits from our Managers). If you stay with a host family, your accommodation is paid from Sunday to Saturday. Your host family will welcome you to their lives, sharing their meals and way of life. You will have a single room in the family apartment.

Host family accommodation is ideal for:

- younger students,
- students looking for a more affordable accommodation option,
- students who want meals prepared for them,
- all students who enjoy family life.

Premium Host Families

At OLSC we have families who offer extra comfort and convenience, for example, superior single bedrooms, a private bathroom, or a shorter journey to school. This option is more expensive, but advantageous for certain students.

Premium host families are ideal for:

- adult students who enjoy family life,
- business students who are tired of staying in hotels.

Apartments

Apartments for our students are available in various locations in Odessa. In general, self catering apartments are mostly suitable for students who wish to be independent rather than constantly interact with the family in homestay; business students; adult students who prefer the privacy and freedom of preparing their own meals.

Advantages of our self-catering apartments:

- Independence
- Privacy
- Highest level of comfort
- Located in various areas of the city
- Regularly checked by the staff

The Guesthouse

Our welcoming, homely and informal guesthouse situated in the resort area of Odessa is a family-run guesthouse, expressing the typical hospitality that the Odessites are renowned for. For this reason we have managed to attract a

large number of regular customers, some of whom we host regularly several times a year. Our service is friendly as we consider this to be our utmost obligation towards our guests. The Guesthouse is only 5 minutes away on foot from the sea.

Advantages of our Guesthouse:

- Location near the sea
- Surrounding amenities
- Excellent room facilities and great level of comfort
- Brilliant opportunity to socialize with other OLSC students.
- Meals (morning and evening)
- Laundry and cleaning (on request)

Before you leave

If you have changed the date of your departure, warn the Administration Office to this effect.

Make sure you have paid for any extra days of accommodation.

Make sure you have enough money to get to/from the airport in case you do not have a transfer.

If you have arranged an airport transfer, check the time in the Administration office.

Calendar

OLSC does not follow any strict semester system. Russian language courses are offered all year-round. Depending on the time of enrolment, there may be additional cultural programmes available. The course programme remains the same irrespective of the actual enrolment time.

Access to Facilities

OLSC educational facilities include modern classrooms, all located on the ground floor, with video showings, a selection of audio and video programmes, fiction and non-fiction books, and movies; a lecture room and special rooms for individual tuition.

At the school, the use of the telephone (with a phone card), fax, and computer (for e-mails) is provided free of charge.

Local Transportation

The system of public transportation in Ukraine is very different from that of foreign countries. While most Americans and the larger part of Europeans are used to depending on their own cars for transportation, it is common in Ukraine

to use the public transportation means. OLSC Russian language school is situated in the centre of the city and the developed transportation system allows the students to reach it from virtually any point in Odessa. You will receive complete details on public transportation services when you arrive at the school.

The First Day of School

On Monday, the first day of your course, you will meet a Manager in a designated room for the orientation. You will be given the course confirmation form with all course facts. You will be given specific information on your schedule and other details of your course. Your schedule on that day will include:

- a welcome talk with the school Managers,
- a placement test of grammar and listening skills,
- information about classes,
- information about the school and area,
- an overview of school activities and excursions,
- a collection of any outstanding payments,
- lessons according to the course schedule,
- a city tour (optional).

On the same day (Monday) or on Tuesday morning, you will receive a schedule indicating your course, classroom number, study level, elective course, and the hours you are to attend your class. You will be assigned the most appropriate class schedule for your proficiency level.

Courses

Learning Russian at OLSC

One of the biggest difficulties for international students is the difference in the approaches taken to language instruction in, for example, American and European language schools. At OLSC, we are trying to focus the activities in the classroom on using language in realistic situations rather than studying about the language, combining that with large amounts of additional materials – video programmes, audio presentations etc. To achieve the greatest success, it is important that you adapt to a way of studying language that may be quite different from that in your own country.

In the traditional classroom, teachers dominate the class time with explanation, correction, and practice exercises. In this type of class, students are expected to be fairly passive. In our language classroom, you are expected to be very active. How much you learn depends on your own effort. You are expected to participate by asking many questions, giving real responses of feelings, attitudes, likes and dislikes, and continually interacting with the teachers and other students. This kind of classroom experience imitates Russian language use in the real world outside the classroom.

You will soon find that you may have fun learning Russian and still achieve success. Your Russian experience in the classroom will be immediately useful in Ukraine and applicable later in jobs, schools, and meetings with Russian-speaking people all over the world.

Class Schedule and Group Formation

The number of students in a class is kept deliberately small (maximum of 6) to ensure the best care and attention and rapid progress. The formation of groups is based on the results of preliminary testing. The school also offers private classes (1-1) as well as group tuition. Morning, afternoon, and evening classes are available at different levels of intensity. One-to-one lessons are scheduled freely depending on effective learning and teacher/student availability.

The standard course consists of 20 hours weekly, including a daily coffee break, which students spend with their teachers. Extra hours are also possible. The Intensive course consists of 30 hours per week.

In addition, the teachers set daily homework and independent activities.

All lessons are 45 minutes long.

Textbooks and Student Materials

During the first day of class, you will be given a textbook and other instructional material in your classes. All other materials and books will be provided for use during your course programme and must be returned at the end of the course unless instructed otherwise by the teachers.

Certificate of Completion

All students are eligible to receive a Certificate of Completion describing the course type and its length. In order to receive this certificate, you must successfully complete the course work in all of your classes, as indicated by a passing grade. You must also maintain 90% attendance in all classes.

Terms & Conditions

1. The contract with the students is concluded prior to course commencement.
2. The list of the group may be modified during the course.
3. All student groups are homogeneous.
4. OLSC follows intensive communicative methods of teaching.
5. All misplaced students may be subject to a transfer to a different group.
6. Change of the teacher is discussed with the students of the group beforehand.
7. During the course, the students fill in enrolment, interim, and final questionnaires. The aim of this is to determine the level of conformity of the student's demands and their fulfilment during the course.

8. All students' disputes are solved by the manager and the administration of the Centre.
9. The manager of the Centre informs the students about all new video and audio materials, and books. The students can find the information of the Centre on the message board.
10. In addition, the students can get reference books, video tapes in the original.
11. Students are permitted to use reference literature, additional video and audio materials in their preparation for the lessons at the Centre.
12. Students are given OLSC club member cards and the right to enjoy discounts.
13. Ways of solving disputes:
 - a) The student appeals to the office manager,
 - b) The student lodges a complaint to the Executive Director of the Centre,
 - c) The student appeals to the Juridical Department of the Centre.
14. The student who does not abide by the Rules of the Centre (see Rules of Education at OLSC) may be expelled without any refund or compensation.
15. Any student missing more than a half of the course for a valid reason must submit an explanatory note and the documents to the manager to confirm the reasons for his absence.
16. During the course, the lessons in the group may be conducted by teacher trainees but no more than 9 lessons per course.
17. System of grades:

Test Results	Certificate Grade
Excellent	A
Very Good	
Good	B
Satisfactory	C

18. Students can get first medical aid at the Centre.
19. Students can use the phone (with a phone card) and send emails free of charge.
20. Official holidays at the Centre are from December 23 till January 15.

Changing Course Plans

Extensions

Although OLSC programmes are designed for you to learn as much as possible during your stay, sometimes students feel the need to extend the course by some additional weeks. If you feel this option may be appropriate for you, please notify your School Manager as early as possible. The Manager will advise you of the additional costs for the extension. Payments for classes and

accommodation are due and payable, in full, one week (seven days) before the extension begins.

Cancellations

'Cancellation' refers to those cancellations made before you leave your own country. Cancellations must be in writing and received by an Odessa Language Study Centre representative at least 14 days before your course start date in order to receive a full refund of your course fees. The application fee is non-refundable. If this is not done, you will forfeit one week of your course fees.

Terminations

If you decide to terminate the course that you have already started, there is no refund.

Failure to follow Ukrainian laws and/or school rules is a reason for dismissal without any refund.

Ukrainian Laws and Customs

Depending on your home country, you may find Ukraine more or less strict than your own country. It is a safe guess that you will not find it the same.

Our country's traditions of democracy place much responsibility on the individual. To make the system work, each individual must obey the laws and respect the customs. It is important that you understand the laws, rules, and customs you may encounter.

Laws

Breaking a law can result in a jail term or a fine. As a foreigner, you will be subject to criminal responsibility under the laws of Ukraine. Sometimes you can lose your immigration status and be deported. The laws may differ significantly from those in other countries and may not afford the protection available to the individual under your country's law. Penalties for breaking a law can be more severe than in your country for similar offences. Persons violating Ukrainian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Ukraine are strict, and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines.

Examples of important laws:

- driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs is a very serious crime,
- buying, selling, and using drugs is illegal,
- hooliganism, physical fighting with another person is illegal.

Rules

Rules are the "laws" of the school. All the students must obey the school rules.

Customs

Customs are accepted ways of behaviour in a country. Knowing the customs of Ukraine will help you feel comfortable with people. Some important customs to know include:

- Independence: The responsibility for taking care of oneself goes along with freedom and individuality. Be aware of your surroundings, especially in cities, and don't venture out by yourself in unknown neighbourhoods.
- Women: Women in Ukraine are equal to men and should always be treated fairly. Men and women share equally household work and childcare.
- Lines: Always stand in line and wait your turn when buying tickets, doing banking, etc.
- Friendliness: People around you are eager to communicate in public places. This is a good way to practise Russian. Of course, as anywhere else, caution should be exercised when dealing with strangers. Be careful when giving out your address or telephone number, or accepting an invitation. Although most Ukrainians are open and friendly, some may be reluctant to talk to strangers. Do not try to force the conversation.

Smoking

Rules, laws, and customs govern smoking behaviour. Although laws vary, often you are not allowed to smoke in public places. The most appropriate and safe way of behaviour is to ask others, "Do you mind if I smoke?"

Leisure

OLSC arranges a full schedule of activities and excursions, for example:

- Weekend excursions to Uman and Belgorod-Dnestrovskiy,
- Boat trips,
- Windsurfing and water-skiing,
- Summer barbecue parties,
- Symphony Orchestra concerts,
- Jazz festivals,
- Visiting museums and art galleries.

Cultural and educational excursions are integrated into each course programme.

Health and Insurance

The Odessa Language Study Centre and its representatives are not liable for damages, injuries, illnesses, or violations to people or goods, however these may occur, unless such liability is legally imposed. Each student is responsible for providing insurance for such risks.

Practical Matters

Pocket Money

It is recommended that you have your budget approximately USD 70-100 for every week of your course. This should cover personal expenses, laundry, local travel, and OLSC activities. You may need additional money if you plan to rent a car, take weekend trips or travel.

Ukraine is a cash economy. While Travellers' Checks and credit cards are gaining wider acceptance in larger cities, acceptance of credit cards is not nearly as widespread as in the United States or in Western European countries. Expect credit card use to be limited to better hotels, upscale restaurants, international airlines, and the rapidly growing, but still select number of up-market stores. When bringing U.S. dollars into Ukraine, ensure that bills are in good condition because those that are worn, torn or written on may not be accepted.

Travellers should also note that customs regulations prohibit sending cash, travellers' checks, personal checks, credit cards, or passports through the international mail system. Customs authorities regularly confiscate these items as contraband. Exchanging U.S. dollars or other currencies into the national Ukrainian currency "hryvnya" is simple and unproblematic, as licensed exchange booths are widespread, and exchange rates are normally clearly advertised. Exchanging U.S. dollars into Ukrainian currency or other currencies is legal only at banks, currency exchange desks at hotels, and licensed exchange booths; anyone caught dealing on the black market can expect to be detained by the local militia.

ATMs (a.k.a. Bankomats) are becoming available throughout Ukraine, particularly in Kyiv, Odessa and in other larger cities. In smaller cities and towns, ATMs are still virtually non-existent. Most ATMs dispense cash only in the local currency, hryvnya. However, because the incidence of credit card and ATM bankcard fraud is high, it is strongly recommended that visitors and permanent residents of Ukraine refrain from using credit cards or ATM cards. The difficulties of a currency shortage can be avoided by coming to Ukraine with a sufficient supply of hard currency to cover necessary obligations during travel. Funds may be transferred by wire; advances may be drawn on credit cards at secure locations and travellers checks may be cashed at many locations.

Telephones

Public telephones are coin or card operated. Card operated telephones are wide-spread in larger cities. Most telephone numbers have six digits but some have seven digits as well. Area codes have four digits (when the number has six digits) or three digits (when the number has seven digits).

Dialling Instructions

Local calls – just the number (six or seven digits)

Long distance calls – 8 + area code (if outside your own area code) + number

International calls – 8 + 10 + country code + area code + number

You may consult your school manager as to purchasing phone cards for international and long distance calling.

Electrical Current

Standard voltage in Ukraine is 220 Volts/50 AC cycles. This may be different from the electrical current in your country. Therefore, we advise to bring your own converter if you plan to take any electrical appliances with you. It may be difficult to find a suitable power converter in Ukraine.

Wiring Money

There are several ways to have money sent to you during your stay:

Western Union – widely available throughout the country,

MoneyGram – available in selected bank institutions.

Tipping

Standard tips for restaurant service, haircutters, and other services is 10-15%

Tipping is not necessary in taxis and self-service restaurants.

Clothing

You are not expected to wear any special uniforms when attending classes at OLSC. However, you may bring some nice clothes for going out to restaurants, nightclubs, etc. Such places may have special dress code rules. You may also bring clothes for outdoor or sports activities. Odessa often experiences snow in winter, so bring warm clothes. Spring and summer are typically very warm. Be prepared for occasional rain during all seasons.

Weights and Measures

Ukraine follows the metric system of measurements.

To convert centimetres to inches, multiply by 0.39.

To convert inches to centimetres, multiply by 2.54.

	Metric	U.S.
Length	2.540 cm	1 inch
	0.305 cm	1 foot
	0.91 m	1 yard (3 feet)
	1.61 km	1 mile
Weight	1 m	3.281 feet
	28.35 grams	1 ounce
	0.45 kg	1 pound
	0.907 kg	1 ton
	1 kg	2.205 pounds

Liquid	29.5 millilitre	1 ounce
	0.48 litre	1 pint
	0.95 litre	1 quart
	3.8 litre	1 gallon

Temperatures

Ukraine follows the Centigrade temperature scale.

To convert Fahrenheit to Centigrade, use the following formula:

$$\frac{(F - 32) \times 5}{9} = C$$

To convert Centigrade to Fahrenheit, use the following formula:

$$\frac{(C \times 9) + 32}{5} = F$$

Travel Checklist

Valid Passport with Ukrainian visa

School confirmation letter

Flight documents

Luggage clearly tabbed with your name and OLSC address

Health and Travel Insurance Documents

Confirmation that OLSC received your flight information (if you have purchased airport transfer service)