

WORK CENTRAL AB

English Language Programs

Free and Low-Cost Language Support Across the Region

A Career Resource from Work Central AB

English Language Programs in Central Alberta

Strong English skills open doors across every part of settling in - from job interviews to school meetings to everyday errands. This guide covers the free and low-cost language programs available to newcomers in Central Alberta.

1. LINC: Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada

- LINC is funded by the federal government (IRCC) and is free for eligible adult newcomers, generally permanent residents, convention refugees, and protected persons.
- Classes cover Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) levels, building practical skills for daily life, work, and community participation.
- In Red Deer, Bredin offers LINC classes for newcomers - you'll typically complete a language assessment first to determine your starting level.
- Some LINC programs offer on-site childminding, which can make attending classes far more manageable for parents.

2. ESL: English as a Second Language

ESL programs are generally funded provincially or offered through community organizations and typically have fewer restrictions on immigration status than LINC, making them accessible to a broader range of newcomers, including temporary residents and international students in some cases. Organizations such as Care for Newcomers and Catholic Social Services offer ESL programming in Red Deer alongside other settlement supports.

3. Getting Started

Steps to Enroll

- Contact a local settlement agency (Bredin, Care for Newcomers, or Catholic Social Services in Red Deer) to ask about current language programs.
- Complete a language assessment to determine your Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) level.
- Register for classes matching your level and schedule - many programs offer daytime, evening, and part-time options.
- Ask about supports available alongside classes, such as childminding or transportation assistance.

4. Free Self-Study Resources

- The Red Deer Public Library offers free access to online language-learning tools, such as Transparent Language, with a library card - library cards are free for Red Deer residents.

- Conversation cafes and informal practice groups, often run through settlement agencies, offer low-pressure opportunities to practice speaking.
- Many newcomers combine formal classes with daily practice - reading local news, watching Canadian television with subtitles, and speaking with English-speaking neighbours or coworkers.

5. English for Employment and Credential Recognition

If you're working toward a regulated occupation, check whether your Professional Regulatory Organization requires a specific language test score (such as IELTS or CELPIP) as part of licensing - this is often a separate requirement from general LINC or ESL programming, and may need dedicated test preparation.

6. Frequently Asked Questions

Common Questions

Is LINC really free? Yes, for eligible newcomers - it's funded by the federal government specifically to support settlement.

What's the difference between LINC and ESL? LINC is federally funded with specific immigration status requirements; ESL is generally more broadly accessible, though it may have different funding sources and possible small fees depending on the provider.

How long does it take to improve my CLB level? This varies by individual, but consistent class attendance combined with daily practice tends to produce the fastest progress.

Can I work while attending language classes? Yes - many programs offer evening or part-time options specifically to accommodate working newcomers.

7. Staying Motivated

- Set small, specific goals - such as ordering food confidently or handling a phone call - rather than aiming only for broad fluency.
- Practice a little every day rather than relying solely on scheduled classes; consistency matters more than intensity.
- Connect with classmates outside of class time to practice together and build friendships along the way.
- Celebrate progress, even small wins - language learning as an adult takes real effort, and steady improvement is worth recognizing.

English Language Program Checklist

- ✓ Contacted a local settlement agency about language programs
- ✓ Completed a language assessment to find your CLB level

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- ✓ Registered for LINC or ESL classes matching your schedule
 - ✓ Explored free self-study resources through the Red Deer Public Library
 - ✓ Confirmed any specific language test requirements for your occupation, if applicable
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Keep Settling In With Work Central AB

See our Settlement Services and Credential Recognition guides at workcentralab.ca/resources for more on building your English skills alongside your broader settlement journey.