STARTALK Institute at Middlebury School of Russian 2016: Proficiency-based Pedagogy for Teachers of Russian

Frequently Asked Questions

Application
When is the application due?
The application (submitted via Google forms) is due no later than 5:00 pm on May 1, 2016.

When will we hear back?
You will receive a confirmation upon submission. Acceptance results will be announced via email on or before May 15, 2016.

Can I apply if I am not a US citizen or permanent resident?
Yes. The program is open to anyone currently teaching or planning to teach Russian in the United States.

Room and Board
Will housing be provided?
Yes. All participants will stay in dorm rooms on the Middlebury College campus among Russian School students and instructors. While we will try to accommodate as many as possible into single rooms, we cannot promise this prior to arrival at Middlebury. If you have any special needs, please contact us ahead of time.

Can we find our own housing if we want?
It is strongly recommended that everyone stay in the dormitories, as 24/7 Russian communication is an essential part of the full language immersion experience.

Will meals be provided?
Yes. Three meals a day will be provided to all participants at Middlebury College cafeterias. For those who request it, special diet meals are readily available, including vegetarian/vegan, gluten-free, low sodium meals, etc. The chefs at Middlebury are very friendly and more than willing to accommodate everyone on campus. There are also several restaurants and cafes in town, however these expenses are not included in funding.
What should we bring?
Basic linen, towels, and pillows are provided in the dorm rooms. However, because summer weather in Vermont is rather unpredictable, you may want to bring a fan (especially for those travelling by train or car and have room to bring a large fan), umbrella, light jacket, and bathing suit (there is a lake nearby and pool open to Russian School participants).

Dress is casual, although participants will be taking part in demo teaching, in which case some feel more comfortable in business casual (although this is not required).

Logistics
How do we get to Middlebury?
All participants will be offered reimbursement for transportation for up to $300. Receipts must be saved and provided for reimbursement to occur. Burlington International (BTV) is the closest airport. Visit Middlebury’s transportation options page here. Shuttle services such as Middlebury Transit (not affiliated with the College) and taxi companies such as Route 2 Cab and New England Taxi provide transportation from the airport and train and bus stations. It is also possible to rent a car at the airport. Amtrak provides train service to Essex Jct., Rutland, and Castleton, Vermont, as well as Port Henry, New York. If you are driving to Middlebury, you can find directions here.

Can I bring my car to Middlebury?
Yes, but you will need to register it with Public Safety, upon arrival or online prior to arrival. You will need your vehicle registration and driver’s license.

When should I arrive and leave?
We ask that you arrive on Wednesday, July 6; you should plan to leave anytime on Sunday, July 17. All participants are required to take part in the introductory webinar (see details below).

Language Pledge
What is the Language Pledge?
All Language Schools students agree to abide by the Language Pledge, a formal commitment to speak, listen, read, and write the language of study as the only means of communication for the entire summer session. It is the foundation of all of our intensive immersion programs. Therefore, we ask that all participants speak Russian at all times, on and off campus. This is crucial not only to the success of the Startalk Institute, but also to the students attending the Russian School over the summer.

Academics
Will I receive credit for participating in the Startalk Institute?
Yes. Participants will be registered in the course RUSS 6001, a non-degree Russian graduate course valued at one course unit of credit. One Middlebury course unit is typically treated as equivalent to 3 credits (semester hours) when transferred.

What work will be expected of me?
Participants should expect a heavy workload. Because of the intensive nature of the program, we will assign roughly 3 hours of homework on a daily basis.
What is the webinar?
The beginning of the program, participants will be required to take part in a webinar from June 27 to July 1. The purpose of this webinar is to familiarize participants with the foundational principles of second language acquisition and teaching pedagogy before the program, so that classroom time is not spent on this material. Participants will meet for an interactive daily webinar from 9:00 to 10:30 am EST; the webinars will be recorded and available for review later. Participants will be assigned daily readings (1-2 chapters or articles on that day’s material, should not take more than two hours) and will be required to post short journal entries online by 7:00 pm that day.

Life at Middlebury
What is Middlebury like?
Middlebury is a beautiful, small, historic town in northwestern Vermont. It has cafes, shops, restaurants, bars, parks, libraries, and a post office, all within walking distance from campus. Just a short drive from campus, there are hiking trails, lakes, waterfalls, as well as a larger grocery store. Weather during the summer is typically warm, though rain is to be expected. It would be wise to bring an umbrella, close-toed shoes, and at least one waterproof jacket.

Is there a gym?
Yes, Middlebury College has a gym that is available to all participants of the Startalk Institute. There are also running tracks, soccer fields, tennis courts, and a pool on campus, as well as numerous trails through nearby woods. With the exception of the golf course, there is no charge to use the athletic facilities.

Will we have free time?
Yes, evenings and weekends will be free, although you will have homework. During this time, you are strongly encouraged to socialize with other participants and Russian school students and instructors. But please, follow the Language Pledge during these times as well.

What types of activities are available?
The Russian School has a rich cultural program available to all who wish to participate. On a weekly basis, students can watch Russian movies, participate in clubs (crafts, cooking, yoga, literature salons, poetry nights, etc.), play on the volleyball or soccer team, attend guest lectures, go to Russian parties, sing karaoke, and much more. As a teacher in training, it is strongly recommended that you interact with the Russian school students as much as possible (but only in Russian).