

U.S. Army provides pathway for foreign language speaking applicants

By Capt. Mia Figgs 10 August 2022



Sgt. 1st Class David J. Aviles López, station commander at Hatillo Army recruiting station, Puerto Rico, poses in front of the Army star. He joined the Army in 2008 under the Foreign Language Recruiting Initiative program.

FORT KNOX, Ky. –

Enlistment opportunities exist for applicants whose primary spoken language is something other than English.

The Foreign Language Recruiting Initiative enables applicants whose first language is not English to enlist and receive English language training prior to attending Basic Combat Training.

To qualify, applicants must score between 21 and 30 on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, and between 40 and 74 on the English Comprehension Language Test. These scores give Recruiting personnel an indication of an applicant's level of English language fluency.

Scoring within the acceptable ranges enables an applicant to enlist into a temporary military occupational specialty 09C – language trainee – and attend training at Lackland AFB, Texas. After language training is complete, the trainee will take the Armed Forces Classification Test to determine his or her new MOS, and ship to basic combat training.

There is also ESL training available for applicants who do not meet FLRI criteria, but who score between 40 and 74 on the ECLT and 31 or above on the ASVAB. These applicants can still process into the Regular Army or Army Reserve and must complete up to 25 weeks of ESL training. These applicants enlist up front into an MOS and will move to basic training and their advanced individual training after completion of ESL training.

“We recognize that it’s important that applicants who are not dominant English speakers know they still have the opportunity to find a life of purpose and achieve their dreams through the U.S. Army,” said Maj. Gen. Kevin Vereen, commander, U.S. Army Recruiting Command. “The Army is an organization where anyone who wants to serve their country can still do that, no matter their dominant language.”

Applicants who have lived in the United States for less than one year will be required to take the ECLT. The exception to this is for those applicants who are from countries in which English is the native language, such as the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and others. Applicants that demonstrate a language barrier during processing and English is not their primary language are also required to take the ECLT to assess their English capability and could qualify for either program.

Applicants from Puerto Rico are required to take the ECLT, unless they have lived in the United States for at least a year.

Individuals can learn more about Army career options at www.goarmy.com and the opportunities available for foreign language speaking applicants by speaking with a local U.S. Army recruiter.