

EDUCATION IN GREAT BRITAIN AND IN THE USA

England

Great Britain is made up of four countries: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Each of them has its own system of education.

Before the age of five, children in England can go to kindergarten. In kindergarten, the children sing, play with toys, paint, draw, run, jump and do other activities. They learn how to communicate with other people and they get ready for real school. Kindergartens in Britain are often **very expensive**. They are usually open from seven in the morning until six in the evening to allow parents to work full time.

When English children are **five years old**, they start going to **primary school**. They finish this school **at eleven** and move on to **secondary school**. All children in England have to stay in school until they are **16 years old**. They study a lot of subjects, for example English, Maths, Science, Design and Technology, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), History, Geography, Modern Foreign Languages, Art and Design, Music, Citizenship, and Physical Education.

When they are **16 years old**, English students take their **GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education)** exams. After these exams, students can leave school if they want to. But most students choose to continue with their education. They choose three or four subjects and study them for two more years. Then they have to take an exam in these subjects. This exam is called the **A-levels** (Advanced Level Examinations). If they want to get to a good university, they need to get good grades.

Schools in England can be either **state** or **private**. If you go to a state school, you don't have to pay for your studies. If you go to a private school, you have to pay for your studies. The most famous private secondary schools in England are called **public schools**. They are very prestigious and very expensive – often more expensive than universities. Some of the most famous private grammar schools are **Eton, Rugby, and Harrow**. These schools are **for boys only**. There are also private schools that are for girls only and there are some schools that are mixed. They are usually **boarding schools** – their students live at the school, not at home.

After passing their A-levels, English students can continue their studies at universities. The first university degree that they get is usually the **bachelor's degree**. The two most common types of this degree are **Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science**. It usually takes three years to complete this degree. After that, they can continue their studies and get their **master's degree**. Again, the two most common types are **Master of Arts and Master of Science**. The students who would like to become academics and scientists need to get their **doctor's degree (PhD)**. This is the highest university degree that you can get. University studies in Britain can be very expensive. At the best universities, the fees are up to **£9,250 a year**.

The two most famous and best universities in Britain are **Cambridge and Oxford**. For a long time, they were the only universities in England. Oxford is **the oldest university in Britain** and the oldest university in the English-speaking world. Many famous people studied there, for example J. R. R. Tolkien or Oscar Wilde. Cambridge is **the second oldest university in Britain** and the second oldest university in the English-speaking world. Some of the famous people who studied there are for example Isaac Newton and Charles Darwin. There is a rivalry between the two universities. Every year around Easter there is a famous **boat race** between the two universities. Today, there is a men's race and a women's race. The men's race started in 1829 and the first women's race took place in 1927.

There are other good and important universities in England, for example **University College London**. There are also some famous universities in Scotland, for example the **University of Edinburgh** and the **University of St Andrews**. The best university in Wales is probably **Cardiff University**.

USA

In the USA, the system of education is different in each state. Typically, children start going to **nursery school** when they are **three years old**. Nursery schools aren't free and they can be very expensive. Nursery school is **voluntary** – children don't have to go there.

When they are five years old, they go to **kindergarten**. Kindergarten takes one year. When they are six years old, children have to start going to real school. They start with **elementary school**, which is sometimes also called primary school. They learn how to read, write and count. There are about 20 to 30 pupils in one class. They are in one classroom with the same teacher most of the day.

After elementary school, students usually go to **middle school** (sometimes called junior high). They have to study English, math, biology, chemistry, physics, P. E. and history. Students can also choose some other subjects, for example foreign languages or art. They move from class to class and have a different teacher for each subject. They stay at school for about seven hours every day.

When they are **fourteen**, students usually move on to **high school**. It usually takes **four years** to finish high school. The students study similar subjects to those they studied at middle school. When they finish high school, they get a **high school diploma**.

Students in the first year of high school are called **freshmen**. Students in the second year of high school are called **sophomores**. Students in the third year are called **juniors**. Students in the final year of high school are called **seniors**. Students in the USA **usually don't wear uniforms**.

After high school, students can go on to study at **university** or **college**. The test that is used to determine if they are ready for higher education is called **SAT** (Scholastic Aptitude Test). Some of the best universities in the world are in the USA, for example California Institute of Technology (Caltech), Stanford, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Harvard, Princeton, and others. The oldest university in the USA is **Harvard**.

The academic year at American universities is usually divided into **two terms**. The school year typically starts in August or September and ends in May or June. During their **first two years** at university, students take **classes in a lot of different subjects**: literature, science, social sciences, history, art, etc. Then they **choose their major** – their specific field of study. This is an important difference between the USA and Britain or the Czech Republic where students specialize in one or two subjects right from the start of their studies.

There are different kinds of school. Most students go to **state schools** (also called public schools in the USA), where they don't have to pay for their education. About 10 % of students go to **private schools**, where their parents have to pay for the education. About 1–2 % of students do not go to school at all. They stay at home and are educated by their parents. This is called **homeschooling**.

Students in the USA get grades in the form of **letters**, not numbers. The grading scale is **A** (excellent), **B** (very good), **C** (improvement needed), **D** (close to fail), **E / F** (fail).

This overview is largely based on the following articles:

http://www.topics.estranky.cz/clanky/maturitni-temata/8_-school_-education.html
https://www.expatica.com/uk/education/The-UK-education-system_106601.html
https://www.expatica.com/uk/education/Choosing-a-university-in-the-UK_103186.html
https://www.expatica.com/uk/family-essentials/Preschool-in-the-United-Kingdom_107705.html
<http://www.theboatrace.org/the-basics>
<https://www.ego4u.com/en/read-on/countries/usa/school>
<https://issn.umn.edu/publications/USEducation/2.pdf>
<https://www.studyusa.com/en/a/58/understanding-the-american-education-system>