

Education in the United States (wikipedia information)

Education in the United States is provided by [public](#) and [private schools](#). [Public education](#) is universally available, with control and funding coming from [state](#), [local](#), and [federal](#) government. Public school curricula, funding, teaching, employment, and other policies are set through locally elected [school boards](#) with jurisdiction over [school districts](#). State governments have the power to determine educational standards and [standardized tests](#) for public school systems. Private schools are generally free to determine their own curriculum and staffing policies, with voluntary accreditation available through independent regional accreditation authorities. 88% of school-age children attend public schools, 9% attend private schools, and nearly 3% are homeschooled .

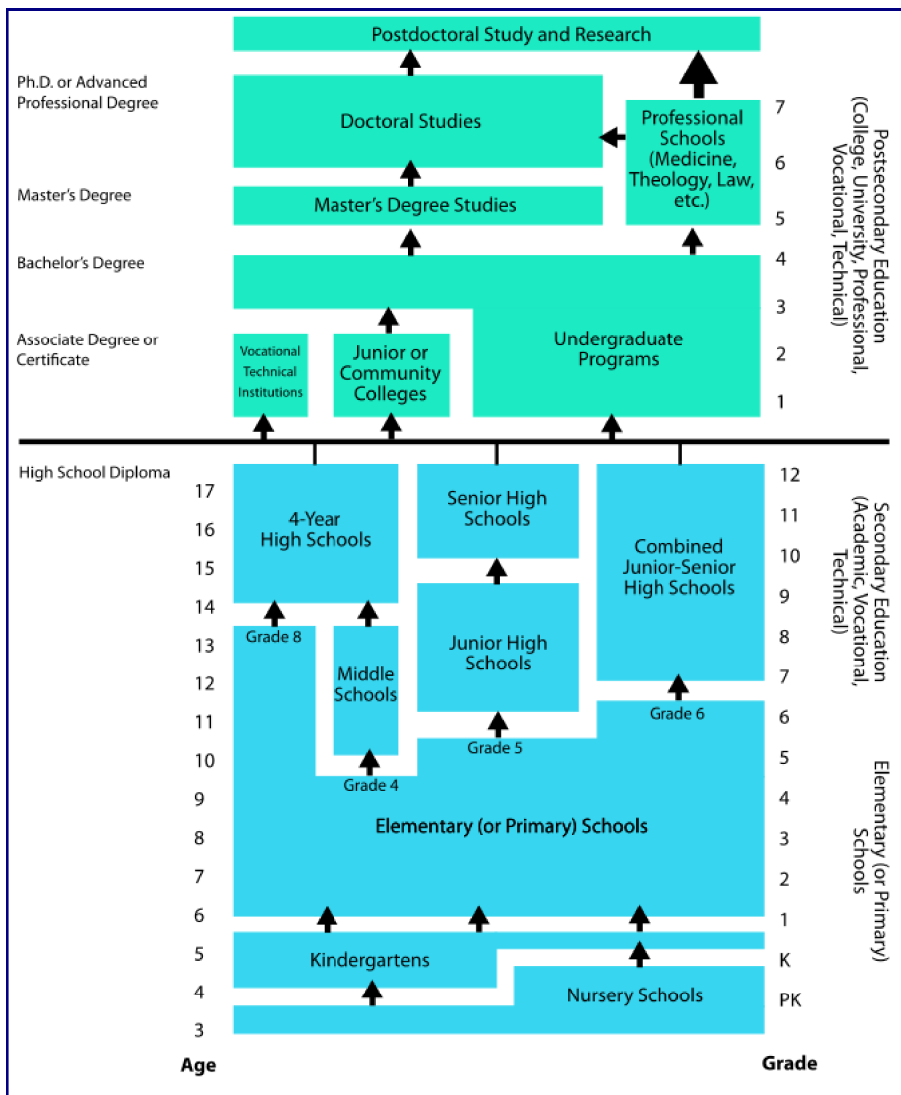
School grades

Most children enter the public education system around ages five or six. They may begin in [preschool](#), [kindergarten](#) or [first grade](#). They normally attend 12 grades of study over 12 calendar years of primary and secondary education before graduating, earning a diploma that makes them eligible for admission to [higher education](#). Education is only mandatory until age 16, however. There are generally five years of primary (elementary) school, during which students customarily advance together from one grade to the next as a single cohort or "class", three years of middle school, which may have cohorts, and four years of high school. There is some variability in the arrangement of grades.

In the U.S., [ordinal numbers](#) (e.g., [first grade](#)) are used for identifying grades. Typical ages and grade groupings in contemporary, public and private schools may be found through the U.S. Department of Education. Generally there are elementary school (K-5), middle school (6-8) and high school (9-12). Many different variations exist across the country.

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General level (or category)	Level	Student age range	
Preschool	Pre-kindergarten	3-5	
	Kindergarten	4-6	
Compulsory education			
Elementary school	Kindergarten	5-6	
	1st grade	6-7	
	2nd grade	7-8	
	3rd grade	8-9	
	4th grade	9-10	
	5th grade	10-11	
Middle school	6th grade	11-12	
	Junior high school	7th grade	12-13
		8th grade	13-14
		9th grade	14-15
High school	Senior high school	10th grade	15-16
		11th grade	16-17
		12th grade	17-18
Higher education			
College (University)		Freshman year	Ages vary, but often 18-22 for a consecutive bachelor's degree (usually within a solitary concentration)
	Undergraduate school	Sophomore year	
		Junior year	
		Senior year	
	Graduate school (with various degrees and curricular partitions thereof)		Ages vary
Continuing education			
Vocational school			Ages vary



Students completing high school may choose to attend a college or university. Undergraduate degrees may be either associate's degrees or bachelor's degrees (baccalaureate).

Community college typically offer two-year associate's degrees, although some community colleges offer a limited number of bachelor's degrees. Some community college students choose to transfer to a four-year institution to pursue a bachelor's degree. Community colleges are generally publicly funded and offer career certifications and part-time programs.

Four-year institutions may be public or private colleges or universities.

Most public institutions are state universities, which are sponsored by state governments and typically receive funding through some combination of taxpayer funds, tuition, private donations, federal grants, and proceeds from endowments. State universities are organized in a wide variety of ways, and many are part of a state university system. However, not all public institutions are state universities. The five service academies, one for each branch of the armed forces, are completely funded by the federal government; the academies train students (cadets or midshipmen) to be commissioned officers in exchange for a mandatory term of military service. Additionally, some local governments (counties and cities) have four-year institutions of their own - one example is the City University of New York.

Private institutions are privately funded and there is wide variety in size, focus, and operation. Some private institutions are large research universities, while others are small liberal arts colleges that concentrate on undergraduate education. Some private universities are nonsectarian while others are religiously affiliated. While most private institutions are non-profit, a number are for profit.

Curriculum varies widely depending on the institution. Typically, an undergraduate student will be able to select an academic major or concentration, which comprises the main or special subjects, and students may change their major one or more times.

Some students, typically those with a bachelor's degree, may chose to continue on to graduate or

[professional school](#). Graduate degrees may be either [master's degrees](#) (e.g., [M.S.](#), [M.B.A.](#), [M.S.W.](#)) or [doctorates](#) (e.g., [Ph.D.](#), [J.D.](#), [M.D.](#)). [Academia](#)-focused graduate school typically includes some combination of coursework and research (often requiring a [thesis](#) or [dissertation](#)), while professional school (e.g., [medical](#), [law](#), [business](#)) grants a [first professional degree](#) and aims to prepare students to enter a learned profession.

Student health

According to the [National Association of School Nurses](#), 17% of students are considered obese and 32% are overweight.

Elementary school

Public Elementary School teachers typically instruct between twenty and thirty students of diverse learning needs. A typical classroom will include children with a range of learning needs or abilities, from those identified as having special needs of the kinds listed in the Individuals with Disabilities Act [IDEA](#) to those that are cognitively, athletically or artistically gifted. At times, an individual school district identifies areas of need within the curriculum. Teachers and advisory administrators form committees to develop supplemental materials to support learning for diverse learners and to identify enrichment for textbooks. Many school districts post information about the curriculum and supplemental materials on websites for public access.

In general, a student learns basic [arithmetic](#) and sometimes rudimentary algebra in [mathematics](#), English proficiency (such as basic [grammar](#), [spelling](#), and [vocabulary](#)), and fundamentals of other subjects. Learning standards are identified for all areas of a curriculum by individual States, including those for mathematics, social studies, science, physical development, the fine arts, and reading.

Secondary school

[Middle school](#) and Junior high school include the grade levels intermediate between elementary school and senior high school. "Middle school" usually includes sixth, seventh and eighth grade; "Junior high" typically includes seventh, eighth, and ninth grades. The range defined by either is often based on demographic factors, such as an increase or decrease in the relative numbers of younger or older students, with the aim of maintaining stable school populations. At this time, students are given more independence, moving to different classrooms for different subjects, and being allowed to choose some of their class subjects (electives). Usually, starting in ninth grade, grades become part of a student's official transcript.

[Senior high school](#) is a school attended after junior high school. High school is often used instead of senior high school and distinguished from junior high school. High school usually runs either from 9th through 12th, or 10th through 12th grade. The students in these grades are commonly referred to as freshmen (grade 9), sophomores (grade 10), juniors (grade 11) and seniors (grade 12).

Basic curricular structure

Generally, at the [high school](#) level, students take a broad variety of classes without special emphasis in any particular subject. Students are required to take a certain minimum number of mandatory subjects, but may choose additional subjects ("electives") to fill out their required hours of learning.

The following minimum courses of study in mandatory subjects are required in nearly all U.S. high schools:

- Science (usually three years minimum, normally biology, chemistry and physics)
- Mathematics (usually four years minimum, normally including algebra, geometry, pre-calculus, statistics, and even calculus)
- English (usually four years minimum, including literature, humanities, composition, oral languages, etc.)
- Social sciences (usually three years minimum, including various history, government/economics courses)
- Physical education (at least one year)

Many states require a "health" course in which students learn about [anatomy](#), [nutrition](#), [first aid](#), [sexuality](#), [drug awareness](#) and [birth control](#). Anti-drug use programs are also usually part of health courses. In many cases, however, options are provided for students to "test out" of this requirement or complete independent study to meet it. Foreign language and some form of art education are also a mandatory part of the curriculum in some schools.

Electives

Common types of electives include:

- [Athletics](#) ([cross country](#), [football](#), [baseball](#), [basketball](#), [track and field](#), [swimming](#), [tennis](#), [gymnastics](#),

[water polo](#), [soccer](#), [softball](#), [wrestling](#), [cheerleading](#), [volleyball](#), [lacrosse](#), [ice hockey](#), [field hockey](#), [crew](#), [boxing](#), [skiing/snowboarding](#), [golf](#), [mountain biking](#), [marching band](#))

- [Career](#) and [Technical Education](#), including [Agriculture/Agriscience](#), [Business/Marketing](#), [Family and Consumer Science](#), [Health occupations](#)
- [Computer word processing](#), [programming](#), and [graphic design](#)
- [Foreign languages](#) ([Spanish](#) and [French](#) are common; [Chinese](#), [Latin](#), [Ancient Greek](#), , [Italian](#), and [Japanese](#) are less common)[45]
- [Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps](#)
- [Performing Arts/Visual Arts](#), ([choir](#), [band](#), [orchestra](#), [drama](#), [art](#), [ceramics](#), [photography](#), and [dance](#))
- [Publishing](#), including [journalism/student newspaper](#), [yearbook/annual](#), and [literary magazine](#)

Homeschooling

About 3% of all children don't go to school. They are homeschooled.

Many select moral or religious reasons for homeschooling their children. The second main category is "unschooling," those who prefer a non-standard approach to education.

Most homeschooling advocates are wary of the established educational institutions for various reasons. Some are religious conservatives who see nonreligious education as contrary to their moral or religious systems, or who wish to add religious instruction to the educational curriculum (and who may be unable to afford a church-operated private school or where the only available school may teach views contrary to those of the parents). Others feel that they can more effectively tailor a curriculum to suit an individual student's academic strengths and weaknesses, especially those with singular needs or disabilities. Still others feel that the negative social pressures of schools (such as bullying, drugs, crime, sex, and other school-related problems) are detrimental to a child's proper development. Parents often form groups to help each other in the homeschooling process, and may even assign classes to different parents, similar to public and private schools.

Grading scale

In schools in the United States children are constantly assessed throughout the school year by their teachers, and [report cards](#) are issued to parents at varying intervals. Generally the scores for individual assignments and tests are recorded for each student in a grade book, along with the maximum number of points for each assignment.

Example Grading Scale

A		B		C		D		F or E				
+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-					
100-97	96-93	92-90	89-87	86-83	82-80	79-77	76-73	72-70	69-67	66-63	62-60	Below 60 Percent

Extracurricular activities

A major characteristic of American schools is the high priority given to sports, clubs and activities by the community, the parents, the schools and the students themselves. Extracurricular activities are educational activities not falling within the scope of the regular curriculum but under the supervision of the school. These activities can extend to large amounts of time outside the normal school day; home-schooled students, however, are not normally allowed to participate. Student participation in [sports](#) programs, [drill teams](#), [bands](#), and spirit groups can amount to hours of practices and performances. Most [states](#) have organizations that develop rules for competition between groups.

Education of students with special needs

Commonly known as *special classes*, are taught by teachers with training in adapting curricula to meet the needs of students with special needs.

According to the [National Association of School Nurses](#), 5% of students in 2009 have a seizure disorder, another 5% have [ADHD](#) and 10% have mental or emotional problems.

College and university

[Post-secondary education](#) in the United States is known as [college](#) or [university](#) and commonly consists of four years of study at an institution of higher learning. There are 4,495 colleges, universities, and junior colleges in the country. In 2008, 36% of enrolled students graduated from college in four years. 57%

completed their undergraduate requirements in six years, at the same college they first enrolled in. Like high school, the four undergraduate grades are commonly called freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years (alternatively called first year, second year, etc.). Students traditionally apply for admission into colleges. Schools differ in their competitiveness and reputation; generally, the most prestigious schools are private, rather than public.

Once admitted, students engage in *undergraduate study*, which consists of satisfying university and class requirements to achieve a [bachelor's degree](#) in a field of concentration known as a [major](#). (Some students enroll in [double majors](#) or "minor" in another field of study.) The most common method consists of four years of study leading to a [Bachelor of Arts](#) (B.A.), a [Bachelor of Science](#) (B.S.), or sometimes another bachelor's degree such as [Bachelor of Fine Arts](#) (B.F.A.), [Bachelor of Social Work](#) (B.S.W.), [Bachelor of Engineering](#) (B.Eng.), or [Bachelor of Philosophy](#) (B.Phil.) Five-Year Professional Architecture programs offer the [Bachelor of Architecture](#) Degree (B.Arch.)

Graduate study, conducted after obtaining an initial degree and sometimes after several years of professional work, leads to a more advanced degree such as a [master's degree](#), which could be a [Master of Arts](#) (MA), [Master of Science](#) (MS), [Master of Business Administration](#) (MBA), or other less common master's degrees such as [Master of Education](#) (MEd), and [Master of Fine Arts](#) (MFA). Some students pursue a graduate degree that is in between a master's degree and a doctoral degree called a [Specialist in Education](#) (Ed.S.).