

Educational system

USA

School attendance is mandatory from 6 to 16. The schools are either public (publicly owned and funded by states) or private (students pay high tuition). School boards are groups of people who control the school.

There are 6 sections of education:

1. Children aged 2-4 attend a pre-school.
2. For children aged 5-6, there are kindergartens.
3. Boys and girls go to an elementary school from 6 to 12 years (1st to 6th grade).
4. From 11 to 15 (6th to 8th grade) they attend a junior high (or middle school).

5. The next four years there is a high school. The students of each grade have names: 9th freshman, 10th sophomore, 11th junior, 12th senior. There are no entrance exams, the student goes to the school of his / her school district. Some courses are required, some are elective. The student also takes part in extracurricular activities – sports, clubs, bands, choir. There are rivalries among the sport clubs, which have cheerleaders, mascots, club colors... There is no exam to graduate. Ending a required class, the student gets a H. S. Diploma (passing grades are A, B, C, D, fail is F).

6. People who want a higher education attend colleges or universities. About $\frac{1}{3}$ of high school graduates go there. SAT means Scholastic Aptitude Test, which is needed for entering a college or university. At so-called community colleges, which are for 2 years, the student gets an AA degree (Associate of Arts). Apart from the tests, to enter a college or university good grades, teacher's recommendation, essays and interviews are required. The undergraduates are students, who study for 4 years – they get a B.A. or B.S. degree (Bachelor of Arts or Science). The graduate students (1-3 years more) get a Master's degree. For a Doctoral degree, you must study 1-5 years more. Your most important subject is called the major, the 2nd most important elective subject is called the minor. The most prestigious U.S. universities are Yale, Harvard, Stanford, Columbia, Princeton...

UK

Children from 5 years attend an infant school and at 7 they go to junior school. These are primary schools.

The secondary schools, where you go from 11, are either state or private. State schools are paid for by public money, they are divided into comprehensive (studying all subjects, anyone can go there – 90% go) and grammar (based on academic ability). Private (or independent) schools are preparatory (Prep, ages 5-7) and public. In public schools, the students pay tuition, wear uniforms, many schools are not co-educational (boys + girls), some are boarding schools (students live there). Famous public schools are Eton College, Harrow, Westminster... At 16, every student takes an exam to get GCSE – General Certificate of Secondary Education, or A level (General Certificate of Education Advanced Level).

About 30% of students go to college or university for higher education. The most prestigious British universities are Oxford, Cambridge, St. Andrews, Edinburgh... The universities built in 19th century are called „red brick“ universities.

Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, there is a 9-year mandatory school attendance. Before, the children usually attend a kindergarten. At 6 years, they go to an elementary school, which is divided into first (1st to 5th class) and second (6th to 9th class) part. Then they can choose a high school (in Czech called middle school). There are grammar schools and specialised high schools. We also have state and private schools. Some grammar schools open classes for 8-year study, available for those who ended the first part of elementary school, and other various types of study. Usually there are entrance exams for a high school, and every high school ends with an exam called maturita. This is an oral exam in four subjects – one is Czech language and literature, one is a foreign language and the others are usually elective.

A student with maturita can go to a college or university (in Czech called high school) for higher education. An entrance exam is required at most universities, but an interview or essay at only few of them. In the last semester of the study, we have to write a diploma work. Then we can get a Bachelor's (3 years), Master's or Engineer's (5 years) or Doctor's degree. The oldest university in the Czech Republic is the Charles' University (UK) in Prague. The other prestigious ones are for example Czech High Technical Education (ČVUT) in Prague, Masaryk's University (MU) in Brno, and other technical, natural scientific and humanitarian universities in the whole country.

Compared with the U.S. system, there are many differences. We don't have pre-school and kindergarten separated, the compulsory 9 years are at one school. At high schools, there are no names of the classes, no school districts, and usually no sport clubs with cheerleaders. Unlike the American system, there are entrance and graduation exams. Also the marking is different, as we use numbers 1-5 instead of letters. At universities, no majors and minors are used. And there is one more difference connected with education – almost every student of high school attends dancing lessons for one year and learns to dance classics, which does not exist in America!

The British system has more in common with ours than the U.S. However, our grammar schools are not based on academic ability, but they are used by more than 10% of students. Private schools are not many in the CR (and no Preps at all), uniforms are not used and a great majority of schools is co-educational and not boarding. There are differences between GCSE and maturita – the form of the test, the age when it is taken... And in the Czech Republic, we don't call any school a „red brick“ university!