

## Nursery and primary school

### **Age:**

Nursery school: From three to six years old.

Primary school: From six to eleven years old.

### ***Timetable:***

Nursery school:

Morning: games, painting (drawing).

Afternoon: siesta, nursery rhymes, games.

Primary school:

Mathematics, French, geography, history, music, drawing, English.

The timetable changes from one school to another, according to the teacher.

Language teaching: In some schools, pupils start English at eight years old. They learn only the bases of English: for example, numbers, colors, the different parts of the body...

***Two characteristics of our system: In France, school is compulsory only from the age of six years old, so nursery school is optional.***

As in nursery school, in Primary school there is only one teacher for all the subjects.

### ***Two strong points:***

#### **Nursery school:**

Transition from family life to life in society: they have to respect new rules (for example, they have to listen to the teacher and to respect other pupils). They are obliged to respect another form of authority. They learn to integrate society.

#### **Primary school:**

They learn different subjects like:

- French (grammar, dictation, reading, verbs...)
- Maths
- History and geography
- Sciences (Biology)
- Sports
- Computer science

These different subjects help pupils to be ready for secondary school.

## **Two weak points**

- School is compulsory only from the age of six. So, some pupils will not go to school before six years old. So, pupils don't start school at the same time, it's bad because it doesn't get children used to being in class with other pupils. If pupils don't start school at the same age, they will not have the same level.
- In primary school, pupils have one teacher for all the subjects. It's a little bit difficult because the teacher doesn't have the same abilities in each subject, so he will not be competent in all the subjects.

### **Arts:**

In nursery school, pupils practise drawing and painting to express themselves. They learn songs, nursery rhymes to train their memory and to learn vocabulary. In primary school, pupils learn poems to train their memory.

### *Repeating a class:*

In France, it is impossible to repeat nursery school. But pupils can repeat classes in primary school, like CP, CE1, CE2, CM1, CM2 (CP corresponds to your first year at primary school, and so on...). In France, you can't repeat a class more than three times.

## **Secondary high-school (junior high-school)**

### **AGE:**

In France school is compulsory from 6 to 16. Junior high school begins at the age of 11. Students come from elementary school. From 11 to 12 the pupils are in a level called '6ème', from 12 to 13, '5ème', from 13 to 14, '4ème' and from 14 to 15, '3ème', which is the last level of this school.

### **DIPLOMA:**

The main diploma in junior high school is the 'Brevet des Collèges' ('collège' is the French word for junior high school). The system is not easy to understand: the global mark is out of 320. Students take this exam in three subjects: French, History/Geography, Mathematics, each out of 40 points, so the total is 120 points. To pass the 'Brevet', students have to get the average mark, i.e. 160 points. Their average marks for the whole year in all the other subjects also count for the final mark and is calculated out of 300. Maybe in the future another subject will be added at the end of 3ème: English.

There are also easy exams at the beginning of 6ème and 5ème. These evaluations are useful for teachers, to know the students' level and what they must improve, ...

## ***LANGUAGES :***

Junior high school is the first school where students really learn foreign languages. They begin to learn the first language, which is usually English, in 6ème. Some people choose Spanish or German as their first language, but this is rare. The second language usually begins in 4ème. However, in some schools you can begin it in 6ème, like the first. This language is Spanish or German (in some schools it can be Italian, or Russian...).

Other options are available: for example the 'European Section', where you can attend 5 hours of English lessons instead of 3h in 4ème and 3ème. Students have access to dead languages too: Latin or Greek. Students who choose Latin begin this subject in 5ème; for Greek it's in 3ème. Learning these old languages enables them to know the roots of French and to be aware of what happened to the Romans and the Greeks.

## ***SOME FEATURES OF THIS SCHOOL SYSTEM:***

- In elementary school, students only have one teacher, whatever the subject. It's not the same in junior high school: they then have a teacher, for French, one for English, one for Mathematics, ... And there are a lot of subjects : French, Mathematics, History/Geography; Physics/Chemistry (which begins in 5ème), Biology/Geology, English, Spanish or German, Art, Music, Physical Education, 'Technology' (where students get some knowledge in electronics and learn to use a computer and create some devices).
- For students, the '6ème' is the first year when they have to move from one room to another according to the subject: each teacher has his own room. Some rooms are specifically devoted to some subjects: for example in Physics and Chemistry, or Biology, you have special tables for experiences. In music there is sometimes a piano, drums, or percussions. The art room is designed so as to enable students to be in groups, and on the walls the teacher can stick the students' work. And for the 'Technology' class there is technology apparatus and electronic components, computers, ...
- As opposed to elementary school, in junior high school the parents get a letter from the school at the end of each term, with the marks of their students, and the comments of the teachers. So marks are seriously taken into account. And they have tests in **all** subjects (even art and music), which is quite different from elementary school.
- There is also an orientation adviser in the school: it allows students to have a definite project.

## ***PROS:***

- The conditions of education are usually good in junior high school. First, there are not many students in each class. So if a student doesn't understand something, he can call the teacher so as to ask for explanations. Usually

teachers always explain to students what they must do: they take care of them (they don't develop their autonomy because they are young; and then students' work is good : for example, instead of just telling students that they have to learn the lessons, they can do a little test –which can be oral- at the beginning of the lesson to be sure that they have learnt it ). And sometimes there are hours after school when you can do your homework helped by a teacher if you don't understand something (it is called 'étude dirigée')

- Students have access to various subjects, which can develop their curiosity. And this is not too boring, because with these different subjects you don't have two or three hours of one subject in a row.

### ***CONS:***

- Although, as we said it before, having a lot of subjects can be interesting, it increases the time spent at school by students. Then it can be tiring (for example, in 3ème, you can have only 25 minutes to have lunch every day and finish every day at 5 p.m.). And it's not always useful: when you enter high school, you stop learning Art, Music and Technology. And all the subjects are considered as equal even though you don't study one of them later. For example in the average mark Art or Music have the same 'weight' as English or Mathematics.
- All students have to go to junior high school, whatever their plans for the future are whether they want to become plumbers, bakers, lawyers or teachers. So students don't have the same level: it's often heterogeneous. It's boring for students who don't care about these subjects (and want to become plumbers for example) and this is a pity for those who want to learn faster.
- If you don't have any lessons, you have to stay in a room called 'permanence room' where you must sit and do your homework or any work, whereas in high school you can do what you want, even go back home.

### ***ARTISTIC TEACHING:***

Two subjects are artistic:

- Visual arts (or 'Art'): you learn to create some visual compositions, not necessarily paintings. Your creation must respect the order of the teacher (that's what you are marked about) using the techniques taught by him.
- Music: you learn how to sing, to play the flute and the history of music too. Sometimes you can play the drums or other percussions.
- During the 4-year syllabus, we have to attend a music class every week for one hour. We also have one hour of Arts. We get marks just as in Physics...
- We can also (we don't have to ) have some optional activities, like learning how to surf on the internet , how to write newspaper , how to create a blog...

- In French, you can act plays (this is rare). But there are theatre clubs at school: a teacher explains to students who volunteer how to act; at the end of the year, they usually perform a play.

### ***EDUCATION TO MEDIA:***

This is mainly carried out in newspaper clubs, where a history teacher helps students to create their own articles (it doesn't exist in every junior high school).

### ***MARKS TO BE ABLE TO ACCESS THE NEXT LEVEL?***

You usually have to get more than the average, i.e. more than 10 out of 20. At the end of each term the teachers have a meeting and give their appreciations for each student and for the whole class. The headmaster is present, the class representatives, and the student's parents union representatives. In the third (and last) meeting of the year, teachers decide whether the student will have access to the next level or not. For example, if he only has 11,5/20 in English, 12/20 in Maths, 5/20 in Music, 4/20 in Art, 6/20 in P.E., 15/20 in French, they will let him pass even if his average mark is under 10/20 : the main subjects are more important.

### ***ROLE GIVEN TO THE PARENTS:***

- There are Teachers/Students meetings, where each teacher meets the students' parents one by one to give them his impressions about him : whether or not he has to work more, his attitude in class, his participation,...
- In each student's parents union a representative is elected for each class : he then has access to the meeting in each term.

## TIMETABLE:

Here is an example of a schedule in 5ème.

COLLEGE PAUL BERT

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(PROFESSEUR PRINCIPAL : Mme SIRAT)

	LUNDI	MARDI	5.1 MERCREDI	JEUDI	VENREDI
8h00	MATHEMATIQUE Mme GRIMAUD A02	LATIN Mme KLAPKA B34 TV	ED.PHYSIQUE Mme SIRAT	LATIN Mme KLAPKA B23 TV	MATHEMATIQUE Mme GRIMAUD A02
9h00	FRANCAIS M. LOESEL B11 TV	ANGLAIS LV1 Mme MONNIER B32 TV	SCIENCES PHY M. ALBERT C14 TV	FRANCAIS M. LOESEL B11 TV	SCIENCES VIE M. RAMIERE C11 TV
10h00	SCIENCES PHY M. ALBERT C14 TV	SCIENCES VIE M. RAMIERE C11 TV	FRANCAIS M. LOESEL B11 TV	HIST.GEO.EDU Mme TOURNEUR A13	
11h00	EDUCATION MU Mme PAPAZOFF B04 TV(mus)	TECHNOLOGIE COLLEGE M. BICHET M. CADINOT M. DE BOISVILLIERS	ARTS PLASTIQ M. NANCY A22 TV	MATHEMATIQUE Mme GRIMAUD A02	ED.PHYSIQUE Mme SIRAT
12h00					
13h30	ANGLAIS LV1 Mme MONNIER B32 TV	HIST.GEO.EDU Mme TOURNEUR A13		ITINERAIRES DE DECOUVERTE M. BOULET M. DUBRILLE Mme LEVARAY M. LOESEL Mme POUSET M. TOURNEUR A13 A14 A21(inv) TV.B01TV B11 TV Salles techno	ANGLAIS LV1 Mme MONNIER B32 TV
14h30	HIST.GEO.EDU Mme TOURNEUR A13	MATHEMATIQUE Mme GRIMAUD A02			FRANCAIS M. LOESEL B11 TV
15h30					VIE SCOLAIRE Mme SIRAT A02
16h30					
17h30					

## Senior High School

After Junior High-school, when you are 15 years old, you go to Senior High School. From 15 to 18 (during 3 years) the three levels are called:

The "Seconde"

The "Première"

The "Terminale"

## Final Exam

- In France, the final exam is called the "baccalauréat". All the subjects are marked but there are different coefficients according to what your speciality is: science, literature, or economics.

- At the end of the second year, the "Première", you take part of the "baccalauréat".

1) For the scientific section only one subject French (oral and written)

2) For the economic section, the subjects are French (oral and written), and Biology

3) For the literary section, the subjects are French (oral and written), Biology, Physics-Chemistry, and Mathematics.

So once you have taken these exams, you drop them in Terminale and you are left with the remaining subjects for the Baccalauréat.

According to your marks and your coefficients you pass if you get 10/20

Under 8 : you don't pass your exam

Between 8 and 10 : you have another chance. You choose 2 subjects that you take once more to try to obtain a minimum mark of 10

Between 10 and 12 : you pass your exam without mention.

Between 12 and 14 : you pass your exam with a specific mention "quiet good".

Between 14 and 16 : you pass your exam with a specific mention "good".

Between 16 and 18 : you pass your exam with a specific mention "very good".

Between 18 and 20 : you pass your exam with a specific mention "excellent".

### **Language Teaching**

In Senior High School, during the first year, students all have the same timetable concerning language teaching. They all study two foreign languages: they can choose among German, English and Spanish. One language must be chosen as a major. For their second year, the schedules will be different. They will depend of the specialization the students choose: Science, Literature or Economy.

In the Scientific and Economic sections students have 3h a week of the most important language (called L1) -- they have one more hour in the European section -- and 2h a week of the other one (L2) .

People who are in the Literary section have 4h per week of the L1 language and 3h per week of L2.

Latin or Greek (not both) can be chosen by everyone as an option

### **Characteristic of school system**

We have to choose one specialization (science, economy, and literature) at the end of the first year in Senior high school following the different results in the different subjects.

When you get to Senior high school, compared to junior high school you have more freedom, i.e. when we don't have a class we can leave the school. We are also seen as adults in senior high school.

**2 Strong points** -The Diversity of subjects (optional subjects like, Latin and Greek...)  
-Qualified teachers

**2 Weak points** -Too many classes per day (up to 8 to 9 hours)  
-Too many students in each class ( 35 students per class)

**Art teaching** In some high school there is music, drama, drawing as optional subjects for the baccalauréat. You also have some high schools who are specialized. For example, the high school “François Magendie” in Bordeaux offers drawing as a compulsory option for students who chose the Literary section. Or in the high school “Camille Jullian” in Bordeaux, there is music as a compulsory option but only during the years of “Seconde”.

**Repeating** Repeating a class is a choice in high school if you think that you are not able to go the next level but you can also refuse to repeat a class even though the teachers advise you to.

### *Apprenticeship*

**Age** From 16 to 25 years old

You do your apprenticeship in a CFA (center of formation for apprentices). You can prepare a CAP, a BEP, a Bac Pro...There are 1400 different diplomas.

**Diplomas** - **CAP**: certificates of professional capacity. You acquire specific techniques, which form you to a precise job. It lasts 2 years, after the collège.

- **BEP**: diploma of professional studies. You get more general knowledge than for the CAP, in a definite sector of activities. It lasts 2 years.

- **Bac Pro**: You can do a bac pro after a CAP, or a BEP, and it lasts 2 years.

**Schedule** *Example of an apprentice's schedule during his CAP:*  
On Monday from 8.00 a.m. to 12.30 a.m. and 13.30 p.m. to 17.30 p.m. you have classes and you learn the bases of the job you have chosen. (here beautician)  
On Tuesday the same in the morning although in the afternoon you work in the firm which corresponds to your studies.

On Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday you work in the firm from 9.00 a.m. to 19.30 p.m.

## 2 characteristics

- Each CFA specializes in one field: the hotel trade, transport...
- You alternate the study and the practise of the job. You spend three weeks in your firm, and one at the CFA.
- An apprentice is, at the same time, a student and an employee.
- You can have access to more than 500 jobs via apprenticeship.

## 2 strong points

- You earn money, you're paid at the end of the month: 25% to 75% of the SMIC (1280,07€/month) according to your age. The SMIC is the minimum wages you can have for a month.
- Studies in a CFA are free. You don't have to pay any registration fees.
- You are considered as an employee so you have five weeks of paid holidays.
- After your diploma, you can go back to general studies.

## 2 weak points

- Sometimes it's difficult to find a company, who accepts to take you as an apprentice.
- Each CFA has its specificities, so you have to be sure of your choice.
- You have fewer lessons so you acquire less general knowledge in many subjects.

## Repeating a year

If you don't succeed in your exams, you can repeat your school year, and so keep the contract you had the year before with your company.

## Arts

General teaching: French, mathematics, languages, sciences, law.  
Technical teaching: drawing, technology.  
Sports.

## Further Education

### **Age schooling:**

To be accepted at university you need to have your General Certificate of Education called "baccalauréat" but there is no specific age. The normal age is 18.

### **Certificates main cycles + Age:**

Master 1 (Degree) Bac + 3

BA-MA Master 2 Bac + 4

Ph D Bac + 8

The terms of Bac + ... is used on CVs to show one's level of education, and in job advertisements to indicate the level required.

### ***Language teaching:***

After we pass our General Certificate of Education, if we want study languages we can prepare many Bachelors' Degrees (licences). Let's take on example: the Bachelor's Degree in foreign languages applied to Law and Economics ( Langues étrangères appliquées LEA). The Degree is prepared in three years. Each year is divided into two semesters. At the end of each semester, there are exams in each topic that you study. In the course of studies you learn two languages through economics of law. In the course of your studies, the first language studied is as important as the second one: same number of hours, same requirements from the teachers. The different topics in the study of these languages are: the language itself – oral and written understanding and expression, translations- but also analyses of commercial, economic documents, the study of contemporary societies, modern history and the economy of these countries. You also need to study financial mathematics, computer science, economy, European economy and marketing. The relations between your studies and the working world are an important aspect. In the third year, you also go through period of probation, and attend conferences given by professionals in the industry and the service fields.

### ***The two characteristics of the French system***

To study at university it is necessary to pay fees for:

- registration : 175 €
- Social Security : 186 €
- medical examination : 6 €
- personal insurances fees : 30 €
- university facilities : 40 €

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total: 437 €

### ***2 strong points:***

- Two years after finishing high school you can have a good job thanks to a diplome called “BTS”.
- However old you are you can attend university.

### ***2 weak points:***

- You can attend university for many years and end up without any qualification.
- The fees in some schools are very high.

### ***Artistic teaching:***

We can either go to university or to one of the four national university-level schools or to the national, regional or local art schools or to private schools.

There you can study fashion and designing which aren't taught in state schools.

Certificates: Licence, Master, and Ph D

Available subjects architecture, painting, design, music (instruments), fashion (designing, making up), cinema, theatre, photography...

### **Education in mass media:**

We can go to university, public schools or private schools.

Certificates: BTS/DUT, licence Master.

Available subjects: journalism, communication, computer science, radioTv, advertising.

### ***Intensification:***

To get a licence you need 180 credits. At university, each year is cut into two semesters. Each represents 30 credits. At the end of the year there are exams. If the student doesn't get enough credits, he won't be allowed to go to the second year and will have to repeat his first year, only repeating again the subjects in which he didn't get enough points.

### Professional

- **Age** : 14 years old
  - **Diplomas** : there are a lot of possibilities :
  - **3 e PVP** : we can choose this class to choose your future you can go to 3eme PVP after the 4eme and project by discovering a lot of professional fields. It's during the college, at the end of the year, if you succeed you pass the brevet which permits to leave college
  - **C.A.P** : it's a diploma that you can obtain in 3 years and which gives you the statutes of a worker.
  - **B.E.P** : this diploma prepares students to professional life . There are a lot of BEP based on industry, farming and economics. It lasts for 2 years.
- If you want to continue your studies with those two diplomas you can do:
- **Bac pro** : which permits to have more knowledge and qualifications about one subject in particular . It's a 2-years- course.

### ***Language teaching***

- 3em PVP : there are 2 hours a week of English or Spanish
- CAP : we can choose between English Spanish or German .

- BEP : just 1 , English
- BAC PRO

### ***The Timetable of a BEP class***

examples:

- First year ( grade 5 in USA )

Professional field (marketing, accounting, Economy and law) .....	14h
French+ history and geography.....	4h
English.....	2h
Social and professional life.....	1h
Artistic.....	2h

P.E.....	2h
Modulates .....	3h
PPCP* .....	3h
Civic education.....	1h
Support.....	1h
- 2nd year (year where you have an exam at the end)	

Professional domain (marketing, accounting, Economy and law) .....	13h30
French+ history and geography .....	2h30
English.....	2h
Social and professional life.....	1h
Artistic.....	1h
P.E .....	2h
Modulates .....	3h
PPCP* .....	3h
Civic education 1h /support .....	1h
<i>*Multidisciplinary project with professional character: On-the-spot situations in occupational environment</i>	

### ***Two characteristics:***

- Training courses in companies within the framework of the BEP studies (2weeks during the 1st year and 4weeks during the 2nd year). During those courses, students learn to find their place in a company and experience real situations, with real situations, which gives them a bigger knowledge of their specialization and their future job.
- Practise (4 hours or 5hours a week) which consists in the application of the lessons by using situations takes from the professional life. For example the make-believe sale of a particular product

### ***Two strong points:***

- An important point is that students can have work experiences and study at the same time. They have some weeks at school and other weeks during which they work in a firm/business as trainees. They're not paid but if the manager wants to give them some money he can.
- Professional studies are shorter than in general studies. So it's good for students who know what job they want to do and who want to work quickly.

### ***Two weak points:***

- Professional studies are no good for students who don't know exactly what they want to do. Professional studies are very specific and if you aren't sure of the job you want to have, you may be disappointed because at the end of these studies, you don't have the choice between many jobs; it's very "precise".
- In some branches (for example in sales), students who come from general studies (ex: business school) are more sought-after by employers than students who come from professional studies (ex: BEP "sell"). And generally, students who come from general studies have a better career profile than those who come from professional studies.

### ***Arts:***

Art lessons are offered: drawing, painting, and they can also attend music classes. But it isn't compulsory, it depends on schools.

### ***Medias:***

There is a special center where newspapers and computers are available. They can be used anytime.

### ***Repeating a year:***

Repeating a year can be a good solution if you had bad marks during the school year and if you think that it would be a good thing to make another year in the same grade to improve your level, and to continue your schooling as well as possible.