

K12 ACADEMICS — WORLD EDUCATION SERIES

Education Systems of the World

The Master Atlas

A full profile of **195 countries** — structure, compulsory years, curriculum, exams & university entry — organized by region. One page per country.



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WHAT THIS IS

The whole world, country by country.

Every country runs education its own way. This atlas gives **each of 195 countries its own full page** — the language of instruction, compulsory ages, school structure, the academic year, university entry, plus a plain-English summary and key points — organized into six world regions.

SIX REGIONS

■ Europe	45 countries
■ Asia	33 countries
■ Africa	54 countries
■ Americas	35 countries
■ Middle East	14 countries
■ Oceania	14 countries

A note on accuracy. Education systems evolve. Each page links to that country's full, regularly-updated guide online.

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REGION 01 OF 06

Europe

A full page for each of **45 countries** — how school works, in plain English.





Albania

AT A GLANCE

Language	Albanian
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	5 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	State Matura
Currency	Lek (ALL)

OVERVIEW

Albania has a centralized, state-supported education system overseen by the Ministry of Education and Sports, with Albanian as the language of instruction in public schools. Literacy is high (around 98–99%), and since joining the Bologna Process in 2003 the country has aligned its universities with...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Basic education (9 years)** — Five years of primary + four years of lower secondary — compulsory for all students
- ✓ **Upper secondary — general** — The three-year gymnasium (gjimnaz), focused on academic preparation for university
- ✓ **Upper secondary — vocational** — Vocational/technical programs lasting two to five years, aligned to the labor market

READ THE FULL ALBANIA GUIDE
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Andorra

AT A GLANCE

Official language	Catalan
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Systems	3 parallel
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Univ. of Andorra
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Andorra — a small principality of roughly 80,000 people between France and Spain — has one of the world's most distinctive education setups: three publicly funded school systems operate side by side, and families are free to choose among them. All are free, and Catalan (the country's official...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Andorran system** — Maternal → primary → secondary, following the Andorran curriculum in Catalan (with strong...
- ✓ **French system** — The French national structure (école → collège → lycée)
- ✓ **Spanish system** — The Spanish structure (primaria → ESO → bachillerato), in state or Congregation (Catholic)...

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Austria

AT A GLANCE

Language	German
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	4 + split tracks
School year	Sept – July
University entry	Matura
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Austria has a well-funded, largely public education system with German as the language of instruction. A defining feature is its early tracking: after four years of primary school, students (around age 10) move into either a more academic or a more general/vocational pathway. Austria is also famous...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary — Volksschule (grades 1–4)** — Ages ~6–10, a common foundation
- ✓ **Lower secondary (age ~10+)** — Either the general Mittelschule (MS) or the academic lower Gymnasium (AHS)
- ✓ **Upper secondary** — The academic Gymnasium (AHS) leading to the Matura; vocational colleges (BHS, 5 years,...

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Belarus

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Belarusian · Russian
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	4 – 5 – 2
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Belarusian State Univ.
Currency	Ruble (BYN)

OVERVIEW

Belarus, a post-Soviet country in Eastern Europe, runs an 11-year general-education system in which both Belarusian and Russian are official languages of instruction (Russian is widely used in practice). Literacy is near-universal, and the system retains strong Soviet-era foundations, particularly...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–4)** — Ages ~6–10
- ✓ **Basic secondary (grades 5–9)** — Completing the compulsory cycle
- ✓ **General secondary (grades 10–11)** — Upper-secondary study leading to university, alongside vocational and technical options

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EUROPE — 05 OF 45

Belgium

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Dutch · French · German
Compulsory	Ages 5–18
Communities	3 systems
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	KU Leuven, UCLouvain
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Belgium has one of Europe's most distinctive setups: there is no single national education system. Instead, education is run by the country's three language communities — the Flemish (Dutch-speaking), French-speaking, and German-speaking Communities — each with its own ministry, structure,...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Preschool (maternelle / kleuterschool)** — Ages ~2.5–6; near-universal, and compulsory from age 5
- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Ages 6–12
- ✓ **Secondary (6 years)** — Ages 12–18, in three two-year stages, with general (academic), technical, vocational, and...

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Bosnia and Herzegovina

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Bosnian · Croatian · Serbian
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	9 + 4
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Univ. of Sarajevo
Currency	Mark (BAM)

OVERVIEW

Bosnia and Herzegovina has one of Europe's most decentralized and complex education systems — a legacy of its post-war political structure. There is no single national ministry running schools; instead, responsibility is split among the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina's ten cantons (each with...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary education (9 years)** — Compulsory, ages ~6–15
- ✓ **Secondary education (4 years)** — The academic gymnasium (leading to the Matura) or vocational/technical schools (3–4 years)

READ THE FULL BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA GUIDE
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EUROPE — 07 OF 45

Bulgaria

AT A GLANCE

Language	Bulgarian
Compulsory	Ages 7–16
Structure	4–3–5
School year	Sept–June
University entry	Matura
Currency	Lev → Euro 2026

OVERVIEW

Bulgaria, a European Union member, runs a state-centered education system with Bulgarian as the language of instruction and near-universal literacy. Its universities are EU-recognized and Bologna-aligned, and — importantly for international audiences — several medical universities offer...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–4)** — Ages ~7–10
- ✓ **Lower secondary (grades 5–7)** —
- ✓ **Upper secondary (grades 8–12)** — Including general and specialized/vocational schools, ending with the Matura

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EUROPE — 08 OF 45

Croatia

AT A GLANCE

Language	Croatian
Compulsory	Ages ~7–15
Structure	8 + 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	State Matura
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Croatia, a European Union member, runs a state-centered education system with Croatian as the language of instruction and near-universal literacy. Its universities are EU-recognized and Bologna-aligned, and a growing number of English-taught programs (notably in medicine) attract international...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (osnovna škola, 8 years)** — Compulsory, ages ~7–15
- ✓ **Secondary (4 years)** — The academic gymnasium (gimnazija), leading to the Matura, or vocational/technical schools...

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Cyprus

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Greek · Turkish
Compulsory	Ages ~5–15
Structure	6 + 3 + 3
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Univ. of Cyprus
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Cyprus, an EU member in the eastern Mediterranean, has an education system rooted in the Greek language and tradition in the Republic of Cyprus (the internationally recognized government), with high literacy. The island is politically divided: this guide focuses on the Republic of Cyprus; the...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Pre-primary + Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~5/6–12
- ✓ **Lower secondary — Gymnasium (3 years)** —
- ✓ **Upper secondary — Lyceum (3 years)** — Academic, or technical/vocational, leading to university

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EUROPE — 10 OF 45

Czechia

AT A GLANCE

Language	Czech
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	9 + 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Maturita
Currency	Koruna (CZK)

OVERVIEW

Czechia (the Czech Republic), a European Union member in Central Europe, runs a state-centered education system with Czech as the language of instruction and near-universal literacy. It is home to one of the oldest universities in the world, and — notably for international students — public...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Basic school (základní škola, 9 years)** — Compulsory, ages ~6–15, combining primary and lower secondary
- ✓ **Secondary (typically 4 years)** — The academic gymnasium (gymnázium), leading to the Maturita, or secondary technical and...

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EUROPE — 11 OF 45

Denmark

AT A GLANCE

Language	Danish
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	Folkeskole + 3 yr
School year	Aug – June
Student grant	SU
Currency	Krone (DKK)

OVERVIEW

Denmark has one of the world's most admired — and most generous — education systems. Tuition is free at every level for Danish and EU/EEA students, and, remarkably, the state pays students a monthly grant (the SU) to study. Instruction is in Danish (with English very widely spoken), literacy is...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Folkeskole** — A single municipal school covering pre-school class through grade 9 (a 10-year compulsory...
- ✓ **Optional 10th year** — Around 45% of students take an extra year — at a folkeskole, an efterskole (residential...
- ✓ **Upper secondary** — Either an academic gymnasium — in four programs (STX general, HHX business, HTX technical,...

READ THE FULL DENMARK GUIDE
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EUROPE — 12 OF 45

Estonia

AT A GLANCE

Language	Estonian
Compulsory	Ages 7–16
Structure	9 + 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	State exams
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Estonia has quietly built one of the best education systems in the world — its students top the PISA rankings in Europe and rank among the global best in reading, mathematics, and science, an extraordinary achievement for a country that regained independence only in 1991. The system is...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Preschool** — Municipalities guarantee a place from age 4 to 7; participation is very high (around 94%)
- ✓ **Basic school (põhikool, grades 1–9)** — Compulsory comprehensive education, ages ~7–16
- ✓ **Upper secondary** — Either the academic gymnasium (gümnaasium, grades 10–12) leading to university, or...

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EUROPE — 13 OF 45

Finland

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Finnish · Swedish
Compulsory	Ages 6–18
Structure	9 + 3
School year	Aug – June
University entry	Matriculation Exam
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Finland's education system is one of the most admired and studied in the world — a model built not on testing and competition but on equity, trust, teacher expertise, and student well-being. Instruction is in Finnish (with a parallel Swedish-language system for the Swedish-speaking minority), and...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Early childhood education and care (ECEC)** — Ages 0–5, play-based
- ✓ **Pre-primary** — One compulsory year at age 6
- ✓ **Basic education (peruskoulu, 9 years)** — A single comprehensive school, ages ~7–16, with no tracking or streaming
- ✓ **Upper secondary** — Either the academic general upper secondary (lukio), leading to the Matriculation...

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France

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	Ages 3–16
Structure	5 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – July
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

France runs a highly centralized education system: the national Ministry of Education sets the curriculum, and the country is organized into regional académies that administer it. Instruction is in French, the system is strongly shaped by the principle of laïcité (secularism), and it is defined by...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **École maternelle** — Nursery school, compulsory from age 3 (since 2019)
- ✓ **École élémentaire (5 years)** — Primary — CP, CE1, CE2, CM1, CM2, ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Collège (4 years)** — Lower secondary — 6e to 3e, ending with the brevet
- ✓ **Lycée (3 years)** — Upper secondary — seconde, première, terminale, ending with the Baccalauréat (general,...

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EUROPE — 15 OF 45

Germany

AT A GLANCE

Language	German
Compulsory	Ages 6–18
Structure	4 + tracks
School year	Aug/Sept – June/July
University entry	Abitur
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Germany runs a federal education system: the country's 16 states (Länder) each control their own schools, so structures, school types, and even holiday dates vary across the country (coordinated nationally by the standing conference of education ministers). Instruction is in German, and the system...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Grundschule (primary, 4 years)** — Ages ~6–10 (6 years in Berlin and Brandenburg)
- ✓ **Gymnasium** — The academic track, to grade 12 or 13, leading to the Abitur and direct university entry
- ✓ **Realschule** — An intermediate track to grade 10, awarding the Mittlere Reife (Realschulabschluss) — a...
- ✓ **Hauptschule** — A more practical track to grade 9, awarding the Hauptschulabschluss, geared to...

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EUROPE — 16 OF 45

Greece

AT A GLANCE

Language	Greek
Compulsory	Ages 4–15
Structure	6 + 3 + 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Panhellenic Exams
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Greece runs a centralized, Greek-language education system with high literacy and a strong classical heritage. Public education is free at every level, university admission is decided by the fiercely competitive Panhellenic Examinations, and a defining feature of Greek life is the frontistiria —...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Nipiagogeio (kindergarten)** — Compulsory pre-primary years (from age 4)
- ✓ **Dimotiko (primary, 6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **Gymnasio (lower secondary, 3 years)** — Completing compulsory education
- ✓ **Lykeio (upper secondary, 3 years)** — General (Geniko Lykeio) or vocational (EPAL), leading to the Panhellenic exams

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EUROPE — 17 OF 45

Hungary

AT A GLANCE

Language	Hungarian
Compulsory	Ages 3–16
Structure	8 + 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Érettségi
Currency	Forint (HUF)

OVERVIEW

Hungary, an EU member in Central Europe, runs a mostly public, Hungarian-language education system with near-universal literacy. Kindergarten is compulsory from age 3, students attend a long single-structure general school before choosing a secondary path, and university admission hinges on the...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Óvoda (kindergarten)** — Ages 3–6, compulsory from age 3
- ✓ **Általános iskola (general school, 8 years)** — A single-structure primary + lower secondary, ages ~6–14, in two stages (grades 1–4 and 5–8)
- ✓ **Upper secondary (typically 4 years)** — The academic gimnázium (leading to the érettségi), a technikum / szakgimnázium (vocational...

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EUROPE — 18 OF 45

Iceland

AT A GLANCE

Language	Icelandic
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	10 + 3/4
School year	Aug – June
University entry	Matriculation
Currency	Króna (ISK)

OVERVIEW

Iceland runs a Nordic-model education system — free, comprehensive, and focused on equity and well-being — with Icelandic as the language of instruction and near-universal literacy. Children attend a single compulsory school covering primary and lower secondary, before choosing an upper-secondary...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Leikskóli (preschool)** — Early-childhood education, widely attended
- ✓ **Grunnskóli (compulsory school, 10 years)** — A single-structure school covering ages ~6–16
- ✓ **Framhaldsskóli (upper secondary, 3–4 years)** — Academic or vocational, leading to the matriculation examination (stúdentspróf)

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EUROPE — 19 OF 45

Ireland

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · Irish
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	8 + 3(+1)+2
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Leaving Cert / CAO
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Ireland runs an English-language education system (with Irish / Gaeilge a compulsory subject and Irish-medium Gaelscoileanna available), known for the high-stakes Leaving Certificate and its CAO points system for university entry. A distinctive feature: most schools are state-funded but privately...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (8 years)** — Junior and Senior Infants plus 1st–6th class, ages ~4/5–12
- ✓ **Junior Cycle (3 years)** — Ending with the Junior Certificate
- ✓ **Transition Year (optional)** — A largely exam-free year for broader learning and work experience
- ✓ **Senior Cycle (2 years)** — Ending with the Leaving Certificate

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EUROPE — 20 OF 45

Italy

AT A GLANCE

Language	Italian
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	5 + 3 + 5
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Maturità
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Italy runs a centralized, Italian-language education system with a deep academic heritage — it is home to the University of Bologna (founded 1088), the oldest university in the world, and the Bologna Process that shaped European higher education is named for it. Schooling leads to the Maturità...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Scuola dell'infanzia** — Pre-school, ages 3–6
- ✓ **Scuola primaria (primary, 5 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Scuola secondaria di primo grado (lower secondary, 3 years)** — Ages ~11–14
- ✓ **Scuola secondaria di secondo grado (upper secondary, 5 years)** — Either an academic liceo (classico, scientifico, linguistico, artistico, and more) or a...

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Latvia

AT A GLANCE

Language	Latvian
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	9 + 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	State exams
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Latvia, an EU and Baltic state, runs a state-centered education system with Latvian as the language of instruction and near-universal literacy. Its universities are EU-recognized and Bologna-aligned, and — notably for international audiences — Latvia offers English-taught programs, including in...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Pre-school** — Compulsory from age 5
- ✓ **Basic education (grades 1–9)** — A single-structure school, ages ~7–16
- ✓ **Secondary (grades 10–12)** — General (gymnasium) or vocational, leading to university

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EUROPE — 22 OF 45

Liechtenstein

AT A GLANCE

Language	German
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	5 + tracks
School year	Aug – July
University entry	Matura
Currency	Swiss Franc (CHF)

OVERVIEW

Liechtenstein — a tiny alpine principality between Switzerland and Austria — runs a German-language education system closely modeled on its neighbors, with early tracking into different secondary school types and a strong tradition of vocational apprenticeship. Literacy is universal, and, given the...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (Primarschule, 5 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Secondary tracks** — The Oberschule, Realschule, or academic Gymnasium (leading to the Matura)

READ THE FULL LIECHTENSTEIN GUIDE
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EUROPE — 23 OF 45

Lithuania

AT A GLANCE

Language	Lithuanian
Compulsory	Ages 6/7–16
Structure	4 – 6 – 2
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Matura
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Lithuania, an EU and Baltic state, runs a state-centered education system with Lithuanian as the language of instruction and near-universal literacy. It is home to one of the oldest universities in the region, its universities are EU-recognized, and — notably — it offers English-taught programs,...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–4)** — Ages ~6/7–10
- ✓ **Basic (grades 5–10)** — Completing the compulsory cycle
- ✓ **Secondary (grades 11–12)** — General (gymnasium) or vocational, leading to the Matura

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EUROPE — 24 OF 45

Luxembourg

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Luxembourgish · German · French
Compulsory	Ages 4–16
Structure	6 + 7
School year	Sept – July
Higher ed	Univ. of Luxembourg
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Luxembourg runs one of the most distinctive education systems in the world: a genuinely trilingual public system in which Luxembourgish, German, and French are each taught and used as languages of instruction at different stages. Children move through the languages as they progress — an ambitious...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Éducation précoce & préscolaire** — Early and pre-school, compulsory from age 4
- ✓ **Fundamental (primary, 6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **Secondary (up to 7 years)** — Either classique (academic, leading to university) or général (technical/vocational),...

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EUROPE — 25 OF 45

Malta

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Maltese · English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	6 + 5
School year	Sept – June
University entry	MATSEC
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Malta, an EU island nation in the Mediterranean and a former British colony, runs a bilingual education system in Maltese and English (both official). Public education is free, English is widely used (making Malta a popular place to learn English), and higher education at the University of Malta is...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~5–11
- ✓ **Secondary (5 years)** — Ages ~11–16, leading to the SEC examinations
- ✓ **Post-secondary** — Sixth form / MCAST (vocational) leading to Matriculation and university

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EUROPE — 26 OF 45

Moldova

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Romanian · Russian
Compulsory	Ages 6/7–16
Structure	4 – 5 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Baccalaureate
Currency	Leu (MDL)

OVERVIEW

Moldova, a small Eastern European country, runs a post-Soviet education system with Romanian (also called Moldovan) as the main language of instruction and Russian used by a significant minority. Literacy is near-universal, the country is EU-aspiring and Bologna-aligned, and — notably — Moldova...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–4)** — Ages ~6/7–10
- ✓ **Gymnasium (grades 5–9)** — Completing the compulsory cycle
- ✓ **Lyceum (grades 10–12)** — General or vocational, leading to the Baccalaureate

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EUROPE — 27 OF 45

Monaco

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	French model
School year	Sept – July
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Monaco — a tiny, wealthy principality on the French Riviera — runs an education system that closely follows the French curriculum, taught in French, with distinctive Monégasque additions such as the history and language of Monaco. Public education is free and well-resourced, and literacy is...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **École maternelle** — Nursery/pre-school
- ✓ **École élémentaire** — Primary
- ✓ **Collège** — Lower secondary
- ✓ **Lycée** — Upper secondary, leading to the Baccalauréat

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EUROPE — 28 OF 45

Montenegro

AT A GLANCE

Language	Montenegrin
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	9 + 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Matura
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Montenegro, a small Balkan country and EU candidate, runs a state-centered education system with Montenegrin as the main language of instruction (Serbian, Bosnian, Croatian, and Albanian are also used by communities). Literacy is near-universal, and the system is Bologna-aligned. Montenegro uses...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (9 years)** — Compulsory, ages ~6–15
- ✓ **Secondary (4 years)** — The academic gymnasium (leading to the Matura) or vocational schools

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EUROPE — 29 OF 45

Netherlands

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Dutch · English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	8 + tracks
School year	Aug/Sept – Jul
University entry	VWO / HAVO diploma
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

The Netherlands runs a high-quality education system defined by early tracking: after eight years of primary school, students are directed at around age 12 into one of three secondary routes based on a national test and teacher recommendation. Instruction is in Dutch, but the country is a global...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (basisschool, 8 years)** — Ages ~4–12; children may start at 4 and must attend from 5
- ✓ **VMBO (4 years)** — Pre-vocational secondary → MBO (vocational education)
- ✓ **HAVO (5 years)** — Senior general secondary → HBO (universities of applied sciences)
- ✓ **VWO (6 years)** — Pre-university secondary → WO (research universities)

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EUROPE — 30 OF 45

North Macedonia

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Macedonian · Albanian
Compulsory	Primary + Secondary
Structure	9 + 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	State Matura
Currency	Denar (MKD)

OVERVIEW

North Macedonia, a Balkan country and EU candidate, runs an education system in which Macedonian is the main language of instruction and Albanian is used for the country's large Albanian-speaking community (and is official where communities meet a population threshold). Literacy is near-universal,...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (9 years)** — Compulsory, ages ~6–15
- ✓ **Secondary (4 years)** — Also compulsory — the academic gymnasium (leading to the Matura) or vocational schools

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EUROPE — 31 OF 45

Norway

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Norwegian · Sami
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	10 + 3
School year	Aug – June
University entry	Upper-sec. diploma
Currency	Krone (NOK)

OVERVIEW

Norway runs a free, comprehensive Nordic-model education system built on equity and inclusion, with Norwegian (in its Bokmål and Nynorsk forms) as the language of instruction and Sami taught and used in Sami areas. Public education is free at every level, the early years emphasize well-being over...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Barneskole (primary, 7 years)** — Ages ~6–13 — with little formal grading in the early years
- ✓ **Ungdomsskole (lower secondary, 3 years)** — Ages ~13–16 — completing the compulsory grunnskole
- ✓ **Videregående skole (upper secondary, 3 years)** — Academic (studieforberedende) or vocational (yrkesfaglig), a legal right for all who...

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EUROPE — 32 OF 45

Poland

AT A GLANCE

Language	Polish
Compulsory	Ages 7–18
Structure	8 + 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Matura
Currency	Złoty (PLN)

OVERVIEW

Poland, a large EU country in Central Europe, runs a state-centered education system with Polish as the language of instruction, near-universal literacy, and strong international test results. Its universities include one of the oldest in the world, and — notably for international audiences —...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (szkoła podstawowa, 8 years)** — Ages ~7–15, ending with the eighth-grade exam
- ✓ **Secondary** — The four-year general liceum (leading to the Matura), the five-year technical technikum, or...

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EUROPE — 33 OF 45

Portugal

AT A GLANCE

Language	Portuguese
Compulsory	Ages 6–18
Structure	9 + 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	National exams
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Portugal, an EU country in the Iberian Peninsula, runs a state-centered education system with Portuguese as the language of instruction. It has made strong gains on international assessments in recent decades, extends compulsory education all the way to age 18, and is home to one of the world's...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Pré-escolar** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Ensino Básico (9 years)** — Three cycles — 1st (4 years), 2nd (2 years), and 3rd (3 years), ages ~6–15
- ✓ **Ensino Secundário (3 years)** — Scientific-humanistic (academic) or professional (vocational), ending with national exams

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EUROPE — 34 OF 45

Romania

AT A GLANCE

Language	Romanian
Compulsory	to grade 10+
Structure	4 – 4 – 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Bacalaureat
Currency	Leu (RON)

OVERVIEW

Romania, an EU country in Southeastern Europe, runs a state-centered education system with Romanian as the main language of instruction (Hungarian and other minority languages are used by communities). Literacy is near-universal, its universities are EU-recognized and Bologna-aligned, and Romania...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (preparatory year + grades 1–4)** — Ages ~6–10
- ✓ **Lower secondary / gymnasium (grades 5–8)** — Ending with the National Evaluation
- ✓ **Upper secondary / high school (liceu, grades 9–12)** — Ending with the Bacalaureat

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EUROPE — 35 OF 45

Russia

AT A GLANCE

Language	Russian
Compulsory	Grades 1–9
Structure	4 – 5 – 2
School year	Sept – May
University entry	EGE
Currency	Ruble (RUB)

OVERVIEW

Russia runs a large, centralized education system with Russian as the language of instruction (regional languages are also used in the republics) and near-universal literacy. It inherited a strong Soviet tradition in mathematics and the sciences — reflected in consistently high performance at...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–4)** — Ages ~7–11
- ✓ **Basic general (grades 5–9)** — Completing the compulsory cycle
- ✓ **Upper secondary (grades 10–11)** — Often with a "profile" specialization (natural sciences, humanities, technology), leading...

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EUROPE — 36 OF 45

San Marino

AT A GLANCE

Language	Italian
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	Italian model
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Diploma
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

San Marino — a tiny landlocked republic surrounded by Italy — runs an Italian-language education system closely modeled on Italy's, with which it maintains close ties. Public education is free, literacy is universal, and, given the microstate's size, most higher education takes place in Italy.

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Nursery & primary** — Early and primary education
- ✓ **Lower secondary** — Middle school
- ✓ **Upper secondary** — Leading to a school-leaving diploma and university

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EUROPE — 37 OF 45

Serbia

AT A GLANCE

Language	Serbian
Compulsory	Ages 6/7–15
Structure	8 + 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Matura / entrance
Currency	Dinar (RSD)

OVERVIEW

Serbia, a Balkan country and EU candidate, runs a state-centered education system with Serbian as the main language of instruction (minority languages are used by communities). Literacy is near-universal, its universities are Bologna-aligned, and Serbia offers some English-taught programs,...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (8 years)** — Compulsory, ages ~6/7–15
- ✓ **Secondary (4 years)** — The academic gymnasium (leading to the Matura) or vocational/technical schools

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EUROPE — 38 OF 45

Slovakia

AT A GLANCE

Language	Slovak
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	9 + 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Maturita
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Slovakia, an EU country in Central Europe, runs a state-centered education system with Slovak as the main language of instruction and near-universal literacy. Its universities are Bologna-aligned and EU-recognized, and Slovakia offers English-taught programs, including in medicine, that attract...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (základná škola, 9 years)** — A single-structure school (a 4-year first stage and a 5-year second stage), ages ~6–15
- ✓ **Secondary (4 years)** — The academic gymnasium (leading to the Maturita) or vocational/technical schools

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EUROPE — 39 OF 45

Slovenia

AT A GLANCE

Language	Slovene
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	9 + 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Matura
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Slovenia, an EU country in Central Europe, runs a state-centered education system with Slovene as the main language of instruction, near-universal literacy, and strong international test results. Public education is free, and the system is Bologna-aligned.

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Basic school (osnovna šola, 9 years)** — A single-structure school, ages ~6–15
- ✓ **Secondary (4 years)** — The academic gymnasium (leading to the Matura) or vocational/technical schools

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EUROPE — 40 OF 45

Spain

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Spanish + regional
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	6 + 4 + 2
School year	Sept – June
University entry	EvAU / Selectividad
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Spain runs a decentralized education system: national law sets the framework, but the 17 autonomous communities administer schooling — and several teach in a co-official regional language (Catalan, Basque, Galician, or Valencian) alongside Spanish (Castilian). Compulsory education runs to age 16,...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Educación Infantil** — Pre-school (0–6)
- ✓ **Educación Primaria (6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **ESO — Educación Secundaria Obligatoria (4 years)** — Ages ~12–16, ending with the ESO certificate
- ✓ **Post-16** — The academic Bachillerato (2 years, leading to university) or vocational training...

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EUROPE — 41 OF 45

Sweden

AT A GLANCE

Language	Swedish
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	10 + 3
School year	Aug – June
University entry	Gymnasium grades
Currency	Krona (SEK)

OVERVIEW

Sweden runs a free, comprehensive Nordic-model education system built on equity and inclusion, with Swedish as the main language of instruction (national minority languages, including Sami and Finnish, are also supported). A distinctive feature sets Sweden apart from its Nordic neighbors: a...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Förskola (preschool)** — Widely used early-childhood education
- ✓ **Grundskola (compulsory school, 10 years)** — Including a compulsory pre-school class from age 6, then grades 1–9, ages ~6–16
- ✓ **Gymnasium (upper secondary, 3 years)** — Academic (higher-education preparatory) or vocational programs — not compulsory, but...

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EUROPE — 42 OF 45

Switzerland

AT A GLANCE

Languages	German · French · Italian
Compulsory	~11 years
Structure	Primary + tracks
School year	Aug – July
University entry	Matura
Currency	Swiss Franc (CHF)

OVERVIEW

Switzerland runs a highly decentralized, federal education system: the country's 26 cantons are responsible for schooling, coordinating through intercantonal agreements. It is genuinely multilingual — instruction is in German, French, Italian, or Romansh depending on the region — and it is renowned...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Compulsory education (~11 years)** — Starting with kindergarten at age 4, through primary and lower secondary (with...
- ✓ **Upper secondary — academic** — The Gymnasium, leading to the Matura and university (chosen by roughly a quarter to a third...
- ✓ **Upper secondary — vocational** — The dual VET system: an apprenticeship combining paid work at a company with part-time...

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EUROPE — 43 OF 45

Ukraine

AT A GLANCE

Language	Ukrainian
Compulsory	to grade 11/12
Structure	4 – 5 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	NMT
Currency	Hryvnia (UAH)

OVERVIEW

Ukraine runs a state-centered education system with Ukrainian as the language of instruction and near-universal literacy. It has been modernizing through the "New Ukrainian School" reform (extending general schooling and shifting toward competency-based learning), and it long attracted...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–4)** — Ages ~6–10
- ✓ **Basic secondary (grades 5–9)** — Completing the core cycle
- ✓ **Specialized/upper secondary (grades 10–12)** — Being extended to a three-year senior stage, leading to university

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EUROPE — 44 OF 45

United Kingdom

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English + regional
Compulsory	to 16 (18 in England)
Structure	Primary + Secondary
School year	Sept – July
University entry	A-Levels / Highers
Currency	Pound (GBP)

OVERVIEW

The United Kingdom is not one education system but four: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland each run their own. Instruction is in English (with Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, and Irish also used). The UK's qualifications — GCSEs and A-Levels (and Scotland's distinctive Highers) — and its...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (Reception + Years 1–6)** — Ages ~4/5–11
- ✓ **Secondary (Years 7–11)** — Ages ~11–16, ending with GCSEs
- ✓ **Post-16 (Years 12–13 / "sixth form")** — A-Levels, T-Levels, or vocational qualifications, leading to university

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EUROPE — 45 OF 45

Vatican City

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Italian · Latin
Compulsory	n/a
Structure	Ecclesiastical
School year	—
Higher ed	Pontifical universities
Currency	Euro (EUR)

OVERVIEW

Vatican City — the world's smallest sovereign state, and the seat of the Roman Catholic Church — is a genuinely unusual case. With a tiny resident population of only a few hundred (mostly clergy, officials, and Swiss Guards) and effectively no resident children in the ordinary sense, it has no...

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REGION 02 OF 06

Asia

A full page for each of **33 countries** — how school works, in plain English.





ASIA — 01 OF 33

Afghanistan

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Dari · Pashto
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Begins late Mar.
Literacy	~37–43%
Uni. entry	Kankor exam
Currency	Afghani (AFN)

OVERVIEW

On paper, Afghanistan's education system looks similar to many others — a 6–3–3 ladder (primary, lower secondary, upper secondary) overseen by the Ministry of Education, with universities under the Ministry of Higher Education, and instruction in Dari and Pashto alongside Islamic studies. In...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary — grades 1–6** — Ages roughly 7–12; the foundation stage, taught in Dari or Pashto
- ✓ **Lower secondary — grades 7–9** — Ages roughly 12–15; general education continues
- ✓ **Upper secondary — grades 10–12** — Ages roughly 15–18; students choose a general track (leading toward university) or a...
- ✓ **Graduation** — Students take exams for the 12th Grade Graduation Certificate (Baccalaureate) at the end of...

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ASIA — 02 OF 33

Armenia

AT A GLANCE

Language	Armenian
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	4 – 5 – 3
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Yerevan State Univ.
Currency	Dram (AMD)

OVERVIEW

Armenia, a post-Soviet country in the South Caucasus, runs a 12-year general-education system with Armenian as the main language of instruction and near-universal literacy (around 99.8%). Since transitioning from the Soviet model, Armenia has reformed its schools and aligned its universities with...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–4)** — Ages ~6–10
- ✓ **Middle / basic (grades 5–9)** — Completing the compulsory basic-education cycle
- ✓ **High school (grades 10–12)** — Upper-secondary study, including specialized and vocational options, leading to university

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ASIA — 03 OF 33

Azerbaijan

AT A GLANCE

Language	Azerbaijani
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	4 – 5 – 2
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Baku State Univ.
Currency	Manat (AZN)

OVERVIEW

Azerbaijan, a post-Soviet country on the Caspian Sea, runs a general-education system with Azerbaijani as the main language of instruction (Russian is also widely used). Literacy is near-universal (around 99.8%), and the country has modernized and expanded its education system, funded in part by...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–4)** — Ages ~6–10
- ✓ **General secondary (grades 5–9)** — Completing the compulsory basic cycle
- ✓ **Complete secondary (grades 10–11)** — Upper-secondary study leading to university, alongside vocational options

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ASIA — 04 OF 33

Bangladesh

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Bangla · English
Compulsory	Primary (1–5)
Structure	5 + 3 + 2 + 2
School year	Jan – Dec
Exams	SSC · HSC
Currency	Taka (BDT)

OVERVIEW

Bangladesh runs one of the world's largest education systems by enrollment, with Bangla (Bengali) as the main language of instruction and English widely taught. A defining feature is its three parallel streams: the mainstream general system, the madrasa (religious) system, and the English-medium...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–5)** — Free and compulsory, ages ~6–10
- ✓ **Junior secondary (grades 6–8)** —
- ✓ **Secondary (grades 9–10)** — Leading to the SSC examination
- ✓ **Higher secondary (grades 11–12)** — Leading to the HSC examination and university

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Bhutan

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Dzongkha · English
Compulsory	11 yrs free
Structure	6 – 3 – 2
School year	Feb – Dec
Higher ed	Royal Univ. of Bhutan
Currency	Ngultrum (BTN)

OVERVIEW

Bhutan, a Himalayan kingdom, has transformed a centuries-old monastic education tradition into a modern, free, state-funded system in just a few decades — with literacy rising from around 20% in the early 1980s to roughly 66–71% today. Uniquely, its schools use a bilingual model (Dzongkha taught as...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Pre-primary + Primary (about 6 years)** — Beginning with PP, ages ~6+
- ✓ **Lower secondary (about 3 years)** —
- ✓ **Higher secondary (about 2 years)** — Leading to university

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ASIA — 06 OF 33

Brunei

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Malay · English
Compulsory	~9 years
Structure	6 + 3 + 2
School year	Jan – Dec
Exams	O- & A-Level
Currency	B\$ (pegged S\$)

OVERVIEW

Brunei, a small, oil-rich sultanate on Borneo, provides free education for its citizens under a bilingual model (the SPN21 system) that uses both Malay and English as media of instruction. Literacy is high, and the government invests heavily in education and in scholarships for study at home and...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Pre-school + Primary (about 6 years)** — The foundation stage
- ✓ **Lower secondary (about 3 years)** —
- ✓ **Upper secondary (about 2 years)** — Leading to Cambridge-based exams and further study

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ASIA — 07 OF 33

Cambodia

AT A GLANCE

Language	Khmer
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Nov – Aug
University entry	Grade 12 exam
Currency	Riel (KHR)

OVERVIEW

Cambodia's education system has been rebuilt from near-total destruction under the Khmer Rouge (1975–79), which dismantled schooling and targeted educated people. Since then, the country has restored and expanded its system, with Khmer as the language of instruction and free public education....

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–6)** — Ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Lower secondary (grades 7–9)** — Completing the compulsory cycle
- ✓ **Upper secondary (grades 10–12)** — Ending with the national grade-12 examination and university entry

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ASIA — 08 OF 33

China

AT A GLANCE

Language	Mandarin
Compulsory	9 yrs (6–15)
Structure	6–3–3
School year	Sept–July
University entry	Gaokao
Currency	Yuan (CNY)

OVERVIEW

China runs the world's largest education system — hundreds of millions of students — overseen by the Ministry of Education, with Mandarin Chinese (Putonghua) as the language of instruction. Rooted in a long tradition of merit-based examination, the system is intensely focused on academic...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Preschool** — Kindergarten (ages ~3–6), widespread but not compulsory
- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **Junior secondary (3 years)** — 初中 — completing the nine-year compulsory cycle
- ✓ **Senior secondary (3 years)** — Either academic high school (高中) or vocational/technical school, entered via the Zhongkao...

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ASIA — 09 OF 33

Georgia

AT A GLANCE

Language	Georgian
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Unified Nat'l Exams
Currency	Lari (GEL)

OVERVIEW

Georgia, in the South Caucasus, runs a Georgian-language education system with near-universal literacy. Since a landmark 2005 reform, university admission has been governed by transparent Unified National Examinations — widely credited with reducing corruption in admissions. Georgia is...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–6)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **Basic (grades 7–9)** — Completing the compulsory cycle
- ✓ **Secondary (grades 10–12)** — Leading to the school-leaving certificate and university

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ASIA — 10 OF 33

India

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Hindi · English + many
Compulsory	Ages 6–14
Structure	5 – 3 – 3 – 4
School year	Apr – Mar / Jun – Apr
University entry	Boards + JEE/NEET/CUET
Currency	Rupee (INR)

OVERVIEW

India runs one of the largest education systems on earth — hundreds of millions of students, dozens of languages, and a mix of central and state control (education is a "concurrent" responsibility, so both the national government and the states set policy). Instruction happens in Hindi, English,...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Foundational (5 years, ages 3–8)** — Three years of pre-school plus Grades 1–2, play- and activity-based
- ✓ **Preparatory (3 years, ages 8–11)** — Grades 3–5
- ✓ **Middle (3 years, ages 11–14)** — Grades 6–8
- ✓ **Secondary (4 years, ages 14–18)** — Grades 9–12, with greater subject flexibility (softening the old Science/Commerce/Arts...

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ASIA — 11 OF 33

Indonesia

AT A GLANCE

Language	Indonesian
Compulsory	12 years
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Jul – Jun
University entry	SNBP / SNBT
Currency	Rupiah (IDR)

OVERVIEW

Indonesia — the world's fourth-most-populous country — runs one of the largest education systems anywhere, with Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia) as the language of instruction. A defining feature is its dual structure: mainstream schools under the Ministry of Education run alongside a large network of...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **SD (primary, 6 years)** — Ages ~7–12 — or the Islamic MI
- ✓ **SMP (junior secondary, 3 years)** — — or the Islamic MTs
- ✓ **SMA / SMK (senior secondary, 3 years)** — General (SMA) or vocational (SMK) — or the Islamic MA

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ASIA — 12 OF 33

Japan

AT A GLANCE

Language	Japanese
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Apr – Mar
University entry	Common Test + uni exams
Currency	Yen (JPY)

OVERVIEW

Japan runs a rigorous, high-achieving education system, overseen by the national MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology), with Japanese as the language of instruction and near-universal literacy. Japanese students consistently rank among the world's best in...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Elementary school (小学校, 6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **Junior high school (中学校, 3 years)** — Ages ~12–15 — completing the compulsory cycle
- ✓ **Senior high school (高等学校, 3 years)** — Ages ~15–18 — not compulsory, but attended by around 99% of students
- ✓ **Higher education** — Four-year universities, plus junior colleges and specialized vocational schools

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ASIA — 13 OF 33

Kazakhstan

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Kazakh · Russian · English
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	4 – 5 – 2
School year	Sept – May
University entry	UNT
Currency	Tenge (KZT)

OVERVIEW

Kazakhstan, Central Asia's largest economy, runs a post-Soviet education system that it has been modernizing and internationalizing. A defining policy is trilingualism — promoting Kazakh, Russian, and English across schooling — and the country has invested in flagship institutions and scholarships...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–4)** — Ages ~6–10
- ✓ **Basic secondary (grades 5–9)** — Completing the compulsory cycle
- ✓ **Upper secondary (grades 10–11/12)** — General or technical/vocational, leading to university

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ASIA — 14 OF 33

Kyrgyzstan

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Kyrgyz · Russian
Compulsory	Ages 7–15
Structure	4 – 5 – 2
School year	Sept – May
University entry	ORT
Currency	Som (KGS)

OVERVIEW

Kyrgyzstan, a mountainous Central Asian country, runs a post-Soviet education system in which both Kyrgyz and Russian are official and used in schooling, with near-universal literacy. University admission is governed by a national test, and Kyrgyzstan has become a notable destination for...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–4)** — Ages ~7–10
- ✓ **Basic secondary (grades 5–9)** — Completing the compulsory cycle
- ✓ **Upper secondary (grades 10–11)** — Leading to university, alongside vocational options

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ASIA — 15 OF 33

Laos

AT A GLANCE

Language	Lao
Compulsory	Primary (5 yrs)
Structure	5 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	National Univ. of Laos
Currency	Kip (LAK)

OVERVIEW

Laos, a landlocked Southeast Asian nation, runs a Lao-language education system overseen by the Ministry of Education and Sports. The government has expanded access and raised literacy substantially, though the system remains under-resourced, with challenges around rural access, teacher supply, and...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (5 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Completing the basic cycle
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Leading to university, alongside vocational options

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ASIA — 16 OF 33

Malaysia

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Malay · English + Chinese/Tamil
Compulsory	Primary (6 yrs)
Structure	6-3-2
School year	varies
University entry	SPM → STPM / matriculation
Currency	Ringgit (MYR)

OVERVIEW

Malaysia runs a distinctive, multi-stream education system that reflects its multi-ethnic society. Instruction is mainly in Malay (Bahasa Malaysia), with English compulsory nationwide, and — uniquely — parallel Chinese-medium and Tamil-medium "vernacular" schools operate alongside national schools...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — National schools (Sekolah Kebangsaan, Malay-medium) or vernacular schools (SJKC...
- ✓ **Lower secondary (Forms 1-3)** —
- ✓ **Upper secondary (Forms 4-5)** — Academic, technical, or vocational streams, ending with the SPM
- ✓ **Pre-university** — Form 6 (STPM), matriculation, foundation, or diploma programs

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ASIA — 17 OF 33

Maldives

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Dhivehi · English
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	7 + 3 + 2
School year	varies
Exams	IGCSE · A-Level
Currency	Rufiyaa (MVR)

OVERVIEW

The Maldives, an Indian Ocean nation of nearly 1,200 coral islands, runs an education system that uses Dhivehi (the national language) in early grades and English as the medium of instruction higher up. Literacy is very high (around 98%), and the country relies on Cambridge (British-based)...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1-7)** — Ages ~6-12
- ✓ **Lower secondary (grades 8-10)** — Ending with IGCSE / O-Level examinations
- ✓ **Higher secondary (grades 11-12)** — Ending with A-Level examinations, leading to university

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ASIA — 18 OF 33

Mongolia

AT A GLANCE

Language	Mongolian
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	5 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Entrance exam
Currency	Tögrög (MNT)

OVERVIEW

Mongolia, a vast, sparsely populated country between Russia and China, runs an education system with Mongolian as the language of instruction and high literacy — a strong legacy of the socialist era. A distinctive challenge and feature is educating the children of the country's nomadic herder...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (5 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Completing the compulsory cycle
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Leading to university

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ASIA — 19 OF 33

Myanmar

AT A GLANCE

Language	Burmese
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	5 – 4 – 3
School year	June – Mar
University entry	Matriculation exam
Currency	Kyat (MMK)

OVERVIEW

Myanmar (Burma) runs a Burmese-language education system alongside a long tradition of Buddhist monastic schools that have historically educated many children, especially the poor. The country had been reforming and expanding its schooling — but the 2021 military coup and the conflict that followed...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (5 years)** — Ages ~6–10
- ✓ **Lower secondary (4 years)** —
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Ending with the matriculation examination

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ASIA — 20 OF 33

Nepal

AT A GLANCE

Language	Nepali
Compulsory	Basic (1–8)
Structure	8 + 4
School year	Apr – Mar
University entry	SEE + grade 12
Currency	Rupee (NPR)

OVERVIEW

Nepal, a Himalayan nation between India and China, runs a Nepali-language education system (with many mother tongues used locally and English common in private schools). The country has restructured its system under its federal constitution, expanding free basic education, though literacy and rural...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Basic education (grades 1–8)** — Free and compulsory, ages ~5–13
- ✓ **Secondary (grades 9–12)** — Leading to the SEE (grade 10) and grade-12 examinations

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ASIA — 21 OF 33

North Korea

AT A GLANCE

Language	Korean
Compulsory	12 years
Structure	5 – 3 – 3
School year	Apr – Mar
Higher ed	Kim Il-sung Univ.
Currency	Won (KPW)

OVERVIEW

North Korea (the DPRK) runs a fully state-controlled, Korean-language education system that provides universal, free, compulsory schooling and reports very high literacy. A defining feature — set apart from most other countries — is the heavy integration of political and ideological education...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **One year of kindergarten** — The final pre-school year, compulsory
- ✓ **Primary school (5 years)** —
- ✓ **Junior middle school (3 years)** —
- ✓ **Senior middle school (3 years)** — Leading to work, military service, or higher education

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ASIA — 22 OF 33

Pakistan

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Urdu · English + regional
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	5 – 3 – 2 – 2
School year	Apr – Mar / Aug – May
University entry	Matric + Intermediate
Currency	Rupee (PKR)

OVERVIEW

Pakistan — the world's fifth-most-populous country — runs a large, multi-stream education system. Urdu is the national language and English the official one (and the medium in many schools), with regional languages (Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and others) widely spoken. Education runs across three...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–5)** — Ages ~5–10
- ✓ **Middle (grades 6–8)** —
- ✓ **Secondary / Matriculation (grades 9–10)** — Ending with the SSC (Matric)
- ✓ **Higher secondary / Intermediate (grades 11–12)** — Ending with the HSSC (FSc/FA), leading to university

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ASIA — 23 OF 33

Philippines

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Filipino · English
Compulsory	K-12
Structure	K + 6 + 4 + 2
School year	varies
University entry	University exams
Currency	Peso (PHP)

OVERVIEW

The Philippines runs a large education system in which Filipino and English are both official and English is the medium for many subjects — a key reason for the country's strong English proficiency. Its defining recent change is the K-12 program (Enhanced Basic Education Act, 2013), which added...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Kindergarten** — Age 5, compulsory
- ✓ **Elementary (Grades 1-6)** — Ages ~6-12
- ✓ **Junior High School (Grades 7-10)** — Ages ~13-16
- ✓ **Senior High School (Grades 11-12)** — Ages ~17-18 — with academic (STEM, ABM, HUMSS), technical-vocational (TVL), sports, and...

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ASIA — 24 OF 33

Singapore

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · Mother Tongue
Compulsory	Primary (6 yrs)
Structure	6 + 4/5 + 2/3
School year	Jan – Nov
University entry	A-Level / diploma
Currency	Dollar (SGD)

OVERVIEW

Singapore's education system is among the most admired in the world — its students consistently rank at or near the top of international assessments (PISA, TIMSS). Built on meritocracy, strong teaching, and a distinctive bilingual policy (English as the main medium plus a "Mother Tongue" —...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Compulsory; ending with the PSLE
- ✓ **Secondary (4–5 years)** — Under Full Subject-Based Banding, ending with national examinations
- ✓ **Post-secondary** — Junior colleges / Millennia Institute (pre-university, 2–3 years), polytechnics (3 years),...
- ✓ **University** —

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ASIA — 25 OF 33

South Korea

AT A GLANCE

Language	Korean
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Mar – Feb
University entry	Suneung (CSAT)
Currency	Won (KRW)

OVERVIEW

South Korea has one of the world's highest-achieving education systems — consistently near the top of international assessments — and one of the most intense. Instruction is in Korean, literacy is near-universal, and the entire system builds toward a single, decisive event: the Suneung (the College...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Elementary school (6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **Middle school (3 years)** — Completing the compulsory cycle
- ✓ **High school (3 years)** — General or vocational, leading to the Suneung and university

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ASIA — 26 OF 33

Sri Lanka

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Sinhala · Tamil
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	5 + 4 + 2 + 2
School year	Jan – Dec
University entry	GCE A-Level
Currency	Rupee (LKR)

OVERVIEW

Sri Lanka is famous for providing free education from primary school all the way through university — a policy dating to the 1940s that gave the country one of the highest literacy rates in South Asia. Instruction is in Sinhala or Tamil (both official), with English as a link language, and the...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–5)** — Ending with the Grade 5 Scholarship Examination
- ✓ **Junior secondary (grades 6–9)** —
- ✓ **Senior secondary (grades 10–11)** — Ending with the GCE Ordinary Level (O-Level)
- ✓ **Collegiate (grades 12–13)** — Ending with the GCE Advanced Level (A-Level), leading to university

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ASIA — 27 OF 33

Taiwan

AT A GLANCE

Language	Mandarin
Compulsory	9 years
Structure	6-3-3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	GSAT / exams
Currency	Dollar (TWD)

OVERVIEW

Taiwan runs a rigorous, high-achieving education system — its students rank among the world's best in mathematics and science on international assessments. Instruction is in Mandarin Chinese (with Taiwanese Hokkien, Hakka, and indigenous languages also taught), literacy is near-universal, and the...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6-12
- ✓ **Junior high school (3 years)** — Completing the compulsory cycle
- ✓ **Senior high school (3 years)** — Academic or vocational, leading to university

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ASIA — 28 OF 33

Tajikistan

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Tajik · Russian
Compulsory	Ages 7–16
Structure	4 – 5 – 2
School year	Sept – May
University entry	Entrance test
Currency	Somoni (TJS)

OVERVIEW

Tajikistan, a mountainous Central Asian country, runs a post-Soviet education system with Tajik as the main language of instruction (Russian is also widely used). Literacy is near-universal, a legacy of the Soviet era, though the system — in one of the region's poorest countries — faces challenges...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–4)** — Ages ~7–10
- ✓ **Basic secondary (grades 5–9)** — Completing the compulsory cycle
- ✓ **Secondary (grades 10–11)** — Leading to university, alongside vocational options

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ASIA — 29 OF 33

Thailand

AT A GLANCE

Language	Thai
Compulsory	9 years
Structure	6 + 3 + 3
School year	May – Mar
University entry	TCAS
Currency	Baht (THB)

OVERVIEW

Thailand runs a large education system with Thai as the language of instruction (English is widely taught and used in international programs). The government provides fifteen years of free basic education, from pre-school through upper secondary, and university admission runs through a centralized...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Prathom (primary, 6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **Lower Matthayom (junior secondary, 3 years, M1–M3)** — Completing the compulsory cycle
- ✓ **Upper Matthayom (senior secondary, 3 years, M4–M6)** — Academic or vocational, leading to university

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ASIA — 30 OF 33

Timor-Leste

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Portuguese · Tetum
Compulsory	Basic (9 yrs)
Structure	9 + 3
School year	Jan – Dec
Higher ed	National Univ. (UNTL)
Currency	US Dollar (USD)

OVERVIEW

Timor-Leste (East Timor), one of Asia's youngest countries (independent in 2002), has two official languages — Portuguese and Tetum — and has been rebuilding its education system after Indonesian occupation and the struggle for independence. Language of instruction (Portuguese, Tetum, and the role...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Basic education (9 years)** — Compulsory, combining primary and lower secondary
- ✓ **Secondary (3 years)** — General or technical, leading to higher education or work

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ASIA — 31 OF 33

Turkmenistan

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Turkmen · Russian
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	12-year
School year	Sept – May
Higher ed	Turkmen State Univ.
Currency	Manat (TMT)

OVERVIEW

Turkmenistan, a gas-rich but closed Central Asian state, runs a centralized, state-controlled education system with Turkmen as the main language of instruction (Russian is also used). Literacy is near-universal, a Soviet-era legacy, but the system is tightly controlled, university places are...

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ASIA — 32 OF 33

Uzbekistan

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Uzbek · Russian
Compulsory	Ages 7–18
Structure	4 – 5 – 2/3
School year	Sept – May
University entry	Entrance test
Currency	Som (UZS)

OVERVIEW

Uzbekistan, the most populous Central Asian country, runs a post-Soviet education system with Uzbek as the main language of instruction (Russian and other languages are also used) and near-universal literacy. Since 2016, sweeping reforms have opened up the country and its education system —...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–4)** — Ages ~7–10
- ✓ **General secondary (grades 5–9)** — Completing the core cycle
- ✓ **Upper secondary** — Continued schooling, academic lyceums, or vocational colleges, leading to university

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ASIA — 33 OF 33

Vietnam

AT A GLANCE

Language	Vietnamese
Compulsory	Ages 6–14
Structure	5 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – May
University entry	National exam
Currency	Dong (VND)

OVERVIEW

Vietnam runs a Vietnamese-language education system that has drawn international attention for a striking reason: its students outperform those of much wealthier countries on international assessments (PISA). Rooted in a strong, Confucian-influenced cultural respect for education, the system is...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (5 years)** — Grades 1–5, ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Grades 6–9, completing the compulsory cycle
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Grades 10–12, leading to university

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AFRICA — 01 OF 54

Algeria

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Arabic · French
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	5 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Dinar (DZD)

OVERVIEW

Algeria runs a large, free, state-centered education system, nationalized after independence in 1962 and overseen by the Ministry of National Education (schools) and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (universities). Arabic is the main language of instruction, French is widely...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (5 years)** — École primaire, ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Lower secondary / middle (4 years)** — Collège (CEM) — completing the nine-year compulsory "fundamental" cycle
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, with general and technical streams (sciences, letters, mathematics, etc.)

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Angola

AT A GLANCE

Language	Portuguese
Compulsory	9-year basic
Structure	6-3-3
School year	Feb – Nov
Higher ed	Agostinho Neto Univ.
Currency	Kwanza (AOA)

OVERVIEW

Angola's education system, overseen by the Ministry of Education (schools) and the Ministry of Higher Education (universities), uses Portuguese as the language of instruction — a legacy of Portuguese colonial rule that ended in 1975. Several national languages (such as Kimbundo, Kikongo, and...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary education (grades 1-6)** — Free and the foundation of the compulsory cycle, beginning around age 6
- ✓ **Lower secondary — 1st cycle (grades 7-9)** — Completing the nine-year basic-education cycle
- ✓ **Upper secondary — 2nd cycle (grades 10-12/13)** — General programs, plus technical (médio técnico) and teacher-training (médio pedagógico)...

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Benin

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	Primary (6 yrs)
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – July
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XOF)

OVERVIEW

Benin, a West African nation and former French colony, runs a French-language education system modeled on the French structure, overseen by the ministries responsible for primary/secondary and higher education. The government has expanded access — notably making primary schooling free and...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — École primaire, ages ~6–11, ending with the CEP
- ✓ **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat (general or technical)

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Botswana

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · Setswana
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	7 + 3 + 2
School year	Jan – Dec
Exams	PSLE · BGCSE
Currency	Pula (BWP)

OVERVIEW

Botswana has invested heavily in education using its diamond revenues, building one of Southern Africa's more developed systems. English is the official language and the medium of instruction (with Setswana used in early primary), literacy is relatively high (around 88%), and the government...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (7 years)** — Standards 1–7, ending with the PSLE
- ✓ **Junior secondary (3 years)** — Forms 1–3, ending with the JCE
- ✓ **Senior secondary (2 years)** — Forms 4–5, ending with the BGCSE and university entry

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AFRICA — 05 OF 54

Burkina Faso

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	6–16 (in principle)
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Oct – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XOF)

OVERVIEW

Burkina Faso, a landlocked West African nation and former French colony, runs a French-language education system modeled on the French structure. The government has worked to expand access, but Burkina Faso has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world, and — critically — a severe security...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — École primaire, ages ~6–11, ending with the CEP
- ✓ **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

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AFRICA — 06 OF 54

Burundi

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Kirundi · French · English
Compulsory	Basic (9 yrs)
Structure	9 + 4
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Univ. of Burundi
Currency	Franc (BIF)

OVERVIEW

Burundi, a small, densely populated country in East Africa, runs a multilingual education system: Kirundi is the national language, French the traditional language of instruction, and English (with Swahili) increasingly important through Burundi's membership in the East African Community. The...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Fundamental education (9 years)** — Compulsory basic schooling combining primary and lower secondary, ages ~6–15
- ✓ **Post-fundamental secondary (about 4 years)** — General and technical tracks leading to university

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AFRICA — 07 OF 54

Cabo Verde

AT A GLANCE

Language	Portuguese
Compulsory	Basic (8 yrs)
Structure	8 + 4
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Univ. of Cabo Verde
Currency	Escudo (CVE)

OVERVIEW

Cabo Verde (Cape Verde), an Atlantic island nation off West Africa, is one of the region's more stable and developed countries and has invested strongly in education. Portuguese is the official language and medium of instruction, while Cape Verdean Creole (Kriolu) is the everyday spoken language....

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Pre-school** — Early-childhood education
- ✓ **Basic education (about 8 years)** — Compulsory, from around age 6
- ✓ **Secondary education (about 4 years)** — General and technical tracks leading to further study

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AFRICA — 08 OF 54

Cameroon

AT A GLANCE

Languages	French · English
Compulsory	Primary
Systems	2 parallel
School year	Sept – June
Exams	GCE · Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XAF)

OVERVIEW

Cameroon is genuinely unusual: as a country with both French and English colonial legacies, it operates two parallel education subsystems — a Francophone (French-based) system and an Anglophone (English-based, British-derived) system — each with its own structure, exams, and qualifications. Both...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Anglophone** — Nursery + Primary (7 years) + Secondary (O-Level, ~5 years) + High School (A-Level, 2 years)
- ✓ **Francophone** — Primary (6 years) + Collège (leading to the BEPC) + Lycée (leading to the Probatoire and...

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Central African Republic

AT A GLANCE

Languages	French · Sango
Compulsory	6–15 (in principle)
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XAF)

OVERVIEW

The Central African Republic (CAR) runs a French-language education system on the French model, with Sango — the national language — widely spoken. CAR has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world, and years of conflict and instability have severely disrupted schooling, damaging infrastructure...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — École primaire, ages ~6–11, ending with the CEP
- ✓ **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

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AFRICA — 10 OF 54

Chad

AT A GLANCE

Languages	French · Arabic
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Oct – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XAF)

OVERVIEW

Chad, a large, landlocked Central African nation, has two official languages — French and Arabic — and its education system reflects both, with French-medium and Arabic-medium schooling. Chad has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world and a wide gender gap, and the system is severely...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–11, ending with the CEP
- ✓ **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

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AFRICA — 11 OF 54

Comoros

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Comorian · Arabic · French
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Franc (KMF)

OVERVIEW

The Comoros, an island nation in the Indian Ocean, has three official languages — Comorian (Shikomori), Arabic, and French — and an education system that blends a French-model secular system with strong Quranic and Arabic schooling. Literacy is moderate and improving, and the system is limited by...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

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AFRICA — 12 OF 54

Côte d'Ivoire

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – July
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XOF)

OVERVIEW

Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), the largest economy in Francophone West Africa, runs a French-language education system on the French model, with numerous local languages spoken across the country. Since 2015, education has been legally compulsory to age 16, and the government has worked to expand...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — École primaire, ages ~6–11, ending with the CEPE
- ✓ **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

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AFRICA — 13 OF 54

DR Congo

AT A GLANCE

Languages	French + national
Compulsory	Primary (free)
Structure	6 + 6
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Examen d'État
Currency	Franc (CDF)

OVERVIEW

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) — the second-largest country in Africa — runs a French-language education system shaped by Belgian and French traditions, with major national languages (Lingala, Swahili, Kikongo, and Tshiluba) used regionally, especially in early grades. A landmark 2019...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Secondary (6 years)** — A long cycle including general, technical, and teacher-training humanités, ending with the...

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AFRICA — 14 OF 54

Djibouti

AT A GLANCE

Languages	French · Arabic
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	5 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Franc (DJF)

OVERVIEW

Djibouti, a small, strategically located nation in the Horn of Africa, runs a French-language education system (with Arabic also official and taught), shaped by its French colonial history. The system is limited by the country's size and resources, and the government has worked to expand access and...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary / basic first cycle (5 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Middle / basic second cycle (4 years)** — Completing basic education
- ✓ **Secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, general or technical, ending with the Baccalauréat

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AFRICA — 15 OF 54

Egypt

AT A GLANCE

Language	Arabic
Compulsory	Basic (9 yrs)
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Thanaweya Amma → Egyptian Bac
Currency	Pound (EGP)

OVERVIEW

Egypt runs one of the largest and most centralized education systems in the Arab world, overseen by the Ministry of Education (schools) and the Ministry of Higher Education (universities), with Arabic as the language of instruction. The constitution makes Arabic, religious education, and national...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Grades 1–6
- ✓ **Preparatory / lower secondary (3 years)** — Grades 7–9, ending with the preparatory certificate — completing the nine-year compulsory...
- ✓ **Secondary (3 years)** — General academic (leading to the Thanaweya Amma / Egyptian Baccalaureate) or...

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AFRICA — 16 OF 54

Equatorial Guinea

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Spanish · French
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	6 + 4 + 3
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	UNGE
Currency	CFA franc (XAF)

OVERVIEW

Equatorial Guinea is distinctive as the only country in Africa where Spanish is an official language (alongside French and Portuguese), a legacy of Spanish colonial rule. Its education system is Spanish-based, and literacy is relatively high for the region (around 95%). Despite significant oil...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Lower secondary (4 years)** —
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Leading to university

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AFRICA — 17 OF 54

Eritrea

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Tigrinya · Arabic · English
Compulsory	Elem. + middle
Structure	5 – 3 – 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	ESECE
Currency	Nakfa (ERN)

OVERVIEW

Eritrea, in the Horn of Africa, runs a state-controlled education system in which early primary is taught in mother-tongue languages (Eritrea recognizes nine), shifting to English as the medium of instruction from middle school, with Tigrinya and Arabic also prominent. The government has expanded...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Elementary (5 years)** — Mother-tongue instruction, ages ~7–11
- ✓ **Middle (3 years)** — Transition to English-medium instruction
- ✓ **Secondary (4 years)** — Ending with the national secondary certificate examination

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AFRICA — 18 OF 54

Eswatini

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · siSwati
Compulsory	Free primary
Structure	7 + 3 + 2
School year	Jan – Dec
Exams	EPC · JC · EGCSE
Currency	Lilangeni (SZL)

OVERVIEW

Eswatini (formerly Swaziland, renamed in 2018) runs a British-influenced education system with English as the medium of instruction and siSwati as the national language. Free primary education was introduced in 2010, boosting enrollment, and literacy is relatively high (around 88%). The country...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (7 years)** — Ages ~6–12, ending with the Eswatini Primary Certificate (EPC)
- ✓ **Junior secondary (3 years)** — Ending with the Junior Certificate (JC)
- ✓ **Senior secondary (2 years)** — Ending with the Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCSE)

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AFRICA — 19 OF 54

Ethiopia

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Amharic + regional · English
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	6 – 2 – 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	National exam
Currency	Birr (ETB)

OVERVIEW

Ethiopia — one of Africa's most populous countries and home to an ancient learning tradition (the Orthodox church's Ge'ez-language schools date back centuries) — runs a large, rapidly expanding modern education system. Early primary is taught in mother-tongue / regional languages (such as Amharic,...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–6)** — Mother-tongue instruction in early grades
- ✓ **Middle school (grades 7–8)** —
- ✓ **Secondary (grades 9–12)** — General secondary leading to university, alongside technical and vocational (TVET) pathways

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AFRICA — 20 OF 54

Gabon

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – July
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XAF)

OVERVIEW

Gabon, an oil-producing nation in Central Africa, runs a French-language education system on the French model, overseen by the ministries of education. Literacy is relatively high for the region (around 85%), and the government has invested in expanding access, though quality and rural provision...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — École primaire, ages ~6–11, ending with the CEP
- ✓ **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

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AFRICA — 21 OF 54

Ghana

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Basic (KG–JHS)
Structure	2 + 6 + 3 + 3
School year	Sept – Aug
Exams	BECE · WASSCE
Currency	Cedi (GHS)

OVERVIEW

Ghana runs one of West Africa's stronger education systems, with English as the medium of instruction (local languages such as Twi, Ewe, Fante, Ga, and Dagbani are used in early primary). Basic education is free and compulsory, and in a landmark move Ghana made senior high school free in 2017 —...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Kindergarten (2 years)** — Early-childhood education
- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Junior High School (JHS, 3 years)** — Ending with the BECE — completing basic education
- ✓ **Senior High School (SHS, 3 years)** — General or TVET streams, ending with the WASSCE

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AFRICA — 22 OF 54

Guinea

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Oct – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Franc (GNF)

OVERVIEW

Guinea, a West African nation and former French colony, runs a French-language education system on the French model, with local languages (such as Pular, Malinké, and Susu) widely spoken. Literacy is low, and the government has worked to expand access, though poverty, teacher shortages, and rural...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — École primaire, ages ~7–12, ending with the CEP
- ✓ **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

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AFRICA — 23 OF 54

Guinea-Bissau

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Portuguese · Crioulo
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	6 + 3 + 3
School year	Oct – June
Higher ed	Amílcar Cabral Univ.
Currency	CFA franc (XOF)

OVERVIEW

Guinea-Bissau, a small West African nation and former Portuguese colony, has Portuguese as its official language, though Crioulo (Guinea-Bissau Creole) is the everyday lingua franca and local languages are widely spoken. The education system is Portuguese-influenced but under-resourced, and years...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Basic education (ensino básico)** — The compulsory foundation, in stages across roughly the first nine years
- ✓ **Secondary education** — General secondary leading toward higher education or work

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AFRICA — 24 OF 54

Kenya

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · Kiswahili
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	2 – 6 – 3 – 3
School year	Jan – Nov
University entry	KCSE → KCBE
Currency	Shilling (KES)

OVERVIEW

Kenya, an East African education leader, runs an English- and Kiswahili-language system that is in the middle of its biggest reform in decades: the shift from the long-standing, exam-heavy 8-4-4 system to a Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) — now often called Competency-Based Education (CBE)....

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Pre-primary (2 years)** — Ages ~4–5
- ✓ **Primary (6 years, Grades 1–6)** —
- ✓ **Junior School (3 years, Grades 7–9)** —
- ✓ **Senior School (3 years, Grades 10–12)** — With academic and career pathways (including a strong STEM focus)

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AFRICA — 25 OF 54

Lesotho

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · Sesotho
Compulsory	Free primary
Structure	7 + 3 + 2
School year	Jan – Dec
Exams	PSLE · LGCSE
Currency	Loti (LSL)

OVERVIEW

Lesotho — a mountainous country entirely surrounded by South Africa — runs a British-influenced education system with English as the medium of instruction and Sesotho as the national language. Free primary education (introduced in 2000) boosted enrollment, and Lesotho is notable for relatively high...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (7 years)** — Ages ~6–12, ending with the PSLE
- ✓ **Junior secondary (3 years)** — Ending with the Junior Certificate (JC)
- ✓ **Senior secondary (2 years)** — Ending with the LGCSE



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Liberia

AT A GLANCE

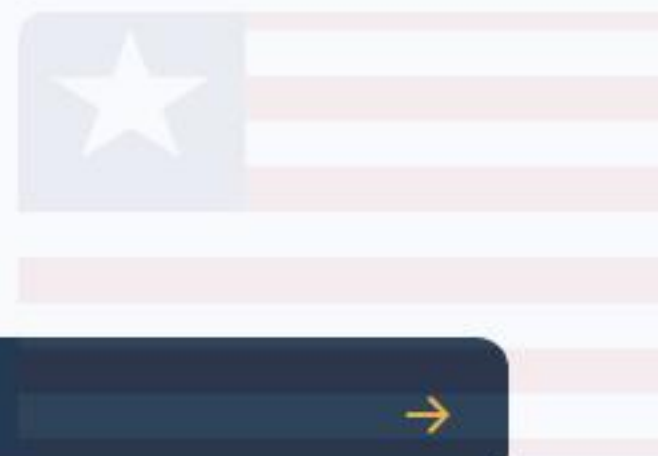
Language	English
Compulsory	Primary + Junior High
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Sept – July
Exams	WASSCE
Currency	Dollar (LRD)

OVERVIEW

Liberia, founded in the 19th century by freed American slaves, runs an English-language education system with a US-influenced structure (elementary, junior high, senior high). Literacy is low — a legacy of civil war (1989–2003) and the later Ebola epidemic, which devastated schooling — and the...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Elementary / primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **Junior high (3 years)** — Completing basic education
- ✓ **Senior high (3 years)** — Ending with the WASSCE



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AFRICA — 27 OF 54

Libya

AT A GLANCE

Language	Arabic
Compulsory	Basic (9 yrs)
Structure	9 + 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Secondary certificate
Currency	Dinar (LYD)

OVERVIEW

Libya, a North African oil producer, runs an Arabic-language education system with relatively high literacy. Once well-funded from oil revenues, the system has been disrupted by years of conflict and political division since 2011, which have damaged schools and split administration between rival...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Basic education (9 years)** — Compulsory, ages ~6–15
- ✓ **Secondary (3 years)** — General or specialized/vocational, leading to university



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AFRICA — 28 OF 54

Madagascar

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Malagasy · French
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	5 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Ariary (MGA)

OVERVIEW

Madagascar, a large Indian Ocean island nation, runs a French-influenced education system in which both Malagasy (the national language) and French are used in schooling. One of the world's poorest countries, Madagascar has expanded access over time, but literacy, completion, and rural provision...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (5 years)** — École primaire, ending with the CEPE
- ✓ **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

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AFRICA — 29 OF 54

Malawi

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · Chichewa
Compulsory	Free primary
Structure	8 + 4
School year	Sept – July
Exams	PSLCE · MSCE
Currency	Kwacha (MWK)

OVERVIEW

Malawi, in southeastern Africa, runs a British-influenced education system with English as the medium of instruction and Chichewa as the national language (used in early grades). Free primary education, introduced in 1994, dramatically increased enrollment. As one of the world's poorest countries,...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (8 years, Standards 1–8)** — Ages ~6–13, ending with the PSLCE
- ✓ **Secondary (4 years, Forms 1–4)** — Ending with the JCE (junior) and the MSCE (senior)

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AFRICA — 30 OF 54

Mali

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	Fundamental
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Oct – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XOF)

OVERVIEW

Mali, a large Sahelian nation and former French colony, runs a French-language education system on the French model, with Bambara and other national languages widely spoken. Mali has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world, and — critically — a severe security crisis has forced the closure of...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Fundamental education, cycle 1 (6 years)** — Primary, ages ~7–12
- ✓ **Fundamental education, cycle 2 (3 years)** — Ending with the DEF
- ✓ **Secondary (3 years)** — Lycée (general or technical), ending with the Baccalauréat

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AFRICA — 31 OF 54

Mauritania

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Arabic · French
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Oct – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Ougulya (MRU)

OVERVIEW

Mauritania, straddling the Arab and West African worlds in the Sahel, has Arabic as its official language and French widely used, alongside national languages (Pulaar, Soninke, Wolof). Its education system is Arabic- and French-influenced, and literacy is low. Language of instruction and...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

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AFRICA — 32 OF 54

Mauritius

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · French · Creole
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	6 + 7
School year	Jan – Dec
Exams	PSAC · SC · HSC
Currency	Rupee (MUR)

OVERVIEW

Mauritius, a multi-ethnic Indian Ocean island nation, runs a multilingual education system: English is the official medium of instruction, French is widely used, Mauritian Creole is the everyday language, and various Asian and ancestral languages are taught. The country uses Cambridge...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Pre-primary + Primary (6 years)** — Ending with the PSAC
- ✓ **Secondary (7 years)** — Lower secondary (ending with the NCE) and upper secondary, leading to Cambridge SC and HSC...

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Morocco

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Arabic · Amazigh · French
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Dirham (MAD)

OVERVIEW

Morocco runs a multilingual education system: Arabic is the main official language of instruction, Amazigh (Tamazight) is now official and being integrated into schools, and French is widely used — especially for mathematics, the sciences, and higher education (Spanish features in the north). The...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **Lower secondary / collège (3 years)** — Completing the compulsory cycle
- ✓ **Upper secondary / lycée (3 years)** — General or technical, ending with the Baccalauréat

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AFRICA — 34 OF 54

Mozambique

AT A GLANCE

Language	Portuguese
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	7 + 3 + 2
School year	Jan – Nov
Higher ed	Eduardo Mondlane Univ.
Currency	Metical (MZN)

OVERVIEW

Mozambique, a large Southern African nation and former Portuguese colony, runs a Portuguese-language education system with local languages widely spoken (and used in some early-grade bilingual programs). The government has expanded access substantially since the end of civil war, though literacy...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (7 years)** — Two phases (EP1, grades 1–5, and EP2, grades 6–7), ages ~6–12
- ✓ **Lower secondary (3 years)** —
- ✓ **Upper secondary (2 years)** — Leading to university

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AFRICA — 35 OF 54

Namibia

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English + local
Compulsory	Free basic education
Structure	7 + 3 + 2/3
School year	Jan – Dec
Exams	NSSC
Currency	Dollar (NAD)

OVERVIEW

Namibia, in southwestern Africa, runs a British/South-African-influenced education system with English as the official medium of instruction (local languages such as Oshiwambo, Afrikaans, and German are used in early grades and spoken widely). Literacy is relatively high, free basic education has...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (7 years)** — Ages ~6–13
- ✓ **Junior secondary (3 years)** —
- ✓ **Senior secondary (2–3 years)** — Leading to the NSSC examinations

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AFRICA — 36 OF 54

Niger

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Oct – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XOF)

OVERVIEW

Niger, a landlocked Sahelian nation and former French colony, runs a French-language education system on the French model, with Hausa, Zarma, and other national languages widely spoken. Niger has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world, and the system faces severe challenges of poverty, rapid...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — École primaire, ages ~7–12, ending with the CEP
- ✓ **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

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AFRICA — 37 OF 54

Nigeria

AT A GLANCE

Language	English + Hausa/Yoruba/Igbo
Compulsory	Basic (9 yrs)
Structure	6-3-3-4
School year	Sept – July
University entry	WASSCE + UTME/JAMB
Currency	Naira (NGN)

OVERVIEW

Nigeria — Africa's most populous country — runs the continent's largest education system, with English as the official medium of instruction (and Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and hundreds of other languages spoken and used in early grades). The system follows a 6-3-3-4 structure, and access to university...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6-12
- ✓ **Junior Secondary School (JSS, 3 years)** — Ending with the BECE — completing the nine-year Universal Basic Education cycle
- ✓ **Senior Secondary School (SSS, 3 years)** — Ending with the WASSCE/NECO
- ✓ **Tertiary (4 years)** — University (many programs run 4-6 years)

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AFRICA — 38 OF 54

Republic of the Congo

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Oct – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XAF)

OVERVIEW

The Republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville) runs a French-language education system on the French model, with Lingala and Kituba widely spoken as national languages. Supported historically by oil revenues, the country has relatively higher literacy than some regional neighbors, though quality and...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — École primaire, ages ~6–11, ending with the CEP
- ✓ **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

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AFRICA — 39 OF 54

Rwanda

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Kinyarwanda · English
Compulsory	Basic (12 yrs)
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Sept – July
Exams	O-Level · A-Level
Currency	Franc (RWF)

OVERVIEW

Rwanda, in East Africa, runs an education system notable for a bold change: in 2008 it switched the language of instruction from French to English, pivoting toward the English-speaking East African Community and global economy (Kinyarwanda is the national language, and French and Swahili are also...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~7–12, ending with the primary leaving examination
- ✓ **Lower secondary / O-Level (3 years)** — Ending with the O-Level national exam
- ✓ **Upper secondary / A-Level (3 years)** — Ending with the A-Level national exam, leading to university

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AFRICA — 40 OF 54

Senegal

AT A GLANCE

Languages	French · Wolof
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Oct – July
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XOF)

OVERVIEW

Senegal, a stable West African democracy and former French colony, runs a French-language education system on the French model, with Wolof and other national languages widely spoken. Alongside the state system, Quranic schools (daaras) educate many children. Literacy is relatively low, and the...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — École primaire, ending with the CFEE
- ✓ **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BFEM
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

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AFRICA — 41 OF 54

Seychelles

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Creole · English · French
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	6 + 5
School year	Jan – Dec
Exams	IGCSE · A-Level
Currency	Rupee (SCR)

OVERVIEW

Seychelles, an Indian Ocean island nation, has three official languages — Seychellois Creole (Kreol), English, and French. Education uses Creole in early grades and shifts to English (with French taught), and the country provides free education with high literacy. Seychelles uses Cambridge-based...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Crèche + Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~5/6–11, beginning in Creole
- ✓ **Secondary (5 years)** — Leading to IGCSE and, for some, A-Level examinations

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AFRICA — 42 OF 54

Sierra Leone

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Sept – July
Exams	NPSE · WASSCE
Currency	Leone (SLE)

OVERVIEW

Sierra Leone, a West African nation and former British colony, runs an English-language education system (Krio is the lingua franca, with Mende, Temne, and other languages spoken). After the devastation of civil war (1991–2002) and the Ebola epidemic, the government launched a major Free Quality...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Ending with the NPSE
- ✓ **Junior Secondary School (JSS, 3 years)** — Ending with the BECE
- ✓ **Senior Secondary School (SSS, 3 years)** — Ending with the WASSCE

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AFRICA — 43 OF 54

Somalia

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Somali · Arabic
Compulsory	Primary (in principle)
Structure	8 + 4
School year	varies
Higher ed	Private universities
Currency	Shilling (SOS)

OVERVIEW

Somalia, in the Horn of Africa, has an education system rebuilding after the collapse of central government in 1991 and decades of conflict. Somali is the main language of instruction, with Arabic and Islamic education prominent. In the absence of a strong state system for years, education became...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (about 8 years)** — The foundation stage
- ✓ **Secondary (about 4 years)** — Leading toward higher education or work

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AFRICA — 44 OF 54

South Africa

AT A GLANCE

Languages	11 official
Compulsory	Grades R–9
Structure	GET + FET
School year	Jan – Dec
University entry	Matric (NSC)
Currency	Rand (ZAR)

OVERVIEW

South Africa runs a large, multilingual education system transformed after the end of apartheid in 1994. The country has eleven official languages (English and Afrikaans plus nine African languages such as Zulu and Xhosa) — mother-tongue instruction is common in early grades, shifting to English...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **General Education and Training (GET)** — Grade R (reception) through Grade 9 — Foundation Phase (R–3), Intermediate Phase (4–6), and...
- ✓ **Further Education and Training (FET)** — Grades 10–12, ending with the National Senior Certificate

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AFRICA — 45 OF 54

South Sudan

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · Arabic
Compulsory	Primary (in principle)
Structure	8 + 4
School year	varies
Higher ed	Univ. of Juba
Currency	Pound (SSP)

OVERVIEW

South Sudan — the world's newest country, independent since 2011 — is rebuilding an education system after decades of war and continued instability. On independence it adopted English as the official language of instruction (a shift from Arabic), alongside Arabic and many local languages. South...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (8 years)** — The foundation stage
- ✓ **Secondary (4 years)** — Leading toward higher education or work

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AFRICA — 46 OF 54

Sudan

AT A GLANCE

Language	Arabic
Compulsory	Basic (8 yrs)
Structure	8 + 3
School year	varies
University entry	Sudan School Certificate
Currency	Pound (SDG)

OVERVIEW

Sudan runs an Arabic-language education system (with English taught and local languages spoken). Once home to some of the region's most respected institutions, Sudanese education has been devastated by the war that erupted in 2023, which closed schools and displaced millions. This guide describes...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Basic education (8 years)** — Compulsory, ages ~6–13
- ✓ **Secondary (3 years)** — Academic or technical, ending with the Sudan School Certificate

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AFRICA — 47 OF 54

São Tomé & Príncipe

AT A GLANCE

Language	Portuguese
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	Primary + Secondary
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Univ. of São Tomé
Currency	Dobra (STN)

OVERVIEW

São Tomé and Príncipe, a small island nation in the Gulf of Guinea and former Portuguese colony, runs a Portuguese-language education system (Forro and other Creoles are widely spoken). Literacy is relatively high for the region, and the government has expanded access, though the system is limited...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Basic education** — The compulsory foundation cycle
- ✓ **Secondary education** — General secondary leading toward higher education or work

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AFRICA — 48 OF 54

Tanzania

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Swahili · English
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	7 + 4 + 2
School year	Jan – Dec
Exams	PSLE · CSEE · ACSEE
Currency	Shilling (TZS)

OVERVIEW

Tanzania, in East Africa, runs an education system with a distinctive language arrangement: Swahili (Kiswahili) — the national language — is the medium of instruction in primary school, and English becomes the medium in secondary and higher education. This shift is a defining (and challenging)...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (7 years)** — Swahili-medium, ages ~7–13, ending with the PSLE
- ✓ **Ordinary-level secondary (4 years)** — English-medium, ending with the CSEE
- ✓ **Advanced-level secondary (2 years)** — Ending with the ACSEE, leading to university

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AFRICA — 49 OF 54

Gambia

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Sept – July
Exams	GABECE · WASSCE
Currency	Dalasi (GMD)

OVERVIEW

The Gambia — the smallest country on mainland Africa and a former British colony — runs an English-language education system (with local languages such as Mandinka, Wolof, and Fula widely spoken), alongside a strong tradition of Islamic and Quranic (madrasa) schooling. Literacy is relatively low,...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Lower basic (6 years)** — Ages ~7–12
- ✓ **Upper basic (3 years)** — Ending with the GABECE
- ✓ **Senior secondary (3 years)** — Ending with the WASSCE

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AFRICA — 50 OF 54

Togo

AT A GLANCE

Language	French
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	6 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – July
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	CFA franc (XOF)

OVERVIEW

Togo, a West African nation and former French colony, runs a French-language education system on the French model, with Ewe, Kabiye, and other languages widely spoken. The government has worked to expand access — including abolishing some primary fees — though literacy and completion, especially...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Ending with the CEPD
- ✓ **Lower secondary (4 years)** — Collège, ending with the BEPC
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Lycée, ending with the Baccalauréat

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Tunisia

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Arabic · French
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	6 – 3 – 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Dinar (TND)

OVERVIEW

Tunisia, in North Africa, runs an education system with Arabic as the main language and French widely used — especially for mathematics, the sciences, and higher education. Tunisia has long prioritized education (a large share of the national budget), giving it relatively high literacy and...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Basic education (9 years)** — Primary (6 years) plus a preparatory/lower-secondary stage (3 years)
- ✓ **Secondary (4 years)** — General or technical, ending with the Baccalauréat

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AFRICA — 52 OF 54

Uganda

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Primary (UPE)
Structure	7 + 4 + 2
School year	Feb – Dec
Exams	PLE · UCE · UACE
Currency	Shilling (UGX)

OVERVIEW

Uganda, in East Africa, runs a British-influenced education system with English as the official medium of instruction (Swahili, Luganda, and other languages are spoken and used in early grades). Uganda was an early adopter of Universal Primary Education, which dramatically expanded access, and it...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (7 years)** — Ages ~6–13, ending with the PLE
- ✓ **Ordinary-level secondary (4 years)** — Ending with the UCE
- ✓ **Advanced-level secondary (2 years)** — Ending with the UACE, leading to university



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AFRICA — 53 OF 54

Zambia

AT A GLANCE

Language	English + local
Compulsory	Free basic education
Structure	7 + 2 + 3
School year	Jan – Dec
Exams	Grade 7/9/12
Currency	Kwacha (ZMW)

OVERVIEW

Zambia, in Southern Africa, runs a British-influenced education system with English as the official medium of instruction (local languages such as Bemba and Nyanja are used in early grades). A major free education policy introduced in 2022 abolished fees for public primary and secondary schooling,...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (7 years)** — Ages ~7–13, with a Grade 7 examination
- ✓ **Junior secondary (2 years)** — Grades 8–9, with a Grade 9 examination
- ✓ **Senior secondary (3 years)** — Grades 10–12, ending with the Grade 12 School Certificate

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AFRICA — 54 OF 54

Zimbabwe

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English + Shona/Ndebele
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	7 + 4 + 2
School year	Jan – Dec
Exams	ZIMSEC O/A-Level
Currency	ZIG / US\$

OVERVIEW

Zimbabwe, in Southern Africa, runs a British-influenced education system with English as the main medium of instruction (Shona, Ndebele, and other languages are among its official languages and used in early grades). Zimbabwe is known for a strong education tradition and one of the highest literacy...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (7 years)** — Ages ~6–13, with a Grade 7 examination
- ✓ **Ordinary-level secondary (4 years)** — Forms 1–4, ending with ZIMSEC O-Levels
- ✓ **Advanced-level secondary (2 years)** — Forms 5–6, ending with ZIMSEC A-Levels, leading to university

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REGION 04 OF 06

Americas

A full page for each of **35 countries** — how school works, in plain English.





Antigua and Barbuda

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	6 + 5 (British)
School year	Sept – July
Exams	CXC / CSEC
Currency	EC Dollar (XCD)

OVERVIEW

Antigua and Barbuda — a twin-island Caribbean nation and former British colony — runs an English-language, British-based education system under the Ministry of Education. Public education is free, literacy is high (around 99%), and, like its Caribbean neighbors, the country uses the regional...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Pre-primary** — One year of early-childhood education
- ✓ **Primary (about 6 years)** — Ages ~5–11
- ✓ **Secondary (about 5 years)** — Ages ~11–16, leading to CXC examinations

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Argentina

AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Ages 4–18
Structure	Primary + Secondary
School year	Mar – Dec
Public university	Free
Currency	Peso (ARS)

OVERVIEW

Argentina has a strong public-education tradition and a striking feature: education is free at every level — including university. Instruction is in Spanish, literacy is high (around 99%), and the country has one of the longest compulsory-education spans in the world, running from age 4 through the...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Educación Inicial (early years)** — Kindergarten; the final years are compulsory — age 5 nationwide, with age 4 also made...
- ✓ **Educación Primaria** — Primary school, typically 6 or 7 years depending on the province
- ✓ **Educación Secundaria** — Secondary school, typically 5 or 6 years, so that primary + secondary total 12 years, with...



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Barbados

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	Primary + Secondary
School year	Sept – July
Exams	CXC · CAPE
Currency	Bds\$ (pegged US\$)

OVERVIEW

Barbados has one of the Caribbean's strongest education systems, with English as the language of instruction, near-universal literacy, and a long history of heavy public investment in schooling. The system is British-based, uses the regional Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) assessments, and...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Nursery/pre-primary** — Early-childhood education
- ✓ **Primary (ages ~4/5–11)** — Ending with the Barbados Secondary Schools' Entrance Examination (the "11-plus" / Common...
- ✓ **Secondary (ages ~11–16/18)** — Leading to CSEC and, for some, CAPE

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Belize

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–14
Structure	8 + 4
School year	Sept – June
Exams	PSE · CSEC
Currency	BZ\$ (pegged US\$)

OVERVIEW

Belize is the only officially English-speaking country in Central America (Spanish and Kriol are also widely spoken), and its education system reflects British-Caribbean roots. A defining feature is the church-state partnership: most schools are operated by churches/denominations but funded and...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Pre-school** — Early-childhood years
- ✓ **Primary (8 years)** — Infant 1–2 plus Standard 1–6, roughly ages 5–13, ending with the Primary School Examination
- ✓ **Secondary (4 years)** — Roughly ages 13–17, leading to CXC examinations

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Bolivia

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Spanish + Indigenous
Compulsory	Primary + Secondary
Structure	6 + 6
School year	Feb – Nov
Public university	Free
Currency	Boliviano (BOB)

OVERVIEW

Bolivia's "plurinational" education system reflects the country's diversity: Spanish is the main language of instruction, but Bolivia recognizes dozens of indigenous languages (such as Quechua, Aymara, and Guarani) and promotes intercultural and bilingual education. The system was reshaped by the...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Initial (early years)** — Pre-primary education
- ✓ **Primary education (about 6 years)** — The foundation cycle, from around age 6
- ✓ **Secondary education (about 6 years)** — Leading to the Bachillerato and university

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Brazil

AT A GLANCE

Language	Portuguese
Compulsory	Ages 4–17
Structure	9 + 3
School year	Feb – Dec
University entry	ENEM
Currency	Real (BRL)

OVERVIEW

Brazil, Latin America's largest country, runs a big, federally coordinated education system with Portuguese as the language of instruction. Basic education is free and compulsory from age 4 to 17, and — strikingly — the country's public universities are free yet highly competitive, with admission...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Educação Infantil (early years)** — Nursery and pre-school, including compulsory pre-primary from age 4
- ✓ **Ensino Fundamental (9 years)** — Fundamental education, ages ~6–14, split into early years (1–5) and later years (6–9)
- ✓ **Ensino Médio (3 years)** — Upper secondary, ages ~15–17, ending with the secondary diploma (Certificado/Diploma de...)

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Canada

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · French
Compulsory	Ages 6–18
Structure	Province-run K–12
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Universities & colleges
Currency	Dollar (CAD)

OVERVIEW

Canada consistently ranks among the world's most educated countries and is one of the top destinations for international students. The single most important thing to understand is that education is a provincial and territorial responsibility, not a federal one. There is no national ministry of...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Early childhood / Kindergarten** — Kindergarten (usually the year a child turns 5) is offered across the country; some...
- ✓ **Elementary (primary)** — Roughly Kindergarten to Grade 6 (Grade 7 or 8 in some provinces)
- ✓ **Middle / junior high** — Where used, typically Grades 7–9 (this stage doesn't exist everywhere)
- ✓ **Secondary (high school)** — Through Grade 12 across most of Canada — with the major exception of Quebec, where high...

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Chile

AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Ages 6–18
Structure	8 + 4
School year	Mar – Dec
University entry	PAES
Currency	Peso (CLP)

OVERVIEW

Chile has a well-developed education system with Spanish as the language of instruction and high literacy (around 97%). It is known for two distinctive features: a three-tier school system (municipal/public, government-subsidized private "voucher" schools, and fully private schools — Chile was an...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Educación Parvularia (early years)** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Educación Básica (8 years)** — Basic education, ages ~6–13
- ✓ **Educación Media (4 years)** — Secondary — scientific-humanistic (academic) or technical-professional (vocational), ages...

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Colombia

AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Ages ~5–15
Structure	5 + 4 + 2
School year	Jan/Feb – Nov
University entry	Saber 11
Currency	Peso (COP)

OVERVIEW

Colombia runs a Spanish-language education system overseen by the Ministry of National Education, with high literacy (around 95%). Schooling spans one compulsory year of preschool, basic education, and upper secondary, and university admission is shaped by a national standardized test, the Saber...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Preescolar** — One compulsory transition year before primary
- ✓ **Básica primaria (grades 1–5)** — Ages ~6–10
- ✓ **Básica secundaria (grades 6–9)** — Completing basic education
- ✓ **Educación media (grades 10–11)** — Academic or technical, ending with the bachiller diploma and the Saber 11 exam

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Costa Rica

AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Ages ~4–17
Structure	6 + 5
School year	Feb – Dec
Higher ed	Univ. of Costa Rica
Currency	Colón (CRC)

OVERVIEW

Costa Rica is famous for a remarkable choice: after abolishing its army in 1948, it redirected the savings into education and health. The country now invests a very high share of GDP in public education, has one of the highest literacy rates in the Americas (near-universal among young people), and...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Preescolar** — Pre-school, with compulsory years before primary
- ✓ **Educación General Básica — primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **Secondary** — Academic (to 11th grade) or vocational/technical tracks, with the latter running longer and...

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Cuba

AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	6 + 3 + 3
School year	Sept – July
Higher ed	Univ. of Havana
Currency	Peso (CUP)

OVERVIEW

Cuba has one of the most distinctive education systems in the world: free and state-run at every level, including university, with no private schools. Following a mass literacy campaign in 1961, Cuba achieved — and has maintained — among the highest literacy rates in the world (around 99.7%), and...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Preschool** — Early-childhood education, widely available
- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Basic secondary (3 years)** — Completing compulsory schooling
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Pre-university (leading to university) or technical/vocational

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Dominica

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	7 + 5
School year	Sept – July
Exams	CXC / CSEC
Currency	EC Dollar (XCD)

OVERVIEW

The Commonwealth of Dominica — a small eastern-Caribbean island (not to be confused with the Dominican Republic) — runs an English-language, British-based education system under its Ministry of Education. Public education is free, literacy is high, and, like its neighbors, Dominica uses the...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Pre-primary** — Early-childhood education
- ✓ **Primary (about 7 years)** — Ages ~5–12
- ✓ **Secondary (about 5 years)** — Leading to CXC examinations

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Dominican Republic

AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Primary + Sec.
Structure	6 + 6
School year	Aug – June
University entry	Pruebas Nacionales
Currency	Peso (DOP)

OVERVIEW

The Dominican Republic runs a Spanish-language education system overseen by the Ministry of Education, with high literacy (around 94%). A 2012 push to devote 4% of GDP to education significantly increased funding and expanded programs such as extended school days. The country is also home to the...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Nivel Inicial (early years)** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Nivel Primario (6 years)** — Primary education, ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Nivel Secundario (6 years)** — Secondary — academic or technical-vocational tracks, ending with the secondary diploma

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Ecuador

AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Ages 5–17
Structure	EGB + BGU
School year	varies by region
Public university	Free
Currency	US Dollar (USD)

OVERVIEW

Ecuador runs a Spanish-language education system, overseen by the Ministry of Education, with intercultural bilingual education for Indigenous communities (in languages such as Kichwa and Shuar) and high literacy (around 93%). A notable feature: Ecuador's 2008 constitution guarantees free public...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Educación Inicial** — Early-childhood education
- ✓ **Educación General Básica (EGB)** — Ten levels of basic education, ages ~5–14
- ✓ **Bachillerato General Unificado (BGU)** — Three years of upper secondary, ending with the bachillerato diploma

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El Salvador

AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Básica (9 yrs)
Structure	9 + 2/3
School year	Jan – Nov
Higher ed	Univ. of El Salvador
Currency	US Dollar (USD)

OVERVIEW

El Salvador runs a Spanish-language education system overseen by the Ministry of Education, and uses the US Dollar as its currency. The country has worked to expand access and rebuild its system after past conflict, with literacy around 90%. Free basic education is the foundation, followed by a...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Educación Parvularia** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Educación Básica (9 years)** — Free and compulsory, ages ~7–15
- ✓ **Educación Media (Bachillerato)** — General (2 years) or technical/vocational (3 years)



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Grenada

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	7 + 5
School year	Sept – July
Exams	CXC / CSEC
Currency	EC Dollar (XCD)

OVERVIEW

Grenada — the "Spice Isle" of the eastern Caribbean and a former British colony — runs an English-language, British-based education system under its Ministry of Education. Public education is free, literacy is high, and the country uses the regional CXC examinations. Grenada is also home to St....

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Pre-primary** — Early-childhood education
- ✓ **Primary (about 7 years)** — Ages ~5–12
- ✓ **Secondary (about 5 years)** — Leading to CXC examinations

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Guatemala

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Spanish + Mayan
Compulsory	Primary + Básico
Structure	6 + 3 + 2/3
School year	Jan – Oct
Higher ed	USAC (free)
Currency	Quetzal (GTQ)

OVERVIEW

Guatemala, the most populous country in Central America, runs a Spanish-language education system with intercultural bilingual education in its many Mayan languages for Indigenous communities. Literacy is around 83%, with significant gaps between urban and rural, and Ladino and Indigenous,...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Preprimaria** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Primaria (6 years)** — Ages ~7–12
- ✓ **Ciclo Básico (3 years)** — Lower secondary
- ✓ **Ciclo Diversificado (2–3 years)** — Upper secondary, ending with the bachillerato or a teaching/technical qualification

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Guyana

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	6 + 5
School year	Sept – July
Exams	NGSA · CXC
Currency	Dollar (GYD)

OVERVIEW

Guyana is the only English-speaking country in South America — a former British colony that is culturally Caribbean and a member of CARICOM. It runs an English-language, British-based education system, uses the regional CXC examinations, and has high literacy. A recent offshore oil boom has made...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Nursery** — Early-childhood education
- ✓ **Primary (about 6 years)** — Ending with the National Grade Six Assessment (NGSA), which allocates secondary places
- ✓ **Secondary (about 5–7 years)** — Leading to CXC examinations

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Haiti

AT A GLANCE

Languages	French · Haitian Creole
Compulsory	Fundamental
Structure	9 + 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Baccalauréat
Currency	Gourde (HTG)

OVERVIEW

Haiti has two official languages — French and Haitian Creole (Kreyòl), the latter spoken by virtually everyone — and a school system unusual for how little of it is public: the great majority of schools are private (run by churches, NGOs, and communities), with the state providing only a small...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **École fondamentale (fundamental, ~9 years)** — The basic cycle, from around age 6
- ✓ **Secondary (~4 years)** — Leading to the Baccalauréat



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Honduras

AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Básica (9 yrs)
Structure	9 + 2/3
School year	Feb – Nov
Higher ed	UNAH
Currency	Lempira (HNL)

OVERVIEW

Honduras runs a Spanish-language education system overseen by the Ministry of Education, with literacy around 88%. The country has worked to expand access and improve retention, though poverty, rural provision, and security challenges affect schooling. Free basic education is the foundation,...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Educación Prebásica** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Educación Básica (9 years)** — Free and compulsory, ages ~6–15
- ✓ **Educación Media (Bachillerato)** — General or technical, 2–3 years

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Jamaica

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	6 + 5
School year	Sept – July
Exams	PEP · CXC
Currency	Dollar (JMD)

OVERVIEW

Jamaica runs an English-language, British-based education system (with Jamaican Patois widely spoken) under its Ministry of Education. Public education is free, the country uses the regional CXC examinations, and Jamaica is home to the founding campus of the University of the West Indies — a major...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Early childhood** — Basic and Infant schools, ages ~3–5
- ✓ **Primary (about 6 years)** — Ending with the Primary Exit Profile (PEP)
- ✓ **Secondary (about 5–7 years)** — Leading to CXC examinations

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Mexico

AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Ages 3–18
Structure	3 + 6 + 3 + 3
School year	Aug – Jul
University entry	Entrance exams
Currency	Peso (MXN)

OVERVIEW

Mexico runs one of Latin America's largest education systems — over 36 million students — governed centrally by the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP). Instruction is in Spanish, with intercultural bilingual education in the country's 68 recognized indigenous languages. A notable feature:...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Preescolar (preschool, 3 years)** — Ages 3–5, compulsory
- ✓ **Primaria (primary, 6 years)** — Ages ~6–12, ending with the Certificado de Educación Primaria
- ✓ **Secundaria (lower secondary, 3 years)** — Grades 7–9, general or technical
- ✓ **Educación Media Superior (upper secondary / bachillerato, 3 years)** — Ages ~15–18 — academic (bachillerato general), technological, or vocational (CONALEP)

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Nicaragua

AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	6 + 5
School year	Feb – Nov
Higher ed	UNAN
Currency	Córdoba (NIO)

OVERVIEW

Nicaragua runs a Spanish-language education system overseen by the Ministry of Education, with bilingual intercultural education (in English Creole, Miskito, and other languages) on the Caribbean coast's autonomous regions. A famous 1980 literacy crusade sharply reduced illiteracy, and the...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Preescolar** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Primaria (6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **Secundaria (5 years)** — Ending with the bachillerato



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Panama

AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Primary + Premedia
Structure	6 + 3 + 3
School year	Mar – Dec
Higher ed	Univ. of Panama
Currency	Balboa / US\$

OVERVIEW

Panama runs a Spanish-language education system overseen by the Ministry of Education, with English and indigenous languages also taught. Literacy is high, and Panama's canal-driven economy has supported growing investment in education, though quality gaps between urban and rural (and indigenous)...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Preescolar** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Primaria (6 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Premedia (3 years)** — Lower secondary
- ✓ **Media (3 years)** — Upper secondary, ending with the bachillerato

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Paraguay

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Spanish · Guaraní
Compulsory	Básica (9 yrs)
Structure	9 + 3
School year	Feb – Nov
Higher ed	Univ. of Asunción
Currency	Guaraní (PYG)

OVERVIEW

Paraguay is genuinely bilingual: both Spanish and Guaraní are official languages, and — unusually for an indigenous language — Guaraní is spoken by the majority of the population. This shapes a distinctive bilingual education system. Literacy is relatively high, and the country has worked to expand...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Educación Inicial** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Educación Escolar Básica (9 years)** — Free and compulsory, ages ~6–15
- ✓ **Educación Media (Bachillerato, 3 years)** — Academic or technical



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Peru

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Spanish + Quechua
Compulsory	Primary + Secondary
Structure	6 + 5
School year	Mar – Dec
Higher ed	San Marcos
Currency	Sol (PEN)

OVERVIEW

Peru runs a Spanish-language education system with intercultural bilingual education in indigenous languages (Quechua and Aymara are also official). Literacy is relatively high, and Peru is home to the oldest officially established university in the Americas. Quality gaps between urban and rural —...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Educación Inicial** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Primaria (6 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Secundaria (5 years)** — Ending with the secondary diploma

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AMERICAS — 27 OF 35

Saint Kitts and Nevis

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	7 + 5
School year	Sept – July
Exams	CXC
Currency	EC Dollar (XCD)

OVERVIEW

Saint Kitts and Nevis, a twin-island Caribbean federation and former British colony, runs an English-language, British-based education system. Public education is free, literacy is high, and the country uses the regional CXC examinations. It also hosts offshore medical schools that enroll...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Pre-primary** — Early-childhood education
- ✓ **Primary (about 7 years)** — Ages ~5–12
- ✓ **Secondary (about 5 years)** — Leading to CXC examinations

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Saint Lucia

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–15
Structure	7 + 5
School year	Sept – July
Exams	CXC
Currency	EC Dollar (XCD)

OVERVIEW

Saint Lucia, an eastern-Caribbean island and former British colony (with a strong French-Creole cultural heritage), runs an English-language, British-based education system (French Creole, Kwéyòl, is widely spoken). Public education is free, and the country uses the regional CXC examinations.

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Pre-primary** — Early-childhood education
- ✓ **Primary (about 7 years)** — Ages ~5–12
- ✓ **Secondary (about 5 years)** — Leading to CXC examinations

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St. Vincent & the Grenadines

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	7 + 5
School year	Sept – July
Exams	CXC
Currency	EC Dollar (XCD)

OVERVIEW

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, an eastern-Caribbean nation and former British colony, runs an English-language, British-based education system. Public education is free, literacy is high, and the country uses the regional CXC examinations. It also hosts offshore medical schools that enroll...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Pre-primary** — Early-childhood education
- ✓ **Primary (about 7 years)** — Ages ~5–12
- ✓ **Secondary (about 5 years)** — Leading to CXC examinations

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Suriname

AT A GLANCE

Language	Dutch
Compulsory	Ages 7–12
Structure	6 + secondary
School year	Oct – Aug
Higher ed	Anton de Kom Univ.
Currency	Dollar (SRD)

OVERVIEW

Suriname, on the northern coast of South America, is the only Dutch-speaking country in the Americas — a legacy of Dutch colonial rule. Its education system follows the Dutch model, with Dutch as the language of instruction (Sranan Tongo is the lingua franca, and many other languages are spoken in...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (GLO, about 6 years)** — The foundation stage
- ✓ **Secondary** — Junior (VOJ) and senior (VOS) secondary, leading toward higher education or work

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Bahamas

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	6 + 3 + 3
School year	Sept – June
Exams	BJC · BGCSE
Currency	B\$ (pegged US\$)

OVERVIEW

The Bahamas runs an English-language, British-based education system overseen by the Ministry of Education. Public education is free, literacy is high, and the country administers its own national examinations (the BJC and BGCSE) modeled on British qualifications and developed with Cambridge.

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Pre-school** — Early-childhood years before formal schooling
- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–6)** — Ages ~5–11; national GLAT assessments in grades 3 and 6
- ✓ **Junior secondary (grades 7–9)** — Leading to the Bahamas Junior Certificate (BJC)
- ✓ **Senior secondary (grades 10–12)** — Leading to the BGCSE; some students add GCE A-Level study for university

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Trinidad and Tobago

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 5–16
Structure	7 + 5
School year	Sept – July
Exams	SEA · CXC
Currency	TT Dollar (TTD)

OVERVIEW

Trinidad and Tobago, an energy-rich twin-island Caribbean nation and former British colony, runs an English-language, British-based education system. Public education is free, literacy is very high, and the country uses the regional CXC examinations — plus a distinctive primary-exit exam (the SEA)...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (about 7 years)** — Ages ~5–12, ending with the SEA
- ✓ **Secondary (5–7 years)** — Leading to CSEC and, for pre-university study, CAPE

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United States

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	~Ages 6–18
Structure	K–5 + 6–8 + 9–12
School year	Aug – June
University entry	Diploma + SAT/ACT
Currency	US Dollar (USD)

OVERVIEW

The United States runs one of the world's largest and most decentralized education systems: there is no national curriculum, and public education is run by the 50 states and roughly 13,000+ local school districts. Instruction is in English. The system is known for its breadth and flexibility, its...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Elementary school (Kindergarten–Grade 5)** — Ages ~5–11
- ✓ **Middle / junior high school (Grades 6–8)** — Ages ~11–14
- ✓ **High school (Grades 9–12)** — Ages ~14–18, ending with the high school diploma

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Uruguay

AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Ages 4–17
Structure	6 + 3 + 3
School year	Mar – Dec
Higher ed	UdelaR (free)
Currency	Peso (UYU)

OVERVIEW

Uruguay runs a Spanish-language education system with a strong secular, free, and compulsory tradition dating back to 19th-century reforms. Literacy is very high, education is free at every level (including university), and Uruguay is world-famous as a pioneer of one-laptop-per-child technology in...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Educación Inicial** — Pre-school (compulsory from age 4)
- ✓ **Primaria (6 years)** — Ages ~6–11
- ✓ **Educación Media** — A three-year basic cycle plus a three-year bachillerato (or technical education)

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Venezuela

AT A GLANCE

Language	Spanish
Compulsory	Primary + Media
Structure	6 + 5
School year	Sept – July
Higher ed	Central Univ. (UCV)
Currency	Bolívar (VES)

OVERVIEW

Venezuela runs a Spanish-language education system that once boasted high enrollment and literacy. Since the 2010s, however, a prolonged economic and political crisis has badly damaged the system — driving teacher shortages, school dropout, and the emigration of millions, including many students...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Educación Inicial** — Pre-school
- ✓ **Educación Primaria (6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **Educación Media (5 years)** — General or technical, ending with the bachillerato

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Middle East

A full page for each of **14 countries** — how school works, in plain English.





Bahrain

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Arabic · English
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	6 + 3 + 3
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Univ. of Bahrain
Currency	Dinar (BHD)

OVERVIEW

Bahrain, a Gulf island nation, provides free public education for citizens with Arabic as the main language of instruction and English taught from early grades and widely used in higher education and business. Literacy is high, and the government has invested heavily in schooling and in a growing...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — The foundation stage, beginning around age 6
- ✓ **Intermediate (3 years)** — Completing basic education
- ✓ **Secondary (3 years)** — With academic tracks (such as science, literary, and commercial) and vocational/technical...

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Iran

AT A GLANCE

Language	Persian
Compulsory	Primary+
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Konkur
Currency	Rial (IRR)

OVERVIEW

Iran runs a large education system with Persian (Farsi) as the language of instruction, high literacy, and a strong emphasis on mathematics and the sciences. University admission is dominated by the Konkur — a fiercely competitive national entrance examination. Notably, women make up a majority of...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (dabestan, 6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **Lower secondary (3 years)** —
- ✓ **Upper secondary (3 years)** — Academic (theoretical), vocational, or technical, leading to the diploma and the Konkur



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Iraq

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Arabic · Kurdish
Compulsory	Primary (6 yrs)
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	National exams
Currency	Dinar (IQD)

OVERVIEW

Iraq runs an education system with Arabic as the main language of instruction and Kurdish official (and the medium of instruction in the Kurdistan Region, which runs a semi-autonomous system). Once among the strongest systems in the region, Iraqi education was severely damaged by decades of war,...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **Intermediate (3 years)** — Lower secondary, ending with a national examination
- ✓ **Preparatory (3 years)** — Upper secondary — scientific or literary tracks — ending with the baccalaureate examination

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Israel

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Hebrew · Arabic
Compulsory	Ages 3–18
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Bagrut + psychometric
Currency	Shekel (ILS)

OVERVIEW

Israel runs an education system distinctive for its parallel streams, reflecting the country's diverse society. Instruction is mainly in Hebrew (with a full Arabic-language stream for Arab citizens), education is free and compulsory from age 3, and the country is renowned for its research...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (grades 1–6)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **Middle school (grades 7–9)** —
- ✓ **High school (grades 10–12)** — Leading to the Bagrut

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Jordan

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Arabic · English
Compulsory	Basic (10 yrs)
Structure	10 + 2
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Tawjihi
Currency	Dinar (JOD)

OVERVIEW

Jordan runs an Arabic-language education system (with English widely taught and used in higher education) known for high literacy — among the highest in the Arab world — and for being a regional education hub that attracts students from across the Middle East. University admission hinges on the...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Basic education (10 years)** — Compulsory, ages ~6–16
- ✓ **Secondary (2 years)** — Academic or vocational, ending with the Tawjihi

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Kuwait

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Arabic · English
Compulsory	Ages 6–14
Structure	5 – 4 – 3
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Kuwait University
Currency	Dinar (KWD)

OVERVIEW

Kuwait, a Gulf state, provides free education for its citizens at every level, with Arabic as the main language of instruction and English widely taught and used in higher education. The government invests heavily in education and in scholarships that fund large numbers of Kuwaitis to study abroad....

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (5 years)** — The foundation stage
- ✓ **Intermediate (4 years)** — Completing compulsory education
- ✓ **Secondary (3 years)** — Leading to university

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Lebanon

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Arabic · French · English
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	6 – 3 – 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Lebanese Bac
Currency	Pound (LBP)

OVERVIEW

Lebanon runs one of the Arab world's most distinctive education systems: trilingual — with Arabic the official language and French or English used to teach subjects like mathematics and the sciences — and predominantly private, with a majority of students in private (often religious/confessional)...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Pre-primary** — Early-childhood education
- ✓ **Elementary / primary (6 years)** — Ages ~6–12
- ✓ **Intermediate (3 years)** — Ending with the Brevet
- ✓ **Secondary (3 years)** — Ending with the Lebanese Baccalaureate

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Oman

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Arabic · English
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	10 + 2
School year	Sept – June
Higher ed	Sultan Qaboos Univ.
Currency	Rial (OMR)

OVERVIEW

Oman, a Gulf sultanate, provides free education for its citizens with Arabic as the main language of instruction and English taught throughout and widely used in higher education. Oman built a modern education system rapidly from 1970 onward, and literacy is now high.

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Basic education (grades 1–10)** — A ten-year cycle covering primary and lower/middle stages
- ✓ **Post-basic education (grades 11–12)** — Leading to the General Education Diploma and university

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Qatar

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Arabic · English
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	6 + 3 + 3
School year	Aug/Sept – June
Higher ed	Qatar Univ. · Education City
Currency	Riyal (QAR)

OVERVIEW

Qatar, a wealthy Gulf state, provides free education for its citizens with Arabic as the main language of instruction and English widely taught and used in higher education. Qatar has invested heavily in education through the Qatar Foundation — most visibly in Education City, a Doha campus hosting...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — The foundation stage
- ✓ **Preparatory (3 years)** — Lower secondary
- ✓ **Secondary (3 years)** — Leading to university

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Saudi Arabia

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Arabic · English
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	6 + 3 + 3
School year	Aug – June
University entry	Qudurat · Tahsil
Currency	Riyal (SAR)

OVERVIEW

Saudi Arabia, the largest Gulf state, provides free education for its citizens at every level, with Arabic as the main language of instruction and English taught throughout and widely used in higher education. The kingdom has invested enormously in education from oil revenues, and its Vision 2030...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (6 years)** — The foundation stage
- ✓ **Intermediate (3 years)** — Lower secondary
- ✓ **Secondary (3 years)** — Leading to university, with academic and (increasingly) technical tracks

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Syria

AT A GLANCE

Language	Arabic
Compulsory	Basic (9 yrs)
Structure	9 + 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Baccalaureate
Currency	Pound (SYP)

OVERVIEW

Syria runs an Arabic-language education system that, before 2011, provided widespread, free schooling with relatively high literacy. Fourteen years of civil war (2011–2024) devastated the system — destroying schools, displacing millions, and creating a "lost generation" of out-of-school children....

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Basic education (9 years)** — Compulsory, ages ~6–15
- ✓ **Secondary (3 years)** — General (scientific or literary) or vocational, ending with the Baccalaureate



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Turkey

AT A GLANCE

Language	Turkish
Compulsory	Ages 6–18
Structure	4 – 4 – 4
School year	Sept – June
University entry	YKS
Currency	Lira (TRY)

OVERVIEW

Turkey (Türkiye) runs a large, centralized education system under the Ministry of National Education, with Turkish as the language of instruction. Rooted in Atatürk's secular republican reforms, it now mandates twelve years of compulsory schooling under the "4+4+4" structure. Access to university...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (İlkokul, 4 years)** — Grades 1–4, ages ~6–10
- ✓ **Lower secondary (Ortaokul, 4 years)** — Grades 5–8 — including the option of imam-hatip (religious) middle schools
- ✓ **Upper secondary (Lise, 4 years)** — Grades 9–12 — general/Anatolian, science, social sciences, vocational-technical,...

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United Arab Emirates

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Arabic · English
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	KG + 5 + 4 + 3
School year	Aug/Sept – June
Higher ed	Branch campuses
Currency	Dirham (AED)

OVERVIEW

The United Arab Emirates, a wealthy Gulf federation of seven emirates, provides free education for its citizens, with Arabic as the official language and English extremely widely used — a reflection of the fact that the great majority of residents are expatriates. The UAE has invested heavily in...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Kindergarten** — Early years
- ✓ **Cycle 1 (primary, ~5 years)** —
- ✓ **Cycle 2 (preparatory, ~4 years)** —
- ✓ **Cycle 3 (secondary, ~3 years)** — Leading to university

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Yemen

AT A GLANCE

Language	Arabic
Compulsory	Basic (9 yrs)
Structure	9 + 3
School year	Sept – June
University entry	Secondary certificate
Currency	Rial (YER)

OVERVIEW

Yemen runs an Arabic-language education system that, even before the current war, faced severe challenges of poverty and low enrollment — especially for girls. Since 2014–15, conflict has devastated the system, damaging schools, leaving teachers unpaid, and forcing millions of children out of...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Basic education (9 years)** — Compulsory, ages ~6–15
- ✓ **Secondary (3 years)** — General (scientific or literary), ending with a secondary certificate

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Oceania

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OCEANIA — 01 OF 14

Australia

AT A GLANCE

Language	English
Compulsory	Ages 6–17
Structure	Primary + Sec.
School year	Jan/Feb – Dec
University entry	ATAR
Currency	Dollar (AUD)

OVERVIEW

Australia offers a globally recognized, English-language education system and is one of the world's leading destinations for international students — behind only the US and UK by enrolments in most years. Schooling is a shared responsibility: the national government sets overarching frameworks (the...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Early years** — Non-compulsory (Foundation/Prep/Kindy — names vary by state); participation is very high
- ✓ **Primary (Foundation to Year 6)** — Ages ~5–12
- ✓ **Secondary (Years 7–10)** — A common academic core; Year 10 marks the end of compulsory schooling in most states
- ✓ **Senior secondary (Years 11–12)** — Leads to a state Senior Secondary Certificate of Education and, for university applicants,...

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Fiji

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · iTaukei · Fiji Hindi
Compulsory	Basic education
Structure	8 + 5
School year	Jan – Dec
Higher ed	Univ. of the South Pacific
Currency	Dollar (FJD)

OVERVIEW

Fiji, a Pacific island nation, runs a British-influenced education system with English as the main medium of instruction, alongside iTaukei (Fijian) and Fiji Hindi. Literacy is high, education has been made tuition-free through secondary school, and Fiji is the regional hub for higher education in...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary (Years 1–8)** — Ages ~6–13
- ✓ **Secondary (Years 9–13)** — Leading to national examinations and university entry

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Kiribati

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · Gilbertese
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	Primary + Secondary
School year	Jan – Dec
Higher ed	USP · KIT
Currency	Australian \$ (AUD)

OVERVIEW

Kiribati, a Pacific nation of low-lying atolls, runs a British-influenced education system with English as an official language and Gilbertese (te taetae ni Kiribati) as the everyday language and medium of early instruction. The system is shaped by the country's small size and dispersed geography,...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary** — The foundation stage, taught initially in Gilbertese
- ✓ **Junior and senior secondary** — With English increasingly the medium of instruction

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Marshall Islands

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Marshallese · English
Compulsory	Ages 6–14
Structure	US-Influenced
School year	Aug – June
Higher ed	College of the Marshall Islands
Currency	US Dollar (USD)

OVERVIEW

The Marshall Islands, a Pacific nation of atolls in free association with the United States, runs a US-influenced education system using Marshallese and English. Its close ties to the US — through the Compact of Free Association — shape both schooling and the paths students take afterward, since...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Elementary** — The primary stage, taught with Marshallese and increasing English
- ✓ **Secondary** — US-style high school, leading toward college

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Micronesia

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English + local
Compulsory	Ages 6–14
Structure	US-Influenced
School year	Aug – June
Higher ed	College of Micronesia
Currency	US Dollar (USD)

OVERVIEW

The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) — a Pacific nation of four states across many islands, in free association with the United States — runs a US-influenced education system using English alongside local languages (such as Chuukese and Pohnpeian). Its ties to the US shape schooling and the...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Elementary** — The primary stage, taught with local languages and English
- ✓ **Secondary** — US-style high school, leading toward college

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Nauru

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Nauruan · English
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	Primary + Secondary
School year	Jan – Dec
Higher ed	USP · abroad
Currency	Australian \$ (AUD)

OVERVIEW

Nauru — the world's smallest island republic — runs an Australian-influenced education system using Nauruan and English. The system is shaped by the country's tiny size, and higher education is provided through regional and overseas institutions.

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary** — The foundation stage, in Nauruan and English
- ✓ **Secondary** — Following an Australian-influenced model

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New Zealand

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · Māori
Compulsory	Ages 6–16
Structure	Yrs 1–8 + 9–13
School year	Jan/Feb – Dec
University entry	NCEA
Currency	Dollar (NZD)

OVERVIEW

New Zealand runs a well-regarded, English-language education system — with a strong and growing place for te reo Māori (the Māori language) and Māori-medium schooling, reflecting the country's bicultural foundation. Its distinctive senior-school qualification is the flexible, standards-based NCEA,...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary & intermediate (Years 1–8)** — Ages ~5–12
- ✓ **Secondary (Years 9–13)** — Ages ~13–18, with the NCEA taken in the senior years (11–13)

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Palau

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Palauan · English
Compulsory	Ages 6–17
Structure	US-Influenced
School year	Aug – June
Higher ed	Palau Community College
Currency	US Dollar (USD)

OVERVIEW

Palau, a Pacific island nation in free association with the United States, runs a US-influenced education system using Palauan and English. Its close ties to the US shape schooling and the options students have afterward, since Palauan citizens can live, study, and work in the US.

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Elementary** — The primary stage, in Palauan and English
- ✓ **Secondary** — US-style high school, leading toward college

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Papua New Guinea

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · Tok Pisin
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	Primary + Secondary
School year	Jan – Dec
Higher ed	Univ. of PNG
Currency	Kina (PGK)

OVERVIEW

Papua New Guinea (PNG) — the most linguistically diverse country in the world, with over 800 languages — runs an education system with English as the official medium, alongside Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu as national lingua francas. The system is shaped by PNG's rugged geography and diversity, and the...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Elementary / early primary** — Often in a local language or Tok Pisin
- ✓ **Primary** — Shifting toward English
- ✓ **Secondary** — Lower and upper secondary, with national examinations at key grades

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Samoa

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Samoaan · English
Compulsory	Ages 5–14
Structure	Primary + Secondary
School year	Jan – Dec
Higher ed	National Univ. of Samoa
Currency	Tala (WST)

OVERVIEW

Samoa, a Pacific island nation, runs a British/New-Zealand-influenced education system using Samoaan and English. Literacy is high, and education is provided through government, mission (church), and private schools, with higher education offered locally and through the regional university.

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary** — Taught in Samoaan and English
- ✓ **Secondary** — Leading to national and regional examinations

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Solomon Islands

AT A GLANCE

Languages	English · Pijin
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	Primary + Secondary
School year	Jan – Dec
Higher ed	SINU · USP
Currency	Dollar (SBD)

OVERVIEW

Solomon Islands, a Melanesian nation in the Pacific with dozens of local languages, runs a British-influenced education system with English as the official medium and Pijin as the common lingua franca. The system is shaped by the country's scattered geography, and the government has pursued...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary** — Taught with local languages/Pijin and increasing English
- ✓ **Secondary** — Junior and senior secondary, with national and regional examinations

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Tonga

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Tongan · English
Compulsory	Ages 6–14
Structure	Primary + Secondary
School year	Jan – Dec
Higher ed	USP · abroad
Currency	Pa'anga (TOP)

OVERVIEW

Tonga, a Pacific island kingdom, runs a British/New-Zealand-influenced education system using Tongan and English. Tonga has an exceptionally strong education tradition — with very high literacy — and churches play a major role in schooling. Higher education is provided regionally and abroad.

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary** — Taught in Tongan and English
- ✓ **Secondary** — Much of it church-run, leading to national and regional examinations

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Tuvalu

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Tuvaluan · English
Compulsory	Ages 6–15
Structure	Primary + Secondary
School year	Jan – Dec
Higher ed	USP · abroad
Currency	Australian \$ (AUD)

OVERVIEW

Tuvalu, one of the world's smallest and lowest-lying island nations, runs a British/New-Zealand-influenced education system using Tuvaluan and English. The system is shaped by the country's tiny size, and higher education is provided regionally and overseas.

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary** — Taught in Tuvaluan and English
- ✓ **Secondary** — A small number of schools, leading to regional examinations

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Vanuatu

AT A GLANCE

Languages	Bislama · English · French
Compulsory	Primary
Structure	Primary + Secondary
School year	Feb – Dec
Higher ed	USP · National Univ.
Currency	Vatu (VUV)

OVERVIEW

Vanuatu, a Melanesian archipelago and one of the most linguistically diverse nations on earth, has three official languages — Bislama (a creole lingua franca), English, and French. Its most distinctive feature is a dual education system: schools teach in either English or French, a legacy of the...

KEY POINTS

- ✓ **Primary** — Delivered in either English or French (with Bislama and local languages)
- ✓ **Secondary** — Junior and senior secondary, leading to national and regional examinations

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