



OVERVIEW OF FRENCH SCHOOL SYSTEM

The French school system is renowned for its traditional excellence and classic teaching methods. Through focused effort by the French school principals and local representatives of French exchange organizations, students are encouraged to enroll in a variety of academic courses the schools offer. Students who go on an exchange program to France come back with a thorough understanding of French culture and a level of fluency in the language that is impossible to obtain in the classroom at home.

There are 3 trimesters (3 month grading periods) per school year, starting in September (official national date). School holidays vary according to the placement area. Students take the **same** courses all year, not switching courses each trimester.

Most French state schools are now operating on a four day week with Wednesday remaining free and school on Saturdays, but it depends on the *lycée*. Students can go to school on Wednesday and/or Saturday depending on the policies of the particular school. Younger applicants will generally go to a “College”, in the classe of “3ème”.

There are three types of schools in France, and exchange students will be placed in state schools run by the government.



Subjects in France

There are three grade levels in the French high school, or lycée:
Seconde (10th grade), Première (11th grade) and Terminale (12th grade).

Classe de Seconde (10th grade, 15-16 y. old)

All subjects below are compulsory for this age group:

French (4 hs), History & Geography (3h), foreign languages (English + another language – 5h30), Economics (1h30), Mathematics (4h), Physics and Biology (3h), Sport (1h30), Moral and Civic Education (18hs/yr), Technology and Digital sciences (1h30)

The follow two years, **Première** and **Terminale** lead to the national baccalaureate examination, which tests the knowledge and skills acquired by the end of high school. Students have tests during the years of **Première** and **Terminale** that represent 40% of the baccalaureate exam final grade. The remaining 60% correspond to the final exam grade.

Classe de Première (11th grade, 16-17 y. old)

In this level, students choose three subjects in addition to the compulsory subjects.

The required courses for 11th grade are:

French (4 hours), History & Geography (3h), foreign languages (English + another language – 4h30), Sciences (2h), Sport (2h), Moral and Civic Education (18h/ year).

Students then choose three of out of the following elective options:
Arts, Biology & Ecology, History-Geography-Politics, Philosophy & Literature, Languages & foreign cultures, Antiquity Literature & Languages, Mathematics, Physics & Chemistry, Biology, Digital sciences, Economics, Engineer sciences

Classe de Terminale (12th grade, 17-18 y. old):

In this level, students are focused on taking the rigorous French college entrance exam, the *baccalaureat*. Therefore, they spend a lot of time in study hall. In this year, students choose two subjects in addition to the required courses.

The required courses for 12th grade are:

Philosophy (4 hours), History & Geography (3h), foreign languages (English + another language – 4h30), Sciences (2h), Sport (2h), Moral and Civic Education (18h/ year).

Students then **choose two** of out of the following elective options:

Arts, Biology & Ecology, History-Geography-Politics, Philosophy & Literature, Languages & foreign cultures, Antiquity Literature & Languages, Mathematics, Physics & Chemistry, Biology, Digital sciences, Economics, Engineer sciences

Schedule

A school day in France is longer than the typical school day in the U.S. School generally begins at 8:00 am. At noon there is a 1½ to 2-hour lunch break, and the day ends at 5:00 or 6:00pm. The actual start and finish times will vary according to each local school.

Extra-Curricular Activities

French high schools do not usually offer extra-curricular activities or very few (sports on Wednesday afternoons or theater, music clubs between 12 and 2 pm). School is very demanding, days are long and students are assigned a lot of homework, so sports and cultural activities are not connected to the school. Such activities take place outside of school. Sports clubs, art schools and youth groups offer extra-curricular activities for high school students. Regional and national competitions are open to athletes who buy a sport license.

What are some typical clubs that students would be able to join? Any, all sports and music clubs are available (soccer, rugby, tennis, athletics are the most popular).