

The American Education System

The US education system may be structured differently than the education system that you have been familiar with since you started school as a young child. Typically, schools are broken into 3 semesters per year or, though not as common, 4 quarters per year. College is known as post-secondary education and begins after students complete high school, which ends at 12th grade, or when they are 17-18 years old.

The college classroom can be very dynamic, consisting of an instructor/professor who is teaching anywhere from a few students to hundreds of students in a single classroom. American courses encourage students to participate in class, and classroom discussions allow students from different backgrounds and cultures to freely express their experiences and opinions, further enriching their learning environment.

Grades are typically based on a 4.000 grade point average (GPA) scale with the use of letter grades – A (most satisfactory), B, C, D, and F (failing). Exams, quizzes, mid-terms, and final examinations are usually given in the undergraduate level, while many graduate levels also include thesis projects; doctorate degree levels include an excessive amount of research, writing, and dissertation defense.

Faculty members also expect a certain etiquette from students in the American classroom. This etiquette is a proper way that students interact in the classroom that respects both the professor and other students.

- **Arrive to class on-time:** Arriving late causes disruption in the classroom, which is disrespectful to the professor and other students. Always be to class on-time.
- **Stay for the entire class:** You are expected to stay for the entire duration of class. It is not acceptable to leave early unless you have talked to the professor about excusing you to leave early.
- **Silence your cell phone:** Keep your cell phone on silent or turned off; vibrate mode can be heard and can be a disruption to class. Do not text or answer calls (unless in an emergency) during class. If you receive a call that is an emergency, excuse yourself, and step outside of the classroom to answer it.
- **Avoid conversations that are not part of class:** Do not have private conversations with friends during class time. It is considered rude to talk during the professor's lectures.
- **Pay attention in class:** You are expected to give your attention to the professor. Do not do homework from other classes, play on your cell phone, or fall asleep during class. Active classroom engagement is your key to being successful in class.
- **Know how to address your professors:** Some professors have doctorate degrees and wish to be addressed as "Dr". Other professors may wish to be addressed as "Mr.", "Mrs.", or "Professor". Other professors prefer to be called by their first name. Be sure you know how to address your professors as a courtesy to them.
- **Tell your professor if you will not be in class:** You are required to be present at all class meetings. If you cannot make it to class, then be sure that you contact your professor before the class meets so he/she is aware that you will not be in class. This also allows you to be informed about lectures and class work that you may miss and can make-up later. It also shows that you are serious to learn and want to be successful in your academics.

For more American education system resources:

Study in the USA: <https://www.studyusa.com/en/a/58/understanding-the-american-education-system>

Education USA: <https://educationusa.state.gov/experience-studying-usa/experience-studying-usa>