

Table 15

Organisation of school year and school day

Table 15.1 Organisation of the school year

This table aims to show, at a glance, the organisation of the school year, which includes when the school year starts, the number of terms and length of main holiday. It is not an exact representation – for example the break in March/April in England and the other home countries is not generally a month long but may take place at any between mid-March and April depending on the timing of Easter. This situation may be present in other countries. There may be mid-term breaks of up to a week which are not included in this table.

The table presents the length of the school year, in days or weeks as expressed in the policy documents of the country concerned. Level of responsibility refers to the body responsible for organising the school year within the statutory number of day/weeks for the school year.

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	School year	Level of responsibility
England							6 weeks						190 days	Local/school
Ireland							10 or 12 weeks						179 or 183 days	School
Northern Ireland							8 weeks						200 days	Local/school
Scotland							6 weeks						190 days (min)	Local
Wales							6 weeks						190 days	Local/school
France							7-8 weeks						180 days	National
• Germany							6 weeks						188-208 days	Federal
Hungary							10 - 11 weeks						185 days	State
Italy							12 -13 weeks						200 days	State
Netherlands							6 – 7 weeks						200 days	State
Spain							11 weeks						175-180 days	Federal
Sweden							10 weeks						40 weeks	Local
• Switzerland							5-9 weeks						38 weeks	Federal
• Australia													200 days	State
• Canada							5-6 weeks						180-200 days	School
Japan													35 weeks	Local
Korea													220 days	State
New Zealand													190-197 days	State
Singapore											6 weeks		40 weeks	State
South Africa													195-200 days	Province
• USA							10-11 weeks						180 days	School

Key	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Main holiday	Other holiday
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Notes

- England** In England, schools must be open for at least 380 half day sessions each school year. The dates of school terms are not fixed nationally; they are set, depending on the legal category of the school, by the local authority (LA) or school governing body. Although school holidays generally cover the same core periods, exact dates may vary between schools and authorities.
- There is currently some movement towards the adoption of a standard school year, which would be consistent year on year. A number of LAs have begun to introduce this model.
- Ireland** 183 days in primary education, six- to 12-year-olds; 179 days in secondary education 12-to-15-year-olds.
- Wales** In Wales, schools must be open for at least 380 half day sessions each school year. The dates of school terms are not fixed nationally; they are set, depending on the legal category of the school, by the local authority (LA) or school governing body. Although school holidays generally cover the same core periods, exact dates may vary between schools and authorities.
- France** The school calendar is fixed by the Minister for National Education, who also determines the dates of school holidays in each of the three zones in metropolitan France. There are three distinct zones (A, B and C) to ensure staggered holidays.
- **Germany** Teaching may be organised on the basis of a five-or six-day week. Following the five-day week model, teaching usually takes place on 188 days a year on average and 208 days for the six-day week model.
- Hungary** There are three, one-week holidays during the autumn, winter and spring, and a long summer break.
- Italy** The Ministry of Public Education sets guidelines for terms and holiday periods, the dates of public holidays and final examinations. Since 1999, headteachers have had some flexibility in implementing these.
- Netherlands** Dates for the summer holidays are decided by the Ministry; the main holiday period is staggered over the three regions (northern, central and southern) into which the country is divided for this purpose (compulsory dates for all schools); all other holidays are recommended by the Ministry. The Minister recommends a period of one week's holiday after every seven to eight weeks of school.
- Spain** 175 days at secondary level (12+), 180 days for six-to 12-year-olds in primary education.
- Sweden** The teaching year comprises 40 weeks which should not be less than 178 working days and not more than 190.
- **Australia** In Tasmania, exceptionally, there are 3 terms.
 - **Canada** The school year averages 180 to 200 teaching days over the period from September to late June.
- Japan** The statutory minimum length of the elementary school year (minimum number of teaching weeks per year) is 35 weeks. For children in Year 1, however, it is 34 weeks.
- New Zealand** 197 days in primary phase education (five- to-12-year olds); 190 days for 12/13- to 16-year-olds (expressed as half day sessions). The Ministry of Education sets term dates but schools have limited flexibility in implementing them.
- **USA** This is a common standard but it varies by state. Local school boards must comply with State schoolyear requirements.

Table 15.2 Organisation of the school week and day

This table looks in more detail at how the teaching week is organised. Teaching time is per week unless otherwise stated; some systems specify teaching time per year.

Level of responsibility refers to the body responsible for organising the school day within the statutory teaching time per week.

	Teaching time per week	School day	School week							Teaching periods	Level of responsibility
			M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	S		
England	Min 21 hours, age 5-7 Min 23.5 hours, age 7-11 Min 24 hours, age 11-14 Min 25 hours, age 14-16	9am-3.30pm	•	•	•	•	•			Varies	School
Ireland	Min 915 hours/year, age 6-12 Average 40 period week, at age 12-15	9am-3/3.30pm	•	•	•	•	•			30 minutes 35-45 minutes	School
Northern Ireland	Min 3 hours/day to age 8 Min 4.5 hours/day, age 8+	9am-3.30pm	•	•	•	•	•			Varies	School
Scotland	Average 25 hours/week at primary Average 27.5 hours/week at secondary	9am-3.30pm	•	•	•	•	•			Varies	School
Wales	Min 21 hours, age 5-7 Min 23.5 hours, age 7-11 Min 25 hours, age 11-16	9am-3:30pm	•	•	•	•	•			Varies	School
France	26 hours/week, age 6 to 11 26 to 30 hrs/week, age 11 to 15 30 to 40 hrs/week, age 15 to 18		•	•	•	•	•	•		55 minutes/1 hour	Local
Germany	19 to 29 periods/ week primary 28 to 30 periods/week, age 10 to 12 30 to 32 periods/week, age 12 to 16	7:30am-1:30pm	•	•	•	•	•	•		45 minutes	School
Hungary	Max 20 hrs/week, age 6 to 9 Max 22.5 hrs/week, age 9 to 12 Max 25 hrs/week, age 12 to 14 Max 27.5 hrs/week, age 14 to 16 Max 30 hrs/week, age 16 +		•	•	•	•	•			45 minutes	State
Italy	Min 27 hrs/week primary education Min 29 hrs/week lower secondary Min 29 hrs/week upper secondary	Varies	•	•	•	•	•	•		1 hour	School
Netherlands	Min 3520 hrs/year, ages 4-8 Min 3760 hrs/year, ages 8-12	9am-3:30pm	•	•	•	•	•			50-60 minutes	School
Spain	Average 25 hrs/week at primary level Average 30 hrs/week at secondary	9am-4:30/5pm	•	•	•	•	•			55 minutes 60 minutes	School
Sweden	Max 6 hrs/day up to age 9 Max 8 hrs/day aged 9+	Varies	•	•	•	•	•			Varies	School
Switzerland	Varies	Varies	•	•	•	•	•	•		Varies	School

Continued

• Australia	Average 25 hrs/week at primary level Average 27.5 hrs/week at second level	9am -3pm	•	•	•	•	•	Varies	School
• Canada	950 hrs/year (Alberta)	9am-3:30pm	•	•	•	•	•		School
Japan	Min 17 to 20 hours/week		•	•	•	•	•		Local
Korea	830 to 1156 hours/year	8am-4:00pm	•	•	•	•	•	40-45 minutes	State
New Zealand	Average 25 hrs/week	9am-3/3:30pm	•	•	•	•	•		School
Singapore		7:30am-1pm 1pm-6:30pm	•	•	•	•	•	30-40 minutes	State
• South Africa	22.5 hrs/week, age 5-8 25 hrs/week, age 8-9 26.5hrs/week, age 9-12 26 hrs/week, age 12-13 27.5 hrs/week, age 13-15 27.5 hrs/week, age 15-18	Varies	•	•	•	•	•	Varies	School
• USA	Varies	Varies	•	•	•	•	•	Varies	School

Notes

- Ireland** Children in junior infants and senior infants classes in primary school (aged 4-6) normally have a shorter school day, ending between 1.30 and 2.30 p.m. Teaching periods last for 30 minutes at primary level and 35-45 minutes at secondary.
- France** Schools are usually open six days a week (Monday-Saturday), but no classes are held on Wednesdays or on Saturday afternoons. Some schools have moved to a four day week, with teaching on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. The missing hours are usually made up by shortening the school holidays. Since the beginning of the 2008/09 school year, the primary school week has been reduced by two hours (from 26 to 24 hours) and there is no more teaching on Saturdays.
- Germany** A teaching period generally lasts 45 minutes.
The half-day school (mornings only, five or six days a week) is the traditional form of teaching in Germany. Until recently, all-day schools (Ganztagsschulen) were the exception and most Länder did not plan any extensive expansion of this school form. However, in a bid to raise standards nationwide, government funding has been provided to set up more all-day schools.
- Hungary** The daily timetable must be based on the statutory average lesson time of 45 minutes. However schools may organise longer or shorter lessons.
- Italy** The school day varies dependent on whether the school has a five- or six-day week; schools with a six-day week are open from 8:30am to 1:30pm; those operating a five-day week have timetables running from 8:30am to 4:30pm. Teaching periods are an hour long for students at the lower secondary level, age 11-14. Individual schools may organise optional teaching activities and other optional activities which may raise the school week to 40 hours.
- Spain** At primary level (6- to 12-year-olds), the sessions are usually three hours in the morning, two hours in the afternoon, with a two-hour break for lunch. In secondary education, days generally end earlier as there is a single session running throughout the morning and early afternoon, with two short breaks.
- Switzerland** In some cantons, children have all day Saturday free, whilst in others they have lessons on Saturday mornings, but one afternoon in the week free, or lessons on Saturday mornings and one full day in the week free.
- Japan** The school week has been reduced from six to five days.
- Korea** The school week coincides with the six-day week in the business and government sectors; five full days Monday - Friday and Saturday morning. However, if the latter sectors adopt a five-working-day policy, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) may then consider reducing school days from six to five per week.
- Singapore** Most schools run double sessions, with different groups of students attending school either from 7:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. or from 1:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. from Monday to Friday. There are plans for all schools to become single session schools by 2016.

Sources/Further information

For further information about the contents of these tables, see the following sections and their subsections of the full archive:

Table 15.1 Organisation of the school year

Education Structure (ages 3-19) ⇒ 3.2 Educational phases (ages 3 - 19) ⇒ 3.2.x.2 Length of school year (in days) and day (in hours)

Table 15.2 Organisation of the school week and day

Education Structure (ages 3-19) ⇒ 3.2 Educational phases (ages 3 - 19) ⇒ 3.2.x.2 Length of school year (in days) and day (in hours)