

EDUCATION IN GERMANY

GRADE		AGE		
13		18	Secondary School (Second Phase)	
12	Berufsschule (Apprenticeship combines work and classes)	17		
11	Berufsfachschule (Vocational Training)	16		
10	Fachoberschule	15		
10	Vocational Training (full or part-time classes)	15		
Hauptschule students usually graduate after 9 years. Realschule students graduate after 10 years.		16		
10	(Some schools have a 10th year)	15	Secondary School (First Phase)	
9	Hauptschule	14		
8	Realschule	13		
7	Gymnasium	12		
6	Gesamtschule Comprehensive School (may combine elements of other 3 schools)	11		
5	Orientation Stage		10	
4	Grundschule Elementary School		9	Elementary School
3			8	
2			7	
1			6	
Kindergarten		5	Pre-school	
		4		
		3		

German public education makes it possible for qualified kids to study up to university level, regardless of their families' financial status.

The German education system is different in many ways from the ones in Anglo-Saxon countries, but it produces high-performing students. Although education is a function of the federal states, and there are differences from state to state, some generalizations are possible.

Children aged one to six may attend **Kindergarten**.

After that school is compulsory for nine or ten years. From grades 1 through 4 children attend elementary school (**Grundschule**), where the subjects taught are the same for all.

Then, after the 4th grade, they are separated according to their academic ability and the wishes of their families, and attend one of three different kinds of schools: *Hauptschule*, *Realschule* or *Gymnasium*.

The **Hauptschule** (grades 5-9 in most German states) teaches the same subjects as the *Realschule* and *Gymnasium*, but at a slower pace and with some vocational-oriented courses. It leads to part-time enrollment in a vocational school combined with

apprenticeship training until the age of 18.

The **Realschule** (grades 5-10 in most states) leads to part-time vocational schools and higher vocational schools. It is now possible for students with high academic achievement at the *Realschule* to switch to a *Gymnasium* on graduation.

The **Gymnasium** (grades 5-13 in most states) leads to a diploma called the *Abitur* and prepares students for university study or for a dual academic and vocational credential. The most common education tracks offered by the standard *Gymnasium* are classical language, modern language, and mathematics-natural science.

The *Gesamtschule*, or comprehensive school, is a more recent development and is only found in some of the states. It takes the place of both the *Hauptschule* and *Realschule* and arose out of the egalitarian movements in the 1960s. It enrolls students of all ability levels in the 5th through the 10th grades.

Beyond the *Hauptschule* and *Realschule* follows the **Berufsschule**, combining work at companies and school classes (apprenticeship; *duales System*). The successful completion of an apprenticeship program leads to certification in a particular trade or field of work.

After German *Abitur* you can go to university. Germany's universities charge little or no tuition. But, students must prove through examinations that they are qualified.

There are several varieties of university-level schools. The classical **universities** provide a broad general education and students usually attend them for about five years. The **Technical Universities** (*Technische Hochschulen*) are more aimed at training students for specific careers and are usually attended for four years. There are also *Hochschulen* for art and music.