

Understanding The US Educational System

The American educational system is comprised of the following levels of schooling:

- **pre-school** (nursery school) - ages 3-5
- **kindergarten** - ages 5-6
- **elementary school** - 1st grade thru 6th grade - ages 6-11
- **middle school** ("junior high school") 7th-9th grades - ages 12-15
- **high school** - 10th - 12th grades - ages 16-18
- **college** - 2 or 4 year post-secondary ("undergraduate") schooling - associate's degree or bachelor's degree
- **Graduate School:**
 - **Master's Degree** - one to two years of post-graduate specialized programs including business, journalism, sciences, humanities, mathematics
 - **Professional Degree** - post-graduate doctoral degree obtained through a highly specialized course of study such as law (J.D.), medicine (M.D.), psychology (Ph.D.), business administration (M.B.A.), and engineering (M.Eng.)

Types of elementary and secondary schools:

- **Public school** - free, funded by public tax dollars
- **Private school** - more expensive and exclusive than a public school - offers smaller classes and often more specialized programs
- **Parochial school** - a private religious school that incorporates religious training and/or rituals into education (i.e. Catholic schools, Jewish yeshiva)
- **Charter schools** - small schools subsidized by public tax dollars but offering a much more intimate learning environment that emphasizes quality