

Unit 3 Handout 1

Comparing and Contrasting

The UK education system

A By law in the UK, all children between 5 and 16 years of age must receive a full-time education. The vast majority, over 90%, of these children attend state schools. The education systems in Wales, Northern Ireland, and England are similar, whereas the education system in Scotland differs in a number of ways. This description will generally refer to the English state system.

B The school year runs from September to July and is usually divided into three terms of approximately 13 weeks each. Students attend school from about 9.00 am to 3.30 pm, Monday to Friday, with a morning break and a break for lunch. Some students eat lunch in the school cafeteria, but many bring food from home.

C Most children in England go to primary school from the age of 5 to 11. These schools are largely co-educational, that is, boys and girls attend together. All schools follow the National Curriculum. The core, or main subjects, are English, mathematics, and science. Other subjects include history, geography, physical education, music, and art. In Wales, the Welsh language is a subject in Welsh-speaking schools. In the same way, in Northern Ireland, the curriculum includes the Irish language in Irish-speaking schools.

D At the age of 11 students move to a secondary school. Most students go to large comprehensive schools which teach children of varying abilities. At the age of 16, most students take exams (GCSEs) in about ten different subjects. At this point, just over 30% leave school and start other training or work.

E Students who remain in education can choose to continue at their school for up to two years (Sixth Form) or go to a special college. Wherever they study, students specialize in three or four subjects, and there are further exams at the age of 17 (AS Levels) and again at 18 (A Levels). Good results in these are required to go to university.

I. Fill in the chart with information from the text.

Countries	UK	
Compulsory Education		
School Year length		
Amount of Terms		
Schedule		
Primary School		
Secondary School		

II. Answer the questions on education. Compare your answers with your partner.

1. What percentage of students pursue a private education?

2. How many young people go on to further education?

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III. Underline the words and phrases in the sentences which show a similarity or a difference. Write (S) for similar and (D) for different next to them.

1. The school year in the UK runs from September to July. In Australia, on the other hand, students go to school from late January to December.
2. Both Sweden and France have a compulsory national curriculum.
3. Japanese schools are different from schools in many other countries in that they usually have an entrance exam.
4. Malaysian schools have two terms a year. In contrast, Australian schools have four terms.
5. School students all over the world are similar in that they have to take exams.

IV. Use a word or phrase from the table to complete the sentences.

1. _____ Wales _____ Ireland include their own language in the curriculum.
2. State and private schools _____ all their students take school-leaving exams.
3. Northern Ireland and Wales have a similar education system to England. Scotland _____ has its own system.
4. In the UK, education is compulsory for children until the age of 16, _____ in Brazil children can leave school at 14.
5. Students in Japanese schools often eat school lunches. _____ students in France also often eat in school.

<i>Compare</i>	<i>Contrast</i>
In the same way...	Whereas..
Both... and...	On the other hand...
...are similar in that..	...are different in that...
	In contrast...

V. Complete the sentences with your ideas and information about Chile.

1. Schools and universities in _____ **are similar** to Chile **in that** _____.
2. English students take A Levels, **whereas** students in my country _____.
3. Primary school in Chile **is different** from _____ **in** _____ **that** _____.

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1. Read the information on the table. Match sentences on the left with their equivalents on the right.

SCHOOL	UNIVERSITY
1 <input type="checkbox"/> The school year is divided into three terms.	a Students are responsible for their own time management.
2 <input type="checkbox"/> Most learning takes place in the classroom.	b There is a timetable, but is often more varied and flexible, and attendance for some classes can be optional.
3 <input type="checkbox"/> Time is arranged and organised for students.	c The academic year usually consists of two semesters.
4 <input type="checkbox"/> There is a fixed class timetable and attendance is compulsory.	d Students generally have less access to academic staff, and feedback is less frequent.
5 <input type="checkbox"/> Class sizes are usually limited to around thirty students.	e Students are encouraged to develop critical and analytical thinking skills when dealing with new information.
6 <input type="checkbox"/> Students generally learn factual information which they are not required to analyse in great depth.	f Some teaching takes place face-to-face with a teacher, but students also learn through lectures, seminars, computer-based or online learning, and laboratory or field work.
7 <input type="checkbox"/> There are limited types of assessment, mainly in-class exams.	g There are varied types of assessment, for example course work, project work, presentations and take-home exams as well as in-class exams.
8 <input type="checkbox"/> Students have frequent access to their teachers, and receive constant feedback on their progress.	h Class sizes can be very large, with some lectures attended by over one hundred students.
9 <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching is usually face-to-face with the teacher in the classroom.	i Some learning takes place in classes, but students are expected to do a lot of independent learning and study.

2. Work in small groups. Write 3 sentences to link ideas in exercise 1, to express similarities or differences. Use the phrases and expressions you use in the previous exercise.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

3. Now add your own ideas to compare and contrast school to university life here in Chile. Then share them with your group. Have a discussion about the topic using the table below.

LANGUAGE BANK Agreeing and disagreeing		
Opinions	Agreeing	Disagreeing
<i>I think / I (firmly) believe ...</i>	<i>I (completely) agree with ...</i>	<i>I (completely) disagree / I don't agree with ... at all.</i>
<i>It seems to me ...</i>	<i>You are (absolutely) right ...</i>	<i>I don't think that's completely true.</i>
<i>I take the view that ...</i>	<i>I'm in complete agreement (with ...)</i>	<i>I'm afraid I can't agree ...</i>
<i>I've always believed ...</i>	<i>That's a very good point ...</i>	<i>I can't accept that (I'm afraid) ...</i>
<i>As far as I'm concerned ...</i>		<i>I see / take your point but ...</i>
<i>It's clear to me ...</i>		<i>I understand what you are saying, but nevertheless ...</i>