

High School Life in the USA

① Read the text and mark the words that are new to you.

High school is a central part of life for teenagers in the United States, and it often appears in Hollywood movies and TV shows. Films like *Mean Girls* or *High School Musical* have made the high school experience famous worldwide. These stories typically show the excitement, friendships, and challenges that define this period of life, but real high schools can be both similar to and different from their Hollywood portrayals.

American high schools usually include grades 9 through 12, with students aged 14 to 18. Each grade has its own name: freshmen (9th grade), sophomores (10th grade), juniors (11th grade), and seniors (12th grade). These labels are often used in movies and are part of students' identities. Seniors, for example, are the oldest students and often take on leadership roles, while freshmen are new to high school and adjusting to a more demanding schedule.

A typical high school day begins around 8:00 AM and ends by 3:00 PM, with students attending classes in core subjects like math, science, English, and history. In addition to these, they can choose electives such as photography, drama, or computer science to explore their interests. Advanced Placement (AP) courses allow students to earn college credits, making high school an important step toward higher education.

Extracurricular activities are a major part of high school life. Sports like football and baseball are extremely popular, and cheerleaders are a big part of this culture, leading the crowd and promoting school spirit. Clubs and activities like debate teams, music ensembles, and theater productions offer additional opportunities to develop talents and make friends.

Events like prom and homecoming are highlights of high school life. Homecoming, held in the fall, often includes a football game, a parade, and a dance. Prom is a formal event held in the spring, where students dress up and celebrate the end of the school year. Both events create memories that students treasure for years.

While high school offers many opportunities, it also has challenges. Issues like bullying, mental health struggles, and even the risk of school shootings are significant concerns. Schools address these problems with counseling services, lockdown drills, and stricter safety measures. Despite these challenges, high school is a time for personal growth and preparation for the future.

② Answer at least 2 of the following questions:

- What grades do students typically attend in middle school and high school?
- Name three electives students can choose in high school.
- How do cheerleaders contribute to school spirit?
- What are two events that are important in high school, and what happens during these events?
- What measures have schools taken to address the issue of school shootings?

③ Write a detailed diary entry (12–15 sentences) imagining your first week as an exchange student in an American high school.

- Describe the classes you attended and the teachers you met.
 - Talk about the sports, clubs, or activities you joined.
 - Share your impressions of events like a pep rally or a school assembly.
- Reflect on how you felt about the differences compared to your school at home.

Example Start:

„Dear Diary,

This week has been one of the most exciting and overwhelming experiences of my life. My first day at an American high school felt like stepping into a movie. I started the day by meeting my homeroom teacher, who gave me my

- ④  In groups of 3–4, **compare** American high schools to your school. Use the following questions to guide your discussion:
- How do the grade levels (freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors) compare to your school system?
 - Are there any events like pep rallies, prom, or homecoming at your school?
 - What extracurricular activities are available in your school, and how do they compare to those in the USA?
 - How do the safety measures in American schools differ from those in your school?

Task:

Create a **mind map** titled „High School: USA vs. Germany“ (or your country). Include the following categories:

„School Structure“

„Extracurricular Activities“

„Events“

„Safety Measures“

Write keywords and short phrases to summarize your ideas. Be prepared to share your mind map with the class.