

Primary and Secondary cycles of Education

As said, **compulsory school**, which is fee exempted, starts at the age of 6 (with the possibility to be anticipated to 5 1/2) and lasts until the age of 16. The percentage of alphabetization in the country reaches the almost totality, at 99%. Schools in Italy are mainly public, although some private institutions exist.

Before entering the schooling system, children are usually introduced to non-compulsory **nidi d'infanzia** and **sezioni primavera**, the equivalent of crèches. These sections usually are for children of one to three years of age. They then enter the **scuola dell'Infanzia**, the rough equivalent of kindergarten. Here, children begin experiencing a more standardized schooling experience with classes, classmates and little learning sections with tasks. Often, they also eat at school and spend part of the afternoon there.

La Scuola Primaria (Primary School)

Scuola primaria (formerly "elementare"), or primary school, begins at age six and continues for five years. Class sizes generally run about twenty five children per class with a minimum of ten students. Pluriclassi, or mixed-level classes, have between six and twelve students. Municipalities manage transportation and school meals, most often asking for contributions but making exceptions for needy families. The curriculum includes: Italian, English, Geography, History, Math, Science, Technology, Music, Art, Physical Education, Information Technology and Catholicism.

La Scuola Secondaria di Primo Grado (Middle School)

Scuola Secondaria di Primo Grado was formerly known as scuola media. Pupils attend it until they turn fourteen years old. Formerly at age fourteen, compulsory education was considered complete. Now this limit has been raised **to sixteen**. While the schooling is free, **books must be purchased at the secondary level**. Class size is about 21 students per class. The curriculum includes: religion, Italian, English, an alternate foreign language, history, geography, science, math, technology, information technology, art, music and physical education.

At the end of the three years of scuola secondaria di primo grado there is a State exam, similar to the one students will have to take at the end of high school.

La Scuola Secondaria di Secondo Grado (High School)

If up to scuola secondaria di primo grado the Italian educational system may seem very much the same as the American's, when it comes to high school, things change dramatically.

Italy is known to be one of the few countries in the world where a distinct, well defined choice about a pupil's future professional career needs to be taken as early as 14. Italian high schools are of different types, depending on the main focus of their teachings. They must be chosen during the final year of **scuola secondaria di primo grado** and the pupil must attend it until his/her 16th year of age. Italian high schools can be divided as such:

LICEI: Schools focusing on theoretical learning	ISTITUTI TECNICI: Schools focusing on technical skills	ISTITUTI PROFESSIONALI: Schools focusing on professional skills
Liceo Artistico: has branches in fine arts, design, photography, sculpture etc.	Istituto tecnico a indirizzo tecnologico: focuses on technical skills such as mechanics, logistics, electronics etc. (divided in branches)	Istituto professionale a indirizzo dei servizi: has branches in agriculture, health <u>and social services, hospitality and gastronomy, commerce.</u>
Liceo Classico: focuses on classical languages, philosophy and literatures.	Istituto tecnico a indirizzo economico: focuses on administration, accounting, marketing or tourism.	Istituto professionale a indirizzo dell'industria e dell'artigianato: branches in industrial and artisanal production, technical assistance and maintenance.
Liceo Scientifico: focuses on biology, chemistry, physics and maths.	-	-
Liceo Linguistico: focuses on foreign languages	-	-
Liceo musicale e coreutico: has branches in music and dance.	-	-
Liceo delle scienze umane: focusing on humanities and psychology	-	-
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In all high schools class sizes are between twenty five to twenty eight students. They, as mention above, **do charge a minimal tuition** for the years after their pupils turn 16. However, based on family income, some students may qualify for exemptions or assistance. Curriculum varies depending on the course of study chosen.

After completing the higher secondary school, students must pass another exam in order to receive their **Diploma di Maturità**. Once they have their diplomas, they either begin their careers in their professions or move on to the University.

Universities in Italy

Italy has **61 state universities and 15 private**. Structurally, they all follow what is considered the now standardized European model, with a primary course of three years to obtain a bachelor degree (diploma di laurea), a further two years to specialize with a Master's degree (laurea magistrale) and, finally, the possibility to obtain a PhD (dottorato di ricerca). This is valid for very much all faculties, except some which maintained a more independent structure, characterized by a single cycle of studies – longer – which equals, once achieved, a Master's degree. Among them, Medicine (6 years), Law (5 years), Architecture, Pharmaceutical sciences.

Specialistic studies in fine arts and music can be pursued in **Accademie delle Belle Arti** (Fine Arts Academies) and **Conservatori** (music schools).