

# Gaza and the Palestinian West Bank



YES students from the West Bank and Gaza identify themselves as Palestinian. Palestinians refer to both the West Bank and Gaza as Palestine.

## **School Classes**

Palestinian students are evaluated on written exams which mostly focus on memorization. A small part of the evaluation depends on homework and projects. Some teachers in Palestine evaluate students on class participation which is about 10% of the student's grade.

In Palestine, all students who are in the same grade take the same subjects. Students remain in one classroom while the teachers rotate rooms. Students go to the same school from first grade to twelfth grade in villages, but in cities the students change schools after sixth grade. There are about 38 students in each class. Most schools in Palestine are not co-ed rather they are schools either for girls or for boys. There are a few schools which are gender mixed in which boys and girls study in the same classes.

## **School Relationships**

In Palestine, the forms of showing respect to teachers differ from a school to school. There are some schools where the students have a friendly relationship with their teachers that does not cross the boundaries of respect. These schools are rare. While in most schools, students are asked to call their teachers by their names and the appropriate title (Ms., Mrs., Mr., etc.).

## **Extracurricular Activities**

Palestinian students generally join clubs outside the school for extracurricular and schools generally do not have clubs. There are many centers, mostly in urban areas, which encourage sports and music and provide classes. Most villages and rural areas do not have clubs in school or even in the community.

## **School Rules**

In Palestine, students are not allowed to bring cell phones to school. Schools in Palestine have strict discipline policies and there is not much room to break rules without suffering consequences.

## **Return**

Palestinian students usually have to take summer classes to help prepare them for the national exam 'Tawajhi.' However there have no concerns about students facing difficulty upon their return to school after their U.S. experience.

## **Family Life**

In cities, Palestinian families consist of parents and their children. Families in the country side may have grandparents also living with them. One or both parents may work outside the home. However, parents usually arrive home from work about the same time as their children.

In Palestine, family members usually eat lunch together as a family, and help themselves sporadically at dinner or breakfast. Middle Eastern cooking can be complicated and Palestinian parents cook for their children and it is rare to expect a child to cook.

## **Teen Life**

Usually if a Palestinian has a sibling close in age they may share things. They may share clothes, computers and a bedroom. If an item is not normally shared then the norm is to ask permission.

In Palestine parents are respected highly and there are limits as to how far a child can engage in argumentative behavior with his parents. Palestinian teenagers are mostly dependent on their parents. One of the reasons students participate in the YES program is to learn how to depend on themselves and be responsible for their actions.

## **COUNTRY FACTS:**

**Major Cities:** Gaza City, Jaba-  
lia, Khan Yunis, Rafah, Bethle-  
hem, Jenin, Nablus, Ramallah,  
Hebron

**Real GDP per capita:** 2,900

**Adult literacy rate:** 97%  
(male); 88% (female)

**Ethnic make-up:** Majority  
Palestinian Arab

**Religion:** Muslim 75% (pre-  
dominantly Sunni), Other 17%,  
Christian and other 8%

## ***Responsibilities***

In Palestine most teens depend on their mothers for household upkeep. Palestinian teenagers get their money from their parents for personal items and social activities and sometimes from babysitting work or from paid chores. Palestinian teenagers are responsible for their homework and usually younger siblings if parents are busy at work and for keeping their rooms clean.

## ***Parental Involvement***

Fathers are more responsible for working and earning an income and mothers are more involved with kids and school. Palestinian families may monitor their children's use of the computer and others not. In Palestinian public school parents may only become involved in serious behavior situations for their children and are not generally kept up to date with academic progress.

In Palestine mothers are usually available around the time their children are back from school. Public transportation in Palestine is easy for Palestinian students so parents do not always need to transport their teenagers. Many Palestinian parents attend their children's activities.

## ***Pets***

Pets are uncommon in Palestinian homes.

## ***Personal Interactions***

### ***Mixed Gender Socializing***

Mixed gender socializing within a group is normally considered acceptable. Socializing in mixed gender one-on-one relationships is generally unacceptable by the community.

## ***Friendships***

Palestinian teens mostly socialize in groups. However, there are one-on-one relationships between same gender friends which are often very close. Friendships are made through school, from the neighborhood and through the family. In Palestinian culture people usually share or borrow money from each other with the idea that borrowed money will be returned as agreed upon.

## ***Communication Styles***

Palestinian teenagers are taught to express their negative emotions in an appropriate way that does not disrespect others.

## ***Eye Contact***

It can be considered disrespectful in Palestine to make direct eye contact with a person while talking to them.

## ***Cultural Norms***

For Palestinians personal space may mean "private time" and not refer to the distance kept between people when talking or just general independent pursuits.

## ***Personal Hygiene***

Generally, in Palestine, people shower every day or once every two days. Palestinian teenagers are expected to keep their bathrooms clean and dry after using them (towels are hung up, and hygiene products are put away). Each person has their own towel to dry with.

It is very uncommon for people to wear the same clothes for two days in a row however they may do not wash their clothes after wearing them one time.

## ***Religion***

In Palestine, Muslims attend Friday noon prayers as a weekly religious event with their family. Christians attend Sunday church services with their family.

## ***Holidays***

Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr are spent visiting family and cooking certain meals and sweets. New Year and Christmas are also holidays.