

Malaysia



COUNTRY FACTS:

Capital: Kuala Lumpur

Population: 28,274,729

Area, sq. mi.: 127,317

Real GDP per capita: 13,800

Adult literacy rate: 92% (male);
85% (female)

Ethnic make-up: Malay 50.4%,
Chinese 23.7%, indigenous 11%,
Indian 7.1%, others 7.8%

Religion: Muslim 60.4%, Bud-
dhist 19.2%, Christian 9.1%, Hindu
6.3%, Confucianism, Taoism, other
traditional Chinese religions 2.6%,
other or unknown 1.5%, none
0.8%

School Classes

Students in Malaysia usually take at least nine subjects and they meet daily or every other day and even have extended sessions. Students are evaluated through standardized tests twice before the mid-term exam and also twice before the final exam. Daily home work and class participation are not evaluated in Malaysia, although students are expected to turn in their homework.

In Malaysia, students remain in the same classroom and teachers rotate to the different rooms. The size of a class varies, but there can be as many as 40 students. Students often have greater bonds with their classmates because they stay in the same class throughout the year. For the most part in Malaysia, boys and girls are not separated in school unless required by the teacher or if they come from Islamic schools, which are not typically co-ed.

School Relationships

The relationship with the teachers is often very formal in Malaysia; students use a formal title of “Mr.” or “Mrs.” always when addressing their teachers.

Extracurricular Activities

Malaysian students often do extracurricular activities through school. Parents in Malaysia will often strongly influence the activities their children take outside of school, guiding them to participate in music or a few certain sports.

School Rules

Cell phone use is not allowed at school in Malaysia and will be confiscated if found. Regarding fighting, in serious cases and after several warnings, the students could be disciplined for the offense.

Return

Malaysian students will have missed university admission especially for public university and students have to re-apply at a later date than their peers. Upon their return, students will need to wait for a few months if they still want to enroll in the public universities in November of that year or the following year in May. Students can also continue Form Six at public high schools. Straight A students will attend scholarship interviews upon return.

Family Life

A nuclear family composition is common in urban areas of Malaysia. The average household has both parents and two or more children. Extended families are more common in suburban and rural areas. Both parents may work in urban families and the father is the primary financial provider while the mother supplements the family income with her work. Rural families generally have a single income provided by the father. Families in Malaysia usually eat dinner together when everyone is home in the evening, typically around 7pm or 8pm. On the weekend, families often eat out. In Malaysia, family activities are given priority before individual activities. Children can socialize with friends but they must get parental approval first.

In the Malaysian household, the father is the breadwinner and decision maker and carries the most authority. The mother manages the children and household matters and contributes to decision making. Male students may feel more comfortable discussing problems or concerns with the host father and female students with the host mother. Respect and courteousness for the parents and older siblings is always shown in Malaysia. Use of titles before first names when addressing older persons is a means of showing respect. Students may be shy to speak informally or have open communication with their host parents. However, they will usually be informal with their host siblings.

Teen Life

It is not uncommon for younger siblings to have hand-me-down clothes from older siblings. Sharing amongst siblings is common, and children will ask permission first before borrowing. The computer or laptop is usually shared by the entire family in Malaysia. Some teenagers can be very independent, but most Malaysian teens rely on their parents. Students should plan their activities with host families to help them learn about time and commitments.

Responsibilities

Children have minimal household chores as their primary responsibility is to their studies. Homework and after school studies or receiving tutoring consume the majority of a student's time and attention. Urban families usually have a live-in maid or employ part-time cleaning services. Rural households or those with extended families assign household responsibilities to the adult female members of the home. The female members of the family do the cooking. It is uncommon for male family members to be in the kitchen.

Pocket money for school meals is given daily or weekly. Part time jobs are not common except during the long year-end school holidays or, more frequently, after finishing high school. Parents provide personal items, and expensive items like handheld games or laptops may be given as a reward for good academic achievements. Generally, teenagers only manage their own budget when they have left home for further education or have a job.

Pets

It is not common in Malaysia for families to keep pets. Dogs kept by non-Muslim families are typically watchdogs and stay outside. Muslim families typically don't keep dogs in Malaysia, and prefer cats which can be kept indoors.

Parental Involvement

Generally parents are too busy with work or are just not as savvy as their children regarding the internet and monitoring does not occur. Students are not accustomed to having their internet use monitored by parents or teachers. Exam report cards are either posted or given to the child to show to his or her parents. School Open Day is held once a year for parents to discuss their child's academic progress. Parents normally do not contact teachers and are very rarely involved in their student's school life unless there is a serious concern.

Personal Interactions

Mixed Gender Socializing

Teenagers in Malaysia typically socialize at school in groups and sometimes one-on-one. Teens from urban areas tend to be open to mixed gender socializing while teenagers from the countryside are shyer about it.

Friendships

Teenagers in Malaysia usually make friends in school or through other friends. It is uncommon to lend money or share money with friends, although borrowing small amounts is considerably more common.

Communication Styles

In Malaysia, people often communicate indirectly; facial expressions, body language and intonation can be clues for the actual meanings of what is communicated. Malaysian teenagers are often considered rude if they show negative emotions and they seldom show their negative emotions. Teenagers tend to repress their feelings and emotions rather than being expressive and open about them. Students have some difficulty when dealing with direct communication because they are afraid of hurting other people. Facial expressions are usually the best judge for the actual meanings of what they say.

A student may feel reluctant to say no and want to be polite by agreeing to something they do not want to do, and may actually not do it. Asking specific questions about how the student plans to carry out the task he or she just agreed to do will help to determine if the student really is okay with what has just been agreed upon, or if there are hidden concerns.

Eye Contact

Eye contact is considered rude when it comes to communication with an elder person and it is rare to have direct eye contact during the whole length of conversation. Students need to be aware that not having direct eye contact with an elder person may be considered rude in the U.S.

Cultural Norms

Malaysians are accustomed to having very little personal space, either at home or in personal interactions. Students may tend to be around parents and siblings more frequently rather than being alone in their rooms. They tend to want to do everything together and participate in all that family members do.

Generally, being punctual is expected and there will be negative perceptions on those who are not punctual, but a few minutes late is still acceptable in certain informal occasions but not on formal occasions. Time management is not practiced as precisely in Malaysia as it is in the U.S. and it is common to be late in informal situations.

Personal Hygiene

Malaysians typically shower two or more times a day due to the hot, humid weather. Malaysians change their clothes daily and sometimes more if hot and sweaty. Bathrooms in Malaysia are usually wet with a drain in the floor. Muslim students, since they need to practice ablution, normally use the host family's bathtub so that the floor will not get wet.

Food and Culture

Diet

As a Muslim country, halal food is easily available. Muslim students can eat vegetables, seafood and dairy products. They will avoid food with pork additives, lard or animal gelatin. Other meat, like beef or chicken, is also avoided if it is not halal or kosher meat. There are no dietary restrictions for non-Muslim Malaysian students. In Malaysia, students are accustomed to eating home cooked meals prepared from scratch and food from street vendors and fast-food chains.

Gifts

Money in small red or green packets is given to children on religious festivals. Birthday celebrations are usually celebrated with a family meal and a present from the parents to the birthday girl or boy.

Religion

For Muslims, prayer (salat) can be done individually or in group and is practiced five times a day. In Malaysia, males go to the weekly afternoon group prayer on Fridays.

During Ramadan, Muslims fast for a month from sunrise to sunset. They also pray an additional prayer called Terawih, in addition to the 5 daily prayers. At the end of the month, Eid al-Fitr is celebrated at the parents' or grandparents' home with special home cooked delicacies. The morning of Eid al-Fitr, people often go to the mosque for prayer and after the prayer, members of the family will ask forgiveness from everyone by kneeling to the elders and kissing their hands and giving hugs. Nowadays, it is also common for elders to give money as gifts to the youth at this time.

Holidays

Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha celebrated by Muslim students.

Chinese New Year celebrated by Malaysians of Chinese decent and

Deepavalli celebrate by Malaysians of Indian decent.