

South Africa

~School Classes

In South Africa, students generally take six to nine subjects at a time, and each class meets either every day or for extended sessions every other day. In South Africa, students are evaluated on daily homework, class participation, and periodic written exams. Boys and girls study in the same classes and are not seated apart in class. The class sizes vary depending on the school or subject.

School Relationships

School is very formal and students are always expected to address school staff by the surnames with the prefix Mr. or Mrs.

Extracurricular Activities

South African high school students are often very involved in school based extracurricular activities, and these activities are where most students develop their friendships. South Africans have freedom to participate in which ever extracurricular activities that they like.

School Rules

South African high schools have a “zero tolerance” policy regarding cell phone usage and fighting. These activities are not allowed at all in school and the penalties for engaging in them are often severe and in some cases will include expulsion.

Family Life

In South Africa, most households consist of parents, or a parent, and their children. Rarely do grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins live in the same house, but extended relatives may come to stay if the financial situation requires it. While it is important to always be respectful, many South African teenagers interact informally with all of their family members.

It is common in South Africa for the father to be the primary financial provider of the family, however this is changing in modern families where many mothers work as well. In most cultures within South Africa the mother is the main authoritative figure when it comes to household decisions.

In South Africa, meals may be eaten all together as a family, or separately depending on family members’ schedules. Often both boys and girls will have to cook for themselves when they get home from school.

Teen Life

If a South African child has something, it is generally his or her own, and not understood to be the shared property of siblings, including clothing. When siblings want to borrow something from each other, it is generally understood that they must ask first. In most cases the parents would also need to be consulted.

Responsibilities

South African teenagers do not generally divide tasks or responsibilities based on gender, either amongst their peers or amongst their family. South African household members, including children, are often given specific tasks or chores. The chores may include cleaning one’s own room or bathroom, doing their own laundry and generally contributing to the upkeep of the house. It is also common for households to have a maid come in twice a week or so to do cleaning.

Students are required to take responsibility for their school work, doing the dishes and generally cleaning up after themselves. Students do not receive pocket money on a regular basis and ask their parents for what they need and the specific amount.

South African teenagers are often expected to plan their daily routines with their parents at least two days in advance and then work out a course of action with them as to how they will get to where they need to be.

Parental Involvement

Schools in South Africa keep parents aware of their children’s academic progress at all times. In South Africa, parents often monitor what their children do online in the interest of their children’s safety. Parents also may limit what sites a child may visit online, or how much time the child spends on the internet. However most homes in South Africa often do not have internet and students often surf the web at school or at the internet café where there is no parent observation.



COUNTRY FACTS:

Capital: Pretoria

Population: 49,109,107

Area, sq. mi.: 470,693

Real GDP per capita: 10,300

Adult literacy rate: 87% (male); 86% (female)

Ethnic make-up: black African 79%, white 9.6%, colored 8.9%, Indian/Asian 2.5%

Religion: Zion Christian 11.1%, Pentecostal/Charismatic 8.2%, Catholic 7.1%, Methodist 6.8%, Dutch Reformed 6.7%, Anglican 3.8%, Muslim 1.5%, other Christian 36%, other 2.3%, unspecified 1.4%, none 15.1%

Pets

Many South African families have pets, often cats or dogs. Pets are not thought of as members of the family, and are often not allowed inside the house.

Personal Interactions

Mixed Gender Socializing

It is perfectly acceptable for South African teens to have friends of the opposite sex and to socialize with them individually; however most are aware of cultural boundaries depending on the rules of the family. For instance, a boy is not allowed to go into a girl's room and vice-versa as families see this as a sign of great disrespect.

Friendships

South African teenagers socialize in groups and sometimes one-on-one. Both ways are considered appropriate and the choice is left up to the individual. Most teenagers make their friends through neighborhood connections and school connections, and family also plays a big role in who one socializes with. Teens often spend a lot of time with their cousins. South African teenagers often think of peers with whom they are only casually associated as friends. Friends are also confidants and therefore are very trusted with personal information. It is uncommon for South African teenagers to share money with each other.

Communication Styles

In South Africa, greeting someone you see every day is generally expected, but the greetings are not necessarily invitations to a larger conversation. South Africans communicate very indirectly and often hide their opinions, especially if it is a negative one about an elder. Teenagers generally are comfortable expressing negative emotions to a friend, but with family they are often more cautious especially if the family member is an authoritative member of the family or an elder.

Eye Contact

Eye contact is race dependant in South Africa: in the black cultures it is regarded as disrespectful to look an elder in the eye, in white cultures it is regarded as disrespectful not to look an elder in the eye. A YES South Africa student may be uncomfortable with sharing their feelings with authority figures.

Cultural Norms

Students do spend a lot of time in the week with family, but may expect to spend a Saturday with their friends. Personal space is relative and individual time alone is rare.

South Africans are punctual. Being on time is considered a sign of respect, and being even a little bit late to an appointment is noticed, but a grace period of 10 minutes is usually given depending on the situation.

Personal Hygiene

Electricity and water rates are high in South Africa so teenagers generally take a quick shower once a day and sometimes twice if they are involved in physical activities. It is generally thought to be unclean in South Africa to wear the same clothes two days in a row or without washing.

South African teenagers are expected to keep the bathroom clean and dry after use, towels are hung up to dry and hygiene products are put away.

Food and Culture

Diet

In South Africa, Halal meat is easy to find and very accessible. South African mothers cook every night with carry-out food being a treat once or twice a week.

Gifts

For major holidays like Christmas or birthdays, South African teenagers are expected to give gifts to family members and close friends, but not necessarily to all of their friends.

Religion

Holidays

In South Africa, Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr are not celebrated nationally although many people do know about them because of the Muslim population and often great respect is shown to Muslims on these days.