

# Indonesia

## School Classes

Indonesian students take 13 to 15 subjects in one semester; each subject is scheduled once or twice a week. Subjects studied are determined early on, sometimes as early as 10th grade, and determine whether a student will be in a science or social studies track throughout high school. In Indonesia, students remain in the same classroom and teachers rotate to the different rooms. Depending on the school, one classroom will seat 30 to 48 students. Public schools in Indonesia are co-ed; boys and girls sit in the same classroom. Seats may or may not be assigned by the teacher. In Pesantren, Islamic Boarding School, boys and girls are separated by room. Pesantren students might find it difficult to adjust to a co-ed environment at first. In Indonesia, students are evaluated through homework, class attendance, special assignments, mid-semester exams and semester exams. Different workloads and expectations on school assignments and homework in U.S. schools may be a challenge for Indonesian students at first.

## School Relationships

Students' respect for their teachers is as high as their respect for their natural parents. At school, teachers take on the roles of "parents at school." Because of this respect, students are generally taught to listen and obey their teachers in every way, without question. In Pesantren, teachers also act as legal guardians. Students learn to follow and abide by the rules and sayings of their teachers, word for word. In Indonesia, it is not expected to critique or disagree with what the teacher is saying. Formal address is used to call teachers: "Pak" or "Bu" ("Mr." or "Mrs."). To students, an informal relationship with teachers and calling teachers by their first names or nicknames will likely seem rude and out of line.

## Extracurricular Activities

In Indonesian schools, extracurricular activities take place on Saturdays in place of regular courses and offer various kinds of opportunities like traditional dance and music, journalism, English club, futsal (soccer-like ball game), basketball, and photography. Students in Indonesia often decide upon and arrange for their own extracurricular activities. Parents are involved indirectly in students' extracurricular activities.

## School Rules

Cell phone usage is banned during classes and school hours in Indonesia, and violation of this rule usually results in confiscation of the phone and other penalties. Fighting is considered a severe rule violation, and could result in suspension or being expelled. All students in Indonesia must wear a uniform. Students may have difficulty determining what clothes are appropriate for school in the U.S. if uniforms are not required. If the student is wearing a headscarf, she may prefer to wear long-sleeved shirts and trousers, or skirts over trousers, and a jilbab, headscarf, to school.

## Return

Upon return to Indonesia, students will have to re-engage with the subjects they left off with when they went on their exchange year. The final year of high school is crucial for their eligibility in National Final Exams which is mandatory for graduating high school and for University Entrance Exams, a separate exam for entering Universities. Students are often afraid they will not be able to keep up with classes and lessons in Indonesia.

## Family Life

Most households consist of parents (or a parent), and children. Some households have one or more relatives living with the family; grandparent(s), aunt, uncle or cousin. Live-in house help are also common, even in lower-middle class households. Drivers are common in middle and upper class households. Household chores may not be something students are used to.

Nowadays in Indonesia, both parents usually work out of the house. Traditionally, though, the father is the breadwinner and the ultimate decision maker, and the mother is the "home manager" and general advisor of the family. The mother's role is highly respected in a family. There is an Indonesian saying that speaks to the immense respect mothers are given; "Heaven lies under a mother's feet." In Indonesia, parents and elders are highly respected, and children are taught to listen and obey without question. Children are taught to kiss the back of the elder's right hand as a sign of respect.



## COUNTRY FACTS:

**Capital:** Jakarta

**Population:** 242,968,342

**Area, sq. mi.:** 735,358

**Real GDP per capita:** 4,000

**Adult literacy rate:** 94% (male); 87% (female)

**Ethnic make-up:** Javanese 40.6%, Sundanese 15%, Madurese 3.3%, Minangkabau 2.7%, Betawi 2.4%, Bugis 2.4%, Banten 2%, Banjar 1.7%, other or unspecified 29.9%

**Religion:** Muslim 86.1%, Protestant 5.7%, Roman Catholic 3%, Hindu 1.8%, other or unspecified 3.4%

Generally in Indonesia, dinner is eaten together, but this depends on the family schedule. When families do eat together, they don't linger at the table or engage in lengthy table talk. More likely, the family will eat quietly, even silently, and take conversations elsewhere after the meal. Talking throughout mealtime is considered impolite. Students may be especially uncomfortable when serious family issues are discussed at mealtime.

Indonesians are very communal, and families tend to do things together. Individual time is rare, if it exists, and is usually reserved for study time in the evening. If an Indonesian family member is found alone, it is a sign that there is something wrong. Generally, teenagers have their free time on the weekend to spend with their friends. The concept of individual pursuit and personal time to one's self in the U.S. may be surprising and uncomfortable for the student at first. Students might feel left out if a sibling or other family member is taking time to his or her self.

### ***Teen Life***

Objects or personal things may be considered as belonging not to one individual, but to be shared by everyone in the family as the family is viewed as one unit in Indonesia. Clothing articles are often shared between siblings, but when siblings want to borrow they must ask first. Older children are expected to care for younger ones. Sibling rivalry is not prevalent and spats among Indonesian siblings do not happen often.

### ***Responsibilities***

Parents usually give an allowance to their children daily or weekly. The allowance covers transportation and meals at school. Children rarely work for pocket money unless parents cannot provide pocket money. The YES stipend amount is approximately equal to the average monthly salary of a clerical or retail employee in Indonesia. In light of this, Indonesian students may either want to save as much as they can, or conversely may have impulses to spend, spend, spend.

In some families, chores or tasks are divided by gender. It is most common for teenage females to help in the kitchen. Males are usually given more "physical" chores like tending the garden, repairing things, and sweeping and mopping floor. Some males may not easily follow instructions from females or feel uncomfortable in a female dominated household. In Indonesian households, the mother or house help prepare the meals. Students may find it challenging to prepare meals for themselves because of unfamiliar kitchen appliances, unfamiliar ingredients and different ways of cooking or preparing food.

### ***Parental Involvement***

In home internet connections are rare in Indonesia, especially in smaller towns, however homes in bigger cities may have it. Students typically use the internet in internet cafes and parents almost never accompany him or her to these places. Parents do not monitor their child's internet use and a student's time on the internet is limited in a different way than it is in the U.S. Students now commonly use their cell phones to access the internet in Indonesia. Progress in school in Indonesia is usually reported in mid-semester or semester reports. Rarely do parents keep up with academic progress more than monitoring those semester reports; only if there is something alarming occurring. Teenagers are mostly dependent on their parents. Big decisions have to be discussed with parents and other family members. Schedules are also discussed as a family.

### ***Pets***

In most Indonesian Muslim communities, dogs serve as watch dogs not domestic pets. Dogs are generally not allowed in the house and the saliva is considered unclean. Indonesian students may be uncomfortable with or scared of dogs.

Parental Involvement

### ***Personal Interactions***

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

Many students in Indonesia are friends from childhood and grow up attending the same school. Groups of friends usually consist of same gender students with common interests. Close friends or best friends would be the same gender, and it would not be uncommon for girls to hold hands with other girls and boys to sit close to other boys. In Indonesia, men and women are not separate but do not touch each other.

#### ***Friendships***

Lending money to friends or family members is common in Indonesia. It is common to repay the money in installments or in a form of treating the friend to small favors or meals. Some confusion or misunderstanding may arise in the U.S. regarding sharing and lending money.

### ***Communication Styles***

Indonesians communicate indirectly. Indonesians, in general, avoid confrontation and avoid showing negative feeling as a way to maintain a harmonious condition in society. Everyone is expected to be looking out to not offend others and to understand unspoken needs. Indonesians may find it very hard to ask for help or to be the bearer of bad news. The student is trying to "save face", a very important part of the Indonesian culture. Children are taught to listen and not to explain or argue with adults; even older siblings are treated deferentially. Indonesians generally won't talk about it if they are having problems.

### *(Communication Styles Continued...)*

Rather than express emotion, or show it outright, Indonesians may write down their feelings for their own use. Expressions of love are not acceptable in public. In some cases, Indonesians smile when they are nervous or confused. Indonesians only discuss emotional topics with those to whom they feel very close, or “connected.” Indonesians do not feel that they can argue with a parent, so they may feel that it is better to say “yes” and then not comply, than to disagree or argue. To the parent it may appear that they have said they would do something and then didn’t do it; however, to the student, it is not intended to be deliberately deceptive. If this becomes a problem, ask the student when something will be done, how he or she will do it, and what problems he or she anticipates in doing it. The answers will give you an opportunity to “read between the lines” to see whether “yes” really meant “yes.”

### *Eye Contact*

Direct eye contact with older people is generally considered rude and students may feel uncomfortable with constant direct eye contact as you talk together. Students from the Jakarta area, however, are accustomed to making eye contact during conversation. Until the discomfort with direct eye contact passes, try looking at the student’s chin, and then back to his or her eyes while speaking.

### *Cultural Norms*

Indonesians usually shake hands when they meet, and may follow a handshake by touching their right palm to their hearts in a show of friendship. When meeting for the first time, Indonesians often bow their heads slightly. This is often followed by small talks that could involve asking how the family is doing or encompass a larger conversation.

Being punctual is well regarded, but time is loosely scheduled and more fluid and is not important to be on time. It may also not be common to plan things that will happen in the future. Time and deadlines are sometimes flexible in Indonesia. The Indonesian student may operate on “jam karet”, which translated literally from the Bahasa Indonesia language means “rubber time”, or “stretch the time and be late.”

### *Personal Hygiene*

Taking baths twice a day is common practice in Indonesia and is deeply-ingrained. In Indonesia, bathrooms are fully tiled, with a drain set in the floor. Water is used for the ritual washing before every time that Muslim people pray. Students use water to wash their hands, feet, and face. The student may have had very little experience using a dry bathroom and may need a bit of guidance to learn that shower curtains belong inside the tub and that bathmats are used to keep the rest of the floor dry when you’ve just stepped out of the shower.

### *Food and Culture*

#### *Diet*

Halal food is everywhere and very easy to find. Most meals are prepared from scratch using fresh ingredients. Processed foods are rare, and sometimes considered unhealthy.

#### *Gifts*

It is common practice among teenagers to those who have birthdays have to treat their friends for a meal or snack. Gifts are quite common but not necessary.

#### *Religion*

Prayer is an important aspect of the religious life of traditionally practicing Muslims who will generally pray five times each day at specific times which are religiously-dictated. Prayers are mostly done personally except Friday noon prayers and Eid prayers.

Ramadan is considered important. People are expected to respect anyone who fasts during this month. Eid al-Fitr is a major celebration marking the end of Ramadan, with a week-long holiday, and big family gatherings. The big day is marked by the Eid prayer in mosques. Students observing the fast will do so from dawn to dusk. Students will want to spend part of the evening praying the tarawih and reciting the Quran.

#### *Holidays*

Religious :Muslim: Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha. Christian: Christmas, Easter. Hindu (Balinese Hindu): Nyepi (“day of silence”), Buddhist: Vesak.

National Holiday: Independence Day, New Year, Islamic New Year, Chinese New Year.

Personal Interactions