

School life at an American high school.

Your British friend is on an exchange year to the USA and is now experiencing school life at an American high school as well as life in a host family. She writes to you using the American English that she has learnt.

Hi, I can't believe it's already been a month since I left for Sacramento. So much has happened! Living here in Sacramento is pretty cool – but it is definitely not like in the movies. My new school is huge – there are about 2300 students and it's not always easy to find your way round. But they offer a lot of after school activities, which is awesome. I've chosen cheerleading and the band. So I can still practise playing the guitar. 😊

Every day I've got the same schedule and we have to move classrooms very quickly, there are only 4 minutes between periods. So I have to hurry! Ugh!

School is very strict - I have had to get used to quite a lot of new rules. Guess what! You are only allowed to go to the restrooms during periods with a hall pass. What else is against the rules at my new school? Being late with no written excuse, or skipping classes, wearing headphones, hats and hoods in the school building. And the dress code is very strict. They don't wear school uniforms here. What a change! ;) But I can't wear most of my clothes: no ripped jeans! Shorts and skirts are allowed, but they must not be cut-offs and skirts must be below the knee! Pants can't be worn below the waist and tops shouldn't be cropped or sleeveless. 😞😞😞

That's a lot to remember for a new student at a school, isn't it? 😞 But don't worry: I've got a school handbook. All the rules are in there. ;)

I guess I will have to go shopping for new clothes downtown. There's a huge shopping mall with 300 shops downtown. I wish we could go shopping together. 😊😊😊

There's not much to do in the evenings here in the suburbs. All the families around here have strict curfews for their kids and my host family, too. So we have to be home very early each night.

By the way, I had a few problems understanding my classmates at the beginning. There are quite a few differences between American English and my good old British English 😊. Chips are French fries and biscuits are cookies, our head teacher is a principal, my classroom is on the first floor which is really the ground floor and the oddest thing of all: a rubber is a condom in American English. ;) I'm slowly getting used to AE and to the pronunciation, but it's weird.

Anyway, I'm really missing you. Keep in touch.

I'm looking forward to your news from Germany. What do you think about the school rules here? Write to me soon.

Lots of love,

Katherine

1. Sum up Katherine's situation in the USA.

*Are you breaking some of these school rules at the moment?
Compare them to the rules at your own school.*

Or

2. Mediation

Imagine you've just received Katherine's letter and your parents, who don't speak any English, ask you about her stay in the US?

Your mum: Gefällt es Katherine an der neuen Schule, was erzählt sie vom Schulalltag?

You: _____

Your mum: Was bedeutet „strenge Schulregeln“, was meinst du damit?

You: _____

Your mum: Was erzählt Katherine über das Leben in ihrer Gastfamilie?

You: _____

Your mum: Wie kommt Katherine mit dem amerikanischen Englisch zurecht?
Hat sie Verständigungsprobleme in der neuen Schule?

You: _____

Your mum: Lade doch Katherine ein, die Sommerferien hier bei uns in Deutschland zu verbringen. Dann können wir gemeinsam etwas unternehmen.

You: _____