

Overview

Population

Turkey has a population of nearly 80 million. Turkish is the first language of 90% of the population. Minority languages include Kurdish, 6% and Arabic, 1.4 %. Throughout the world Turkish is spoken by about 220 million people.

Climate

Although Turkey is a hot summer holiday destination, much of the country experiences cold winters with snow.

Education System (for children from Turkey)

- Preschool Education: Optional for 4 - 6 year olds
- Primary Education: Lasts 8 years and is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 14.
- Secondary education: includes all general, vocational and technical schools that provide at least 4 years of education after primary school

EAL

The most common foreign language is English, which is taught from year 2 (age 8) in state schools. Children can choose to study other languages e.g. French, German through to the end of secondary school.

Education System – main differences and implications for schools

School starting age

- Emphasis in pre-school is on play rather than learning.
- Children start school full time the September after their 6th birthday.
- Students appear to have “jumped” a year (a child who was in Year 1 in Turkey will suddenly be in a Year 2 in England).

School day

- The school day, hours and lunch vary from school to school and depend on different factors such as the type of school and the region. However all classes last between 40 and 45 minutes with at least five minutes break between lessons.
- Schools may have 2 sessions with one group of children having their lessons from early morning to midday and another from midday to early evening.
- School uniform is compulsory at Turkish schools in order to prevent discrimination due to social class.
- Subjects are taught in the students’ own classroom even at secondary school; the students stay in their room while the teachers move from class to class.
- At primary school pupils have the same class teacher for four years.

Curriculum

- At primary school children are mainly taught Literacy, Numeracy, Science, a Foreign Language, Islamic studies, Music and Social Studies.
- At secondary school pupils are taught Geography, History and PE in addition to the above.
- Exams are usually essay based rather than multiple choice.
- Grade scales range from 1 to 5 (1=insufficient,5=excellent)

Literacy

Unlike English, Turkish is a highly phonetic language and Turkish words are pronounced in exactly the same way as they are spelt, with each letter of the Turkish alphabet always representing the same sound. Because of this, Turkish children may experience difficulties with English pronunciation, especially with new vocabulary or with words they have heard but have not seen written down.

Maths

- Decimals are written using a comma rather than a full stop e.g. 6,5 instead 6.5
- The written method for division is different from that taught in English schools.
- In Turkey the number 7 is written with a dash through it 7̄. Also, the Turkish 1 can be confused with the English 7.
- Turkish children are used to using pencils for maths and rubbing out their workings. They may need to be told to show all their workings and not to rub them out.

Cultural sensitivities

- Most children come from Muslim families; some pray regularly and only eat Halal meat, whilst other families are less strict.
- Turkish children do not sit on the carpet in primary school.

Parental involvement and attendance in Turkey

Turkish secondary school children have to repeat a school year if they do not achieve the expected minimum grade; some parents have to pay for private tuition to ensure their child achieves the expected levels.

- Children bring all their school text and exercise books home every day for homework so parents can see what they have been learning and can help with homework.
- Children sit written and oral tests 3 times a year for each subject, with regular feedback to the parents.
- Children receive 2 reports per academic year.

Language differences that may cause problems with Literacy

Alphabet/Script

- The Turkish language has 8 vowels: a e ı i o ö u ü and 21 consonants including ç ğ ş making 29 letters in total.
- You will never find two consonants together in a word: there is always a vowel between them e.g. “okul” = “school”, “bıçak” = “knife”

Spellings

- Pupils may attempt to impose phonetic consistency in the Turkish language on English spelling patterns, e.g. they might omit silent letters in spellings or pronounce them (e.g. the final “e” in words like “female”).
- They may also apply pronunciation “rules” they have observed in one example to other situations. For instance, the “k” sound of the “c” in “cat” may lead to confusion with words like “centre” where the “c” makes a soft “s” sound. This inconsistency in English phonics may cause Turkish children difficulties.

Questions/tenses

- The question tag “-mı/-mi/-mu/-mü?” together with a slight rise in intonation indicates a question in Turkish. Turkish pupils may have difficulties with the change in word order used in English, particularly with irregular verbs. Stress on words pronounced in isolation is on the final syllable.
- There is no equivalent to the perfect tense in Turkish.
- Sometimes Turkish uses the simple past where English uses the simple present (e.g. “Geç kaldım”: literal translation = “I was late” but means “I am late”). This may cause problems in interpretation or usage of tense.

Verbs

In Turkish the verb is often omitted entirely (e.g. “Bu kedi siyah”= this cat black”), whereas in English the verb is necessary. Turkish pupils may omit “is”, “are”, “was”, “were” or experience problems using these words correctly.

Agglutination

In Turkish, meaning is added to the verb by placing other individual words in front of it (e.g. “gelebileceksin” meaning “you will be able to come home”). Here, the verb element “gel”= “come”) has had three endings tagged onto it: -ebil (be able to), -ecek (will) and -sin (you).

Word order

Whereas in English the sentence structure is “subject-verb-object”, the basic word-order in Turkish is “subject-object-verb”. This can lead to errors such as “I many friends have”.

Articles

In Turkish, there is no equivalent for “a”, “an”, “or” and “the”. “Bir” (“one”) may be used before a noun to indicate “how many” as in “bir elma yedim” (“one apple ate I” = “I ate an apple”).

Useful classroom words

Greetings

Welcome	Hoş geldiniz
Hello	Merhaba
Thank you	Teşekkür ederim
Please	Lütfen
Goodbye (formal)	Güle güle
Good morning	İyi günler
Are you OK?	İyisiniz?

School Routine

School playground	Okul bahçesi
School office	Okul ofisi
Hall	Yemekhane/salon
School	Okul
Assembly	Toplantı
Toilets	Tuvalet
School field	Okul Bahçesi
Classroom	Sınıf
Registration	Kayıt
Computer suite	Bilgisayar odası
Break time	Tenefüs
Outside	Dışarı
Inside	İçeri
Fire drill	Yangın tatbikati
Packed lunch	Beslenme
School dinner	Okul yemeği
School nurse	Okul hemşerisi
First aid room	İlk yardım odası
Staff room	Öğretmenler odası
Lunchtime	öğlen yemeği
School uniform	önlük
Library	Kütüphane
Reading book	Okuma kitabı
Library book	Kütüpane kitabı
Copy	Suret
Label	Etiket
Colour	Renk
Pen	Tükenmez Kalem
Pencil	Kursun kalem
Yes	Evet
No	Hayır

Days of the week

Monday	Pazartesi
Tuesday	Salı
Wednesday	Carsamba
Thursday	Perşembe
Friday	Cuma
Weekend	Haftasonu

Numbers

Zero	Sıfır		
One	Bir		
Two	İki	20	Yirmi
Three	Üç	30	Otuz
Four	Dört	40	Kırk
Five	Beş	50	Elli
Six	Altı	60	Altmış
Seven	Yedi	70	Yetmiş
Eight	Sekiz	80	Seksen
Nine	Dokuz	90	Doksan
Ten	On	100	Yüz
How many?	Kaçtane?		

Instructions/Questions

Work with a partner	Bir ile çalış
Use your dictionary	Sözlüğünü kullan
Do you understand?	Anladın mı?
Talk about this at home	Evde bu konuda konuş
Translate these words at home	Bunları evde tercüme et
You can write in Turkish	Türkçe yazabilirsin
Write in sentences	Cümle kur
Fill in the blanks	Boş yerleri doldur
Please be quiet	Lütfen sessiz
Annotate	Acıklama
Highlight	Vurgulamak
Draft	Taslak
Come here please	Buraya gel lütfen
Sit on the carpet	Haliya otur
Where does it hurt?	Neresi acıyor?
Well done	Aferin