Family Life

The number of family members living in the same house depends on where the student lives in Jordan. If the student lives in the city, he or she will usually have a small household and some extended family may live in the same building. In rural areas, students will have a larger household, including the grandfather and grandmother and maybe their uncle or aunt. Usually students eat breakfast either before school or during the first break at school. Family lunch is served around 3–4pm and a small family dinner from 8–9pm.

In Jordan, usually both parents work if the student lives in the city. In rural areas, only the father works and the mother will stay at home to take care of the children. Authority is shared in different ways in Jordan. The father typically has primary authority in the family, while the mother usually has authority over the children since she is with them the most.

It is understood that family members need to have their own time and most will take individual time to relax and a short time to do their own activities. Students generally interact informally with their immediate family members in Jordan. If students have a good relationship with their extended family members, like uncles, aunts, nieces and nephews, they interact informally as well.

Teen Life: Teenagers are used to having responsibilities if they are out with their friends or if they are at home alone or babysitting for their younger siblings. However, generally at this age, students rely heavily on their parents, and specifically their mother. Siblings usually share things like clothes, computers, and many other items, and they are expected to ask first.

Responsibilities: Students are expected to take responsibility for their academic performance and other school-related issues. Students are not responsible for household chores. Families may have a housekeeper depending on their financial status or if the mother works. Students are used to having their meals ready and prepared for them. Jordanian boys may have an especially difficult time adapting to doing household chores in the U.S. compared to females. Girls may help their mother cook, but not often. Parents usually give their children a specific amount of money daily. Students don’t work in Jordan at this age and do not have any expectations to be able to budget their money.

Parental Involvement: Parents receive their child's grades on a monthly basis in Jordan and have monthly parent-teacher meetings to discuss their child's progress in his or her classes. If any misbehavior or absence occurs, schools will contact the parents directly. As Jordanian teenagers tend to be very dependent on their parents and siblings, most teenagers constantly seek their parents' guidance and advice. Parents generally do not actively monitor what their children do online.

Pets: Some Jordanian families have pets, especially cats. However, pets are not allowed to enter the house, especially bedrooms, bathrooms, and the kitchen.

Classes: Students are not allowed to choose their school subjects; the Ministry of Education determines the subjects for students according to their grade level. Students study eight subjects each semester. Secondary education consists of two major streams:
(a) Comprehensive secondary education stream with a common general educational basis, and specialized academic or vocational education;
(b) Applied secondary education stream which is based on vocational preparation and training.

The conditions for acceptance into the different tracks are determined in accordance with regulations issued by the Ministry of Education. Generally, 50% of each student's grade is calculated from homework, participation, and quizzes, while the other 50% is calculated from exams. Students have all of their classes in the same classroom, and each teacher comes to the class to teach their subject.

Extracurricular Activities: Students can participate in extracurricular activities in or out of school. Extracurricular options in the public schools are very limited. However, private schools have more options, such as sports, music, and community service or volunteer work. Some students can participate in independent activities by registering in a private sport, music, or other club outside of school, but it depends on the student's economic situation at home. Parents usually get involved in supporting their children in extracurricular activities if they have an event or final game.

School Rules and Attire: Schools have a “zero tolerance” policy regarding fighting, bullying, and sexual harassment. All schools are expected to have an on-site counselor that assists with these types of cases; the schools' principal and teachers also take part in reporting and administrating any required disciplinary actions or measures towards the students involved. Schools also have strict rules and penalties for cheating. If a student is caught cheating, their exam will be seized and the student will need to repeat the course. Generally, Jordanian students are not allowed to use their cell phones in school, however restrictions vary between schools.

All public schools are gender segregated in Jordan, while some private schools are co-ed. Girls' public schools require uniforms, while the public schools for boys do not. The uniform for female students includes a short dress with a white shirt and pants; females are also allowed to wear jilbabs (a long garment worn by women along with a head scarf).
Religion: Most families encourage their children to attend religious services. Most Christians go to church every Sunday, while some go only on Christmas and Easter. Generally boys go to mosque with their fathers every Friday for prayer; most Muslims also go to mosque on Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, and during Ramadan. During Ramadan, students fast from sunrise until sunset. Students break their fast with dates, followed by some soup, and then the main course; some students have sandwiches or yogurt before sunrise. Before Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan, students go to buy new clothes. During Eid, some students welcome visitors or go on vacation, and some may receive money from their family members. Local places of worship, such as mosques and churches, serve as community centers in Jordan. Each member of the community is expected to be engaged in the activities and charity work that their mosque or church organizes.

Holidays: The main observances are Christmas, Easter, Eid al-Adha, and Eid al-Fitr. All schools have holidays between the first and the second semester for two weeks at the end of the year for summer break, which is usually around 3 months long.

Guest Culture: Guests in Jordan are treated with the highest regard as the honoring of a guest stems from Bedouin culture and treatment of guests is viewed as a source of pride for many. It is considered impolite for guests to refuse food as generosity and hospitality are very important; Jordanians will usually offer guests food more than once, even if the guest declines the first time.

Lunch and Diets: Usually one parent is responsible for packing food for their children. Parents also give their children pocket money to buy snacks from school, where there is usually a small kiosk or cafeteria with light lunch options. From how meals are cooked to the times of the day meals are eaten, Jordanian food culture is very different from American food culture. The diet is mainly based on wheat, rice, vegetables, and meat. In Jordan, meals are intimate, social affairs and everyone is expected to eat from the same communal platter. "Fad diets" are not common in Jordan. Most Muslim Jordanians abide by the halal diet (food that meets the Islamic law standard); pork and alcoholic beverages are not permitted.

Students mostly change their clothes daily, and may wear their clothes twice in one week but not two days in a row. Teenagers are used to changing all of their clothes after taking a shower. Teenagers are used to wearing their clothes until after school, and then they will change into more comfortable clothes when they arrive home, unless they have any outdoor plans or activities. Teenagers must keep their bathrooms clean; generally, they have one large towel and one small towel for their hair and face. Towels are usually replaced every other day.