School curricula around the English-speaking world, from England to India

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England's Year 4, Scotland's P3, Ireland's 2nd Class, Australia's Foundation: how English-speaking countries count school years, what they expect and how they test.

Children who speak English go to school under dozens of different curricula, and the first thing that trips families up is the name of the year. A 7-year-old is in 2nd grade in Chicago, Year 3 in London, P4 in Glasgow, 2nd Class in Dublin, Year 2 in Sydney and Class 2 in Delhi. Under the names, the systems agree on more than they differ, and over the last few years they have moved closer on one thing in particular: teaching children to read with phonics, explicitly and in order. This post is the short tour. Peabody Teach has a full page for each curriculum in its free curriculum guide, and a find your curriculum page with every system's school years side by side. Peabody is free through the end of 2026, with no ads.

The years, side by side

Matched by age at the start of the school year. Cut-off dates differ, so a child born near one can land a year either way.

- Age: 4–5 · US and most of Canada: Pre-K · England and Wales: Reception · Scotland: P1 · Northern Ireland: P1 · Ireland: Junior Infants · Australia: Kindy · India: LKG · South Africa: Pre-Grade R
- Age: 5–6 · US and most of Canada: Kindergarten · England and Wales: Year 1 · Scotland: P2 · Northern Ireland: P2 · Ireland: Senior Infants · Australia: Foundation · India: UKG · South Africa: Grade R
- Age: 6–7 · US and most of Canada: 1st grade · England and Wales: Year 2 · Scotland: P3 · Northern Ireland: P3 · Ireland: 1st Class · Australia: Year 1 · India: Class 1 · South Africa: Grade 1
- Age: 8–9 · US and most of Canada: 3rd grade · England and Wales: Year 4 · Scotland: P5 · Northern Ireland: P5 · Ireland: 3rd Class · Australia: Year 3 · India: Class 3 · South Africa: Grade 3
- Age: 10–11 · US and most of Canada: 5th grade · England and Wales: Year 6 · Scotland: P7 · Northern Ireland: P7 · Ireland: 5th Class · Australia: Year 5 · India: Class 5 · South Africa: Grade 5

The rule of thumb: England's Year N is about US grade N minus one, and Scotland's and Northern Ireland's P1 is about England's Reception. Ireland starts school with two infant years. Ontario calls its two kindergarten years JK and SK, and New Zealand children start in Year 1 on their fifth birthday.

What they share

Phonics first, almost everywhere now. England has taught early reading through systematic synthetic phonics for years, with a phonics check in Year 1. Ontario's 2023 Language curriculum calls for direct, explicit and systematic teaching, with Grades 1 to 3 focused on word reading and spelling. Since the start of 2025, every state school in New Zealand has had to teach reading with structured literacy. Australia's Version 9.0 curriculum puts more weight on phonics than the version before it, and several Australian states now run a Year 1 phonics check. We explain the research behind this in how to teach a child to read.

Number facts, then much more. England expects times tables to 12 × 12 by the end of Year 4 and checks them that June. But every curriculum here also asks for fractions, measurement, shape and data from the primary years, which is why we wrote math is more than math facts.

Two languages, often. Wales teaches Welsh to every child, Ireland teaches Irish, South Africa teaches a home language and a first additional language, India usually teaches English beside Hindi or a regional language, and Kenya teaches English and Kiswahili.

What differs

Year lists or broad levels. England sets out primary English and maths year by year. Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence uses five broad levels, each spanning about three years, and children move through them at their own pace. The Curriculum for Wales describes progress at five steps, around ages 5, 8, 11, 14 and 16, and leaves each school to design its own curriculum.

How much testing, and when. England has national checks in Years 1, 4 and 6. Australia's NAPLAN comes in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, and Ontario's EQAO tests in Grades 3, 6 and 9. Ireland tests reading and maths in 2nd, 4th and 6th Class. Wales uses short online assessments that adapt to each child, every year from Year 2 to Year 9. Northern Ireland has no national primary tests like England's.

Who writes it. Canada has no national curriculum: each province writes its own. Australia has a national one that New South Wales and Victoria publish in their own versions. In India, CBSE schools follow NCERT's books, while ICSE schools and state boards set their own syllabi, all within the 2023 national framework.

A quick tour

- England. Key stages 1 to 4, a phonics check in Year 1, a times tables check in Year 4 and SATs in Year 6; a national review reported in November 2025. The National Curriculum in England, explained.
- Scotland. Early, First, Second, Third and Fourth levels from age 3 to the end of S3. Curriculum for Excellence.

- Wales. Six areas of learning and five progression steps. The Curriculum for Wales.
- Northern Ireland. A play-based Foundation Stage in P1 and P2, then two key stages to P7. The Northern Ireland Curriculum.
- Ireland. Junior Infants to 6th Class, with a new maths curriculum from 2024. Ireland's Primary Curriculum.
- Canada. Province by province: Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta compared. Canada's provincial curricula.
- Australia. Foundation to Year 10, NAPLAN and the NSW syllabuses. The Australian Curriculum.
- New Zealand. Te M?taiaho and structured literacy. The New Zealand Curriculum.
- India. The 5+3+3+4 stages and the boards. CBSE, ICSE and NCF 2023.
- South Africa. Grade R to 12 in four phases. CAPS.
- International schools. The IB, Cambridge, and British and American curricula abroad.

The find your curriculum page also covers the Philippines' MATATAG curriculum, Kenya's Competency-Based Education, Nigeria's Basic Education Curriculum, Jamaica's National Standards Curriculum, Singapore and the four biggest US standards.

A curriculum is not a way of teaching

The curriculum says what a child should learn and when. A way of teaching says how: Singapore math's blocks first, teaching for mastery, Charlotte Mason's living books, Montessori. You can mix them freely. A family in Scotland can follow Curriculum for Excellence and teach maths blocks first; a homeschooling family in Texas can follow the TEKS and read Charlotte Mason style. Our post on types of curriculum is the tour of the ways of teaching.

How Peabody supports each one

On Peabody, a parent or teacher makes those two choices separately for each child, on the child's grown-up page under "What they're learning":

1. Which curriculum. Pick from 30, from Common Core to CAPS, or "our own way". Peabody then counts school years the curriculum's way for that child (P3, Year 2, Grade R, JK), shows the grown-up where the child is in it and which national checks are ahead, and links the official document and our guide page.
2. How we teach math. Peabody's way, mixed practice, small steps (teaching for mastery), blocks first (Singapore style) or the school's order. Where a curriculum leans one way, Peabody suggests it: small steps for England, blocks first for Singapore.

Without an account, anyone can set how school years are counted on their device at peabody.kids/country. Whatever you pick, nothing is locked: every subject and skill stays open, and the library of leveled stories is the same for everyone.

What we haven't done yet, said plainly: the learning map's standard codes are US ones (Common Core, NGSS and C3), and topics come in one order for everyone. Matching each topic to another curriculum's own codes means reading its documents line by line, so we'll add them one curriculum at a time rather than guess.

Questions parents ask

What US grade is Year 4 in England?

About 3rd grade. England's Year N is roughly US grade N minus one, because Year 1 starts in the September after a child turns 5.

What age is P1 in Scotland?

About 4½ to 5½. Scotland's P1 sits beside England's Reception and US pre-K, so P3 is about US 1st grade.

Is Australia's Foundation year the same as kindergarten?

Yes, near enough. Foundation is the first year of school, at about 5, the same age as US kindergarten. New South Wales calls it Kindergarten.

Can I use Peabody with a curriculum from another country?

Yes. Pick the curriculum on your child's grown-up page and Peabody uses its school years for your child. Peabody teaches in English, so languages such as Irish, Welsh or Hindi stay with the school's own books.

Free at peabody.kids/blog/english-speaking-curricula-around-the-world