



ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS IN TEXAS SCHOOLS

Exceptions to the compulsory attendance law:

- CHILDREN WHO ARE ENROLLED IN A PRIVATE OR PAROCHIAL SCHOOL
- CHILDREN WHO ARE HOME-SCHOOLED
- STUDENTS WHO ARE 17 YEARS OLD AND ENROLLED IN A GED (HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY) PROGRAM
- STUDENTS WHO ARE 17 YEARS OLD AND HAVE RECEIVED A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR GED CERTIFICATE

Most other students of Texas public schools must comply with the Compulsory Attendance Law.

Compulsory attendance

Good attendance is important for many reasons. Your child receives the maximum benefit of education by being in school every day, and numerous studies show a strong link between academic performance and consistent attendance. Because attendance is so critical for the quality of your child's education, Texas has a Compulsory Attendance Law.

State law requires schoolchildren to attend school each day that instruction is provided. The law applies to children ages 6–18. If you voluntarily enroll your child in prekindergarten or kindergarten before age 6, school attendance laws apply to your child, too.

Excused absences

Although perfect attendance is the goal, it's not always possible. School districts are required to excuse a student's absence for reasons listed in state law, such as to:

- Observe a religious holy day
- Attend a required court appearance
- Serve as an election clerk
- Attend a healthcare appointment
- Visit college campuses

The Texas Education Code describes these reasons in greater detail and lists additional statutorily excused absences.

Your school has its own criteria for determining what else is considered an excused absence. Generally, an absence may qualify as excused in cases of:

- Personal illness
- Death of an immediate family member
- Medical treatment

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Excessive absences

Both the child and parent are responsible for unexcused absences. Yes, even if your child is 16 years old and skips class without you knowing, you are considered responsible!

After too many unexcused absences, the school is required to notify the parent. A compulsory attendance notification will be sent to the parent if a student has unexcused absences on 10 or more days or parts of days within a six-month period or three days or parts of days during a four-week period. Notice it says “parts of days.” This means that leaving school early, or arriving excessively late in the day, even if the child attended for some of the day, may count as an absence.

The compulsory attendance letter gives the parent notice that the student has accumulated too many unexcused absences and gives the parent a chance to correct the child’s attendance record.

A student with excessive absences may also be subject to truancy prevention measures. These measures may include a behavior improvement plan, school-based community service, or a referral to counseling, mediation, or teen court. A student who is between the ages of 12 to 18 may also be referred to a truancy court within 10 school days of the student’s tenth unexcused absence. In addition, parents may be criminally charged or fined if their child continues to miss school.

The 90 percent rule

In addition to compulsory attendance law, districts are required to enforce the 90 percent rule, which states that students in grades K-12 must attend class for 90 percent of the time it is offered to receive credit or a final grade. The 90 percent rule applies to all absences, including excused absences. If the student doesn’t meet this requirement, an attendance committee may grant the student credit or a final grade, depending on the circumstances.

The Student Handbook explains your school’s guidelines on absences, tardies, and making up missed schoolwork. Becoming familiar with the school’s policies will help you manage your child’s attendance and ensure that he or she avoids too many missed school days.

