TEENS LESSON

School Starts Later. What Changes?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Would you choose a later start to school?
2. Which is more useful to you: an extra hour in the morning or afternoon?
3. What would make getting to school easier?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**median**	☐	A	got more of something
2	**clinically**	☐	B	moved or changed a little
3	**shifted**	☐	C	a problem that is hard to understand
4	**supervise**	☐	D	watch people to make sure they are safe and doing the right thing
5	**slot**	☐	E	a fixed time in a timetable
6	**gained**	☐	F	the middle number when numbers are put in order
7	**adolescent**	☐	G	to do with young people between child and adult
8	**puzzle**	☐	H	in a way a doctor would measure

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Swiss students who could start school later mostly did, and slept longer. The study did not test a later finish, so that half of the deal is a question for you.

1 An extra hour in bed is an easy offer to like at seven in the morning. At a school in Gossau, Switzerland, students were given a version of that choice: arrive at 7:30 or wait until 8:30. Researchers wanted to know what happened to their sleep. The timetable also raised questions about buses, afternoon plans and how a school day should fit together.

2 In Gossau, in north-eastern Switzerland, classes at one secondary school used to begin at 7:20. The school then introduced a flexible model, in which students could arrive at 7:30 or wait until 8:30, when classes officially began, and some lessons were moved to midday or the afternoon. Researchers from the University of Zurich surveyed students in spring 2022, before the change, and again in spring 2023, once it was in place.

3 The study appeared in the Journal of Adolescent Health in February 2026. It gathered 754 responses, but some students answered both surveys, so that is not 754 different students. The median age was 14.

4 When offered the choice, 95% of students took the later option, and the median start moved about 38 minutes later. Wake-up times shifted while bedtimes stayed roughly the same, so students gained an average of 45 minutes of sleep on school days. They also reported fewer problems falling asleep, fewer of them had a clinically low health-related quality of life, and their scores in maths and English were higher.

5 None of this should be read as a guarantee. This was a before-and-after survey, not a randomised experiment: nobody was assigned to a timetable by chance, and a year is long enough for other things to change. The authors conclude only that flexible schedules may offer an effective way to reduce adolescent sleep deficits, a considerably more modest claim than saying that a later start improves grades or health for every student.

6 Flexibility is the model's main attraction, and also its main puzzle. A student who lives close by or badly needs sleep can arrive later, whereas one who relies on an early bus can still come at 7:30. The study did not test a later finish, which is why that half of the deal is left to you. A survey about sleep cannot capture what a later arrival does to everything around it: after-school training, caring responsibilities, transport and the school's own staffing, since someone has to supervise and teach in the early slot.

7 So the question in the headline remains open, and it is a personal one. Would you take the extra hour in bed if it cost you an hour in the afternoon? And what would you want your school to ask before it changed anything?

Sources: University of Zurich; Journal of Adolescent Health, study abstract. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. Fewer than 754 different students took part in the study. T F NG
2. Under the new model, students could no longer start at 7:30. T F NG
3. Most students gained extra sleep by going to bed earlier. T F NG
4. The authors claim that the later start caused the higher maths and English scores. T F NG
5. Teachers at the school were happy to work in the early slot. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

assigned	capture	considerably	effective	gathered	imposed	marginal	modest

1. Each pupil was _____ a partner for the science project, so nobody could choose their friends.
2. No single photo can _____ the atmosphere of a festival that lasted three days.
3. The coach made only a _____ claim: the new routine might help, not that it would win matches.
4. The second exam paper was _____ harder than the first, and many students ran out of time.
5. The head teacher _____ feedback from every class before changing the homework policy.
6. Revising in short sessions is a more _____ way to remember facts than one long night before the exam.

6 Word forms

Use the word in brackets to make a word that fits the gap.

1. The _____ of a later start was popular with almost every student. (INTRODUCE)
2. Teenagers who sleep badly often have _____ concentrating in afternoon lessons. (DIFFICULT)
3. The results were _____ , so the school decided to run the trial for another year. (CONCLUDE)
4. Her _____ made her the obvious choice for team captain. (RELY)
5. A later finish could have _____ consequences for after-school clubs. (FORESEE)

7 Language focus: prepositions

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Formal phrases like contingent on and tantamount to are common in reports. The preposition never changes.

by	for	into	of	on	to	with

1. Any improvement in grades is contingent _____ students actually sleeping more.
2. Changing the whole timetable would be tantamount _____ rewriting every teacher's week.
3. A later finish could be fraught _____ problems for students who train in the evening.
4. Constant tiredness may be symptomatic _____ a wider problem with screens at night.
5. The flexible model was put _____ practice in spring 2023.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What school start time would you try for a month?
2. Should everyone follow the same timetable?
3. What should a school ask students before changing the day?

9 Plan a fair school day

In pairs, plan a school day for two invented students: one who lives far away and one who has training after school. Include fixed lessons, a lunch break and travel. Decide who could start later and what each student gives up. Then explain one compromise to another pair. You can use invented students, so nobody has to share anything personal.

Useful phrases

I'd rather start later, even if I finish later.

That wouldn't work for someone who catches the early bus.

What if lessons started at half past eight on two days?

She'd miss her training, so that isn't fair.

Let's meet in the middle.

We've decided that the best compromise is ...

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 F · 2 H · 3 B · 4 D · 5 E · 6 A · 7 G · 8 C

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 F · 4 F · 5 NG

5 Vocabulary

1 assigned · 2 capture · 3 modest · 4 considerably · 5 gathered · 6 effective

6 Word forms

1 introduction · 2 difficulty · 3 inconclusive · 4 reliability · 5 unforeseen

7 Language focus

1 on · 2 to · 3 with · 4 of · 5 into