TEENS LESSON

Would You Choose a Later Start to School?



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	**officially**	☐	A	said what they had noticed
2	**arranged**	☐	B	go and get someone from a place
3	**reported**	☐	C	a plan of the times for lessons
4	**sorted**	☐	D	a good result
5	**timetable**	☐	E	in the way the rules say
6	**win**	☐	F	planned and organised
7	**collect**	☐	G	put into groups
8	**secondary school**	☐	H	a school for students aged about 11 to 18

3 Read

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

A Swiss school offered students a choice between an early start and a later one. Researchers asked what happened to their sleep.

1 At 6:45 on a dark winter morning, an extra hour in bed sounds almost too good to be true. But would you still want it if it meant a later finish in the afternoon?

2 Researchers in Switzerland wanted to know what happens when students are actually given a choice. At a secondary school in Gossau, classes used to begin at 7:20. Then the school introduced flexible hours. Students could arrive at 7:30 or wait until 8:30, when classes officially began, and some lessons were arranged at midday or in the afternoon.

3 Researchers from the University of Zurich asked students about their sleep and health before the change and again a year later. The study appeared in the Journal of Adolescent Health in February 2026. The students were about 14. Some students answered both surveys and others answered only one, so the results describe groups of students as well as individuals.

4 When students were allowed to choose, almost all of them did. In fact, 95% used the later option, and they started about 38 minutes later. Most woke up later but went to bed at about the same time, so they slept about 45 minutes more on school days, on average. They also reported fewer problems falling asleep, and fewer students had a low score for health-related quality of life.

5 The researchers also reported higher scores in maths and English. That sounds like a clear win, but a survey like this cannot prove that the later start caused every change. Students were not sorted into different timetables by chance, so other things that changed during the year could also play a part.

6 There are everyday questions that a sleep study cannot answer. A student who depends on a bus from a village has to follow the bus timetable. Someone with football training or a younger brother to collect may find a later finish harder than an early start. A flexible system works best when the school and families can plan around it.

7 So, if your school offered the choice for a month, which would you pick: an extra hour in the morning or an extra hour in the afternoon?

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. Before the change, the Gossau secondary school started lessons at 7:20. (T) (F) (NG)
2. Every student in the study answered both surveys. (T) (F) (NG)
3. On school days, the students slept roughly 45 minutes longer on average. (T) (F) (NG)
4. The study proves that a later start improves maths and English scores. (T) (F) (NG)
5. The researchers asked the students' parents about the change. (T) (F) (NG)

5 Vocabulary

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

average	caused	chance	depends	flexible	introduced	prove	scores

1. The school _____ a new rule this term: no phones in the corridors.
2. Whether we play outside _____ on the weather.
3. The team captain was picked by _____ : everyone's name went into a hat.
4. Nobody knows what _____ the fire alarm to go off during the exam.
5. Her maths _____ were much higher in the summer than in the winter.
6. Our coach is quite _____ : if you have an exam, you can miss training.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. By the time I got to school, the first lesson _____ . (START)
2. Next year, some lessons _____ to the afternoon. (MOVE)
3. If school started at nine, I _____ much better. (SLEEP)
4. I _____ for the bus for twenty minutes, and it still hasn't come. (WAIT)
5. Students _____ to use their phones during lessons. (NOT ALLOW)

7 Language focus: prepositions

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. These verbs and adjectives need a fixed preposition. Learn the whole pattern: rely on, lead to, struggle with.

at	for	from	into	on	to	with

1. Students who rely _____ the early bus can still arrive at 7:30.
2. Lack of sleep can lead _____ poor concentration in class.
3. Many students struggle _____ early mornings, especially in winter.
4. She is responsible _____ collecting her younger brother after school.
5. The teacher divided the class _____ four groups for the project.

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

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 T · 4 F · 5 NG

5 Vocabulary

1 introduced · 2 depends · 3 chance · 4 caused · 5 scores · 6 flexible

6 Verb forms

1 had started or had already started · 2 will be moved or are going to be moved · 3 would sleep or 'd sleep · 4 have been waiting or 've been waiting · 5 are not allowed or aren't allowed

7 Language focus

1 on · 2 to · 3 with · 4 for · 5 into