Le bac

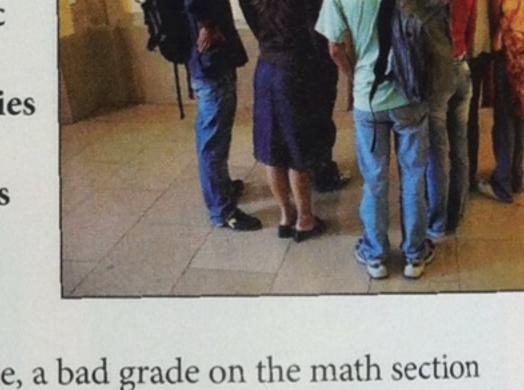


The three years of lycée culminate in a high-stakes exam called the

baccalauréat or bac. Students begin preparing for this exam by the end of seconde (10th grade), when they must decide the type of bac they will take. This

choice determines their coursework during the last two years of lycée; for example, a student who plans to take the bac S will study mainly physics, chemistry, and

math. Most students take le bac économique et sociale (ES), le bac littéraire (L), or le bac scientifique (S). Others, though, choose to follow a more technical path and take the bac sciences et technologies industrielles (STI), the bac sciences et technologies de la santé et du social (ST2S), or the bac sciences et techniques médico-sociales (SMS). There is even a bac technique for hotel management, and music/dance!



The bac has both oral and written sections, which are weighted differently according to the type of bac. This means that, for example, a bad grade on the math section would lower a student's grade significantly on a bac S but to a lesser degree on a bac L. In all cases the highest possible grade is 20/20. If a student's overall score on the bac is below 10/20 (the minimum passing grade) but above 8/20, he can take the rattrapage, or make-up exam. If the student fails again, then he can redoubler, or repeat the school year and take the bac again.

Students can pass the bac with: mention Très bien et félicitation du jury 18/20 - 20/20 mention Très bien 16/20 - 18/20

14/20 - 16/20 mention Assez bien 12/20 - 14/20

10/20 - 12/20

mention Bien

no special mention

Students usually go to find out their results with friends and classmates just a few days after they take the exam. This yearly ritual is full of emotion: it's common to see groups of students franticly looking for their results posted on bulletin boards at the lycée. Over 80% of students pass the bac every year, granting them access to France's higher education system.

Coup de main

In French, a superscript following a numeral tells you that it is an ordinal number It is the equivalent of a * after a numeral in English: 10° (dixième) = 10th.