

# 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** (10<sup>th</sup> 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:

18/20 - 20/20	mention Très bien et félicitation du jury
16/20 - 18/20	mention Très bien
14/20 - 16/20	mention Bien
12/20 - 14/20	mention Assez bien
10/20 - 12/20	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 frantically 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 <sup>e</sup> following a numeral tells you that it is an ordinal number. It is the equivalent of a <sup>th</sup> after a numeral in English: 10<sup>e</sup> (dixième) = 10<sup>th</sup>.