

2 Joe's podcast

Hi everyone.

Today I'll be telling you about the rules at our school.

First, for our British friends: We don't need to wear a school uniform, so we're allowed to come to school in our jeans and a T-shirt for example.

However, our clothes must be appropriate, which means we cannot just wear whatever we might fancy, like tank tops or very tight, revealing clothes. So it's not "anything goes". But I'm OK with that. The only thing I think they could be a bit more relaxed about is the wearing of caps and hats. I mean, what's so problematic about wearing a baseball cap in class? That doesn't stop you thinking, does it?

What really sucks though is that we aren't allowed to make phone calls on the corridors or in the hall. I mean I get it that you shouldn't phone anyone or check your messages during class, but after class or during recess ... Uh, hold on: just for our British listeners: "recess" is the word we use in America for "break" – just in case you didn't know. So ... recess, I mean, breaks: we're only allowed to eat and use our phones in the cafeteria. In fact, we're not even allowed to take food into the classroom at all. So no quick snacks in between lessons.

Now, you folks might've wondered why American students always carry their books when they hop on to the next class. Well, I suppose it's quite typical of an American high school that we have to put our school bags and all the other stuff into our lockers, as we're only allowed to bring the books we need for the lesson plus our pencil cases to the classroom. Furthermore, if you want to go to the restroom (that's the American word for "toilet"), you must have a so-called bathroom pass. You mustn't leave the classroom without one. If you're caught without one, you're in deep trouble. "Now why is that?", I hear you ask. Well, it's because high schools in America are so much bigger than in Britain. Hence teachers and other staff don't know all the students. That's why students have to prove that they're allowed to leave the classroom. Otherwise, they could just play truant, you know, skip a lesson – or do something really silly. Also, the teachers are responsible for their students. So it's good for them to have some written documentation when students leave the classroom. As you can see, the rules are quite strict, but getting a toilet or bathroom pass isn't really a problem because teachers will give you one (most of the time). So you're always allowed to leave the classroom when you need to.

Another very American thing we do is that every day, before the start of the first lesson, everybody has to stand up for the Pledge of Allegiance, even the teachers. I remember a German exchange student who was with us for a year, and he looked really puzzled when we got up and did the pledge. He also found it a bit strange that there was an American flag in every classroom. But that's how it is here.

That brings me to another thing that Elias, the German guy, found strange. It's the fact that at our school, and most schools in America, a class doesn't have a classroom of their own. They have to move for every single lesson because it's the teachers who are allowed to have their own rooms. So the class must come to the teacher, and not the other way round, as in many schools in Germany apparently. Actually, I think it would be a lot nicer if we were allowed to have our own classroom. Then we wouldn't have to move around so much.

OK then, that's it for today. Why don't you let me know what school is like where you live?