

# Your High School Classes Will Open the Doors to College



Because you are planning to go to college, it's important that you take the right classes in high school. That means that, beginning in ninth grade, the majority of your classes should be ones that will prepare you for admission to and, perhaps even more importantly, success in college. Most admission officers will tell you that the first thing they look at is your choice of classes, even before they look at grades. When it comes time to apply to college, you want to make sure that you meet the admission criteria for ALL colleges in which you are interested. Always remember that it is much better to be "over prepared" than "under prepared."

**Here's what you need by the end of your senior year in order to meet the admission expectations at a majority of colleges:**

<p><b>4 full years of English classes.</b> This includes courses in which you study writing and courses in which you read literature. Colleges know that you need to be able to write well in nearly every career. You need to be able to read and analyze, and you need to develop strong communication skills! Highly selective schools want to</p>	<p><b>4 full years of math classes.</b> Students who take math in each year of high school are far more successful in college than students taking only three years. Math is the tool that you will use for many other classes, especially those in science. Your math classes should include at least four of the following six classes, taken in this order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pre-algebra</li><li>• Algebra</li></ul>
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<p>see that students are taking the most rigorous courses. Advanced Placement classes are preferred over dual enrollment classes at some universities. Students wishing to apply to top universities should be taking strong academic challenging core academic classes throughout the four years in high school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geometry</li> <li>• Algebra II and/or Trigonometry</li> <li>• Precalculus</li> <li>• Calculus* (many universities require Calculus for admissions including some of the public state universities)</li> </ul> <p>Never “skip” a year of math in high school because you will lose your momentum. If you do not take math in your senior year, you will find that the math classes required in college will be very difficult! Highly selective schools want to see that students have taken calculus.</p>
<p><b>3-4 years of laboratory science classes.</b></p> <p>You will have the strongest background if you have taken at least one year each of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biology</li> <li>• Chemistry</li> <li>• Physics</li> </ul> <p>Other sciences are considered “the soft sciences” and are great electives, but should not take the place of biology, chemistry and physics if the student wants to be more competitive in the application process</p>	<p><b>3 years, at a minimum, of social sciences.</b> Most college freshmen studied World History and US History in high school. Other social science options include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History/Government/Economics</li> <li>• Sociology</li> <li>• Geography</li> <li>• Psychology</li> </ul>
<p><b>2-4 years of foreign language.</b></p> <p>More and more colleges are requiring a minimum of 2 years of language study while in high school, as an admission criterion. Because many colleges require students to study a second language, it is important that you expose yourself to the study of languages while in high school. Highly selective schools will require 3 or 4 years of a foreign language</p>	<p>A small number of colleges require one year of <b>visual or performing arts</b> prior to admission. Participation in these classes throughout high school can help you develop a “special talent” that will make you a highly qualified applicant. (true at UC Berkeley)</p>

Most colleges require students to meet certain college prep curriculum standards, but just meeting the minimum is not necessarily the best way to prepare for college. Strong preparation means going beyond the minimum—allowing you to start your college career in college-level courses, not remedial courses designed to help you catch up or review high school material—for NO CREDIT!

It is important to remember that many colleges will recalculate the GPA (Grade Point Average) based on the core classes in the five academic areas.

Highly selective colleges may require SAT Subject Tests. Make sure you take the subject tests that are required during the spring of 11<sup>th</sup> grade or early fall of senior year.

Most colleges will use SAT/ACT for admissions. Students should take both the SAT and ACT. Many schools will use the highest scores and super score for admissions.



When it comes to picking your courses, you will want to meet with a counselor to plan a strong high school program that will open doors to any college you wish to attend.

- **Plan classes that will prepare you well for college admission and success.** Your counselor will know which high school classes are required for college admission.
- **Review how you are doing in your classes and suggest areas that need improvement.** If you need to do some catching up, your counselor can suggest ways to do that.
- **Find special programs that may help you prepare for college,** beyond your school's walls. These might include weekend or summer programs on college

campuses (often free to students whose parents didn't go to college), internships, or community college classes open to high school students. Your counselor will know about local college fairs, opportunities to visit college campuses, and even overnight visits to colleges that may be offered.

- **Familiarize yourself with everything you need to know about taking recommended and/or required college admission tests.** Counselors know how and when to register for tests. They can even help with fee waivers if your family can't afford to pay for tests.
- **Figure out how to pay for college** by applying for financial aid from colleges and scholarship agencies.

Meet with your family to help them understand how the college admission and financial aid process works!

Although most of the work you will do with your high school counselor and CAP advisor about college planning will take place during your junior and senior years, it is never too early to visit with your counselor. This is the time to start helping your counselor get to know you and your college dreams.

The information was taken from the NACAC (National Association for College Admissions Counseling) website