

High School Classes Colleges Look For

Source: www.collegeboard.com

If you're in high school and you're thinking about college — and you should be — you should know that the courses you take now matter. That's because college admission officers want to see a solid foundation of learning that you can build on in college.

To create that foundation, take at least five solid academic classes every semester. Start with the basics, and then move on to challenging yourself in advanced courses. The courses listed below should prepare you for success in college and beyond.

English (Language Arts)

Take English every year. Traditional courses, such as American and English literature, help improve your writing skills, reading comprehension and vocabulary.

Math

Algebra and geometry help you succeed on college entrance exams and in college math classes. Take them early, so you'll have time for advanced science and math, which will help show colleges you're ready for higher-level work.

Most colleges want students with three years of high school math. The more competitive colleges prefer four years. Take some combination of the following:

- Algebra I
- Algebra II
- Geometry
- Trigonometry
- Calculus

Take at least five solid academic classes every semester.

Science

Science teaches you how to think analytically and how to apply theories to reality. Colleges want to see that you've taken at least three years of laboratory science classes. A good combination includes a year of each of the following:

- Biology
- Chemistry or physics
- Earth/space science

Schools that are more competitive expect four years of lab science courses, which you may be able to get by taking advanced classes in these same areas.

Social Studies

Improve your understanding of local and world events by studying the cultures and history that helped shape them. Here is a suggested high school course plan:

- U.S. history (a full year)
- U.S. government (half a year)
- World history or geography (half a year)
- An extra half-year in the above or other areas

Foreign Languages

Solid foreign language study shows that you're willing to stretch beyond the basics. Many colleges require at least two years of study in the same foreign language, and some prefer more.

The Arts

Research indicates that students who participate in the arts often do better in school and on standardized tests. The arts help you recognize patterns, learn to notice differences and similarities, and exercise your mind in unique ways.

Many colleges require or recommend one or two semesters in the arts. Good choices include studio art, dance, music and drama.

Challenging Course Work

To ready yourself for college-level work, enroll in [challenging high school courses](#), such as honors classes, AP courses or IB-program courses. You may even be able to take college courses at your high school or a local college.

More Help with Choosing Courses

Use [College Search](#) to look up a specific college's academic requirements to be sure you're on track to attend the college of your choice. You can also meet with a school counselor or teacher if you have questions about choosing classes and staying on track for college.