

Earning College Credit in High School

[+] Pros

- + You can earn college credit or be placed in higher level courses by earning a qualifying score on the AP exam.
- + You can earn college credit through qualifying IB exam scores.
- + College credit earned or advanced placement saves money on tuition for unnecessary classes.
- + Earning college credit in high school shows college admissions departments your willingness to take challenging courses, which will improve your chances of being admitted.
- + Studying college-level coursework prepares high school students for the rigor of college material.
- + Students will gain good study habits by experiencing college-level coursework.
- + Tech Prep is a valuable school-to-work transition strategy, which helps students make the connection between school and career.

There are several benefits to earning college credit in high school. You will save time by completing college-level courses prior to attending college. You will also save money by earning college credit for free or at a greatly reduced cost before you attend college full time. In addition, colleges care about the courses you take in high school. Your course decisions can demonstrate to colleges that you are ready for the rigor of college-level coursework. Below are several options for earning college credit in high school.

Some high schools offer dual enrollment and technical preparation programs that allow students to take college courses and earn credit that can be applied not only toward high school graduation requirements but also toward a certificate or degree.

Another option is to enroll in college-level courses taught in high school. Perhaps the most common programs are Advanced Placement (AP) and the International Baccalaureate® (IB) Diploma Programme. Below is information about these programs—check with your high school for program details and the availability of courses in your area.

Advanced Placement

There are 40 AP courses and exams offered—a complete list of courses can be found at <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses>. Please note that not all subjects are available in every high school that offers AP courses. You will need to check with the office that administers AP courses at your school for a list of available subjects and enrollment information. Most AP courses are also available online if an AP course you are interested in is not offered at your high school. (A fee may be required.)

Once enrolled in AP courses, students should sign up for the exam that will be administered at the end of the course. If the AP subject exam you wish to take is not offered as a course at your high school, talk to the office responsible for AP coursework to look into other options.

AP exams are scored on a scale of one to five. Many U.S. colleges and universities grant credit and/or advanced placement for scores of three and above. Check with the college or university you plan to attend to determine the exam score necessary to gain college credit or advanced placement for each AP course. Each college or university sets its own standard for how AP exam scores are treated.

IB Diploma Programme

The IB Diploma Programme is an academically challenging educational programme for students aged 16 to 19. The programme is available at more than 5,700 schools in 160 countries and is known for its unique academic rigor and emphasis on students' personal development.

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Students enrolled in the IB Diploma Programme study six subject groups: language and literature studies, language acquisition, individuals and societies, sciences, mathematics and the arts. The Diploma Programme also includes three core requirements:

- Theory of knowledge, in which students reflect on the nature of knowledge and on how we know what we claim to know.
- The extended essay, in which students complete an independent, self-directed piece of research resulting in a 4,000-word paper.
- Creativity, activity, service, in which students complete a project related to those three concepts.

Students take written exams at the end of the Diploma Programme, and a diploma is awarded to students who earn at least 24 points for all coursework completed. For more information about the IB Diploma Programme, visit www.ibo.org.

Dual Enrollment Programs

Dual enrollment, also known as concurrent enrollment or early college, allows students to take college-level classes for college credit while continuing to participate in regular high school activities. Classes are often offered at high schools or nearby community colleges.

Typically there is no cost for students to participate in these college courses.

Not every high school participates; contact your high school counselor for more information.

Technical Preparation (Tech Prep) Programs

Tech Prep is a multiyear program (two or more years in high school and two in an occupational/technical program at a community college or career and technical education institution) designed to prepare students for technical occupations. This type of program

expands education and employment opportunities by preparing students for careers in health care, business, industry, labor and government.

A complete Tech Prep program includes the following:

- A comprehensive career development plan
- Courses designed for a specific career that integrate academic and occupational preparation
- A learning environment that emphasizes math, communications, science and technology
- A smooth transition from high school to college or employment

For more information, visit <https://ed.gov/about/ed-offices/octae/tech-prep-education>.

College Admissions

High school students who are planning to continue their education at a college or career and technical education institution can use these opportunities to stand out in the admissions process. The course material is challenging and shows your commitment to academics. To ensure that any college-level programs you participate in during high school will be accepted by the college you plan to attend, work with that school's admissions office early in the college-planning process.

Need More Information?

The College Place is here to help you with free college-planning resources and personal advice. Visit our website at www.ecmc.org/TCP.