

## Create a solid academic portfolio

Your course schedule may seem like a random selection of classes to you, but college admissions officers see it as the blueprint of your high school education. They're looking for a solid foundation of learning that you can build on in college.

Take at least five solid academic classes every semester. The following subjects and classes are standard fare for success in high school and beyond, whether you plan to attend a four-year, two-year, or technical school.

<p><b>English (Language Arts)</b></p> <p>Take English every year. Traditional courses such as American and English literature help you improve your writing skills, reading comprehension, and vocabulary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literature</li> <li>• Writing/composition and/or speech</li> </ul> <p><b>Math</b></p> <p>To succeed on college entrance exams, in college math classes, and in most careers, you need algebra and geometry. Take them early on, and you'll be able to enroll in advanced science and math in high school—and you'll show colleges you're ready for higher-level work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Algebra I</li> <li>• Geometry</li> <li>• Algebra II</li> <li>• Trigonometry and/or calculus</li> </ul> <p><b>Science</b></p> <p>Science teaches you to think analytically and to apply theories to observations of the natural world. Laboratory classes let you test what you've learned through hands-on work. Six semesters are recommended.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biology</li> <li>• Chemistry and/or physics</li> <li>• Earth/space sciences, advanced biology, advanced chemistry, or physics</li> </ul>	<p><b>Social Studies</b></p> <p>Understand local and world events that are happening now by studying the culture and history that has shaped them. Social sciences round out your core curriculum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two semesters of U.S. history</li> <li>• One semester of U.S. government</li> <li>• One semester of economics</li> <li>• One semester of world history or geography</li> <li>• One additional semester of these or other areas</li> </ul> <p><b>Foreign Languages</b></p> <p>Solid foreign language study shows colleges you're willing to stretch beyond the basics. Many colleges require at least two years of foreign language study, and some prefer more.</p> <p><b>The Arts</b></p> <p>Research indicates that students who participate in the arts often do better in school and on standardized tests. The arts help you recognize patterns, discern differences and similarities, and exercise your mind in unique ways, often outside of a traditional classroom setting.</p> <p><b>Computer Courses</b></p> <p>More and more college courses and jobs require at least a basic knowledge of computers. Computer skills also can help you do research and schoolwork better and faster.</p>
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**Source:** collegeboard.com

### Handout 2A

## THREE INTEREST INVENTORIES

**The Strong Interest Inventory** compares a student's interests with those of individuals in many occupations and provides an indication of which careers might suit the student. Occupations are grouped into six themes, based on the work of John Holland: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. The Strong Profile, High School Edition, provides information on postsecondary options; offers ideas for work-study/volunteer and summer jobs; describes work environments that may appeal to the student's interests; lists the student's personal characteristics; and includes steps the student can take to identify and evaluate career and educational options. A Memo to Parents and Guardians explains the use of the Strong Inventory and provides tips to help parents assist students in the career exploration process.

The inventory is designed to be administered to high school students over 14 years of age; it contains 317 items and takes approximately 35 to 40 minutes to complete. It is written at an eighth-grade reading level.

For more information, go to [www.cpp.com](http://www.cpp.com).

**The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator** is a personality assessment designed to provide feedback about an individual's patterns of behavior. The MBTI can be helpful for undecided students in several ways. It can show how the individual makes decisions, organizes his or her life, and acquires information. The MBTI can also demonstrate where the individual focuses his or her attention (on the outer world of people and things or the inner world of ideas), and which types of career environments may be best suited to his or her personality. Myers-Briggs can help students understand their learning styles and make initial choices about majors and careers.

There are various versions of this assessment, among them the MBTI Self-Scorable Form M, which is written at a seventh-grade reading level and appropriate for students 14 and older. That assessment takes 15 to 20 minutes.

For more information, go to [www.cpp.com](http://www.cpp.com).

**ORA Personality Profiler** unites different models for describing personality—psychological type, temperament, trait, and the five-factor model of personality—into a comprehensive and research-validated survey. This in-depth assessment of personality is included in MyRoad™, a comprehensive Web-based guidance product. There is one set of questions for students 13 to 15 and another for students 16 and older. Completion of the questions takes less than an hour and yields a type description, detailed results indicating the degree of preference expressed for each global scale (as well as facet scale results), and two lists, one of suggested majors based upon the type description, and one of suggested careers.

For more information about the student or adult versions of the Personality Profiler, go to [www.myroad.com](http://www.myroad.com).

## FAQs about the Advanced Placement Program® (AP®)

More than 3,000 U.S. colleges award placement or credit or both for a qualifying grade on an AP® Exam.

### **What's the difference between credit and placement?**

Some colleges award credit for qualifying AP Exam grades. This means that you actually earn points toward your college degree. Others award advanced placement. This means that when you're in college, you can skip introductory courses, enter higher-level classes, and/or fulfill general education requirements.

### **Can I earn college credit or placement just by taking the AP course?**

Colleges and universities give credit or placement only for qualifying AP Exam grades, not AP course grades. Without a corresponding AP Exam grade, they can't verify that the AP courses you take are true college-level courses.

### **What can I do with college credit or placement?**

College credit or placement can allow you to move into upper-level courses sooner, pursue a double major or a combined bachelor's/master's degree program, gain time to study and travel abroad, and complete your undergraduate degree in fewer than four years.

You can receive credit for equivalent courses worth thousands of dollars at colleges and universities.

### **Why should I take the AP Exam if I'm not looking to earn credit or placement?**

- The AP Exams provide colleges and universities with additional information about your ability to succeed in college-level study.
- Some scholarship awards consider AP Exam grades.
- Many colleges use AP Exam grades to place students into honors classes.
- The AP Exams give you a clear understanding of what you need to succeed on a college exam.

**Source:** The Value of AP Courses and Exams. © 2004 The College Board.

### **Handout 2B**

## SAMPLE AP POLICY AT A LARGE UNIVERSITY

Area	AP Exam	Qualifying grade(s)	Credit awarded for these university courses	Credit hours
English	Composition and Literature	3, 4	ENGL 101	3
		5	ENGL 101, 102	6
	Language and Composition	3, 4	ENGL 101	3
		5	ENGL 101, 102	6
	Both tests	3, 4 on each	ENGL 101, 102	6
History	U.S. History	3, 4, 5	HIST 101,102	6
	European History	3, 4, 5	HIST 173	3
Humanities	Music Theory	3, 4, 5	MUSC 205, 206	6
	Art History	3, 4, 5	AAH 210	3
	Studio Drawing	3, 4, 5	ART 210	3
	General Studio	3, 4, 5	ART 103	3
Languages	French Language	3, 4, 5	FR 101, 102	8
		3	FR 101, 102	8
		4	FR 101, 102, 201	11
		5	FR 101, 102, 201, 202	14
	Spanish Language	3, 4, 5	SPAN 101, 102	8
		3	SPAN 101, 102	8
	Spanish Literature	4	SPAN 101, 102, 201	11
		5	SPAN 101, 102, 201, 202	14
Math	Calculus AB	3, 4, 5	MTHSC 106	4
		3, 4, 5	MTHSC 106, 108	8
	Statistics	3, 4	MTHSC 203	3
		5	MTHSC 101, 203	6
Psychology	Psychology	3, 4, 5	PSYCH 201	3
Science	Biology	3	BIOL 103, 104	8
		4, 5	BIOL 110, 111	10
	Chemistry	3, 4, 5	CH 101 and 102 or 112	8
		3, 4, 5	CPSC 101	4
		3, 4 <sup>1</sup>	CPSC 101	4
		5	CPSC 101, 102	8
	Environmental Science	3, 4, 5	EN SC 200	3
	Physics B <sup>2</sup>	3, 4, 5	PHYS 207, 208	8
	Physics C, Mechanics	3, 4, 5	PHYS 122, 124	4
Physics C, E, & M	3, 4, 5	PHYS 221, 223	4	

1. Students earning a grade of 4 on Computer Science AB may request a personal interview with a departmental representative to determine whether credit will be given for CPSC 102.

2. Students enrolling in curricula requiring calculus-based physics (PHYS 122, 221, 222, 223, 224) but who earn a grade of 5 on Physics B will be asked to meet with a departmental representative for further evaluation and placement counseling.

## Thinking about college: A checklist for parents of middle schoolers

- Help your child start planning for college now. By beginning academic and financial planning for college while your child is still in middle school, you help ensure your child's success after high school graduation.
- Help your child explore his or her interests and possible careers. Understand that your child is likely to change his or her mind as you explore opportunities and options. By continuing to support your child in education and career decisions, you help your child gain confidence and achieve goals.
- Speak to your child's school counselor to learn about important courses and how your child can choose courses and qualify for advanced placement. Make sure your child meets the academic requirements for high school graduation and admission to college.
- Stay in touch with your child's teachers throughout middle school and high school, not only on parent conference dates but also on open school nights. Stay informed of your child's academic progress, and ensure that your child has tutoring or help with test preparation and other skills, if needed.
- Help your child explore colleges by visiting their Web sites or by scheduling visits with colleges of interest. Use the *College Board College Handbook* to gain information about different colleges and what they require.
- Begin to plan financially for college as early as possible. Save as much as you can. Learn about your state's 529 College Savings Plan.
- Remember to rely on your school counselor for information, and use [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com) to learn more about how you can steer your child toward a successful future.
- It's important to note that your personal background will not affect your child's admission to college.

**Source:** CollegeEd®, 3rd Edition, *The College Board*

## A planning list for parents of ninth- and tenth-graders

It may seem early to start thinking about getting your child ready for college, but it really isn't—important groundwork should take place in ninth and tenth grade. Here's a list to help you make sure your child is on the right track:

### Grade 9

- 1. Create a four-year high school plan.** Once your child is settled into ninth grade, introduce the idea of preparing an overall plan for high school that relates to his or her goals.
  - Make sure you and your child know what high school courses are required by colleges, and that your child's ninth-grade courses are on the right track.
  - Map out when these courses should be taken.
  - Familiarize yourself with the various levels of courses offered by your child's school.
- 2. Start your child thinking about careers.** Encourage your child to develop a tentative career goal. Of course it will change—often—but it's the thought process that counts.
  - Help your child to identify interests—likes and dislikes—not just in academics but in all areas. This will help your child focus on goals.
  - Encourage your child to discuss career options with others, such as the school counselor, teachers, recent college graduates who are working, professionals in the community, etc.
- 3. Suggest extracurricular activities.** Encourage your child to actively take part in a sport, school club, music or drama group, or community volunteer activity.
  - Remember that colleges would rather see real involvement in one activity than a loose connection to several activities.
  - If your child may want to play sports in college, research the National College Athletic Association eligibility requirements. The NCAA requires completion of certain core courses; you can find the specifics at [www.ncaaclearinghouse.net](http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net).
- 4. Meet with the school counselor.** The school counselor knows how to help your child get the most out of high school. Make sure your child has an opportunity during the school year to discuss post-high school plans with the school counselor.
  - You should participate in this meeting, too.
- 5. Save for college.** It's still not too late to start a college savings plan, if you haven't already. Every little bit helps!
  - Investigate state financial aid programs and 529 plans.
- 6. Obtain a social security number for your child if you don't already have one.** This is often required for applications, testing, scholarships, and other opportunities.

# A planning list for parents of ninth- and tenth-graders (page 2)

## Grade 10

1. **Meet with the school counselor—again.** Make sure your child meets with his or her school counselor to ensure that he or she is enrolled in college-preparatory courses.
  - Check to see that your child is taking any prerequisites to advanced-level junior- and senior-year courses.
2. **Ask if the PSAT/NMSQT® is offered to tenth-graders.** While this test is usually taken in the eleventh grade, it is also often offered in the tenth. That's because it provides invaluable feedback on the Student Score Report; tenth-graders can then work on any disclosed academic weaknesses while there is still ample time to improve them.
3. **Is your child interested in attending a U.S. military academy?** If so, he or she should request a precandidate questionnaire and complete it.
4. **Attend college and career fairs.** These often take place in the fall, at your school, or in your area.
5. **Support your child's participation in a school activity or volunteer effort.** Extracurricular activities help students develop time-management skills and enrich the school experience.
6. **Tour college campuses.** If possible, take advantage of vacation or other family travel opportunities to visit colleges and see what they're like.
  - Even if there is no interest in attending the college you are visiting, it will help your child learn what to look for in a college.

**Source:** *The College Board*