

Introduction to AP Courses:

AP (Advanced Placement) courses are college-level classes designed by the College Board for high school students who want an academic challenge and to earn college credits. While some colleges and universities offer college credit for these courses if students earn a qualifying score on the AP Exam (usually a 4 or 5), some do not.

AP classes are known for being fast-paced and rigorous, covering complex topics in greater depth than regular and honors high school courses. Instead of focusing mainly on memorization and surface-level understanding, AP exams emphasize critical thinking and application of concepts.

Many students say that taking AP classes helped them develop and improve their study habits and test-taking strategies for college success.

Pros:

- Many colleges **give you credit** or let you **skip intro-level classes** if you score a 4 or 5 on the AP exam, allowing you to **graduate faster** and **save on tuition**
- Boosts **college applications**: Increases your **weighted GPA**, demonstrates your **academic abilities**, & often **preferred by admission officers**
- **Prepares** you for the rigor and structure of **college courses**

Cons:

- **Heavier workload** and **stress**, which can lead to **burnout**
- Can **lower** your **GPA** (especially unweighted) if you do poorly in the class
- AP exams cost around **\$60-\$100** dollars **each**
- **Not all colleges** give **credit** for AP courses, especially those **outside the U.S.**

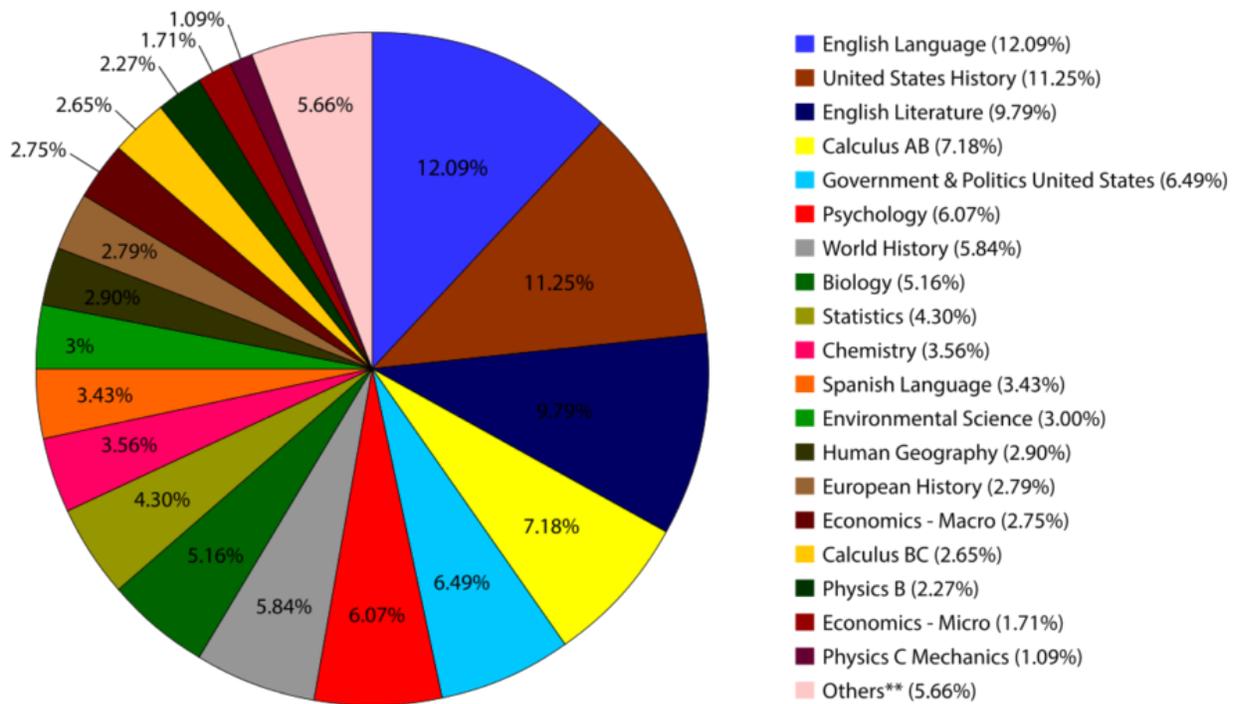
AP Exams: What to Expect?

- AP Exam season **begins in May** and lasts around 2 weeks.
 - There are usually 2 AP exams scheduled each day: 1 in the **morning**, 1 in the **afternoon**
- All AP exams consist of a **Free-Response (Frq)** and **Multiple-Choice (MCQ)** section
- FRQs are **graded using a rubric**, meaning you will only **receive points** if you mention **specific ideas**
- There are **12 possible task verbs** that can appear on the **FRQ** (e.g., define, describe, explain, etc.)
- The **MCQ and FRQ** sections are **weighted differently** depending on the subject

- AP exams can **last** about **1 hr and 30 minutes** to **3 hrs and 15 minutes** depending on the subject
 - AP Physics C: Mechanics has one of the shortest exams, while AP English Literature and Composition has one of the longest
- While AP exams were **traditionally on paper**, College Board has been transitioning many of them to **digital formats**
- AP exams are **graded on a curve**, so you can earn a 5 on the exam with a score as low as 65% (AP Calculus AB)
- A score of **3 or higher** on the exam is a **passing a grade**, but it's recommended to not submit a score of 3 or lower to colleges

AP SCORE	US GRADE	CORRESPONDING SCORE BOUNDARIES (%)
5	A: Excellent	90-100%
4	B: Good	80-90%
3	C: Average / Fair	70-80%
2	D: Poor (but passing)	60-70%
1	F: Failure	Lower than 60%

Popular AP Exams:



AP Exams (some) From Highest to Lowest Pass Rates:

- AP Chinese Language and Culture
- AP Japanese Language and Culture
- AP Calculus BC
- AP Physics C: Mechanics
- AP Spanish Language and Culture
- AP Art and Design
- AP Computer Science A
- AP Psychology
- AP Statistics
- AP U.S. Government and Politics
- AP Literature and Composition
- AP Language and Composition
- AP United States History
- AP Environmental Science
- AP Human Geography
- AP Environmental Science

How Many AP Courses Do Colleges Look For?

There is **no one answer to this!** Many people recommend taking as many AP classes as possible, but it's important to remember **colleges value balance**—they look at **both your academic rigor and extracurricular involvement**.

Taking too many APs can...

- Make it harder to manage your extracurricular activities (bad!)
- Make it difficult to score well on all your AP exams (colleges care more about your **exam grade** than your **grade for the class**)

It's also important to remember that colleges judge your **academic rigor** in the **context of your school**. If your school offers 4 APs and you take all 4→ that's considered very rigorous. However, if your school offers 15 and you take 4→ that's considered *moderately* rigorous.

Not taking the AP Exam after completing the course may lead colleges to assume you scored poorly (such as a 1 or 2). However, there is an exception if it's common at your school for students not to take AP exams — for example, due to exam costs or the school not offering in-school testing.

Best Resources for AP Classes:

- **UC Scout**—offers unit-by-unit lectures for over 20 AP courses. It is not free and requires a fee for enrollment. The courses are comprehensive and detailed, covering all the material needed to prepare for AP exams.
- **Ultimate Review Packet**—great for reviewing topics before tests, quizzes, and the AP exam. Fast-paced and not ideal for those self-learning the topic. Also requires a fee. Includes quizzes and study guides.
- **YouTube**—Great for reviewing topics, with many videos that cover each topic in detail. However, it can be difficult to know if you've fully learned all the necessary information, and it's not ideal for complete self-learners due to limited feedback and interaction.