

AP (Advanced Placement) classes are college-level courses offered in high school, authorized by the College Board. They allow students to master rigorous material, often boosting weighted GPAs, improving college admissions, and earning college credit through end-of-year exams (scored 1-5). Over 30 subjects are offered across AP Capstone, arts, English, history, math, sciences, and world languages.

Key Aspects of AP Classes

- **College Credit:** A score of 3 or higher on AP exams often translates to college credit or advanced standing at many universities. Some Colleges require scores of 4 or 5.
- **Admissions Edge:** Taking APs demonstrates academic rigor, showing colleges you are prepared for higher-level work. These courses focus on critical thinking, scholarly writing, and time management.
- **Weighted GPA:** Because of their difficulty, AP classes are often weighted on a 5.0 scale, offering a slight boost to GPA.*

* Please note: UC's and CSU's only award GPA bumps in the college calculated GPA for 4 courses total of all completed Honors and AP classes.. You may check which courses are awarded a bump by visiting the UC A-G Portal and looking for the gold stars. Additional GPA bumps will apply to RCHS GPA only. Most Colleges do not include GPA bumps for courses taken in the 9th grade.

- **Cost Savings:** Earning credit in high school can reduce tuition costs and allow students to skip introductory college courses.

Important Considerations

- **Workload:** AP courses require a significant time commitment, strong study skills, and independence.
- **Timing:** Most students take APs during sophomore, junior, and senior years, with junior year being the most critical for demonstrating rigor.
- **Exams:** The mandatory final exams take place in May. While grades in AP Courses are weighted, they are also arbitrary to the extent that passing the AP Exam demonstrates mastery of material and therefore holds more weight in college acceptance decisions.
- **Balance:** Experts recommend choosing APs in subjects you enjoy rather than "padding" your transcript with too many, which can lead to burnout. Most competitive colleges recommend students take and pass 3 AP Exams; including one English, one Math, and one of the students choice based on area of interest.

How many AP classes should I take?

There is no "right" number when it comes to AP classes. It's about finding the right balance between aligning with your longer-term educational goals, challenging yourself, and still making sure you have time to do all the other things you need and want to do.

Be realistic about what you're capable of, and don't be afraid to push yourself. If you feel confident you can manage 3 AP courses in a year, great! If you know one AP course each year is more realistic for you, that's also great! If you are applying to highly-selective colleges (Ivy League), taking more AP courses will generally help your application. Colleges do want to see that you're taking the opportunity to enroll in these advanced courses if your school offers them, but they'll also take notice if you've overenrolled in AP classes and, as a result, your grades start to fall or you don't do well on the AP exams.