



COURSE SELECTION

Key Strategies and Guidelines
to Keep in Mind

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Your friends are talking away about which AP, IB, or A-Level courses they plan to take and how their dream school requires certain classes, and you have no idea how they know these things. Choosing your high school courses can feel like an overwhelming ordeal. At first glance, all the options, course names, and new lingo can be very confusing. When it comes to advanced course selection for high school, there are a lot of factors to consider.

To help you navigate through the choices, we have outlined the general rules of course selection, what to do before you choose your advanced courses, as well as a more in-depth look at selecting the AP, IB, and A-Level courses that could be right for you.

GENERAL RULES FOR COURSE SELECTION

A good place to start is thinking about what a typical course load looks like at your high school. In the college admissions process, you will be compared to other students from your school, so it is important to think about your course selection in that context. Your high school college counselor will detail the rigor of your course load in their letter of recommendation. Before you choose classes, talk to your counselor so that you understand the courses students at your school usually take. Ask which ones are considered the most challenging, and think about how you can select your courses to go above and beyond, separating yourself from the rest of the pack.

Alongside considering what students typically choose to study at your school, remember the following rules when you sit down to pick your courses.

- **Take Core Classes All Four Years** - Most of the top colleges want you to take core classes throughout all four years of high school. The core classes are English, math, science, social science and a foreign language. Colleges want students who have a holistic grasp on academics each year. Admissions officers value this consistency, as they want to admit students who not only have expertise in their subject of interest, but who also have considerable knowledge of core fields. Some colleges have a set list of courses that the students they admit must have taken. For example, the University of California schools have [15 required courses](#) that applicants must take to be considered for application. By excelling at core courses and maintaining a balance in your learning, you keep your options open for future prospects and gain a solid education.

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- **Well-Rounded Academics vs. Specialization** - While maintaining the core academic areas, you are also encouraged to have a specific interest or passion, and you should definitely take AP classes and pursue extracurriculars in that area. Just don't put all your eggs in one basket! Maintain a balance of upper level courses. Colleges want you to have a grasp of both STEM and humanities. Taking AP or IB courses in different areas conveys a mastery of core subjects at a higher level and looks great on your college applications.
 - **Make the Most of Elective Slots** - Take advantage of the elective slots in your schedule, instead of just using them for study hall time. Colleges appreciate seeing that you have maximized your course load. You can choose a traditional academic course, such as statistics or human physiology, and expand your knowledge in those areas. If you're more of a creative person, take an art class or creative writing course. Whatever you choose, make the most out of your school's offerings based on your interests and strengths.
 - **Requirements by State and Schools** - Many states and schools have their own requirements for graduation. For example, Florida requires a course in performance art, speech, or debate, while Minnesota requires an online course or learning experience. You might be worried that these could interfere with what you plan to select in school. Look into alternative ways to fulfil these and other requirements. Sometimes you don't have to use up valuable spaces in your school course load for them. Investigate if you can get the credits online or at a local college over the summer. Make sure you know exactly what these requirements are before it's too late!
 - **Select Courses Based on Teachers** - Letters of recommendation from your teachers make up an important component of your college applications. Choose classes where you click with the teachers and continue to build these relationships. The better they know your strengths and goals, the more detailed their letter. If your teachers don't know you very well, they won't have much to say about you. So don't forget to consider teachers who know you best in the classroom (or whom you want to get to know better!) when thinking about which classes you will take.
 - **Consider Your Performance** - If you're excelling in honors classes, it's time to look into more advanced options to boost your college applications. If your grades need improvement, it's time to figure out how to make your schedule more manageable. Multiple C's or all B's on your transcript doesn't reflect well on you, so if you need to change something in your time management skills, start keeping a schedule, drop a club or two do so. It's important to find a balance between a rigorous course load and also performing well in them!
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WEIGHTED COURSES AND GPA

Knowing how grading works at your school is key to strategically planning how you approach each course. You may have heard about weighted GPA vs. unweighted GPA. Unweighted GPA is usually measured on a 4.0 scale, and doesn't take difficulty of courses into account. An A in your IB, honors, and AP classes could all equate to an unweighted 4.0 GPA. But, if your school follows a weighted GPA scoring system, succeeding in more difficult courses such as AP and IB is more highly regarded. Usually your weighted GPA is measured on a 5.0 scale. An A in an AP class could translate to a 5.0, while an A in a less-challenging course could only equate to a weighted GPA of 4.0. Advanced courses could thus lead to a higher weighted GPA.

WHAT TO DO BEFORE YOU CHOOSE AP/IB COURSES

At most schools, junior and senior years constitute the key time to take AP and IB classes. You definitely want to be up for the challenge by the time the 11th grade rolls around. Take advantage of freshman and sophomore year classes to ensure that you're ready for these rigorous courses. Know the prerequisites for your IB and AP classes beforehand in order to prepare for the tougher classes. If you want to take IB Literature, for instance, you should take lit courses in 9th and 10th grade to prepare. If you want to enroll in AP Calculus, you can't just cruise through Pre-Algebra in freshman year. Take the appropriate preparatory classes you need.

You might also wonder about the difference between honors classes and AP/IB courses. Honors classes are challenging courses as well, but you should take AP, IB or A-Level classes to have a more competitive application and show admissions officers that you are willing to challenge yourself. Remember, AP and IB classes are typically weighted more than honors courses. But if you're not the best at standardized testing you could take honors courses to boost your weighted GPA. But, if you're hoping to get into a top national universities or liberal arts college, AP and IB are the way to go.

It can be hard to choose between the [AP and IB](#). Consider which offers more courses in your school, which courses have the best teachers, and whether students are allowed to combine both at your school.

A black and white photograph of a stack of books on a wooden surface. The books are of various thicknesses and some have dark covers with gold or light-colored spine bands. A blue geometric overlay is present in the top-left and bottom-right corners. The text 'AP COURSES' is written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the image.

AP COURSES

SELECTING YOUR AP COURSES

One of the most common and challenging higher level exams that high school students take is the Advanced Placement, or AP exams. AP exams occur every year in May, and usually feature both a multiple-choice and a free-response section. Even though AP classes are most suited to the learning of juniors and seniors, you may start earlier depending on your school's policy. Schools sometimes have restrictions on which year you can take certain APs and place caps on how many AP classes each student can take. Look online or talk to your counselor to find out more about your school's policies to navigate and strategize which courses would be the best for you.

KNOW WHICH COURSES YOUR SCHOOL OFFERS

The College Board offers 38 AP subjects in total. Your school probably will not offer them all, but most schools cover several disciplines so that you have options. Learn the number of APs that most students at your school take, and then how many you should enroll in to stand out.

Below is a list of every AP subject administered by College Board:

- Art History
- Biology
- Calculus AB
- Calculus BC
- Chemistry
- Chinese Language & Culture
- Comparative Government & Politics
- Computer Science A
- Computer Science Principles
- English Language and Composition
- English Literature and Composition
- Environmental Science
- European History
- French Language & Culture
- German Language & Culture
- Human Geography
- Italian Language & Culture
- Japanese Language and Culture
- Latin
- Macroeconomics
- Microeconomics
- Music Theory
- Physics 1: Algebra-Based
- Physics 2: Algebra-Based
- Physics C: Electricity & Magnetism
- Physics C: Mechanics
- Psychology
- Research
- Seminar
- Spanish Language & Culture
- Spanish Literature & Culture
- Statistics
- Studio Art: 2-D Design
- Studio Art: 3-D Design
- Studio Art: Drawing
- U.S. Government & Politics
- U.S. History
- World History

HOW SCORING WORKS

The multiple-choice sections of AP exams are digitally scored. The free-response sections are scored by experienced AP teachers and college faculty according to their areas of expertise. A Chief Reader for each exam - always a university faculty member - develops scoring rubrics for free-response questions. The cutoff scores for AP grades are based on several factors:

- What percentage of students earned each AP grade over the past three years
- How students did in multiple-choice questions and different parts of the exam
- How examiners viewed the overall quality of answers in the free-response questions
- How university students who took the exam as experimental studies performed

The scores are reported on a 5-point scale at the end of July:

- 5 = Extremely well qualified
- 4 = Well qualified
- 3 = Qualified
- 2 = Possibly qualified
- 1 = No recommendation

Some universities accept a 3 or above to grant college credit, although top schools look for higher scores or do not give credit at all. A “5” may be considered equivalent to an A in college, so you should aim for those fives! But note that colleges have been increasingly giving fewer and fewer advanced credits for AP classes, as many schools believe that AP courses do not substitute for college level course quality. Students who use APs for college credit are also sometimes required to take fewer classes and graduate early. Colleges view restricting AP credit as a method of continuing to maintain a certain amount of tuition and revenue.

Colleges that do not give any credit at all may still use AP scores for placement purposes in the different courses. If you are a top student and want to skip low level prerequisites, this may be your best option.

STRATEGIC TIPS FOR CHOOSING AP CLASSES

So, how do you choose from a wide selection of AP classes to ensure that you can study to the best of your abilities and score those 5's? We've outlined some tips below to help you narrow down your choices:

- **Reflect on Past Courses** - Often, in order to qualify for AP classes you'll have to take honors-level courses in the same areas, or meet a required GPA or grade. So make sure you're choosing AP classes based on the courses you've excelled at during freshman or sophomore year. If you've discovered that you're surprisingly good at English, take AP Lit. If physics was your best class, take that as a sign that you would perform well in AP Physics!
- **Think About Your Future Plans** - This is key in your advanced high school course selection process. What do you want to major in once you're in college? Do you have a dream career? What academic areas are you passionate about? Asking yourself these questions can help you decide which direction you want to head. If you plan to study STEM fields in college, you're definitely going to need AP Calculus to show admissions officers your prowess. If you want to eventually go to medical school, taking AP Biology and Chemistry is a great place to start. Studying for these AP exams will also help you prepare for the SAT subject tests. Knowing the overlap between your AP courses and your SAT subject tests certainly helps you consolidate study time! Check out the list below to see which subject tests corresponds with which AP subject:
 - AP Calculus: Math 1 or Math 2 SAT II
 - AP US History: US History SAT II
 - AP Biology: Biology SAT II
 - AP Chemistry: Chemistry SAT II
 - AP Physics: Physics SAT II
 - AP English Literature and Composition: English SAT II
 - AP World History: World History SAT II
 - AP Chinese Language and Culture: Chinese with Listening SAT II
 - AP French Language and Culture: French, French with Listening SAT II
 - AP German Language and Culture: German, German with Listening SAT II
 - AP Italian Language and Culture: Italian SAT II
 - AP Japanese Language and Culture: Japanese with Listening SAT II
 - AP Latin: Latin SAT II
 - AP Spanish Language and Culture: Spanish, Spanish with Listening SAT II

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- **Don't Try to Self-Study for AP exams** - It's important that you only sit for the AP exams in which you are enrolled at your school. Don't try to self-study, as extra scores are not seen as a good use of your time in most cases. Even a couple of extra 5's won't help you stand out. It would be far better to use that time having an impact in your community. In addition, studying under an instructor will prepare you far better for your exams and be more efficient; your teachers have lots of experience! Plus, remember those letters of recommendation? Your teachers can't write them if they haven't taught you directly. It's important that you select the courses from your school that interest you the most so that you can perform better on the exams.
 - **Take Advantage of Tenth Grade** - At some high schools, students can take AP classes in tenth grade, or even ninth grade. While you definitely don't want to overburden yourself this early, it may be worthwhile to take an early AP or two to get a feel of what's to come, without the pressure of impending college applications. If you're hoping to take all three of the popular AP science classes - Physics, Chemistry and Biology - your sophomore year is a great place to get one out of the way. Or if you want to take AP World History or European History, you could try to enroll in the tenth grade. Talk to your counselor to figure out which are best for you early on, in order to strategically plan your course load.
 - **Don't Put Everything Off** - Since you can take APs multiple years throughout high school, there's no need to stuff all of your AP classes into senior year. You'll be busy trying to write your personal statement and working hard on extracurriculars. So, make the most out of your options and spread out those APs. Take a couple in the tenth grade if you can, a few in the eleventh grade, and the rest in the twelfth grade. Colleges know you're human and definitely don't expect you to have taken ten AP classes in your senior year alone. Moreover, you'll perform better if you have fewer exams to study for each year.
 - **Maintain a Balance** - Balance is important - not only in the way you spread your AP classes throughout the years, but in the courses you decide to take. While colleges want to know if you excel in the field of your interest, they also like to know you've got skills in other areas. What better way to demonstrate that than through excellence in your AP exams? For example if you want to major in History, yes should you score well in AP US History and AP World History. But you can also take AP Physics or AP Calculus to show colleges that you're skilled in other fields too and can keep up with the distribution requirements of the school.
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IB COURSES

A black and white photograph of a person in a graduation gown, holding a stack of books and a rolled diploma tied with a ribbon. The image is framed by blue diagonal shapes in the top-left and bottom-right corners. A horizontal blue line is positioned below the text 'IB COURSES'.

SELECTING YOUR IB COURSES

The International Baccalaureate, or IB, is a diploma program offering advanced courses in various fields, just like the AP. If you're planning on pursuing the IB diploma, you'll need three higher level and three standard level classes (each lasts two years), along with a 1600-word essay known as the Theory of Knowledge, which explores the nature of knowledge itself, and how we know what we claim to know. You also have to write a 4000-word Extended Essay answering a research question about an IB subject of your choosing. If you're taking a few standalone IB classes, you don't have to worry about these diploma requirements, but it's still good to know how the full IB program operates.

KNOW WHICH COURSES YOUR SCHOOL OFFERS

Similar to APs, knowing your choices is a good place to start when thinking about selecting your courses. The courses you select for IB will span throughout the 11th and 12th grades, and prepare you for the IB exams at the end of senior year. If you're completing the diploma, your course selection should adhere to the following IB rubric:

- Group 1: a first language
- Group 2: a second language
- Group 3: a humanities course
- Group 4: a science course
- Group 5: a math course
- Group 6: an arts course or an additional course in any of the other groups

From these, any three can be higher level (HL), and any three can be standard level (SL). You can also take four HLs if you're confident. The difference between the two levels lies in the difficulty of the exam and the amount of material taught. Naturally, you are going to be more challenged by HL classes.

You're probably wondering about your options for each of the groups. Your school won't offer every single IB subject that's out there, but you'll probably have a few choices among each of the groups. The subjects you can choose to fulfill IB requirements are outlined in the table below. Within Group 1, for instance, you can choose to study English in the form of Literature, Language and Literature, or Literature and Performance. For Group 2 you can choose a second language based on your proficiency.

GROUP 1: A FIRST LANGUAGE

Literature
Language and Literature
Literature and Performance

GROUP 2: A SECOND LANGUAGE

Language B (for intermediate knowledge)
Language ab initio (If you have no background in the language)

GROUP 3: A HUMANITIES COURSE

Business Management	Society
Economics	Psychology
World History	Philosophy
Global Politics	Social and cultural anthropology
Geography	World Religions
Information Technology in a Global	

GROUP 4: A SCIENCE COURSE

Biology
Chemistry
Computer Science
Environmental Systems and Societies
Physics
Design Technology
Sports, Exercise, and Health Science

GROUP 5: A MATH COURSE

Further Math (HL only)
Math Higher Level
Math Standard Level
Math Studies (SL only)

GROUP 6: AN ARTS COURSE (can be substituted with class from another group)

Dance
Film
Music
Theatre
Visual Arts

HOW SCORING WORKS

You will not have your IB grades in hand by the time you apply to college, as you won't sit for them until May of your senior year. The transcript your school sends to colleges contains your "predicted grades," or, what each of your teachers predicts that you will receive after your actual IB exams. Each of your IB courses are graded, and then reported on a scale of 1-7:

- 7 = Excellent
- 6 = Very Good
- 5 = Good
- 4 = Satisfactory
- 3 = Sufficient
- 2 = Fail, with some work required to pass
- 1 = Fail, with considerable work required to obtain a passing grade

Certain percentages are assigned within each number of the scale just like with any grading system, where there are specific grades or numbers assigned to a range of scores. So, if you decide to complete the IB diploma, your 6 courses will be graded out of 7 each, equalling 42. Your Theory of Knowledge essay and Extended Essay together count for three additional points. So, the maximum score you can aim for in the IB diploma is 45.

Schools do see your final grades once they come out, but during admissions decisions, they will be assessing your academic skills based on the predicted grades. Usually, colleges value 6's and 7's as impressive IB grades, and you may be able to use them for credit or to meet requirements for placement in upper level college courses.

STRATEGIC TIPS FOR CHOOSING YOUR IB CLASSES

You might be wondering how to make sure you're taking the best courses out of the options available to you from each group. We've outlined some tips to guide you through making the decision:

- **Think About Your Future Plans** - Colleges ask you for your prospective major and tentative future plans through application systems such as the [Common Application](#) or [Coalition Application](#). Even if you don't fully know what you want to do with your life, you probably have certain areas you're more interested in studying than others.

So, if you want to be a Biology major in college, you obviously should take IB Biology, preferably as an HL course. If you state in your college application that you're a prospective Biology major but you don't have any advanced courses in the subject, it won't make sense!

- **Choose Higher Levels Based on Strength** - Understandably, HL courses are much tougher than SL ones. Top colleges want to see you excel in your HL classes. In order to shine in them, you should choose your higher levels very strategically. Don't take IB Physics as an HL class just because all your friends are doing so. If you're better at English, and want to take IB English HL, and a standard level science, do it! Especially if you're not planning a STEM major, you don't need to take an HL science. So, if you think you'll score higher in your lit class, don't take a higher science only to score a 4 and regret it.
- **Choose the Sixth Subject Based on Interest** - If you're a dancer or a singer or an artist, you should definitely emphasize your talent and take a Group 6 course accordingly. But you might have noticed that you don't have to take a course in the arts as your sixth subject. You want to take classes that you can score well in, and subjects you're passionate about. If you're more of a STEM person, take a second science class. If you enjoy the humanities and are already taking IB Economics, why not choose something such as IB History? You're more likely to enjoy and excel in courses that interest you.
- **Don't Overestimate Your Math Abilities** - A lot of IB students tend to think that they have to take Further Mathematics HL to apply to engineering schools. It would look great on your college applications if you do well, but Further Math is not a cakewalk. You can also take Math HL and apply to engineering programs, or pursue other STEM majors. That being said, if you're not a math or science person, don't stress yourself out by taking a higher level math. The standard level Math and Math Studies (slightly easier) are both good options for those not so strong at math. You'll have other subjects to take at a higher level which can highlight your strengths.
- **Think About What Will Help Your Extended Essay** - Your senior year of high school is going to be made up of many firsts, one of which is a 4000-word research essay, the IB Extended Essay. You may only have experience writing five-paragraph essays, and your research methods might max out at Googling for a class project completed in one day. Your Extended Essay, however, requires more in depth study on a topic of interest, a research question you can actually spend pages writing about. And, your essay has to align with an IB subject. So, even though you don't have to know your topic when you first select classes, make sure you're interested enough in your courses to want to write a massive essay in one of them! If you don't take IB Psychology, but want to write your essay on human personalities, a lack of psych background will not benefit you at all. You need to start planning in 10th grade for the next two years!

A-LEVEL COURSES



SELECTING YOUR A-LEVEL COURSES

If your school operates under the British system, you'll sit for A-Level exams. You will study for your A-Level exams throughout junior and senior year of high school. A-Levels are comprised of two exams: AS, which you take in the 11th grade, and A2 or A-Levels, which you take in the 12th. AS exams are similar to junior year finals. Since your A2 exams won't take place until the end of senior year, you need to perform well in AS for colleges to view your transcript as competitive.

The minimum requirement for most colleges and universities is at least three A-Levels. While that number might seem low, each A-Level subject comes with multiple units and exams so the amount you have to study adds up.

KNOW WHICH COURSES YOUR SCHOOL OFFERS

Just like with AP and IB, your school won't offer every single A-Level course. A lot depends on your country as well. For example, if you take A-Levels in UK, you are [more likely to choose from a wider variety of foreign languages](#) than if you took it in [one of the few schools which offer A-Levels the United States](#). A-Levels are a two year curriculum. The courses you choose in 10th grade are what you will study throughout junior and senior years of high school. The A-Level courses you can choose from are:

- Accounting
- Afrikaans
- Ancient History
- Anthropology
- Applied Art and Design
- Applied Business
- Applied ICT
- Applied Science
- Arabic
- Archaeology
- Art and Design
- Bengali
- Biblical Hebrew
- Biology
- Business
- Business Studies
- Chemistry
- Chinese
- Citizenship Studies
- Communication and Culture
- Computer Science
- Computing
- Creative Writing
- Dance
- Design and Technology
- Design and Textiles
- Digital Media and Design
- Divinity
- Drama and Theatre
- Dutch
- Economics
- Economics and Business
- Electronics
- Engineering
- English Language
- English Language and Literature
- English Literature
- Environmental Science
- Environmental Studies
- Environmental Technology
- Fashion and Textiles
- Film Studies
- Food Studies
- Food Technology
- French
- Further Mathematics
- General Studies
- Geography

- Geology
- German
- Global Development
- Government and Politics
- Greek
- Gujarati
- Health and Social Care
- Hindi
- Hinduism
- History
- History of Art
- Home Economics
- Human Biology
- ICT
- Irish
- Islamic Studies
- Italian
- Japanese
- Journalism
- Latin
- Law
- Leisure Studies
- Life and Health Sciences
- Marine Science
- Mathematics
- Media Studies
- Modern Hebrew
- Modern Languages
- Moving Image Arts
- Music
- Music Technology
- Nutrition and Food Science
- Panjabi
- Performance Studies
- Persian
- Philosophy
- Photography
- PE
- Physical Science
- Physics
- Polish
- Politics
- Portugese
- Product Design
- Psychology
- Pure Mathematics
- Quantitative Methods
- Religious Studies
- Russian
- Science in Society
- Sociology
- Software Systems Development
- Spanish
- Sports Science
- Statistics
- Systems and Control Technology
- Tamil
- Technology and Design
- Thinking Skills
- Travel and Tourism
- Turkish
- Urdu
- Welsh
- World Development

There is a total of 80 A-Level classes worldwide. Your school may have slightly fewer options available, as different countries and schools have a wide variety of offerings. It can seem overwhelming to choose but it's important to prioritize your career goals, what your strengths and interests, and which teachers you get along with the best.

HOW SCORING WORKS

AS and A Level exams take place every year in May. Each subject is scored on an A*-E scale:

A* = Excellent
A = Very good
B = Good
C = Satisfactory
D = Fail
E = Fail

The grade boundaries for scoring an A* vary every year, and differ from subject to subject. They are announced by the exam board a few days prior to the release of A-Level results, based on the difficulty of that year's papers, and how well most students fared in their exams.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A-LEVEL CLASSES

- **It's Okay to Take Fewer A-Level Classes** - Just because your friends are taking five or six A-Level classes, it doesn't mean you have to. Colleges understand that students usually take three or four A-Level classes. In fact, this is the conventional number and these classes can take up your entire day and that's okay. Better grades in fewer courses that are challenging would look far better on your transcript than more classes with weaker grades. If you can handle five or six A-level courses, wonderful. But if you feel like you should prioritize classes that you will need for your college major and show admissions officers that you're skilled in those, that is the way to go. Don't give in to peer pressure!
- **Choose Combinations with Your Prospective Major in Mind** - Choosing A-Level classes requires prioritizing what's important for your future. Since you pick A-Level classes at the end of 10th grade, you might not know what career direction you're heading towards. Just consider the subjects you're good at and fields that interest you. If you want to be pre-med in college, you should take Biology, Chemistry, and Physics in your A-Levels. If you want to have the option of a career in engineering, Pure Mathematics, along with Physics or another STEM course - Engineering, if your school offers it. Choosing a humanities-heavy course load and then saying you want to study a STEM subject won't help your admissions chances, as colleges will have no idea how you perform in science classes. If you're applying to UK and US programs, make sure you check the requirements at each university on your list. The British system mandates certain A-Level courses and grades to be eligible even to apply for certain programs. For example, to study Biology at Oxford University, you need to take A-Level Biology, plus one subject between Physics, Chemistry and Math. You also need one A* in a science or math course and at least 2 A's. Base your selection on your target schools and interests - choose subjects you wouldn't mind studying not only throughout high school, but across all four years of college as well.
- **Think About Your Strengths** - If you're applying to US universities your A-Level classes should balance finding what major you might want to pursue in college with courses where you will perform well. You might want to be an English major in college, but you're excellent at statistics. Adding stats alongside English-adjacent classes can elevate your track record and show admissions officers that you're skilled in multiple disciplines. If you're applying only to UK universities, you'll need to focus more on the subjects you need to enroll in the specific programs instead. For example, if you want to study English Literature at the University of Cambridge, you need to take A-Level English Literature, and score at least an A. Your Biology grades don't really matter here, and you can take any other humanities course where you will excel.

- **Consider Your O-Level Courses and Results** - The O-Levels, or the exams you sit for after tenth grade, require you to choose between 6-9 classes on average and are far less intensive than your A-Levels. When you pick your O-Level courses at the beginning of 9th grade, you can thus be less restrictive and try out different courses to see which subjects you might want to study. Your O-Level choices feed into your A-Level selection, however, because you won't be able to keep up with an A-Level class in something you haven't studied for O-Levels. You choose your A-Level classes once your O-Level exams are done. However, since you get to study a far wider range of subjects, your O-Level results can be a good indicator of your strengths. Plus, you'll also know which topics peak your curiosity and the ones you'd like to explore further. If you scored poorly in your Economics O-Level exam, don't opt for A-Level Econ. Instead, look through your grades and recall which classes you enjoyed the most and want to explore further.

Your transcript is an exceptionally important component of your college application and it all begins with the course selection process. Choosing your high school courses starts early in high school, even before you take advanced classes. It's crucial to strategize early on because the decisions you make your freshman and sophomore years often dictate the choices you make for AP, IB, or A-Levels.

No matter which of these exams you take, what's important is that you take courses which challenge you and you can strive for excellence in. Think about your career prospects, areas where you shine, and how to maintain a balance by showing depth of knowledge in a multitude of areas. Don't make the decisions on a whim. Try and foresee which subjects will help you in a couple of years when you're working through the Common App, and choose the classes which will benefit you the most, and help put you at the top of the application pool.