

AP Biology

2026 Summer Assignment

Dear AP Biology Student,

Welcome to AP Biology. I am looking forward to working with you during the upcoming school year.

AP Biology is a challenging and rewarding course. Success here is not built on memorizing large amounts of information at the last minute. Students who thrive are those who engage with the material consistently over time — through repeated practice, retrieval, and reflection. The structure of this summer assignment is designed with exactly that in mind.

Purpose of the Summer Assignment

Rather than assigning one large packet to complete at the end of the summer, the assignment is organized into four learning cycles released throughout June, July, and August. Each cycle is intentionally short and focused, and is designed to:

- introduce foundational AP Biology concepts before the school year begins,
- build your ability to retrieve and apply what you have learned,
- expose you to AP-style scientific thinking gradually and with support,
- and reduce cognitive overload at the start of the school year.

What Each Learning Cycle Contains

Every learning cycle includes three components, posted together in a topic folder in Google Classroom:

- A reading: A short, focused reading that introduces the key concepts for that cycle. The readings are written to be student-friendly and include analogies, diagrams, and real biological examples to help you build understanding.
- Analogy videos: A set of short videos — one per key analogy from the reading — that bring the concepts to life visually. These are optional but highly recommended, especially if any part of the reading feels unclear.
- One or two Google Forms: Cycles 1–3 include two forms released one week apart. Cycle 4 includes one short form only. Their structure is explained below.

Understanding the Form Structure

Cycles 1 through 3 each include two separate Google Forms, and the gap between them is intentional:

- Form A — Check Your Understanding: Released on the same day as the reading. It contains recall and basic application questions closely tied to what you just read. Complete this within a few days of doing the reading, while the material is fresh.
- Form B — Think Like a Biologist: Released approximately one week after Form A. It contains one or two AP-style application questions that ask you to use what you learned in an unfamiliar biological context. This is the kind of thinking AP Biology will ask of you all year.

Please do not complete both forms on the same day. Research on learning consistently shows that returning to material after a short gap strengthens memory and understanding far more than doing everything at once. The spacing between Form A and Form B is not a scheduling inconvenience — it is one of the most effective learning strategies known to science, and it is built into this course from day one.

What You Will Be Learning

The four learning cycles cover the foundational chemistry of life — concepts that will reappear throughout every unit of AP Biology:

- Cycle 1 — Water & Polarity: Why water's molecular structure makes life on Earth possible.
- Cycle 2 — Carbon & Functional Groups: The chemical backbone of biological molecules.
- Cycle 3 — Macromolecules: How carbohydrates, lipids, proteins, and nucleic acids are built and what they do.
- Cycle 4 — Enzymes — A Preview: A brief, low-stakes introduction to enzymes as a warm-up for what we will explore together in depth during the first weeks of school.

Summer Learning Cycle Schedule

Cycle 1 will be posted in Google Classroom on June 25 — the last day of school — for students who would like to get started early. The suggested start date is June 30, giving most students a few days to decompress after the school year ends. All assignments remain open throughout the summer to accommodate vacations, camps, and family schedules.

Cycle 1 — Water & Polarity

- Available in Google Classroom: June 25
- Suggested start: June 30
- Form A due: July 6
- Form B released: July 8 | Form B due: July 14

Cycle 2 — Carbon & Functional Groups

- Available in Google Classroom: July 15
- Suggested start: July 15
- Form A due: July 21
- Form B released: July 23 | Form B due: July 29

Cycle 3 — Macromolecules

- Available in Google Classroom: August 1
- Suggested start: August 1
- Form A due: August 7
- Form B released: August 9 | Form B due: August 15

Cycle 4 — Enzymes: A Preview

- Available in Google Classroom: August 18
- Reading + Form A due: August 28
- *No Form B for this cycle.*

A note on Cycle 4: This final cycle is intentionally lighter than the previous three. It offers a brief introduction to enzymes — the proteins that make biological chemistry possible — as a preview of what we will explore together in depth during the first weeks of school. One short reading, one brief form, no Form B. Think of it as easing into the finish line rather than sprinting through it. You've worked hard this summer — Cycle 4 honors that.

Accessing the Summer Assignment

- Join the AP Biology Google Classroom using the class code: oxgzc5xf
- Each learning cycle will be posted in its own topic folder in the order you should complete it: reading first, then analogy videos, then Form A, then Form B.
- Students enrolling later in the summer should complete assignments as soon as possible after joining.
- Questions during the summer? Contact me at: tthomas@teaneckschools.org

Estimated Time Commitment

Cycles 1–3 are each designed to take approximately 60–75 minutes total, spread across two weeks:

- Reading: 20–30 minutes
- Analogy videos (optional, recommended): 10–15 minutes total
- Form A: 15–20 minutes
- Form B: 20–25 minutes

Cycle 4 is designed to take approximately 30–40 minutes total:

- Reading: 15–20 minutes
- Form A: 15–20 minutes

I hope you enjoy your summer. I have designed this assignment to be genuinely manageable — not a burden, but a bridge. The structure is deliberate, the content is focused, and every component has a purpose rooted in how learning actually works.

The students who arrive in September having engaged thoughtfully with these four cycles will feel the difference from the very first week.

I look forward to beginning the year together.

Sincerely,

Mr. Thomas

AP Biology