

Wellesley High School

Course Selection Fact Sheet

In order to meet the individual needs of all students, Wellesley High School offers a variety of courses, some taught at different levels. **All** of our academic courses are college preparatory, designed to build the foundation for future success. Electives provide an outlet for you to experience different subjects, explore new ideas and develop skills in areas of strong interest.

There are many sources of information to help you with the course selection process. This is a summary to get you started. If you have any questions, talk to your counselor.

Important to Remember...

Selecting courses for next year should be a thoughtful process with the ultimate goal to create an appropriately **balanced** educational experience. There are some important things to keep in mind when selecting courses:

- Courses should be challenging but not overwhelming. It is more important to be **successful** in a level than to take the highest one offered.
- Take into account **everything** you do, remembering that you need to balance homework with sports, extracurricular activities and time to relax with friends and family.
- There are a maximum of 42 periods in the 7-day cycle, but you may benefit from some unscheduled times for directed research and use of the extra-help labs.
- Use your best judgment in selecting the right course for you, keeping in mind your teacher's recommendation; while it may be difficult, do not let the classes your friends are in sway you.
- Choose courses that keep you on track for meeting graduation requirements and the recommended years of study for college admissions.

See the Program of Studies for details about level designations in general and for subject-specific guidelines.

Leveled courses are designated CP (College Preparatory), ACP (Advanced College Preparatory) and H (Honors). In addition, there are a few AP (Advanced Placement) courses offered that are the equivalent of college-level courses; students in AP are encouraged to take the College Board Advanced Placement Examination. For courses that are offered at the combined ACP/Honors level, students will be placed in the Honors section *for scheduling purposes only*. Students will be able to designate which level they would like to be assessed at in the fall once they learn about course expectations. World Language teachers will make this distinction in the spring

The Process for Students in grades 9–11:

Course selection is online.

Please note that students must select at least 34 credits per year.

Students and School Counselors discuss the overall course selection process and timetable either in grade level seminars (Grades 9 & 11) or in a large counselee meeting (grade 10) in late-January and early-February. Students are welcome and encouraged to see their School Counselors with individual questions about their course selection process.

Turn this sheet over for simple considerations to help in assessing levels.

The student and parent discuss the program choices for the following year, review specific language in the Program of Studies, and review the student's report card. The student completes the online registration form through the PowerSchool portal, which will show the teacher recommendations. This will be available **March 6th**. The

student will complete the electronic course selection confirmation form found on the PowerSchool portal and have a parent sign off as well. The form must be completed by **March 14th**. All students who do not have access to a computer should contact their House Office to obtain a hard copy of the course selection sheet.

Teachers are usually the best judge of appropriate levels – Many students who overrode their recommendation have since requested to move back to the recommended level.

In academic courses where there is a disparity between request and recommendation, the level recommended by the teacher will be recorded. **All requests for level changes must be received by March 14th when course selections are final. No changes can be made from this point forward. The next opportunity to make a schedule request change is in the fall.**

In June, rising grade 10, 11, 12 will have access to their list of courses so students can plan their summer assignments. Summer Assignments can be found on the WHS website before the close of school. Rising grade 9 students will receive their schedules in late August with the rest of the high school. Information regarding requesting course/level changes will be available at that time.

Level Selection Considerations

Most WHS students take a mix of levels. It is important to find the best course fit for each of your academic subjects. However, you also need to look at the whole picture to ensure the load will not be too great. For example, even if your individual teachers each suggest Honors, you may decide that a course load of five Honors classes will be overwhelming and choose to take your least favorite or most difficult class as an ACP.

The best means of determining your course level next year is to gauge how you are doing this year.

- If you need instructional support from the teacher, benefit from help with subject organization and concepts, and like a pace that allows you to practice skills, College Preparatory levels may be the best bet.
- If you have effective reading and writing skills, but understand concepts better when teachers provide some structure to help in understanding, Advanced College Preparatory levels may be a good fit.
- If you like to learn independently, enjoy open-ended analysis, have strong communication and conceptual skills, are extremely motivated and can organize time well to manage a lot of homework, an Honors course can work for you.
- **But remember,** if the current work has been too hard, you have needed a lot of support from the teacher or a tutor, you have trouble organizing concepts and/or you are struggling to complete homework along with everything else in your day, you might want to consider shifting to a different level.

Frequently Asked Questions

Advanced Placement (AP) courses are bound by a pre-approved college-level curriculum. Honors classes have more flexibility in what's covered as well as the pace of the course. AP and Honors classes add the same points to the GPA.

Colleges want to see challenging coursework yet it is not as simple as counting courses. They want to see a balanced and successful schedule.

There are several problems with this strategy. First, you may not be able to change levels if classes are full. Second, if you are able to find an open section, it may require you to change other classes in your schedule, change teachers or drop electives in which you are already enrolled. Third, the grade you earned in the Honors class stays with you and is rolled into the ACP or CP average.

There are consequences for shooting too high. **Taking** a course isn't the same as **succeeding** in a course. In fact, low grades in an Honors class can hurt your GPA. A

Department heads have established subject-specific guidelines to help you determine the best course level. See the Program of Studies and WHS department websites for helpful information.

For example, in English, a sophomore's work expectations are different:

Level	Reading/ mtg:	Written/ mtg:
CP	20 pgs	300 words
ACP	35 pgs	600 words
H	45 pgs	800 words

What's the difference between Honors and Advanced Placement courses?

How many Honors and AP courses do colleges want?

Isn't it better to select an Honors class now, since I can always move to the ACP level in the fall?

From the colleges' point of view, isn't it better to get a

grade of C in Honors than B in an ACP class?

grade of C in Honors earns you a 3.0 whereas a grade of B- in ACP adds 3.2 to your GPA. And if you have an Honors grade of D+ your GPA is calculated as 2.3. Earning just a C in the ACP class would earn 2.5 and it is likely that you may do much better in the course level more appropriate for you. Colleges want to see you do well **and** maintain balance in your life.

How many years of a language do colleges want?

While there is **no** World Language requirement to graduate WHS, many colleges require having taken a language for admissions. Taking more years in the same language is better, but only if you're successful. After two years, look at how you're doing, evaluate your interests and discuss your schedule with your counselor. Also, it may be better for some students to start their language in sophomore year.

If I'm not at the top of the class, will I get into a "good" college?

With over 4,000 colleges in the U.S. alone, this isn't the right question. You should not make decisions based on a name. Students at every level at WHS get into the **right** colleges for them; colleges in which they can grow and succeed.

What looks better, ...?

Many students and parents ask questions which start this way. The most important thing to remember when you select courses is that the classes you take should not be based solely on what you *think* colleges want or what classes your friends are taking. Your courses belong to you, and your goal should be to create a rewarding experience of learning. If you do that, you will do well.