Guide to AP and IB Classes: What Students Should Know

In high school, weighted classes like Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) are considered more challenging than standard classes. Taking these courses boosts a student's GPA and demonstrates to college admissions officers a willingness to take on academic rigor. These courses can also potentially earn college credit, save money, and prepare students for the expectations of higher education.

What is an AP Class?

Advanced Placement (AP) classes are college-level courses offered in high school and administered by the College Board. These classes culminate in an AP exam scored from 1 to 5. A score of 3 or higher can earn college credit at many universities.

AP Biology

Covers molecular biology, genetics, ecology, and evolution. Ties into biology, pre-med, and environmental science majors.

AP Chemistry

Focuses on chemical reactions, stoichiometry, and thermodynamics. Ideal for chemistry, engineering, and healthcare majors.

AP Physics 1/2/C

Covers Newtonian mechanics, electricity, and magnetism. Ties into physics, engineering, and computer science.

AP Calculus AB/BC

Explores differential and integral calculus. Critical for math, physics, engineering, and economics.

AP Statistics

Teaches data analysis, probability, and inference. Useful for business, psychology, social sciences.

AP English Language

Develops rhetorical analysis and argument writing. Useful for communications, journalism, law.

AP English Literature

Focuses on literary analysis of prose and poetry. Ideal for literature, education, or law.

AP U.S. History

Covers political, cultural, and economic U.S. history. Ties into political science, history, and law.

AP World History

Explores global historical themes and comparisons. Good for international relations, history, and anthropology.

AP U.S. Government & Politics

Studies American political systems. Relevant for government, law, political science.

AP Macroeconomics

Covers the economy on a national/global scale. Connects with economics, business, finance.

AP Microeconomics

Focuses on supply/demand and market structures. Important for economics, business, and marketing.

AP Computer Science A

Introduction to Java programming. Ideal for CS, software engineering.

AP Psychology

Covers human behavior and mental processes. Ties into psychology, education, and healthcare.

AP Environmental Science

Studies ecological systems, pollution, and policy. Relevant to environmental studies and biology.

What is an IB Class?

International Baccalaureate (IB) classes are part of a global education program that emphasizes critical thinking, research, and intercultural understanding. IB courses are grouped into six subject areas, with students often pursuing the full IB Diploma.

Language & Literature

Focuses on analysis and communication. Ties into journalism, education, law.

Language Acquisition

Learning a second language. Great for global studies, international relations.

Individuals & Societies

Includes history, economics, psychology. Ties into humanities, business, and social sciences.

Sciences

Biology, chemistry, physics, environmental science. Great for STEM majors.

Mathematics

Covers algebra, calculus, and statistics. Ideal for math, engineering, economics.

The Arts

Music, theatre, visual arts. Ties into creative fields, fine arts, and design.

AP vs IB in College Admissions

Both AP and IB courses are highly respected in college admissions. AP classes offer flexibility, allowing students to choose individual subjects. IB is more structured and holistic, often requiring a full diploma that includes an extended essay, theory of knowledge, and creativity/service components. AP is ideal for students strong in specific areas; IB is suited for globally-minded students seeking academic depth across disciplines.