

# How to Earn College Credits in High School

The cost of college tuition is expensive, so many high school students try to earn college credit while still in high school. There are many different ways to do this, and no matter where you go to high school, there should be an option...

Method 1 of 3:

## Taking Exams for College Credit

1.



**Sign up for AP courses.** One way to get college credit in high school is to sign up for AP classes, which may overlap with dual enrollment classes. The Advanced Placement Program (AP) is through The College Board. The program allows high school students to take classes with college-level work in a high school setting. At the end of the year, you take a test given by The College Board, and if you make a high enough score, you can receive high school credit.<sup>[1]</sup>

1. The required score on AP exams varies from college to college, as does the amount of credit you will receive.
2. There are AP classes in almost every general subject area, and different classes are offered depending on what grade you're in. Some high schools may be limited to which AP courses they offer students.
3. AP tests cost \$93 each.<sup>[2]</sup>

2.



**Go through the IB program.** International Baccalaureate (IB) is a program offered to high school students at select schools where they can take college-level courses for credit. After completing the courses, you can take an exam to earn credit. Some colleges give credit to students who receive an IB diploma.<sup>[3]</sup>

1. The IB program is not available at all schools. To find a school that offers the IB program, go to the IB website and search for schools in your area.<sup>[4]</sup>
2. Not all colleges accept IB scores. Learn which schools honor IB credit before joining the IB program.

3.



**Take a CLEP exam.** The College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) exams are exams you take to demonstrate what you know to earn college credit. The exams require you to show a college-level mastery of a subject. There are 33 different CLEP exams you can take in areas generally covered in the first couple of years of college.<sup>[5]</sup>

1. The amount of college credit you receive depends on your score on the test.
2. CLEP exams are only accepted by around 3,000 colleges.
3. You have to take the exam through a test center. Each test costs \$80.<sup>[6]</sup>

4.



**Take ECEs.** Excelsior College Examinations (ECEs) are college-level proficiency exams. You do not take a class to prepare for this course, but demonstrate your knowledge of college-level material. There are ECEs in various subject matters and the tests are taken at testing centers.<sup>[7]</sup>

1. There are study aids and practice exams you can use to prepare for this exam.
2. Hundreds of colleges accept ECE scores. Do some research to find out if your intended college accepts these test scores.<sup>[8]</sup>
3. ECEs cost \$110 per test.<sup>[9]</sup>

Method 2 of 3:

## Participating in College Equivalency Classes in High School

1.



**Take college classes at your high school.** Some high schools allow juniors and seniors to take free college classes at their high school. The high school partners with a local college or university to develop the class. The class is taught at the high school by a high school teacher who has been approved to teach college-level material, so you don't have to go anywhere else to take the class.<sup>[10]</sup>

1. Some of these programs require you to pay a partial tuition fee. This fee varies by school and district.
2. Many colleges will give you credit for this type of program, but double check which colleges accept this credit before choosing to participate in the program.

2.



**Participate in a dual-enrollment program.** Many high schools have dual enrollment programs with local colleges. In this program, juniors and seniors can attend college classes for both high school and college credit. You will take classes at a college campus that are taught by college professors.<sup>[11]</sup>

1. Some dual-enrollment classes overlap with AP courses.

2. Not all schools will accept dual enrollment credits and the amount of credits you receive varies from school to school. Talk to your guidance counselor and research your intended schools to figure out if the credits will transfer.
3. Some school districts require students to pay for dual enrollment classes, while others let high school students take the courses for free. Find out the financial requirements in your school district.



**Take online courses.** Another way to earn college credit while still in high school is to take online courses through online colleges or local universities. You can do this during the summer after your junior or senior years. Be aware that you will have to pay the tuition for these courses.<sup>[12]</sup>

1. Make sure you choose an online school that is accredited. Check their accreditation status before you sign up with them. You can also check to see if they have been approved by the Department of Education, or check U.S. News and World Report's rankings of online schools.

Method 3 of 3:

## **Determining Your Plan to Earn College Credit**

1.



**Talk to your high school guidance counselor.** Before you choose the right path for earning college credits, schedule a meeting with your guidance counselor. Your counselor can help you figure out which path would be the right for you. Your counselor can also work with you to research which colleges will accept credits from your chosen program.<sup>[13]</sup>

1. If you don't want to talk to your counselor, you can talk to a teacher or principal instead, though they may not be able to answer your questions as thoroughly as a guidance counselor.

2.



**Determine which colleges you want to apply to.** As you determine the best choices for you during high school, you should start thinking about which colleges you will want to apply to. Knowing the admissions guidelines for your intended colleges, plus what they will accept, will help you make the right choices.

1. Make a list of your goal schools. Check to see what transfer credits they accept. You can check the school's website, or you can check the examination websites to see if they list your school as someone who accepts credit from the exam.

3.



**Talk to the college admissions counselor.** If you are interested in getting college credits before you go to college, you should talk to the college admissions counselor at your choice schools. Not all colleges accept the same pre-college transfer credits. If you want to attend a certain school, it's important to know what they allow to transfer before participating in any college credit program.<sup>[14]</sup>

1. For example, most colleges accept AP exam credits, but many do not accept CLEP or IB credits. Same state colleges may accept a dual enrollment credit, but a college in a different state may not.
2. Even if you are a freshman, it's never too early to figure out the admission requirements and policies for your choice schools.

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