



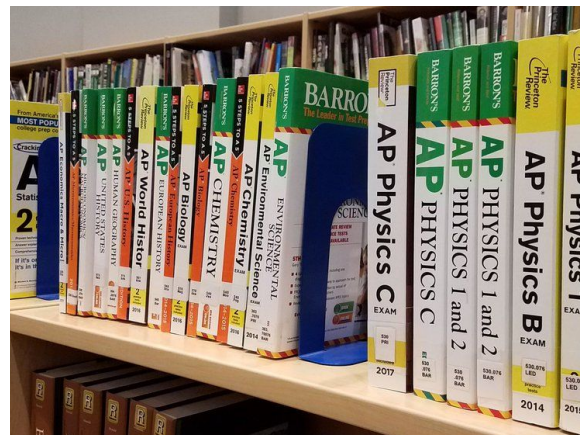
What is the Difference Between AP and IB Courses?

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In American high schools there are many challenging courses that offer different levels of varying difficulty. These courses include vocational courses, honors courses, college preparatory courses, and more. Therefore, students who achieve good grades may want to know which courses are available in addition to the honors program. In this article, we'll take a look at AP and IB courses to better understand what they are and the differences between them. For more information on course selection, please pay close attention to the following descriptions and suggestions.

What is an AP course? AP's full name is “Advanced Placement”, a pre-university course in the United States, and a college course offered by the College Board in high school. If you recognize the reference to the “College Board” it is because the College Board is also the organization that develops the SAT. The College Board created AP courses to provide high school students (mostly Juniors--grade 11 and Seniors--grade 12) a challenging pre-university course at a standardized level. Most AP courses target AP exams (although some courses now offer other assessment methods).



If a student passes the AP exam, he or she may earn college credit or earn credit toward a college's or university's general education or introductory course program.

There are currently [38 categories of AP courses](#). These courses include general subjects such as Biology and American History, as well as some unusual high school courses such as Psychology and Human Geography. Students usually take AP courses through their school or self-study. AP exam scores range from 1 (low) to 5 (high). If you elect self-study and pass the exam with a score of 3 or higher, you will also receive the same credit(s) as the students who take the actual course in their school classroom. AP courses are more common in the

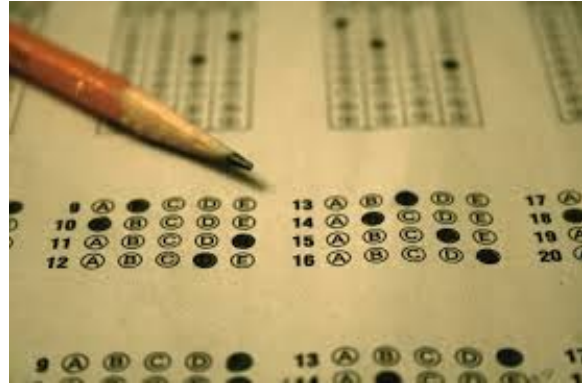
United States than IB courses. If you achieve good results (typically a 3-5) on multiple AP exams, you will receive a formal achievement recognition. The achievement recognitions include: AP Scholar, AP Scholar with Honors and AP Scholar with Distinction. They are awarded to the best performing students, and the best performers are also recognized within each U.S. state, as well as nationwide.

What is an IB course? The International Baccalaureate (IB Program) offers highly rigorous, highly respected and standardized courses for high school students in six (6) different core course areas which include the “Groups” listed below.

- Group 1: Language and Literature
- Group 2: (Foreign) Language Acquisition
- Group 3: History, Economics, Geography, Social Sciences
- Group 4: Experimental Sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Physics, etc.)
- Group 5: Mathematics
- Group 6: The Arts (Dance, Theater, Visual Arts, etc.)

IB courses are also offered at the “standard level” (SL) and “higher level” (HL). In order to receive an IB Diploma, a student must take a minimum of 240 hours of HL courses and 150 hours of SL courses. Essentially, an IB experience is a two-year course sequence and usually only students in grades 11 (Juniors) and 12 (Seniors) can participate. Some schools may allow 10th grade students to take IB courses, but usually these courses are part of a comprehensive course sequence in grades 11 and 12, and eventually lead to an IB Diploma.

The goal of the IB program is to expose students to university-level knowledge in interdisciplinary areas through a holistic approach. Students enrolled in the IB Diploma program are also required to complete an independent, extended, research, thesis project. In addition, students must take a course in knowledge theory, in which they learn about and write a paper on the nature of knowledge and make oral presentations based on their research. Extracurricular activities and community service projects are also another requirement in addition to a range of other academic programs. Like the AP course, the IB course requires a final exam, but grading is based upon a 1 (low) to 7 (high)-point scale. If you pass the exam, you may earn college credit and an introductory (general education), lower level university course credit depending on your college's or university's specific policies. The IB program has been highly regarded by colleges and universities, but it has not been as widely implemented in the United States. Of the 5,000 schools offering IB courses worldwide, less than 2,000 are in the U.S. The IB course curriculum is more common in Europe because it originated in Switzerland in the 1960's.



Why should students consider taking AP courses or an IB Program? According to the U.S. Department of State, “**both** the Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) Program give high school students an opportunity to pursue college-level studies while still in high school.” Also, the advanced course content and challenge to analyze information through research as well as the opportunity to present research results, using public speaking as a vehicle to enrich student performance. In total, either the AP or IB experience allows students to develop confidence in their ability to present their ideas and enhance critical thinking skills essential to ongoing success in college or university-level classes.