

2020-21

Supplement for AP Students and Parents in California

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Introduction

Amendments to the California Education Code require College Board, as a sponsor of standardized tests, to adopt certain procedures for students who take Advanced Placement® (AP®) Exams in California. A provision of this law is that students be provided with certain information concerning the purpose of the exams, procedures for releasing score reports, score interpretations, and the use of exam scores.

Much of this information—including registration and exam procedures, deadlines, fees, and reporting services—is on apstudents.org.

Complete descriptions of the content and structure of each exam, along with sample exam questions, are provided in the AP Course and Exam Descriptions. These subject-specific booklets may be found in your school library or guidance office, obtained from your AP teacher, or downloaded from apstudents.org/courses.

The Advanced Placement Program

The Advanced Placement Program enables students to pursue college-level studies while still in high school. Through 38 college-level courses, each culminating in a rigorous exam, AP provides willing and academically prepared students with the opportunity to earn college credit, advanced placement, or both.

The Purpose and Nature of the Exams

AP Exams are offered annually to enable secondary school students to demonstrate college-level achievement. In 2021, AP Exams will be offered based on the learning goals outlined in the following AP Course Descriptions: Art and Design (2-D Art and Design, 3-D Art and Design, Drawing), Art History, Biology, Calculus (AB, BC), Chemistry, Chinese Language and Culture, Computer Science A, Computer Science Principles, Economics (Macroeconomics, Microeconomics), English (Language and Composition, Literature and Composition), Environmental Science, European History, French Language and Culture, German Language and Culture, Government and Politics (Comparative, United States), Human Geography, Italian Language and Culture, Japanese Language and Culture, Latin, Music Theory, Physics (Physics 1, Physics 2, Physics C: Electricity and Magnetism, Physics C: Mechanics), Psychology, Research, Seminar, Spanish (Language and Culture, Literature and Culture), Statistics, United States History, and World History: Modern. In addition to an exam, AP Seminar and AP Computer Science Principles students must submit through-course performance tasks. In place of an exam, AP Art and Design students submit portfolios containing digital images of their artwork for evaluation. In place of an exam, AP Research students submit a through-course performance task including an academic paper and presentation and oral defense.

AP Course and Exam Descriptions and the corresponding exams are prepared by AP Development Committees of educators appointed to overlapping terms by College Board and aided by assessment specialists from Educational Testing Service (ETS). Each committee normally has at least three members from colleges or universities and at least three members from secondary schools. In addition, the chief AP Exam reader serves as an ex officio member of the committee.

With the exception of Art and Design, which contains portfolio exams, Research, which contains through-course performance tasks, and Computer Science Principles and Seminar, each of which contains a through-course assessment and end-of-course exam, exams vary in length from two to three hours and contain both multiple-choice and free-response questions; exams in European History, United States History, and World History: Modern also contain short-answer questions. The AP Exams in World Languages and Cultures, Spanish Literature and Culture, and Music Theory have a listening component. The exams in World Languages and Cultures and Music Theory also have a speaking or sight-singing part, respectively. The exams in Chinese and Japanese Language and Culture are administered through computers.

Test Security and Administration Policies and Procedures

When testing irregularities occur, College Board may decline to score the exams of one or more students, and it may cancel the scores of one or more students when it determines that such actions are required to protect the integrity of the exam. College Board may do so whether or not the affected students caused the testing irregularities, benefited from them, or engaged in misconduct. When it is appropriate in the judgment of College Board, College Board may give the student or students the opportunity to retake the test without charge.

In the event of a testing irregularity, College Board will cooperate with any California school in charge of a test site where an irregularity occurred. Such cooperation includes, without limitation: conducting a swift investigation upon learning of a complaint or a notice of inadequate or improper test conditions relating to an administration of an AP Exam; swiftly notifying the test site of the determination by College Board upon completion of the investigation; and providing test materials in a timely fashion to assist the test site to administer a retest within thirty (30) days upon completion of the investigation, if applicable.

Please see apstudents.org/examsecurity for more information.

Overview of the Scoring Process

Note: References to multiple-choice content in this section don't apply to the 2020 AP Exams. In 2020, AP Exams consisted of only free-response content.

The tasks of reading and scoring AP Exams require procedures designed to produce equitable and consistent evaluations of performance.

The multiple-choice sections of the exams are scored by computer. The free-response sections and through-course performance assessments are evaluated by experienced AP teachers and college professors, called readers, who spend a week in June scoring answers at the AP Reading. Each subject's chief AP Exam reader, a college professor in that subject, selects readers from among applicants who provide information about their education, experience, and association with the AP Program.

To confirm students' scores accurately reflect their achievement in the subject, the following procedures help ensure scoring guidelines are applied fairly to all responses:

The Conscientious Development of Scoring Guidelines

The preparation of scoring guidelines typically begins as early as two years before the AP Reading when the Development Committee prepares the exam. At the AP Reading itself, the guidelines are refined through a series of reviews by Reading leaders based on their experience with actual student answers.

Training and a Rigorous Review of the Scoring Guidelines by All AP Readers

Three to seven hours of the total seven-day AP Reading period are devoted to reviewing the scoring guidelines and securing consistency in their application. The objective is to combine two essential components: (1) the guidelines developed by the Reading leadership and (2) each reader's professional assessment of the response as seen through the lens of those guidelines.

The Use of Carefully Developed Scoring Scales

The scoring guidelines for each question have an associated scoring scale designed to allow readers to make distinctions among answers. Because the scoring guidelines and their accompanying scales are tailored to individual questions within each exam, they allow each answer to be appropriately scored.

Minimizing the Possibility of the "Halo Effect"

The "halo effect" (giving an answer a higher or lower score than it deserves because of good or poor impressions of other answers from the same student) is minimized by two practices: (1) having each question, or question set, read by a different reader and (2) completely masking all scores given by other readers. These practices enable each reader to evaluate the free-response answers without being influenced by the student's performance on other questions or scores assigned by other readers.

The Close Monitoring of Scoring

Considerable effort is made throughout the Reading to maintain the consistent application of scoring guidelines. Working with small groups of readers, the Reading leaders independently score exams that have been read previously and monitor readers' scoring consistency regularly and thoroughly. If there is too great a disparity between the two sets of scores, the Reading leaders and the reader resolve the differences. The scoring guidelines and reader training practices are designed to significantly reduce the chances that the same student would receive scores that reflect different abilities if the answer had been scored by different readers.

Development of Scores

While colleges and universities are responsible for setting their own credit and placement policies, AP scores offer a recommendation on how qualified students are to receive college credit or placement:

- 5 = extremely well qualified
- 4 = well qualified
- 3 = qualified
- 2 = possibly qualified
- 1 = no recommendation

Before these scores are determined, however, a number of intermediate steps are taken:

1. The multiple-choice section is scored by computer. Multiple-choice scores are based on the number of questions answered correctly. Points are not deducted for incorrect answers or unanswered questions.
2. Scores are assigned to individual essays or problems in the free-response section by readers at the AP Reading. These scores are based on detailed scoring guidelines established by the Development Committee and reader training processes monitored by the Reading leaders. AP Computer Science Principles performance tasks are scored by readers. AP Seminar and AP Research performance tasks are scored by the classroom teacher; however, for the written components of the performance tasks, the AP score is based on reader score. The AP Seminar End-of-Course Exam is scored by readers.
3. A composite score is created from the combined scores on the multiple-choice and free-response sections. When an exam is newly developed or significantly revised, the committee determines the percentage each section should contribute to the composite score. Statistical analysis determines the weights to be used based on this percentage. For example, suppose that the multiple-choice section of the exam has a maximum possible score of 60, the free-response section of the same exam has a maximum possible score of 30, and the committee would like both sections to contribute equally to the total composite score. A weight of 2 would be assigned to the free-response scores, and a weight of 1 would be assigned to multiple-choice section scores. These weights would produce a maximum possible composite score of 120, with each section (free response and multiple choice) contributing equally to the maximum possible composite score.
4. The conversion from the composite scores to the reported AP scores is determined by establishing four score boundaries on the composite score scale. The score boundaries for each exam are based primarily on statistical equating to scores on a previous year's exam. For new and redesigned exams, the initial score boundaries are established through the process of panel-based standard setting.

Technical Information About the 2020 AP Exams

	Maximum Composite Score	% Multiple-Choice: % Free-Response in Composite	Score Distributions (%) in California				
			5	4	3	2	1
Art History	16	0:100	16.8	25.5	28.1	20.9	8.7
Art and Design: Drawing Portfolio	100	N/A	14.0	40.5	33.5	10.6	1.4
Art and Design: 2-D Design Portfolio	100		12.1	36.8	41.3	9.1	0.6
Art and Design: 3-D Design Portfolio	100		4.1	29.8	38.3	22.6	5.2
Biology	16	0:100	11.1	23.0	34.1	24.0	7.9
Calculus AB	28	0:100	22.4	20.7	19.1	22.6	15.2
Calculus BC	29	0:100	48.6	16.8	18.3	12.6	3.6
Chemistry	20	0:100	13.1	20.1	26.5	20.7	19.7
Chinese Language & Culture*	12	0:100	62.1	16.6	14.9	3.2	3.2
Computer Science A	19	0:100	31.2	22.4	21.2	11.1	14.1
Computer Science Principles**	40	0:100	12.1	26.0	37.2	17.8	6.9
Economics: Micro	18	0:100	23.5	28.5	16.0	14.0	18.0
Economics: Macro	18	0:100	18.9	25.1	18.0	15.7	22.3
English Language & Composition	12	0:100	13.4	21.0	28.8	26.0	10.8
English Literature & Composition	12	0:100	9.7	17.1	33.2	28.4	11.6
Environmental Science	20	0:100	12.1	27.1	12.1	24.7	23.9
European History	20	0:100	13.1	18.9	23.8	29.9	14.3
French Language & Culture*	10	0:100	23.7	28.7	28.6	13.5	5.5
German Language & Culture*	10	0:100	32.4	28.5	13.2	20.2	5.6
Government & Politics: U.S.	12	0:100	14.9	16.1	24.8	21.6	22.6
Government & Politics: Comparative	13	0:100	26.6	28.5	18.4	15.8	10.7
Human Geography	18	0:100	12.3	22.4	24.2	11.1	30.0
Italian Language & Culture*	10	0:100	29.3	22.0	34.0	12.7	2.0
Japanese Language & Culture*	12	0:100	55.7	10.5	20.7	6.5	6.6
Latin	25	0:100	15.1	19.6	34.5	16.9	13.9
Music Theory	50	0:100	29.6	20.4	24.1	19.2	6.8
Physics 1: Algebra-Based	25	0:100	10.9	19.5	23.6	24.5	21.5
Physics 2: Algebra-Based	25	0:100	19.3	25.7	33.1	17.2	4.6
Physics C: Electricity & Magnetism	25	0:100	44.3	21.8	9.5	14.7	9.8
Physics C: Mechanics	25	0:100	43.5	25.4	14.9	8.8	7.4
Psychology	14	0:100	23.6	24.5	22.8	9.1	20.0
Research	10	0:100	8.7	30.5	32.7	26.3	1.9
Seminar**	78	0:100	5.8	14.1	58.9	19.0	2.2
Spanish Language & Culture*	10	0:100	32.5	38.7	21.5	6.8	0.5
Spanish Literature & Culture	10	0:100	14.6	19.1	41.5	21.3	3.5
Statistics	22	0:100	17.5	21.0	22.1	20.8	18.5
U.S. History	20	0:100	14.6	19.4	25.7	19.6	20.9
World History	20	0:100	9.7	23.0	27.1	25.7	14.5

*Score distributions (%) for Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish Language and Culture are based on the standard groups of examinees (i.e., students with no out-of-school experience in the language).

**Performance tasks for AP Computer Science Principles and AP Seminar were worth 100% of the score on 2020 AP Exams. Each year, these performance tasks are submitted to the AP Digital Portfolio before the exam date.

Distribution of Scores for the 2020 AP® Exams

The table on page 4 presents selected technical information about the 2020 AP Exams. For each exam, the maximum possible composite score is indicated. Because there was no multiple-choice content on 2020 AP Exams, the multiple-choice/free-response ratio is 0:100 for applicable exams. The table also presents the percentages of students in California who earned a score of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 on each of the 2020 AP Exams. These percentages may experience shifts each year. The shifts are based entirely on the ability level of each year's examinees.

AP Score Reports

AP score reports are cumulative and include scores for all AP Exams a student has ever taken, unless the student has requested that one or more scores be canceled or withheld from a college. AP scores and any information furnished by students to the AP Program are treated as confidential.

Students must sign in to [apcentral.collegeboard.org](https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/apcentral) to view their scores. AP score reports are available in July to designated colleges and universities, students, high schools, and districts. They are released to a college only with the students' authorization, as designated in My AP (myap.collegeboard.org) or on subsequent score report requests. Although most AP score reports are available in July, some reports take longer to process due to late testing or other special circumstances (e.g., late arrival of testing materials or extra time needed to match student records).

NOTE: *There may be other circumstances that could delay a student's score. If a student's AP score is delayed, this will be indicated on their online score report. Students testing late may have their score(s) delayed up to a month.*

More information about score reporting and the withholding or cancellation of scores is available at [apcentral.collegeboard.org](https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/apcentral).

Use of AP Exam Scores

AP Exam scores are used by colleges in granting credit, advanced placement, or both for a course in a particular subject. Because preparation for AP Exams involves work equivalent to that for introductory college courses, College Board recommends that colleges award credit to students who receive AP scores of 3, 4, or 5 and admit such students to appropriately advanced courses. Students seeking credit through their AP scores should note that each college or university, not the AP Program or College Board, determines the nature and extent of its policies for awarding credit, advanced placement, or both. Because policies regarding AP scores vary, students should consult the AP policy of individual colleges and universities. They can find this information in a college's catalog or on its website, or by using the AP Credit Policy Info search at [apcentral.collegeboard.org](https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/apcentral).

College Board has prepared and widely distributed a statement titled *Guidelines for the Release of Data*, which can be downloaded from collegeboard.org/research. All users of College Board test services have been asked to read this statement and be guided by it.

Students with Disabilities

Students with documented disabilities may be eligible for accommodations on AP Exams. College Board provides a wide range of accommodations, including but not limited to special formats (e.g., braille, ATC format, large-print (large-type)), extended time, extra breaks, modified setting, human readers, scribes, use of a computer, etc. Typically, the school's College Board Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) coordinator submits the request for accommodations online on behalf of the student. Requests for accommodations should be submitted as early as possible and no later than **January 15, 2021**. If a student has previously been approved for accommodations by College Board for the PSAT™ 10, PSAT/NMSQT®, SAT®, or AP, the student doesn't need to submit another request. With some exceptions, a student remains approved across all College Board programs.

NOTE: *Some accommodations are administered differently across College Board programs. For example, for AP, a student who is approved for extended time will **not** automatically be provided extra breaks. A student requiring extra breaks must apply for that specific accommodation for AP Exams.*

If a student requires additional or different accommodations, the school's SSD coordinator **must** submit an Accommodations Change Request Form with supporting documentation. **Only those students who have been preapproved by College Board are eligible for extended time or other testing accommodations.** If a student wants to submit a request for accommodations without the participation of the school, they should download a Student Eligibility Form from collegeboard.org/ssd. For questions, contact College Board Services for Students with Disabilities at 844-255-7728 (toll free in the United States and Canada), 212-713-8333, or via email at ssd@info.collegeboard.org. Students should contact their SSD coordinator as soon as possible to make any necessary arrangements. More information about accommodation requests is available at collegeboard.org/ssd.

Additional Assistance

AP courses are made available by secondary schools to provide challenging educational experiences. Because of their knowledge of the AP Program, AP coordinators and teachers can answer many questions directly. Information is also available at apstudents.org. If students have questions that cannot be answered by their school staff or by reading AP informational materials, they can contact AP Services for Students.

AP Services for Students
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Princeton, NJ 08541-6671

888-225-5427 (toll free in the United States and Canada)
212-632-1780
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About College Board

College Board is a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, College Board was created to expand access to higher education. Today, the membership association is made up of over 6,000 of the world's leading educational institutions and is dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education. Each year, College Board helps more than seven million students prepare for a successful transition to college through programs and services in college readiness and college success—including the SAT and the Advanced Placement Program. The organization also serves the education community through research and advocacy on behalf of students, educators, and schools.

For further information, visit collegeboard.org.