



# How To Get To College

A Guide to Preparing for the California State University



## What Classes Should I Take in High School?

### (9th through 12th Grades)

Everyone who wants to enter the California State University as a freshman must take these classes. Beginning in fall 2003, the California State University and the University of California will have the same college preparatory pattern. (Shoot for As and Bs in your courses, but earn at least a C grade. Remember, you need to have a 3.0 overall GPA.)

- **English:** 4 years of college preparatory English composition and literature (take one each year).
- **Math:** 3 years (4 years is recommended), including Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, or higher mathematics (take one each year).
- **History and Social Science:** 2 years, including 1 year of U.S. history (or 1 semester of U.S. history and 1 semester of civics or American government) and 1 year of social science.
- **Laboratory Science:** 2 years, including 1 biological science and 1 physical science.
- **Language (other than English):** 2 years of the same language (American Sign Language is applicable).
- **Visual and Performing Arts:** 1 year of dance, drama or theater, music, or visual art.
- **College Preparatory Elective:** 1 more year of any college preparatory subject.

These classes total 15 units (a unit equals one year or two semesters). You will need to plan to take four of these classes almost every year you are in high school.

## Why Are These Courses Important?

Reading, writing, math and science form the foundation upon which to build your knowledge and expand your mind. It's important to master these courses in middle school and high school as they will give you the tools you need to succeed in college and beyond:

**Reading:** Reading—literature, fiction and non-fiction—and lots of it helps improve vocabulary, verbal skills and writing ability.

**Writing:** Expressing yourself well is important in every field of endeavor. Learn good research and writing techniques. Get feedback and give yourself plenty of time to rewrite and edit your writing assignments to do the best job possible.

**Computing:** In today's technological world, having an understanding of math and science is a must. Progressing from basic math to algebra to geometry, calculus and trigonometry will give you the tools to open your mind to new ways of thinking and problem solving.

## What Grades Do I Need?

The CSU takes the top third of California high school graduates (and community college transfer students who have 56 or more transfer credits). If your GPA (grade point average) in the college prep courses taken in 10th through 12th grades is 3.0 and above, you are automatically eligible. If your GPA is between 2.0 and 3.0, your eligibility also depends on how well you do on the SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test) or ACT (American College Testing) college entrance tests. See your counselor or log on to [www.csumentor.edu](http://www.csumentor.edu) for more information.

**Note:** *Chico, Long Beach, San Diego and San Luis Obispo require higher GPAs and test scores for admission. The ACT or SAT must be taken by the October test date. See [www.csumentor.edu](http://www.csumentor.edu) for more information.*

## How Will I Pay for College?

**Good news:** The CSU has one of the lowest fees in the nation for a four-year public university—approximately \$2,500 a year! In addition, you, like almost half of the CSU's students, may qualify for financial aid. If you earn good grades in high school and meet financial need requirements, you are guaranteed a Cal Grant—free money for college. File a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and have your high school provide your GPA to the California State Student Aid Commission by March 2. Visit [www.csumentor.edu](http://www.csumentor.edu) to find out more about financial aid at the CSU. Visit [www.csac.ca.gov](http://www.csac.ca.gov) to learn more about Cal Grants and file a FAFSA at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).

## Need Help?

Click on [www.calstate.edu](http://www.calstate.edu) for information about the CSU's 23 campuses. For information on financial aid and admission, including how to apply to a CSU campus, visit [www.csumentor.edu](http://www.csumentor.edu). The CSUMentor website features:

- Admission information, including how to apply to a CSU campus online
- Virtual tours of each campus
- Financial aid information
- Answers to commonly asked questions
- A student planner for each grade level
- And more!



## You Can Make It Happen!

Preparing for college is a journey with a great reward at the end: a college degree. A college degree can help you reach your dreams. How do you get there? The first thing to know is that you can make it happen if you are willing to prepare yourself for college. It's best to start early but it's never too late to start getting serious about school. What does it take? The lists for each grade level below explain what you need to do now to prepare for college. You can also find information on our websites: visit [www.calstate.edu](http://www.calstate.edu) to learn about the CSU and its 23 outstanding campuses; or [www.csumentor.edu](http://www.csumentor.edu) for specific information about admissions, including how to apply to a CSU campus. You can also contact the CSU admissions division at (562) 951-4726 for more information.

### 9th Grade

#### **Students:**

- Take challenging courses to expand your knowledge and stretch your mind and that satisfy the CSU's college admission requirements: Algebra I or Geometry, college prep English, and a foreign language.
- Aim for As and Bs in all of your classes. Focus on your classwork and your homework to develop the study skills you will need to succeed in college.
- Check with the math teacher to see if your school participates in the Mathematics Diagnostic Testing Project, a readiness assessment test that determines your math level.
- Participate in school orientation to learn about the different activities available at your high school. Join clubs, play sports and volunteer. Take elective courses that interest you and that meet the CSU's admission requirements such as music, art, theater, or a foreign language.
- Develop a "Student Planner" on the CSUMentor website at [www.csumentor.edu](http://www.csumentor.edu). This planner will help (1) decide the high school courses you need to enroll in to meet the CSU admission requirements; (2) give you SAT and ACT test dates; and (3) tell you the GPA (Grade Point Average) you need to meet the CSU's admission requirements.

#### **Families:**

- Get information about what courses your student needs to take to graduate high school and be eligible for college by attending back-to-school nights and meeting with the high school counselor and teachers. See "What Classes Do I Need to Take?" (in the center of the poster) to help your student plan his or her four-year high school curriculum so he or she will be eligible for college upon graduation.

### 10th Grade

#### **Students:**

- Take Geometry or Algebra II and college prep English.
- Try to earn As and Bs in all your classes. Studying hard in high school will help prepare you for college course work.
- Focus on your classwork and your homework to develop the study skills you will need to succeed in college.
- Expand your knowledge and develop your interests: Take part in enrichment programs and special summer workshops and camps at CSU campuses in music, science, engineering, writing, filmmaking, theater, language, and many other subjects.

#### **Families and Students:**

- Visit CSU campuses, take tours, and talk to the students on campus about their experiences.
- Start talking to your student about what college they would like to attend and what subject they would like to major in.
- Begin to inform yourself about colleges, financial aid, scholarships and the educational requirements of the different careers your child may be interested in.



## 11th Grade

### Students:

- Check with your high school counselor to make sure you are taking the college preparatory classes needed for CSU admission, including Algebra II or advanced math and English.
- Strive for As and Bs, which are especially important during your junior and senior years.
- Register in October for the PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test), a practice exam for the SAT I (Scholastic Assessment Test I), which is required for several national scholarships, such as the National Merit Scholarship, the National Achievement Scholarship, and the National Hispanic Scholarship, and may be needed for admission.
- Take the PSAT and use the results to see where you are strong and where you need to improve to be ready for college.
- If taking AP (Advanced Placement) subjects, register to take the AP exams in the spring. Scoring well on the test(s) will give you college credit for these courses!
- Use the CSU's Diagnostic Writing Service at [www.essayeval.org](http://www.essayeval.org) to have a university essay reader evaluate your writing skills.
- Start thinking about when to take college entrance exams, the SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test) or the ACT (American College Testing). Register for the exam one month before the test date. If you take the exam in the spring or summer, you will get the results in time to see if you need to retake the test in the fall. Discuss this with your counselor. See [www.csumentor.edu](http://www.csumentor.edu) for test dates and locations.

### Families and Students:

- Attend college information programs and meet with CSU campus representatives when they visit your high school.
- Visit one or more of the CSU's 23 campuses. Contact the Outreach Office at the campus to schedule a tour and get information about academic programs, admission requirements and financial aid. Bring your student transcripts or a list of courses completed since the 9th grade.
- Prepare for the SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test) or ACT (American College Testing) by reviewing test preparation books with sample questions. Attend a workshop on how to prepare for these entrance exams. Financial aid may be available for some workshops or for the test fee; check with your counselor.

## 12th Grade

### Students:

There are lots of things to accomplish this year, but each step outlined below will get you closer to reaching your goal of graduating from high school and going to college!

- Take advanced math such as trigonometry or analytic geometry/calculus, English, and other courses required for CSU admission.
- Review class schedules with your counselor to ensure that you are meeting all of your college preparatory requirements.
- Maintain good grades (As and Bs) in all your courses. This is especially important for college admission.
- **Early September:** Register for the SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test) or ACT (American College Testing). Your high school counselor will provide registration forms and information about fee waivers.
- **October:** Begin the CSU application process on CSUMentor ([www.csumentor.edu](http://www.csumentor.edu)). Be aware of application deadlines!



### Families and Students:

- Visit CSU campuses you are interested in and meet with admission and outreach representatives.
- Attend college information programs, and talk to CSU representatives when they visit your high school.
- Check frequently with high school counselors or career center directors for scholarships awarded by schools, local companies and community groups.
- **October 1-November 30: Very important:** Apply to CSU campuses for next fall during this initial admission application filing period (some campuses may continue to accept applications after November 30).
- **January:** Complete and file the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).
- **February:** Be sure your financial aid application including GPA (grade point average) for Cal Grant is on file with the California State Student Aid Commission (CSAC). Your high school must submit your GPA for Cal Grant consideration by March 2.





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