III. NAVIGATING YOUR ACADEMIC JOURNEY
Your high school experiences are fundamental to understanding yourself and shaping your future.

As you navigate your path through high school, many of the choices you make will either open doors to your future, or close them. Taking the right classes and doing well in them is the best way to keep as many doors open as possible.
Navigating your academic journey

Attending college is the best way to ensure success in your next stage in life. Taking the right classes, working hard, and tracking your progress are critical parts of getting there.

This section will help you understand what’s required for college and how to choose the courses that will best develop your skills and interests.

01 TAKING ESSENTIAL CLASSES

02 MAKING CLASSES WORK FOR YOU

03 TRACKING YOUR PERFORMANCE
Taking essential classes

When it comes to taking the right classes for graduation and college, planning ahead matters.

Making a plan starts with understanding which high school courses every student needs to take. Completing your state’s high school graduation requirements won’t necessarily be enough to get into college. To set yourself up for success, at a minimum, you will need to take the classes listed below—and do your best in every course you take.

- **VISUAL/PERFORMING ARTS**: 1 year
- **SOCIAL STUDIES**: 2 years
- **WORLD LANGUAGE**: 2 years
- **MATH (INCLUDING AT LEAST ALGEBRA II)**: 3 years
- **SCIENCE (INCLUDING AT LEAST TWO LAB SCIENCES)**: 3-4 years
- **ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS**: 4 years

Learn more about your state’s minimum high school graduation requirements [on this website](https://xqsuperschool.org/pathfinder) or by asking a guidance counselor or teacher.
FACT:

Your college application is more than just a record of your grades and test scores—it’s the story of your learning journey.
UNDERSTAND

Making classes work for you

When you plan ahead and work hard in class, your high school experience becomes so much more than four years of checking off boxes.

As you pick your classes, think about how each class can develop your strengths and explore your interests.

**Required Courses**

*Which classes are required for graduation and college?*

Start by working with your school counselor to determine which courses to take during your four years of high school.

For certain subjects, like Math and English, make sure you work hard and complete all of the courses that help prepare for college placement tests, to avoid having to pay to retake these classes in college.

**Advanced Courses**

*Do you feel challenged by your classes?*

Advanced classes teach the skills—like problem-solving, writing, and time management—that you need to succeed in college and life.

Although you might get a lower grade in an advanced class, colleges want to see that you push yourself and are ready for the demands of college courses.

**Elective Courses**

*What subjects interest you? What skills do you want to develop?*

Electives are a great way to explore different subjects and develop new skills.

Your course selection—whether you immerse deeply in one subject or try many—can help college admissions understand your interests beyond required coursework.
UNDERSTAND

Tracking your performance

Grades aren’t just a letter on a page, they’re a tool for assessing where you are and where you need to improve.

Make sure to do your best in every class, and keep track of your grades. Every assignment, quiz, and test is a chance to improve.

What grades mean to

You

- Set goals for where you want your grades to be so that you can track your progress
- See your strengths and weaknesses—and figure out how to get help
- Think about how you can increase your grades and the difficulty of your classes over time

Colleges

- Assess your performance as a whole, looking at your grade and the difficulty of the class
- See that you were willing to try courses outside of your comfort zone
- Understand how your academic performance progressed over time

Struggling with course work? Make a plan to get back on track using this resource and by talking to your guidance counselor and teachers.
## THE PLAN

Make the most of my high school learning experience and take courses that prepare me for college

## THE STEPS I WILL TAKE

1. Take the essential classes on [page 4](#)  
2. Explore an interest through an elective course  
3. Do my best in every class and track my grades  
4. (Write my own)
## Want to learn more?

These resources will help you get started.

### SELECTING CLASSES AND TRACKING PROGRESS

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graduation requirements</strong></td>
<td>**Conversation with your guidance</td>
<td><strong>Select elective courses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn about which courses you should</td>
<td>counselor**</td>
<td>Read this article to get advice on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>should take based on your state’s</td>
<td></td>
<td>which electives can help you explore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>graduation requirements.</td>
<td></td>
<td>your passions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic tracker</strong></td>
<td><strong>AP course information</strong></td>
<td><strong>GPA calculator</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use Big Future’s Tracker to help you</td>
<td></td>
<td>Calculate your GPA and learn what</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>determine whether you’re taking the</td>
<td></td>
<td>grades you’ll need to get into your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>right courses for college.</td>
<td></td>
<td>target school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Explore](#) [Explore](#) [Explore](#) [Explore](#) [Explore](#) [Explore](#)
Continue your journey, grow your knowledge.

Don’t forget to check out these other XQ College Pathfinder resources.

There’s more to come.
We will keep adding new tools and resources.

We’d love to hear from you!
What do you think of this guide? How can we make it better? Are there other resources you’re looking for? Please let us know!

Send Feedback