Choosing Courses at the Proper Level

In certain subjects—including economics, English, foreign languages, mathematics, music, and the natural sciences—you must consider the level at which you should begin. Placement in these subjects is determined by test scores, by consultation with departmental representatives, and by your own judgment of the adequacy of your preparation. Some departments offer their own placement tests designed to ascertain the course level best suited to your preparation. Other departments may use standardized tests completed in high school or the Math and Science Survey you filled out over the summer for placement purposes.

Most students eligible to enroll in advanced courses have received high scores on Advanced Placement (AP) tests or on comparable tests, such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) higher-level examinations or the General Certificate of Education (GCE) A-level examinations. However, students without such scores may still enter Yale prepared to enroll directly in advanced courses. These students include, for example, native and heritage speakers of foreign languages, students who have studied independently, or those who have taken college courses while enrolled in high school.

If you are unsure about your preparation or the level at which you should begin study in a subject, the director of undergraduate studies (DUS) of the program can assist you.

After you have determined the level of courses that your Yale placement or high school test scores suggest for you, you can still review your placement decisions and, if necessary, modify them in consultation with the appropriate academic departments at Yale. Before the course selection period, you will have an opportunity to consult with DUSes from most of Yale’s majors and programs at the Academic Fair. During the course selection period, you will have time to attend some classes on a trial basis. You may still change the level of a course if, after submitting your course schedule, you remain uncertain about the accuracy of your placement. Consult the instructor and your residential college dean about the steps to take in such a case.

See Yale College Programs of Study, Academic Regulations, section Q, Acceleration for a detailed description of the use of Advanced Placement test scores in course placement and in the award of acceleration credits. For more information, be sure to consult the departmental program descriptions in the Yale College Programs of Study and Placement, Preregistration, and Applications for Special Programs, below.