

Graduation Requirements

Courses required for graduation and university admission.

The California *Education Code (EC)* establishes a minimum set of requirements for graduation from California high schools. The requirements should be viewed as minimums and support regulations established by local governing boards.

The University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU) systems have established a uniform minimum set of courses required for admission as a freshman. The UC has created a [Doorways](#) site that provides complete information about the high school courses approved for admission to the university. In addition to the required courses, California public universities have other [requirements](#) for admission as a freshman.

High School Subject Area	State Mandated Requirements* (EC 51225.3) for High School Graduation	UC Requirements for Freshman Admissions	CSU Requirements for Freshman Admissions
English	Three Years	Four years of approved courses	Four years of approved courses
Mathematics	Two years, including Algebra I, beginning in 2003–04. (EC 51224.5)	Three years, including algebra, geometry, and intermediate algebra. Four years recommended.	Three years, including algebra, intermediate algebra, and geometry.
Social Studies/Science	Three years of history/social studies, including one year of U.S. history and geography; one year of world history, culture, and geography; one semester of American government and civics, and one semester of economics.	Two years of history/social science, including one year of U.S. history or one-half year of U.S. history and one-half year of civics or American government; and one year of world history, cultures, and geography.	Two years, including one year of U.S. history or U.S. history and government and one year of other approved social science.
Science	Two years, including biological and physical sciences.	Two years with lab required, chosen from biology, chemistry, and physics. Three years recommended.	Two years, including one year of biological and one year of physical science with lab.
Foreign Language	One year of either visual and performing arts, foreign language, or career technical education**.	Two years in same language required. Three years recommended.	Two years in same language required.
Visual and Performing Arts	One year of either visual and performing arts, foreign language, or career technical education**.	One year of visual and performing arts chosen from the following: dance, drama/theater, music, or visual art.	One year of visual and performing arts chosen from the following: dance, drama/theater, music, or visual art.

Physical Education	Two years	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Electives	Not Applicable	One year***	One year***
Total	13	15 (7 in the last two years of high school)	15

* Beginning in 2005–06, all students must pass the California High School Exit Examination prior to graduation, in addition to meeting course requirements.

Beginning in 2009–10, *EC* Section 60852.3 provides an exemption from meeting the CAHSEE requirement as a condition of receiving a diploma of graduation for eligible students with disabilities who have an individualized education program (IEP) or a Section 504 plan.

Beginning January 1, 2010, students in foster care who transfer to a new school while in grades 11 or 12 may be able to graduate from high school without meeting the local graduation requirements that exceed the state minimum course requirements. In these cases, the district would need to conclude that the student would not reasonably be able to complete the additional local graduation requirements during the student’s remaining time in high school. These students would still be required to pass the CAHSEE. See [CDE Foster Youth Resources](#) for additional information.

** Beginning with the 2012–13 school year (sunsets with the 2017–18 school year), *EC* Section 51225.3 provides that a district may choose to adopt a career technical education course as an optional high school graduation requirement. For more information about this requirement, see our [Frequently Asked Questions page](#).

*** Must be chosen from approved academic courses in history, English, advanced mathematics, lab science, foreign language, social science, or fine arts. See UC [Doorways](#)  for approved courses at your high school.

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Last Reviewed: Thursday, January 16, 2014