

About the Advanced Placement Program[®] (AP[®])

The Advanced Placement Program[®] enables willing and academically prepared students to pursue college-level studies — with the opportunity to earn college credit, advanced placement, or both — while still in high school. AP Exams are given each year in May. Students who earn a qualifying score on an AP Exam are typically eligible, in college, to receive credit, placement into advanced courses, or both. Every aspect of AP course and exam development is the result of collaboration between AP teachers and college faculty. They work together to develop AP courses and exams, set scoring standards, and score the exams. College faculty review every AP teacher's course syllabus.

AP Physics Program

The AP Program offers four physics courses: AP Physics 1: Algebra-based, AP Physics 2: Algebra-based, AP Physics C: Mechanics, and AP Physics C: Electricity and Magnetism.

Guided by the National Research Council and National Science Foundation, the AP Program collaborated with college and university educators and AP teachers to develop two, yearlong AP Physics courses to replace AP Physics B.

AP Physics 1: Algebra-based and AP Physics 2: Algebra-based are the equivalent of the first and second semesters of an introductory, algebra-based Physics college course. Because these courses are intended to be yearlong courses, teachers have time to foster deeper conceptual understanding through student-centered, inquiry-based instruction. Students have time to master foundational physics principles while engaging in science practices to earn credit or placement.

In addition, there are two AP Physics C courses: Physics C: Mechanics and Physics C: Electricity and Magnetism. Each corresponds to one semester of an introductory, calculus-based college course. Physics C: Mechanics is taught prior to Physics C: Electricity and Magnetism.

AP Physics 1: Algebra-Based Course Overview

AP Physics 1 is an algebra-based, introductory college-level physics course. Students cultivate their understanding of Physics through inquiry-based investigations as they explore topics such as Newtonian mechanics (including rotational motion); work, energy, and power; mechanical waves and sound; and introductory, simple circuits.

LABORATORY REQUIREMENT

This course requires that 25 percent of the instructional time will be spent in hands-on laboratory work, with an emphasis on inquiry-based investigations that provide students with opportunities to apply the science practices.

RECOMMENDED PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisite courses.

Students should have completed geometry and be concurrently taking Algebra II or an equivalent course.

Although the Physics 1 course includes basic use of trigonometric functions, this understanding can be gained either in the concurrent math course or in the AP Physics 1 course itself.

AP Physics 1 Course Content

Students explore principles of Newtonian mechanics (including rotational motion); work, energy, and power; mechanical waves and sound; and introductory, simple circuits. The course is based on six Big Ideas, which encompass core scientific principles, theories, and processes that cut across traditional boundaries and provide a broad way of thinking about the physical world. The following are Big Ideas:

- Objects and systems have properties such as mass and charge. Systems may have internal structure.
- Fields existing in space can be used to explain interactions.
- The interactions of an object with other objects can be described by forces.
- Interactions between systems can result in changes in those systems.
- Changes that occur as a result of interactions are constrained by conservation laws.
- Waves can transfer energy and momentum from one location to another without the permanent transfer of mass and serve as a mathematical model for the description of other phenomena.

Science Practices

Students establish lines of evidence and use them to develop and refine testable explanations and predictions of natural phenomena. Focusing on these disciplinary practices enables teachers to use the principles of scientific inquiry to promote a more engaging and rigorous experience for AP Physics students. Such practices require that students:

- Use representations and models to communicate scientific phenomena and solve scientific problems;
- Use mathematics appropriately;
- Engage in scientific questioning to extend thinking or to guide investigations within the context of the AP course;
- Plan and implement data collection strategies in relation to a particular scientific question;
- Perform data analysis and evaluation of evidence;
- Work with scientific explanations and theories; and
- Connect and relate knowledge across various scales, concepts, and representations in and across domains.

Inquiry-Based Investigations

Twenty-five percent of instructional time is devoted to hands-on laboratory work with an emphasis on inquiry-based investigations. Investigations will require students to ask questions, make observations and predictions, design experiments, analyze data, and construct arguments in a collaborative setting, where they direct and monitor their progress.

