

How I Aced 22 AP Exams (and How You Can Too)

Secrets of AP testing from the AP State Scholar of Texas

by Joseph Allencherril

I have grouped the 22 AP tests I took into three categories: Math and Science, Humanities, and History / Social Sciences. Here is the list of my recommended books.

Math and Science

Biology

Best Prep Book(s): CliffsAP Biology

Tips: Memorize CliffsAP Biology = Automatic 5 on the AP exam. ‘Nuff said. Don’t be scared by the material.

Calculus AB and BC

Best Prep Book(s): Peterson’s

Tips: The AP Calculus test actually has one of the most generous curves of all the AP tests, so a 4 or 5 is not that difficult to achieve. Nonetheless, it might also be one of the most important AP courses for those considering a career in medicine, as the majority of medical schools will accept AP Calculus as a substitute for two semesters of calculus in college.

Chemistry

Best Prep Book(s): Princeton Review

Tips: Princeton Review is far and away the best prep book for AP Chemistry. Don’t be discouraged by the practice exams though – they are much more difficult than the real thing, but are quite didactic (there’s an SAT word for you).

Computer Science A

Best Prep Book(s): Barron’s, 5 Steps to a 5

Tips: This is one of the more difficult classes to self-study for – unless you’re already a programmer.

Environmental Science

Best Prep Book(s): SmartyPants

Tips: Just read this guide, and you’ll be set. It’s really all you need for a 5. That, and maybe a recollection of a little bit of middle school earth science.

This document may not be shared or distributed, in either excerpts or in its entirety, beyond its intended recipients without the consent of Ivy Planners, LLC.

Physics B, Physics C: Mechanics and Physics C: Electricity/Magnetism

Best Prep Book(s): Princeton Review

Tips: The Princeton Review covers all the concepts and presents you with problems that are more difficult than the real thing. If you go through this book and do enough of the free response questions from past years (which are available for free on the College Board's website), you are well on your way to a 5.

Statistics

Best Prep Book(s): REA, Princeton Review

Tips: REA might be a little too much for last minute review, but the Princeton Review might be just right for the student who paid attention in class but needs a quick refresher before the AP test. That being said, Barron's is a safer bet for those who choose to self-study. It's always better to be over prepared than to be underprepared.

This document may not be shared or distributed, in either excerpts or in its entirety, beyond its intended recipients without the consent of Ivy Planners, LLC.

Humanities

English Language and English Literature

Best Prep Book(s): CliffsAP

Tips: Practicing for AP English will also prepare you for the reading sections of the SAT and ACT. Think of it as killing three birds with one stone. The Literature exam is heavier on the literary terms than the Language exam.

French Language

Best Prep Book(s): Barron's

Tips: Like with all language exams, you need to do your best to immerse yourself (see Spanish language tips below).

German Language

Best Prep Book(s): Barron's

Tips: Like with all language exams, you need to do your best to immerse yourself (see Spanish language tips below).

Spanish Language

Best Prep Book(s): Barron's

Tips: Barron's has a great grammar review. Be sure to do practice exams, or you may be caught unawares by the real thing. Watch Spanish television and listen to Spanish radio. Full immersion is what you need to succeed with this, and pretty much all AP language exams.

Music Theory

Unfortunately, there are really no good prep books for this course. Your best bet is to look at past exams for this one – and hope that you have a good teacher.

This document may not be shared or distributed, in either excerpts or in its entirety, beyond its intended recipients without the consent of Ivy Planners, LLC.

History and Social Sciences

European History

Best Prep Book(s): Modern European History by Schaum's

Tips: There is a little overlap between this exam and the World History exam, so it's easier to take this exam after World History. The format of the test is essentially the same as that of US History and World History.

Macroeconomics and Microeconomics

Best Prep Book(s): Princeton Review

Tips: There is a good amount of overlap between these two exams, and I would recommend taking both if you can. Most high schools offer only the Macroeconomics class, however you could easily self-study Microeconomics. Again, practice is key here. Do enough of the past free response questions (free on the College Board website), and you'll be able to predict what's going to be on the test.

Psychology

Best Prep Book(s): Barron's

Tips: Barron's prep book is good if you have time to prepare for the AP test or if you're just self-studying (and even then it is still quite detailed, which is good if you're thoroughly interested in the subject). The Princeton Review, as usual, presents a concise review of practically everything you need for a great score.

US Government and Politics

Best Prep Book(s): Princeton Review

Tips: Government is really not a difficult test at all. Just read the Princeton Review and keep abreast of current events (which you should be doing anyway, right?)

US History

Best Prep Book(s): Princeton Review, REA

Tips: Again, Princeton Review is very concise. REA is better for self-studiers and those with more time to study.

World History

Best Prep Book(s): Princeton Review, Barron's

Tips: Princeton Review has everything you need for a 5 if you know it backward and forward. Barron's is recommended for those looking for a more comprehensive and thorough take on the subject (it is written by a Ph.D.); especially recommended for self-studiers with more time and a passion for history.

This document may not be shared or distributed, in either excerpts or in its entirety, beyond its intended recipients without the consent of Ivy Planners, LLC.