

AP Chemistry Welcome Letter

Welcome to Advanced Placement Chemistry! Some of you have taken an Advanced Placement course before, while for others, this will be your first experience with AP. This course requires much hard work and sacrifices of personal time. Therefore, now and in the future, it is important to keep focused on the advantages offered in this course. A few advantages are listed below.

1. One of the most important benefits of this course is that if you take and **pass** the AP exam given in May, you will be able to receive college credit at most universities and colleges in the United States.
2. Whether or not a student passes the national exam, he/she may choose to take freshman chemistry in college anyway. Students who have done this have found that they have a **tremendous** advantage over others who have not taken AP Chemistry. Most of the material covered in a college general chemistry course will be review and students who have taken AP Chemistry tend to do well on exams! There are several reasons for this:
 - a. High School classes are generally smaller than college classes. The opportunity for individual help is much greater. It is not unusual for a freshman chemistry class to have 200 students. In this situation it is nearly impossible to ask questions.
 - b. Teaching is the number one priority at the high school level.
 - c. At times freshman chemistry is used to "weed out" students to prevent large numbers of students moving into upper division classes. Many times only the most outstanding students move on.
3. Truthfully, AP Chemistry looks great on your transcript. Many universities are looking for ways to distinguish the thousands of students that apply for admission from each other. The number of difficult courses on a student's transcript helps.
4. AP Chemistry will teach you to think at higher levels. You will be forced to think and apply concepts to new situations. This is excellent preparation for the higher level thinking required at the college level.

Students need to be realistic about the expectations for this course. Many students think they are ready for college level work, but really do not know what this means or are the commitment it requires. In order to get a more realistic view of this course; I have included some perceptions entering students have, and the reality of the situation.

1. PERCEPTION: I have always been a straight A students and always will be.

REALITY: If your main purpose in taking this class is to collect one more A, you are taking the class for the wrong reason and may be disappointed. There are easier classes to get and A in. Hopefully you are taking the class to challenge yourself academically and to increase your knowledge of chemistry.

2. PERCEPTION: I can miss class and catch up on my own. I have always before.

REALITY: YOU CAN'T!!! In AP Chemistry, you have to give up a lot to get a lot. You can't be gone for three days and expect to get caught up with a ten-minute tutoring session. Think carefully about activities what will take you out of school. Learn to say no and make good choices.

3. PERCEPTION: Like all teachers, I'm exaggerating about how much work there is and the difficulty of the class.

REALITY: I'm not exaggerating!! Talk to students who have taken the class before.

4. PERCEPTION: I'm making the class tougher than it really needs to be.

REALITY: This is a college level course, not an advanced high school course. After completing this course, students should learn as much as they would taking any freshman chemistry course in any college or university in the United States.

5. PERCEPTION: The majority of the class is falling behind, I will slow down.

REALITY: I can't! As much as I would like to and some students may need it, I can't slow down for the students who are having difficulty keeping up. There is a body of knowledge that needs to be covered before mid-May when the AP exam is given.

6. PERCEPTION: I probably won't have to work as hard as other students.

REALITY: Not true. ALL students who are successful in this course put in many hours of studying outside of class time. Help will be available before and after school. If you are extremely busy with work and/or school and community activities, think carefully about the time and energy commitment you will be able to make for this class.

7. PERCEPTION: Mrs. Portwood doesn't **really** expect us to do the summer assignment, and she isn't **really** going to give us a test during the first week in August.

REALITY: I'm **really** serious about this. The summer assignment is mainly review of Chemistry I. The test will give you a head start on several things including: the memorization ionic charges, solubility rules, basic stoichiometry, etc. This early work will allow us to spend more time later on more difficult topics.

You will find the summer assignment and information regarding the first week of quizzes at the end of this sheet. Hopefully this letter will clarify the expectations of this class. There is fun to be had in this class, as well as the satisfaction of challenging yourself in an upper level science course.

I hope you have a safe and wonderful summer. Don't forget your summer assignment/early test - and I'll see you in the fall!

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