

SOPHOMORE COURSE SELECTION FAQs

What should I keep in mind when planning and selecting my junior year courses?

When choosing your junior year classes, it is important for sophomores to think about how well they have done thus far in school, including their grades, the effort they made to earn those grades, the level of rigor in their current curriculum, time commitments outside of school, the importance of social and emotional well-being, and their subject area strengths and interests.

The foundation of a successful junior year curriculum is based on an honest, realistic self-assessment about how well they have done thus far at New Trier and what expectations they have for their continued success. It is also helpful to ask for guidance and input from current teachers, advisers, post-high school counselors and parents/guardians. Picking junior curriculum is not about taking on the hardest courses possible, but rather doing as well as possible in the courses you choose to take. Finally, plan a curriculum that is influenced by self-reflection and self-awareness, not by what your peers are doing or suggesting what you should be doing. Just because it is right for them, doesn't mean it is right for you.

What questions should I ask before choosing my courses?

How much time do I spend on homework in my current courses?

How much sleep do I get given the demands of my current courses?

How much time do I commit to my extracurricular activities outside of class?

What are my social commitments outside of academics and my activities?

How much will moving up a level in a class increase the demands of the course and consequently my ability to be successful?

If I am really struggling in a current course, should I consider moving down a level?

What graduation requirements do I still need to complete in the next two years?

Have I met requirements for Civics, Consumer Education and 1 year of fine/applied art?

Why are junior year classes so important?

Every year of high school is important to your continued growth and maturity as a student and person (socially, emotionally and academically), however from the post-high school counseling consideration, for those pursuing the college path, junior year will be the last full year of high school coursework that you will complete before you apply to college. It is also the year from which you will ask for a core academic teacher to write a letter of recommendation in support of your application. So choose a challenging, but realistic schedule that allows you to balance extracurricular activities, engage in a balanced life outside of school, and find the academic success of which you are capable.

How many core academic courses should I be taking?

The answer to this question will vary from student to student, so there is no right or wrong answer. Some will choose to do 5 or more core academic courses every year and some will choose a variation of that. However, roughly two-thirds of New Trier students took 19 core academic credits over four years. In other words, two-thirds took 5 core academic courses for 3 years and 4 core academic courses for 1 year. If you are considering the four-year college path, then 4-5 core academic courses every year is strongly recommended.

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Should I move up levels for my junior year to be more competitive for my college applications?

Moving up levels in a class is a choice you should make carefully and thoughtfully, taking into consideration the big picture. Consult your current teacher in the subject area(s) you intend to move up in for their insight into your preparation and ability to succeed. Consider your extracurricular commitments and how you are at managing time, homework and a faster paced class. What grade did you earn in your current course and if you do move up, would you be content with potentially earning a lower grade? Again, moving up in a course and taking on the increased rigor is helpful if you can continue learning and performing well in the class.

Only 3-5% of graduates took all four level classes during their time at New Trier, and the reality for more than 90% of New Trier students is that they take the different core subject areas at a mix of levels (2, 3, 9 and/or 4). Students find great success in admissions to a variety of selective colleges by taking courses at the levels most suitable to their ability to learn and earn strong grades.

Does the state university system of California require a visual or performing art?

Yes, if you anticipate applying to a college in the University of California system or in the Cal State system, you will need one year of the same visual or performing art to be eligible for admissions. Courses that would fulfill this requirement include art, music, dance, theatre, photography, etc. For additional clarification, please discuss with your post-high school counselor as the requirements vary from school to school.

Should I consider taking elective courses?

Absolutely! in order to graduate from New Trier you need one year of a fine or practical art, and a consumer education course. However, it is fun to think beyond just what is required and think about what you are interested in and what you might be good at. New Trier has such a rich variety of elective offerings with opportunities to explore areas of interest that you might not otherwise have a chance to explore: art, music, dance, theatre, architecture, engineering, photography, cooking, automotives, to name a few. Each elective course can not only provide exposure to a possible career path, but also demonstrate your interests beyond the core academic course work and show a glimpse of talent and experiences that you could bring to a campus community.

Social studies and junior year?

While there may be a few exceptions, almost all New Trier students will take US History in their junior year. While only world history, US history and a semester of Civics are required to graduate, the minimum number of social studies courses post-high school counseling recommends is three. There are some exceptions to this of course, but students who complete three years of social studies will leave the door open at most colleges. Similar to language, taking four will maximize the number of years in social studies, but will ultimately depend upon your personal interests, future college major, aptitudes and the other core academics you plan to take.

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How much math should I take?

New Trier requires students to take three years of math in high school in order to graduate, so most if not all sophomores selecting junior year courses will be taking math. There are a handful of colleges that will require four years of math (Missouri, Purdue, Minnesota, Indiana (3.5), for example) and many that highly recommend it. If you are interested in STEM fields such as engineering or a possible business major, then you will most likely need four years of math.

I am thinking about stopping my language after two years, but should I continue to the next year?

While New Trier does not have a graduation requirement for modern or classical languages (MCL), students are strongly encouraged to complete at least two years of the same language to be eligible for admission at many colleges. To be competitive for admission, however, we suggest students consider completing at least 3-4 years of a modern or classical language. Students who complete four or more years of MCL are considered to have maximized the subject area. Some students with learning differences will have one or no years of language depending upon the individual parameters of their IEP and that is perfectly appropriate. Some students will choose to take 2, 3, 4, 5 or even 6 years of a language, depending on their individual circumstance. How many years you choose may depend on personal preference, aptitude, interest and the balance of your other core academics.

I'm considering playing college athletics. Are there specific guidelines I need to follow to make sure I'm NCAA eligible?

For a complete listing of high school eligibility requirements, visit the NCAA Eligibility Center. A direct link to their core course requirements is linked [here](#).