

# Tips for Completing AP Summer Homework

## **Acknowledge its importance**

For AP-level students, one of the most challenging aspects of summer homework is believing in its importance. “It’s summer!” your mind might unhappily shout. “Summer is for fun!” Unfortunately, the reality is that *true* learning is a continuous process. Completing your AP homework does not need to be an all-consuming task (and reaching that state is unhealthy), but it does need to be a task this summer. Think of it this way — world-class athletes do not train for part of the year. They instead follow a consistent schedule that varies in intensity. The summer is a time that your brain can use to recharge, but it still needs stimulation. Consider your AP homework that stimulation.

## **Create a schedule**

Across the United States and abroad, thousands of high school students are enrolling in and preparing for Advanced Placement (or AP) courses. The AP curriculum is rigorous, and as a result, many AP programs assign homework during the summer. Although this homework carries a significant cost in time and effort for reluctant students, it can help you maintain and strengthen your academic skills during the long summer months.

The total “cost” can move well beyond time and effort, however — if you reach the week before school begins without having completed this assigned homework, you may run the very real risk of struggling in the class before it even starts. Even if your AP summer homework is not factored into your regular grade (and at many high schools, it is), you could be starting the academic year at a disadvantage.

Luckily, AP summer homework is not insurmountable. If you are facing a mountain of required reading, problem sets, and essays, here are several tips and tricks that can help you complete your AP summer homework.

## **Create a plan**

Before you begin your AP homework, make a plan. On the first day of summer vacation, it may seem as though you have months in which to do your work, but this time quickly disappears. Procrastinating can be a recipe for disaster. To ensure you remain on schedule, purchase a calendar and set milestones in pen. *Do* leave time to enjoy a family vacation or an outing with friends. If you have two books to read for AP English Literature and Composition, for example, note the page counts, and divide the total pages by the days until school begins. This is your daily minimum.

## **Reward your progress**

Write each of your milestones, or goals, on an index card with the target date of completion and a reward for adhering to that schedule. Post these index cards where you will see them — beside your television, next to your laptop, on the refrigerator, etc. Choose a reward that is truly motivating, such as seeing a highly anticipated movie. If you tend to procrastinate, consider leaving a favorite video game or personal possession with a friend or family member who will only return the item to you when you reach your goal.

## **Stay in contact with classmates and teachers**

Summer homework is far less beneficial if you do not understand the assignment. Some AP teachers will provide you with a reading guide for AP United States History or an answer key for your AP Calculus BC problems. You can also look for relevant resources online. Ask if your teacher welcomes questions over summer vacation, or start a study group with your classmates. Without the consistent feedback that you receive during the school year, it can be difficult to know when your summer homework is done well. Communicating with your classmates and/or teachers can help you avoid that uncomfortable, sinking feeling when you reach the first test of the school year, only to find that your leisurely pool-side skimming of *A Tale of Two Cities* was insufficient.

## **Continually challenge yourself**

The best architects, athletes, doctors, lawyers, teachers, and, yes, students become better at their trades by constantly challenging themselves. Signing up for an AP class certainly counts as a challenge, but once you have your AP summer assignments in hand, begin looking for ways to improve your knowledge base and your performance as a student. Seek out AP practice tests in AP Biology or AP Statistics, and experiment with the problems they contain. Not only can you work these problems into the schedule you created, you can also utilize them to identify your class-specific strengths and weaknesses. If you are focusing on courses that are literature-heavy, look for each class’s reading list, and get a head start on the books that will be assigned early in the school year. It can seem near-impossible to motivate yourself in the summer months, but come fall, you will likely be very glad you did. Good luck!