

Ecology/Environmental Science, or Ecology/Environmental Science Honors: Which Should I Take?

Please review the course descriptions in the Program of Studies <http://www.arps.org/hs/Academics/CurrentProgramOfStudies.pdf> as you make your decision about the courses for which you will register. You should consider your interests, your future goals, and what other courses you will be taking, in selecting a set of courses that will be both challenging and manageable for you in your first year of high school. The questions below may help guide you in making your decision.

Note: Both *Ecology/Environmental Science* courses will cover how the climatology of Earth creates major life zones, and how minerals and rocks become sources of nutrients for plants. You will learn about how living things interact with their physical and biological environments, and will study populations, the transfer of energy through food webs, and how humans affect the functioning of ecosystems. You will perform many field investigations outside, using our local environment as an outdoor lab.

	College Prep Course	Honors Course
Content covered	All major objectives covered	All major objectives covered in depth; plus some additional objectives
Lab Investigations & Field Work	Emphasized in both courses	Emphasized in both courses
Pace	An average high school pace	A faster pace
Critical & Creative Thinking	Emphasized in both courses	Emphasized in both courses
Mathematical Problem-Solving	Students use mathematics to solve real-world, written, and graphical problems.	Students perform more in-depth quantitative analysis of problems, including more multi-step problems, graphical and statistical analysis.
Reading	Textbook readings and articles at a basic high school level	More advanced textbook and article readings will be required.
Amount of Homework	Students report spending 20-30 minutes on homework several days a week; more when a lab report is due.	Students report spending 30-60 minutes on homework many days of the week; more when a lab report is due.
Preparation for MCAS	Covers all <i>Ecology, Mathematical Skills, and Scientific Inquiry Learning Standards</i> required for the Biology MCAS; as well as some basic <i>Chemistry Learning Standards</i> .	Covers additional <i>Mathematical Skills</i> and introductory <i>Chemistry Learning Standards</i>

Guiding Questions to Assist You in Your Decision-Making Process

Are you interested in all, or most, of the topics of *Ecology & Environmental Science*? Are you considering a future career in Science? Are you willing to invest additional time and study for this course?

You might want to sign up for the Honors course.

Do you enjoy reading?

There will be more independent reading, at a more advanced level, in Honors.

Will you have time to complete nightly homework assignments?

Both courses assign regular homework. Honors courses require more work at home on your own.

What is your comfort level with Mathematics?

Both courses require students to write formal lab reports that include mathematics and graphing. More depth and additional mathematical calculations will be required in Honors. A generally higher comfort level with mathematical problems will be helpful in the Honors courses. Extra support and further explanations of mathematical concepts will be offered in College Preparatory courses.

Do you have outside interests that might take priority over science homework? How many Honors courses do you plan to take?

It may be easier to balance a heavy extra-curricular schedule with College Preparatory courses. It's important not to over-extend yourself. If you take Honors Social Studies, the Honors option in English, and Ecology/Environmental Science/Honors, you may be signing up for a particularly challenging first year at the high school.

Do you find it challenging to interpret multiple choice questions on tests and quizzes?

Tests and quizzes will cover more material, at a greater depth, in Honors level courses. You may find the transition to high school tests and quizzes more comfortable in College Preparatory courses.

How are your study skills? Do you manage your time effectively? Is your notebook well-organized? Are you a good independent worker? Are you good about coming to a teacher for help when you have a question or concern?

The Honors course will require more independent work, so good study skills are important. In both courses, it is a good practice to come to teachers for help earlier rather than later, on any topic you are finding difficult.

College Prep Textbook: Environmental Science, by Karen Arms. Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 2008.

Honors Textbook: Environment, 6th Ed., by Raven, Berg, & Hassenzahl. Wiley & Sons, 2008.