



In this document you will find information about:

- The timeline
- Getting to know the upper school
- The re-enrollment process
- Academics
- Frequently asked questions

Timeline

- November** Step-up Day for Harker eighth graders at the upper school. Mon., Nov. 18, 2024, 3-5 p.m.
Dinner and student panel for eighth graders and their parents, Mon., Nov. 18, 5-6:30 p.m.
- December** Letter from the upper school admission office confirming eligibility to re-enroll to those who meet the re-enrollment requirements based on November grade report “snapshot.”
- January** Course Selection Night for grade 8 students and parents previews academic course work in ninth grade and prepares students to submit their choices. At the middle school theater on Tues., Jan. 28, 2025, 6-7:15 p.m.
Sign re-enrollment contract and submit deposit to the business office to hold place in grade 9. Contract and deposit deadline is Jan. 31, 2025.
- April** Welcome Night at the upper school for all students and parents (separate events at the same time).
- May** Grade 8 teachers confirm placements for grade 9 courses, and course lists are emailed to parents and students.
- July** The bookstore, accessed through the parent and student portals, is updated for fall textbooks by early July. Students should purchase textbooks and ready laptops for August (see student or parent portals for computer needs).
- August** Fall sports season begins Aug. 11, 2025 – Cross country, boys/girls water polo, football, girls volleyball, girls tennis, girls golf. (Please take note to plan vacations to end by Aug. 10, 2025.)
“Welcome to the Upper School” evening hosted by Paul Barsky, upper school head.
Grade 9 Student Orientation Day
Matriculation Day - individual schedules published, and school starts!

Getting to Know the Upper School

Save the date! Mon., Nov. 18, 2024

Upper School Step-up Day, 3-5 p.m.

Harker eighth graders will take a bus to the upper school campus and have the opportunity to spend a fun afternoon learning about all the wonderful opportunities in high school and interacting with students and faculty. We will assume all grade 8 students will attend, but if they are unable to, their parent may opt them out of the visit day.

Dinner and student panel, 5-6:30 p.m.

Parents are invited to join their Harker eighth grader to have dinner and hear about the upper school experience from a panel of Harker seniors.

More detailed information to follow for these Mon., Nov. 18 events.

Re-enrollment Process

Early re-enrollment notification

In mid-November, using the November gradebook snapshot, administration and faculty review the performance of all eighth grade students. Students whose current and past performance show a strong and consistent pattern of achievement will be offered the opportunity to re-enroll for the ninth grade. Re-enrollment notification will occur in the beginning of December. Re-enrollment contracts will be offered at the beginning of February during the normal re-enrollment time.

Criteria for re-enrollment

The middle school student/parent handbook establishes the following criteria that must be met to be eligible for re-enrollment: “To support a successful learning experience in the upper school, grade 8 students must earn a C average or higher for the year in English, math, history and science with a D average or higher in foreign language. They must also exhibit good behavior and citizenship as outlined in the handbook. The middle school faculty and counselors will make every attempt to assist students who are experiencing academic difficulties.”

February re-enrollment

All student files will be reviewed again at the end of the first semester and re-enrollment contracts will be offered at the regular re-enrollment time to all eighth grade students who have met the criteria for re-enrollment.

If a student does not qualify for re-enrollment at February contract time, a final review of grades will occur using the March gradebook snapshot to determine if a student qualifies to enroll at the upper school.

Upper School Academics

To give you a view into the upcoming upper school academic experience and to ensure a smooth transition, we've compiled information about upper school courses, placement and an FAQ section based on questions fielded over the years. While further reading is not required now, more complete academic information is available in the upper school [Course of Study](#).

Grade 9 Classes

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| 1. English | } | Placement by eighth grade teachers based on semester 1 student work. |
| 2. Math | | |
| 3. Science | | |
| 4. History | | Placement by eighth grade English and history teachers based on semester 1 student work. |
| 5. Foreign Language | | Student decides language, teacher places. |
| 6. Study of the Arts | | Student submits two desired options. |
| 7. “Extra Period Option” | | A non-academic class. Student decides, applies, auditions. Can be left as a free period. |

The upper school runs a seven period block schedule with three classes meeting one day and four classes meeting the next. Students can take up to six academic classes and one Extra Period Option (EPO). All ninth graders take six academic classes: English 1, math, physics, World History 1, language, and a study of the arts.

Here are important considerations:

- Placement in all but the arts class are based on work in eighth grade and approvals by eighth grade teachers.
- Students who choose to start a new language at a level higher than level 1 will be given a proficiency evaluation on Sat., April 19.
- The options for the grade 9 arts class are Study of Visual Arts, Study of Music, Study of Theater Arts, Study of Technical Theater, or Study of Dance.
- The options for the Extra Period Option (EPO) class include performing arts choral ensembles (Dolce Voce & Rhapsody), Orchestra, Lab Band, Harker Dance Company, and Kinetic Krew, Speech & Debate, Principles of Business and Entrepreneurship, and Introduction to Journalism. Students may also take a P.E. class or a free period in the EPO space.

FAQs

How do we purchase a computer and books for the upper school?

Laptop (hardware and software) requirements are in the Resources tool of the parent portal and the Tech tab on the student portal and also found on the Back-to-School Hub which launches in June 2025. The online bookstore is used in the upper school like in the middle school. The store is ready for use by mid July, and this is where you should go to most easily determine which books are required for each course (and to purchase).

How do we select courses for ninth grade?

In January, students and parents are invited and strongly encouraged to attend the Course Selection Night for grade 8 students to learn more about academics at the upper school and the specific choices for ninth grade. Then, students will complete a Google form with their choices.

How much homework should my child expect at the upper school?

Student's homework loads will depend on the number and level of classes they pursue as well as their aptitude in those subjects. Our teachers follow a guideline of no more than 45 minutes of homework for each subject (60 minutes for honors and 75 minutes for AP) per class meeting. Keep in mind that the upper school uses a block schedule where classes meet every other day, four classes on one day, then three classes the next. Therefore, this amount of homework is assigned every other day.

Are changes to a student's selections allowed?

We use the students' selections to create sections and teacher schedules for the upper school, so it is important that students are thoughtful about their selections.

How are placements (non-honors or honors) determined for grade 9 courses?

Just as between grades 7 and 8, course level is determined by the teachers based on student work and progress; grade 8 teachers place students for grade 9. History placement is determined by semester one student work in English **and** history due to the greater emphasis on writing in upper school history. While placements are determined by a student's first semester grades, performance in second semester is also reviewed for significant changes.

Are the requirements for honors placement the same as in middle school?

Yes, students are expected to achieve a solid A in a non-honors course before taking an honors course.

When do we find out the placement for grade 9 courses?

Student course lists are shared with students and parents in late May.

Does my child need to continue with their middle school language?

All students must complete through level 3 in one language to fulfill the upper school graduation requirement. Students are welcome to continue their language from middle school, honoring the placement of their grade 8 teacher. Students may also pursue a new language. The placement for this language is determined by a proficiency evaluation administered in April if the student has experience and desires to start above level 1 in this new language.

Can my child take AP CS A in ninth grade?

Students who have met the prerequisites for AP Computer Science (which includes successful completion of Honors Algebra 2/Trig by June) may delay their study of the arts graduation requirement. This is not recommended, but is possible for very strong students deeply interested in continuing in computer science beyond the AP course in grades 10-12.

Long-Term Upper School Planning FAQs:

How do we know if the course load is correct for our child? I've heard about AP classes, SATs, etc.

Focus on the grade 9 courses and choices right now, and trust the assessment of student work and placements of the grade 8 teachers. In the fall of ninth grade, the assistant division head educates the ninth grade students and parents on curricular options and guides them in creating a four-year plan. This initial plan can be modified over the years to meet your child's changing interests and goals. Information on APs and SATs is provided in the opening seven pages of the upper school Course of Study on the parent/student portals, the Academic Planning portal tile, as well as through College Counseling events. (Parent portal>Resources> search on "course.")

Is summer school required to do well in the upper school?

The Summer Institute offers coursework that can benefit some students, but taking a class in the summer is not a requirement or necessity to have a successful high school career. Being fresh and excited to return to school is the only requirement for summer.

I've heard about students self-studying for AP exams. What does Harker think about that?

We believe strongly in the strength of our curriculum and the value of learning with our teachers. Therefore, we do not encourage students to take AP® exams if the student did not take the corresponding AP course (referred to as "self-study exams"). If, however, students do pursue a self-study exam in spite of our recommendation, they may not take the corresponding AP course at Harker after sitting for the test. For example, if a student takes the AP Statistics exam, that student may not take the AP Statistics course at Harker in a subsequent year.

Should my child take additional coursework outside of Harker's curriculum?

Harker, at both the upper and middle schools, offers an impressive amount of opportunities for students to explore, both inside and outside of the classroom. That being said, some students might be interested in coursework that Harker does not offer, and taking an outside class could be a way to explore these interests. Please be advised, outside classes will not be included on Harker's upper school transcript nor will these classes serve as prerequisites for our classes.