

Why Take Latin?

The reasons are limitless and each person's experience is unique, but here is what college and university admissions personnel say when asked about Latin as an academic pursuit:

“The study of Latin is also the study of history, art, music, theatre, philosophy, law, literature, laboratory science, ‘and more!’”

Teresa Hudkins, Willamette University

“The study of Roman culture which typically accompanies Latin study informs the study of any Western literature, art, or culture as well. [. . .] If Latin were dead, every Western culture and language would be also bereft of life.”

Matthew Potts, Admissions Counselor, University of Notre Dame

“Latin trains abstract thinking, provides a key to all modern Romance languages, is a model for interdisciplinary study (language, history, culture) and can be a lot of fun.”

Michael C. Behnke, Vice President for Enrollment, University of Chicago

“Vocabulary and grammar of the English language can be mightily improved through the study of Latin.”

Kathy Lindsey, Associate Director of Admissions, Middlebury College

“A background in Latin provides students with a stronger English vocabulary. Open any SAT prep book and you will see a crash course in Latin in the vocab section.”

Andrea Thomas, Assistant Dean of Admission, Hamilton College

Should I Take Latin III & IV?

Many students struggle with this question. They often wonder if taking two years of one language in high school is enough. Through continued study, much can be gained beyond what any transcript will ever show. However, here are the thoughts of college admissions personnel when they review the language section of a candidate's high school transcript.

“[...] the student studying for four years has a genuine interest in knowledge and education, not just in fulfilling minimum foreign language requirements.”

Matthew Potts, Admissions Counselor, University of Notre Dame

“We give the most consideration to students who have taken the highest level language available at their school.”

Robert Killion, Office of Admissions, Haverford College

“Our recommendation is that, in terms of high school preparation, students take 4 years of a single language, believing that achieving proficiency in a language is preferable to not quite achieving proficiency in two.”

Steve Le Menager, Director of Admissions, Princeton University

“[. . .] the more years of a language, the better—it shows that the student has gone beyond the minimum requirement.”

Lia Brassord, Assistant Director of Admissions, Smith College

“While most colleges do not require four years of a language or a science for admission, dropping a discipline can be detrimental to a student’s chances of being admitted. Admission Officers are looking for students who have challenged themselves in many areas. At the most competitive colleges in the country, Admission Officers are making distinctions between thousands of overly qualified applicants. In speaking with students about senior year course selection, we encourage students to think carefully before dropping a language.”

Andrea Thomas, Assistant Dean of Admission, Hamilton College

“[. . .] depth and mastery are important in the serious study of any discipline. The student who is willing to do more than the minimum is *always* more appealing.”

Ray Brown, Dean of Admissions, Texas Christian University

“We look for at least three years of study of the same language for many of our programs. If not completed before admission, it must be made up with a year of college-level study.”

B.J. Ore, Sr. Associate Director of Admissions, University of Pittsburgh

“Ideally a student will present at least 4 years of the same language (classical or modern) if the curriculum allows.”

Terry Cowdrey, Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, St. Lawrence University

“The more years in one language the better it shows commitment and desire for proficiency.”

Dennis O’Driscoll, Director of Admissions, Creighton University

“Three to four years of a language shows follow-through and a deeper level of interest.”

Michael C. Behnke, Vice President for Enrollment, University of Chicago

College & University Admissions Personnel Respond to Latin

When you see Latin on a transcript, what impression of the student does that give you?

“Students taking Latin are typically scholarly. They pursue academic study in the purest sense, they are not simply fulfilling a requirement.”

Matthew Potts, Admissions Counselor, University of Notre Dame

“We value the study of Latin very highly, at least on par with other languages.”

Steve LeMenager, Director of Admission and Associate Dean, Princeton University

“We add on extra ‘weight’ when we see Latin on a transcript.”

Philip Ballinger, Dean of Admissions, Gonzaga University

“That’s a student who is willing to step away from the crowd.”

Ray Brown, Dean of Admissions, Texas Christian University

“We consider students who study Latin seriously (with strong, steady performance) to be excellent candidates for Bryn Mawr.”

Elizabeth Mosier, Acting Director of Admissions, Bryn Mawr College

“This year, I was particularly impressed by a student with average test scores and grades who had taken Latin throughout middle and high school. We ended up offering the student admission, and I think it is fair to say that it was his commitment to Latin that tipped the scales.”

Andrea Thomas, Assistant Dean of Admission, Hamilton College

“This student is likely to be disciplined, have a strong basis for further learning, be a little more creative toward intellectual pursuits than most.”

Michael C. Behnke, Vice President for Enrollment, University of Chicago

“Classical languages on a transcript indicate seriousness of purpose and true devotion to a rigorous program of study.”

Fred Zuker, Vice President and Dean of Student Services, University of Dallas