



Saint Francis High School

Math Department

Frequently Asked Questions (Student- Facing)

During placement season, our academics team receives a high volume of messages from incoming families. Some of our most frequently asked questions about math placement can be found below with answers from our team.

Q: How does the placement process work for math?

A: A student's math placement is determined by their 8th grade course and their placement exam score. All students are eligible for placement in the next course in their sequence, so long as they have received a passing grade in the class. For example, a student taking Algebra 1 in 8th grade would automatically be eligible for Geometry at Saint Francis. The placement exam determines a student's eligibility for the honors level of that course. For example, a student hoping to enter Geometry Honors after taking Algebra 1 in 8th grade would need to earn a qualifying score on the Saint Francis exam.

Q: Why is the placement exam important?

A: Our students come from over 100 middle schools, all with different experiences in math classes. The purpose of the placement exam is to establish a consistent baseline for the skills that students are expected to have in math classes at Saint Francis. While we understand that a single score is not always representative of a student's understanding, it is our most reliable predictor of student success in a math class at Saint Francis. Our ultimate goal is to match students to the class that will provide an attainable academic challenge during 9th grade.

Q: I did not get into the honors level but they really want to take honors. What happens next?

A: There is a waitlist available for students who did not place into honors but are interested in the honors level. In the fall, we will review the waitlist, should any additional spots open in our honors sections. Students should register for their recommended class but can be placed on the waitlist by selecting the corresponding option on their registration form after placement exams.

Q: What happens if I don't make it off the waitlist?

A: Even if a student does not get into honors, there will not be any placement implications beyond 9th grade. For example, all of our Geometry and Geometry Honors students take a placement exam during the school year to check their readiness for the Advanced Algebra 2 Trig Honors course. Placement is then determined based on their grade in the current course and their score on the placement exam. There is no preference or automatic placement given to students in Geometry Honors.

Q: Can I see a copy of my student's exam to understand what they missed?

A: Unfortunately, we are not able to release individual exams as it can compromise the integrity of our assessments for future years

Q: I need an algebra refresher over the summer. What resources are available?

A: If you are interested in pursuing Geometry and think that some extra support might help bridge the gap, we do have an Algebra 1 course available. The Algebra 1 course is an in-depth option that will cover Algebra 1 topics. While the summer program is not a replacement for an Algebra 1 class, it might provide the additional support you are looking for to feel confident in a Geometry placement.

If you are interested in taking Algebra 1 next year but would like some extra practice before the school year begins, we offer a Lancers Rising course. The Lancers Rising session will help students brush up on their algebraic foundations.

Lancers Rising Link: <https://www.sfhs.com/summer/lancers-rising>

Summer School Course Link: <https://www.sfhs.com/summer/high-school/courses>

Q: What about other summer programs for math? What opportunities are available for summer learning?

For more information on our summer programs, you can visit [our page](#) on Trigonometry & Geometry advancement. Students who are taking geometry or trigonometry for the first time as a summer class can use those courses as an opportunity for advancement. However, students may not take Algebra 1 for the first time as a summer class, due to the foundational skills that are built in that course.

Q: I received a tentative recommendation for honors. What does that mean?

A: A tentative recommendation indicates that a student was near the cutoff score on the placement exam, but did not quite reach the score for a strong recommendation. Students that are near the cutoff would want to carefully consider whether or not they feel ready for the challenge of honors in their 9th grade year and may want to take on some additional algebra review over the summer.

We want to also note that Advanced Algebra 2 Trigonometry Honors, in particular, is a very rigorous course. Students should be aware of the demands of the course if they choose to pursue it with a tentative recommendation.

Q: I received a tentative recommendation for honors. If I choose to take the class, how long do I have to drop the class at the beginning of the year?

A: The window for changing a class at the beginning of the year is very short (only a few days). Students who are seriously struggling in a class may have the opportunity to make a change again at the 6-week grading period, but that change is often only used in very difficult situations. We highly encourage students to choose a placement that feels like a good fit initially and not overextend themselves, as moving classes can be difficult socially and can have broader implications for a student's schedule.

Q: How does math placement impact science placement?

A: In order to be placed into Biology Honors, students should be concurrently enrolled in Geometry during 9th grade. We are able to accept students into Biology Honors if they have met the prerequisites for Geometry but choose to take Algebra 1 Honors instead.

We do want to note that there will be potential implications on a student's science honors trajectory moving forward if this pathway is pursued. For placement in Chemistry Honors, students must have concurrent placement in Algebra 2. Students are able to take summer geometry after their 9th grade year to bridge that gap but will need to plan accordingly to progress in the honors sequence.

Q: How does honors credit work at Saint Francis?

A: There is extra honors credit assigned for most classes, but the UC system does not honor credit for all classes. For example, Geometry Honors is one of the classes that would receive an internal honors designation, but would not count towards a UC GPA. More information can be found on Page 43 of our scheduling guide and course bulletin.

Link: <https://www.sfhs.com/academics>

Q: What's the difference between honors and on-level anyways?

A: Our honors classes are generally more rigorous and faster paced than our on-level classes. Students are expected to enter the class with full understanding of the prerequisite concepts, as little to no time is spent reviewing previous content. On-level classes, on the other hand, have the flexibility to spend a bit more time exploring foundational topics. Some course-specific differences can be found below:

- Algebra 1 Honors moves at a faster pace and focuses more on real life applications. This course will cover all of the Algebra 1 topics, but will include more challenging problems and less review of pre-algebra.
- Geometry Honors is faster paced and has a depth of material that goes beyond regular geometry. Geometry Honors focuses on proofs, in-depth explanations, and includes constructions. It is expected that students have mastered algebra to be successful in Geometry Honors.
- Algebra 2 will cover the fundamentals of Algebra 2 with an additional review and reintroduction of Algebra 1 material. Algebra 2 Honors will replace the Algebra 1 review with coverage of Conic Sections and an introduction to Trigonometry.