

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) **...about taking foreign languages at Westmont**

Q: I want to take a foreign language at Westmont. How do I determine which level to register for?

A: Start by taking the placement exam to get a general indication as to which semester course you should register for. This test is available on-line.

Next, consider the score you receive on the placement exam in combination with the number of years of your high school language classes (with a grade of C or better) you have had. Use these general rules to determine the course level of your language that you will register for:

- If you've had **1 year or less** of language in high school - Enroll in the 1st semester course (e.g. SP 001, FR 001, GR 001) *unless* you place higher, due to spending time in a country with this language or a family history of fluency in the language.
- If you've had **2 years** of language in high school - Enroll in either the 1st semester course or the 2nd semester course (e.g. SP 002, FR 002, GR 002): course 1 if your placement score is below 100, course 2 for others.
- If you've had **3 years** of language in high school - *Do NOT enroll in the 1st semester course* even if the placement test puts you there. You should enroll in the 2nd semester course if you placed in course 1 or 2, and the 3rd semester course (e.g. SP 003, FR 003, GR 003) if the test places you in course 3.
- If you've had **4 years** of language in high school - Enroll in the 2nd, 3rd or 4th semester course (e.g. SP 004, FR 004, GR 004), depending upon where the test places you. Even if you place in level 2, if you feel confident, you can enroll in the 3rd semester course. Again note: if you placed in level 1, *please take the 2nd semester course. You will NOT be allowed to take the 1st semester course.*
- If you've had more than **4 years** of language in high school - You will probably be placed at the 4th semester or in an upper-division class (a class numbered 100 or higher). If the test says 4+, you should enroll in SP 100 or a French Literature class (FR101-104). We do not have upper division classes in German.
- If you took the **AP language exam & scored 4 or 5** - You have received credit for the 4th semester of the language, and this portion of your General Education requirement is fulfilled. You may enroll in upper-division courses (e.g. SP 100 or FR literature) if you want to continue your language abilities, (and you should consider pursuing a major or a minor in your language!)

Q: How long does the test take?

A: About 15-20 minutes.

Q: May I use my book, dictionary or other materials during the placement test?

A: No.

Q: What is this test and why does Westmont use it?

A: The test was created by educators at Brigham Young University. It is used by numerous prestigious institutions to place students accurately in language courses. We want to make sure you are placed into a language course that matches your level of proficiency. By using your test results along with your previous language experience we hope to place you in the course we think best matches your ability.

Q: What if I don't agree with my score? (It seems too high or too low to me!)

A: Don't panic—the placement test is just one way we determine your placement. As mentioned above, we allow you to look at your score *in combination with* your prior language experience (in high school or community college) to determine what level is most appropriate for you. In each language class an additional assessment will be made during the first week to determine if you are in the correct level. Adjustments to your schedule may be necessary if you register for a course either above or below your abilities. Students with 3 or more years of high school language will not be allowed to register for the first course of the same language at Westmont regardless of their placement score.

Q: If I want to take a language that I've never studied before, do I have to take the language placement test?

A: No. You can register for the first semester of the course in any given semester that it is offered.

Q: I heard I have to take a language before graduating. Do I? (What is the GE foreign language requirement for Westmont?)

A: The General Education (GE) foreign language requirement is one semester of a foreign language taken at the appropriate placement level.

Q: How can I meet the GE foreign language requirement?

A: In one of the following ways:

- (1) by taking the language placement test in a proctored setting and testing into the 4th semester of a language (a score of 404 or higher in French, 549 or higher in German, or 441 or higher in Spanish);
- (2) by taking one semester of a foreign language at your appropriate placement level
- (3) by passing a foreign language or literature AP exam with a score of 4 or 5;
- (4) by passing the language SAT II with a score of 580 or higher,
- (5) by receiving a 5, 6 or 7 on an IB language exam (Higher Level only);
- (6) by proving proficiency in a language other than French, Spanish or German (see below).

Q: If I want to start a new language, will taking the first semester course still count for the GE?

A: Yes.

Q: Can I fulfill my GE language requirement with the language placement test?

A: Only in a proctored setting. You can take the test again in the Stamps Language Lab after you arrive on-campus. These testing times will take place either during Orientation or throughout the semester by contacting the Modern Language department chair. By testing into the 4th semester (a score of 404 or higher in French, 549 or higher in German, or 441 or higher in Spanish) you will fulfill the GE and can take upper-division courses.

Q: What happens if I have passed the AP *literature* exam in my foreign language?

A: Congratulations! If you received a 4 or 5, you have met the GE requirement and are eligible to take an upper-division French or Spanish literature course (101-105).

Q: What happens if I have passed the AP *language* exam in my foreign language?

A: Congratulations! If you received a 4 or 5, you have met the GE requirement and are eligible to take an upper-division course (SP 100 or French literature). We strongly suggest you enroll in these courses as soon as possible, while the language is still fresh! You might also consider a major or minor in your foreign language.

Q: What if I took the SAT II in a foreign language? Can I use that to meet the GE?

A: Yes, if your score is 580 or above.

Q: What if I want to take a language course *later* in my Westmont career?

A: You will have an opportunity to take the language placement test at any point in the semester. Follow the instructions at the beginning of this page for taking the test and for selecting the most appropriate semester level. If you are even *considering* taking a language course in the upcoming semester, you should take the language placement test. This will keep the option open for you.

Q. What if I am fluent in another language besides French, German, or Spanish? Is there another way to fulfill the language requirement?

A: Yes. It is possible for you to meet the requirement if you have a qualified person who can attest to your fluency (speaking and writing) send a letter to the Registrar, Michelle Hardley, describing your fluency. The letter should be on letterhead stationery (if possible) and should include the credentials of the writer. Following receipt of that letter, Mrs. Hardley will inform you of her decision.

Send the letter to:

Michelle M. Hardley
Registrar
Westmont College
955 La Paz Road
Santa Barbara, CA 93108-1089

Q: I took Sign Language in High School. Does this count for the language requirement?

A: The Academic Senate at Westmont College has determined that sign language does not meet the foreign language general education requirement. Students with a language based learning disability whose documentation is current (within the last 3 years) may request to take Sign Language as an accommodation for their disability. Contact Sheri Noble, Director of Disability Services (snoble@westmont.edu, (805) 565-6186) for additional information.