

GETTING STARTED WITH BIOLOGY & GENERAL CHEMISTRY AT DARTMOUTH

BIOLOGY

Determining Where to Start with Biology: To help students determine if they are sufficiently prepared to enter a foundation (lab) course directly, the biology department has established an online self-assessment exam for students. This self-assessment is a helpful way to determine your biology starting point, the [Biology Placement/Advisory Test](#) is available on the [New Student Orientation Canvas Site](#).

To gain clarity about your best starting point for biology courses at Dartmouth, students should check the [Biology Department's website](#). We also recommend having a conversation with a Pre-Health Dean or undergraduate dean about taking BIOL 11 before enrolling in the foundation courses. There is a BIOL 11 course offered every term. BIOL 11 has no labs, focuses on problem-solving in biology, and prepares students to take the required laboratory-based courses.

BIOL 11 (various topics offered – check ORC): This course focuses on problem-solving in biology and prepares students to take the required lab-based foundation courses. BIO MAJORS: if taken BEFORE any foundation courses, BIO 11 WILL COUNT towards your major.

BIOL 9 is another possible starting point. It will be offered during the Spring 2026 term. BIOL 9 is a hands-on class that focuses on laboratory experiments and interpretation.

The Foundation Lab Courses: While any foundation course would "count" as a medical school prerequisite, to best prepare for the MCAT and medical/dental/veterinary school, we highly recommend taking BIOL 12, BIOL 13, AND BIOL 14, even though taking two foundations fulfills the pre-requisite.

Dartmouth's biology foundation courses can be taken in ANY order.

- BIOL 12: Cell Structure and Function
- BIOL 13: Gene Expression and Inheritance
- BIOL 14: Human Physiology
- BIOL 16: Ecology

Other courses in Biology

- For Dental and Veterinary school: Microbiology and Anatomy are additional requirements.
- **Texas Medical and Dental schools require more biology credit than most other med/dental schools.**

GENERAL CHEMISTRY

General Chemistry: An introduction to the fundamental concepts of chemistry and their application to real-world problems in a college-level general chemistry curriculum is important preparation for several majors and a component of the pre-health (medical/dental/veterinary) curriculum.

At Dartmouth the General Chemistry curriculum consists of: Chem 5 and Chem 6 or Chem 11 (completion of which also provides credit-on-entrance (CR) for Chem 5). Chem 5 and Chem 6 are the standard track through general chemistry. Chem 11 is a one-term general chemistry course designed specifically for students with significant prior exposure to chemistry.

Prepare for your general chemistry course with the [General Chemistry Canvas review site](#) before starting your General Chemistry course, especially if it has been a while since you took a chemistry course or if you did not have the opportunity to do so during high school. It is also helpful to review before taking a placement exam if it's been a while since you learned the material. This will help you hit the ground running in our short, fast-paced terms.

Which general chemistry track (Chem 5 and Chem 6 or Chem 11) should I complete?

- If you took the Chemistry AP exam and scored a 4 or 5 (or 6 or 7 on the IB Chemistry exam or A on the British A-level Chemistry exam), you have demonstrated a significant understanding of general chemistry principles. You will automatically receive credit-on-entrance (CR) for Chem 5 and be placed into Chem 11.
- Students with significant prior exposure to chemistry who are interested in taking Chem 11 and who do not have the AP, IB or A-level scores listed above must take the Chemistry Placement test. The results from this test will guide your placement into the general chemistry curriculum.
 - The Chemistry Placement test is now live! You can find it on the New Student Orientation Canvas site.
 - If you are placed into Chem 11 as your starting point, upon completing this course you will also receive credit-on-entrance (CR) for Chem 5, if you do not already have this credit, thus completing the General Chemistry sequence.
- Students who did not take AP, IB or A-level Chemistry or who do not have these AP/IB/A-level scores and who do not complete the Chemistry Placement test must enroll in Chem 5 as their first chemistry course. These students will complete the Chem 5 and Chem 6 sequence.

Important note about prerequisites

- Math 3 (first term of calculus) is a pre-requisite for Chem 5 and Chem 11 and **must** be taken first.
 - If you receive credit-on-entrance (CR) for Math 3, you have the necessary math pre-requisite to take Chem 5 or Chem 11.

- Math 3 **cannot** be taken concurrently with Chem 5 or Chem 11. If you do not have credit for Math 3 and want to take general chemistry in your first year at Dartmouth, you will need to complete Math 3 during the fall term.
- Math 3 is sufficient mathematics for the pre-health curriculum. However, if you are considering a STEM major (e.g., Chemistry, Physics, Computer Science, Engineering), additional math will be required.