

ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES 2026–2027

The Team

A team consists of nine full-time students from the ninth through twelfth grades of the same high school; or, if there is no ninth grade, a team consists of nine full-time students from the tenth through twelfth grades of the same high school. A full-time student is defined as a student who is enrolled in four or more class periods per day. Each team is made up of three Honor students, three Scholastic students, and three Varsity students in accordance with the following grade point average definitions based on accumulated unweighted GPA:

Honor:	3.85 – 4.00 GPA
Scholastic:	3.50 – 3.8499 GPA
Varsity:	0.00 – 3.499 GPA

Contestants may compete in a higher division than their own grade point average category but not in a lower division.

Each team member competes in all ten events of the Decathlon and is eligible for individual medals in all ten events. Only six scores count for the final team standing in the competition—the top two Honor scores, the top two Scholastic scores, and the top two Varsity scores. Therefore, schools may enter with fewer than nine members and still be eligible for team awards as long as there are at least two Honor, two Scholastic, and two Varsity members.

Within each state, the determination of the composition of each team is made by the State Academic Decathlon organization and/or the State Director, and the decision of the State Academic Decathlon organization and/or the State Director is final. The state championship team that attends the National Finals, however, must be comprised according to the guidelines stated previously. The nine students who attend the National Finals must be the same nine students who participated in and won the state competition. No different or additional team members may be included except in the event of a student's death, medical emergencies, or other extenuating circumstances and only with the express prior approval of USAD.

The State Academic Decathlon organization has the full authority to declare the first-place team ineligible to attend the National Finals in accordance with the rules and practices of its state organization and may send the second-place team to represent its state. In such cases, the decision of the State Academic Decathlon organization and/or the State Director is final. However, the United States Academic Decathlon should be notified promptly of such an occurrence.

GPA Classification and Calculation

USAD determines student placement in competition categories—Honor, Scholastic, or Varsity—using only the unweighted cumulative GPA as listed on the student’s official high school transcript. This GPA must include all coursework completed prior to the current grade level and must exclude all grades earned during the current academic year. Only grades earned through the summer immediately preceding the current school year are counted toward eligibility. Pass/Fail and Credit/No Credit courses are excluded from GPA calculations; only letter-graded coursework is considered.

The specific criteria for GPA calculation and eligibility by grade level are:

- **Freshmen:** GPA includes grades from their 8th grade academic year, including any summer session grades completed before their freshman year, as reported on the official transcript.
- **Sophomores:** GPA includes grades from the summer before sophomore year, all coursework from freshman year, and the summer before freshman year if grades are reported on the transcript.
- **Junior:** GPA includes grades from the summer before junior year, all coursework from sophomore and freshman years, and the summer before freshman year if grades are reported on the transcript.
- **Senior:** GPA includes grades from the summer before senior year, all coursework from junior, sophomore, and freshman years, and the summer before freshman year if grades are reported on the transcript.

Community college or other college courses are included in the GPA only if high school credit is given and the course is listed on the official school transcript.

Weighted GPAs that assign extra points for Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or honors courses are not used in eligibility determinations. Plus or minus grading modifiers are only included if the school factors them into its official unweighted cumulative GPA. The *USAD Unweighted GPA Calculation Worksheet* should be used only when the student’s unweighted GPA is not available from official school transcripts or district records. This worksheet allows you to calculate the student’s unweighted GPA by accounting for plus and minus modifiers according to the USAD formula, ensuring accurate and standardized GPA calculations when official records are insufficient or unavailable.

If a school or a teacher has a policy of changing grades subsequent to receipt of advanced placement test scores, the new grade must be used for the computation of the Decathlon GPA. The deadline for the adjustment of AP grades is established by the State Academic Decathlon organization and/or State Director, and the decision of the State Academic Decathlon organization and/or State Director will be final.

Verification of Eligibility

Each high school will submit official transcripts to verify eligibility of team members to the manager of the competition the team is entering. The school certification of transcripts will be the final indication of a student's eligibility and GPA category. The competition manager shall check the GPA classification in accordance with the above guidelines and verify eligibility of each team member. The team coach shall be notified of any discrepancies.

Foreign students are eligible to participate in the United States Academic Decathlon. A foreign student who does not possess a valid transcript may participate in the Honor category. If a coach wishes to qualify a foreign student for the Scholastic or Varsity categories, the coach must provide adequate evidence that the student performed at the corresponding GPA level within the foreign system during the one year prior to participation in the Decathlon. The State Academic Decathlon organization and/or the State Director have final authority regarding the participation and classification of foreign students, and the decision of the State Academic Decathlon association and/or the State Director will be final.

Home-schooled students can participate in the United States Academic Decathlon® if their school district allows home-schooled students to participate in other extracurricular activities. Home-schooled students can only participate in the United States Academic Decathlon program at the high school they would attend if they were not home-schooled. The GPA classification of home-schooled students will be made in accordance with state law pertaining to home-schooled students. The State Academic Decathlon organization and/or the State Director have final authority regarding the participation and classification of home-schooled students, and the decision of the State Academic Decathlon association and/or the State Director will be final.

For the National Finals, each State Director must file a team certification guaranteeing that this is the same team that won the State Championship and that all team members are eligible for the categories as indicated. Official transcripts must accompany this form. In addition, the United States Academic Decathlon may request transcripts directly from the high school in order to verify eligibility. The decision of the State Academic Decathlon organization and/or the State Director regarding the certification of the State Championship Team will be final.

Participation in the United States Academic Decathlon is voluntary and is open to all students regardless of race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, disability or handicap.

Questions regarding computing the Decathlon GPA or eligibility of students should be addressed to the State Director or to the United States Academic Decathlon® at 714-585-1259 or e-mail: daniele@usad.org.