




A Guide for Homeschooling Through High School

Dear homeschooling parent,

Whether you are a first-time homeschooler or you've homeschooled for years, teaching high school at home is a new adventure!

Like any adventure, there will be times of smooth sailing. And there will be times when you'll hit a rough spot that may tip your boat. Would you be more comfortable homeschooling your teen if you knew where to turn for help when needed? We've got you covered!

Read on to discover answers to your high school questions. As Home School Legal Defense Association High School Consultants, we understand the practical help and tips you need to keep going, and we're excited to provide you with information to educate your teen with confidence. You'll find assistance for planning the subjects you will teach, creating your teen's transcript, keeping on track during the high school years, and much more. As you read through this guide, look for the diploma icon  indicating that related resource lists can be found at hsllda.org/HSGuide.

Having graduated our own children from high school at home, we enjoy sharing from our experience and bringing friendly advice to families navigating these exciting years. Visit the HSLDA Homeschooling Thru High School website, hsllda.org/highschool, for additional encouragement and information.

If you are a member of HSLDA, call or email us for individual consultation (540-338-5600 or [hsllda.org/contactstaff](mailto:info@hsllda.org)). If you are not yet a member of HSLDA, we encourage you to join today! Visit hsllda.org/join or call 540-338-5600.

Carol Becker, Joyce Blankenship, and Stacey Wolking
HSLDA High School Consultants



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Planning the high school years



When planning a high school program, your teen's post-high school goals and objectives are the primary considerations. Since most teens are in a quandary when deciding with certainty their future plans, this may seem like an impossible assignment!

We recommend that you use the high school years to help your teen determine his interests, skills, and talents, so that as he progresses from a freshman to a senior, his future educational/vocational goals will come into sharper focus. Each year, you can adjust the high school plan accordingly.

If your teen is unsure about attending college, it is beneficial to plan the high school program with college as a possibility, so he will be prepared if he changes his mind.

We suggest using a simple four-year plan form (see an example on the next page) that outlines the courses your teen will complete during the high school years. Include core academic as well as elective courses, and remember that adjustments to the plan may

be necessary as your teen's goals become more defined. The plan gives you an overall picture of the high school years and lets you see at a glance the courses completed each year as well as planned future courses. For more detailed information, *Develop a High School Plan* (hslida.org/DevelopHighSchoolPlan) guides you through the process to plan for all four years of high school; this e-book will help you prepare your teen for post-high school goals. 🔍



SAMPLE FORM

Four-Year High School Plan

Name of student: _____


Date prepared: _____

Core Courses

Grade level:	8 th (Only list high school-level courses.)	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th
English	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Math	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
History / Social science	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Science/Labs	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Foreign language	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Elective Courses*

Physical education	_____	_____	_____	_____
Fine arts	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____	_____

* Examples of elective courses: art, music, drama, health, first aid, vocational arts, nutrition, computer skills, home economics, career development, public speaking, driver's education . . . and many, many more! HSLDA's website includes a list of 80 possible high school elective ideas. 

Note: Remember to take into account any courses required by your state homeschooling law. (Go to hsllda.org/laws and click on your state to read HSLDA's summary of your state homeschool law.) Also, college-bound students should check college websites for minimum courses required for admission.

SAMPLE HIGH SCHOOL PLAN

General High School

For students planning to go directly into the workplace or the military

	Suggested Credits	Possible Courses
English	4 credits	Composition, literature, rhetoric, creative writing, journalism (<i>Suggested courses should stress grammar, vocabulary, and communication skills.</i>)
Math	3 credits	Algebra 1 and 2, geometry, general math, consumer math, business math, accounting
History	2–3 credits	World history, American history, United States government
Science	2–3 credits	Physical science, general science, earth science, biology, chemistry, physics
Foreign language	1–2 credits	French, Spanish, Latin, German, Russian, etc. (<i>optional</i>)
Physical education	1–2 credits	<i>Many options are available.</i>
Fine arts	1–2 credits	Art, music, drama, photography, etc.
Electives	6 credits	Practical arts, life skills, Bible, computer skills, etc.
Total credits	20–22* credits	

* Most states count a one-year course as equaling 1.0 credit and a semester course as equaling 0.5 credit. In California, a one-year course is 10.0 credits and a semester course is 5.0 credits. In New Jersey, a one-year course equals 5.0 credits and a semester course equals 2.5 credits. In Indiana and Idaho, a one-year course equals 2.0 credits and a semester course equals 1.0 credit.

SAMPLE HIGH SCHOOL PLAN

Average to Strong College Prep

Check with colleges to which your teen plans to apply for specific admission requirements.

	Suggested Credits	Possible Courses
English	4 credits	American literature/composition, British literature/composition, world literature/composition, rhetoric, creative writing, speech/communication, journalism, debate (<i>Also consider AP or college courses.</i>)
Math	3–4 credits	Algebra 1 and 2, geometry, precalculus/trigonometry, statistics, calculus, AP statistics, AP calculus
History	3–4 credits	<i>Essentials:</i> world history, American history, United States government (<i>Also consider economics, geography, constitutional law, and AP courses.</i>)
Science	3–4 credits	Physical science, earth science, biology, chemistry, anatomy and physiology, physics (<i>Also consider AP courses.</i>)
Foreign language	2–4 credits	French, Spanish, Latin, German, Russian, etc. (<i>At least two years of the same language is preferred.</i>)
Physical education	1–2 credits	<i>Many options are available.</i>
Fine arts	1–2 credits	Art, music, drama, photography, etc.
Electives	6 credits	Practical arts, life skills, Bible, computer skills, etc.
Total credits	24–28* credits	

* Most states count a one-year course as equaling 1.0 credit and a semester course as equaling 0.5 credit. In California, a one-year course is 10.0 credits and a semester course is 5.0 credits. In New Jersey, a one-year course equals 5.0 credits and a semester course equals 2.5 credits. In Indiana and Idaho, a one-year course equals 2.0 credits and a semester course equals 1.0 credit.

SAMPLE HIGH SCHOOL PLAN

Rigorous College Prep

For students applying to a highly selective college

	Suggested Credits	Possible Courses
English	4+ credits	American literature/composition, British literature/composition, world literature/composition, rhetoric, creative writing, speech/communications, journalism, debate (<i>AP or dual-enrollment college courses are strongly recommended.</i>)
Math	4+ credits	<i>Essentials:</i> algebra 1 and 2, geometry, precalculus/trigonometry (<i>Also consider calculus, statistics, and accounting. AP or dual-enrollment college courses are strongly recommended.</i>)
History	4+ credits	<i>Essentials:</i> world history, American history, United States government (<i>Also consider geography, sociology, psychology, political science, constitutional law, etc. AP or dual-enrollment college courses are strongly recommended.</i>)
Science	4+ credits	Physical science, biology, chemistry, physics, anatomy, microbiology (<i>AP or dual-enrollment college courses are strongly recommended.</i>)
Foreign language	3–4 credits	French, Spanish, Latin, German, Russian, etc. (<i>At least two years of the same language is preferred.</i>)
Physical education	1–2 credits	<i>Many options are available.</i>
Fine arts	1–2 credits	Art, music, drama, photography, etc.
Electives	5 credits	Practical skills, Bible, computer skills, etc.

Total credits 26–30* credits

* Most states count a one-year course as equaling 1.0 credit and a semester course as equaling 0.5 credit. In California, a one-year course is 10.0 credits and a semester course is 5.0 credits. In New Jersey, a one-year course equals 5.0 credits and a semester course equals 2.5 credits. In Indiana and Idaho, a one-year course equals 2.0 credits and a semester course equals 1.0 credit.

Credits and grades



How do I assign credits to a course?

There are several methods for determining credit for a course.

1. If a high school textbook by a reputable publisher is used for a yearlong course, one credit is earned. Similarly, if a textbook for a one-semester course is used, the course earns a half credit.

2. If no textbook is used (for example, when using an integrated curriculum, unit study, or real books as opposed to textbooks), contact the curriculum publisher to find out how many credits the publisher has assigned to the course. If this information is not available or if you are designing your own course, log hours to determine credit. Typically, for a nonacademic elective course, logging 120 hours is considered one credit and 60 hours is a half credit. Log 150 hours to earn one credit for an academic course (such as history or English), and 180 hours for a one-credit lab science course. Don't be legalistic about keeping track of hours. Simply, 50 minutes a day, five days a week for 36 weeks equals 150 hours for core courses.

The following states use a different credit system:


- California: yearlong course = 10 credits; semester course = 5 credits
- New Jersey: yearlong course = 5 credits; semester course = 2.5 credits
- Indiana and Idaho: yearlong course = 2 credits; semester course = 1 credit

 More resources at hslida.org/HSGuide

3. When a high school student takes a college-level course and the course fulfills both high school and college requirements simultaneously, we call this dual enrollment. A one-semester college course (typically earning three to five college credits) can be converted to a yearlong, one-credit high school course. Some local policies may differ with umbrella organizations, so verify the dual-enrollment conversion policy if this applies.

Grading guidelines

We suggest setting up a method of evaluation prior to beginning any high school course. Let your teen know upfront how you will assess her work: tests, quizzes, assignments, papers, projects, presentations, oral discussions, etc.

There is a twofold purpose for grading your student's coursework. Primarily, grades provide immediate feedback for teens about their level of work and may motivate them to do their best. A well-thought-out grading guideline, given when you assign work, will help teens to better understand what you expect from them. More significantly, the high school transcript lists a final grade for each course. Determining a course grading percentage for tests, quizzes, assignments, labs, papers, projects, etc., will simplify calculating the final grade. When calculating a grade point average (GPA), you will convert these final grades into grade points. Our online resource page provides grading examples and more details to streamline the grading process. 

Records made easy



After laying out your high school plan, keeping organized records will be the next step. This section provides you with a framework for simple, manageable recordkeeping as you homeschool your high schooler.

Good recordkeeping during the high school years is important because your student may need to provide accurate details of his high school coursework to prospective employers, colleges, vocational/trade schools, and/or the military. You'll want to keep these records even if your teen's current plans do not include college—you never know how those plans may change over the next few years! Also, check your state homeschooling law to note any specific records it requires.

Recordkeeping tracks your student's completed coursework, credits earned, and grades, as well as the many opportunities of which your teen takes advantage. This information falls into three main categories: academic records, personal records, and a transcript. Together, these paint a vibrant picture of your student's interests, abilities, and achievements.

See our online resource page for examples of how to compute final grades. For each high school class, keep track of grades for completed work. At the end of the school year, you can average these grades using your course grading percentages to compute final grades. For each high school course you list on your student's official transcript, we also suggest writing a course description; see examples in our online resources. 📎

📎 More resources at hsllda.org/HSGuide

You will also want to record the activities in which your teen participates outside of the school day. Personal records cover contact information, medical records, and extracurricular activities, which include varsity and community sports, artistic undertakings, performing arts, work experience, volunteer service, mission trips, and mentoring programs, as well as honors and awards. College applications request this information, and prospective employers may also want to know about your teen's interests and activities. Record this information in resume format. 📎

Develop a system of recordkeeping that will not be burdensome to you. For example, you may choose to use a three-ring binder, file folders, or your computer. Whatever you decide, keep it simple, and please keep backups.

Don't wait until your teen's senior year to find yourself scrambling to remember the details of what he accomplished during high school! Take time *now* to set up a simple method of documentation. You'll save time and energy (and maybe tears!) later. *Simplify Your Recordkeeping and Transcript* (hsllda.org/SimplifyRecordkeepingTranscript) provides more detailed information.

Academic records

- Course description—For each course, record the course name, textbooks, DVDs, course overview,* grading percentages, grade earned, and number of credits. (More detailed records could include tallying the number of tests, quizzes, labs, projects, papers, and other assignments completed for the course.)
- Report cards (from your homeschool or from other schools your teen has attended)
- Transcripts of community college or distance learning courses taken during high school
- Scores from standardized achievement tests, college entrance exams (SAT, ACT, and CLT), college scholarship exam (PSAT/NMSQT), SAT Subject Tests, and tests for possible college credit (CLEP and AP)
- School district records (if required by your state)

* A course overview gives a brief description of the content of the course and the order in which the concepts are taught. If using a textbook, the table of contents provides a good summary of the sequence of units, and the preface often provides an overview of the educational philosophy employed.

Personal records

- Contact info (phone numbers for HSLDA, state homeschool organization, and local school district's homeschool department, and umbrella organization if applicable)
- Medical records (include immunization records)
- Documentation of learning issues, challenges, or disabilities
- Extracurricular activities: For each of the following categories, record the name of the activity participated in, the approximate number of hours of participation, coach/director/instructor's name (where applicable), acquired skills, responsibilities shouldered, and other relevant information.
 - ♦ Awards and honors
 - ♦ Leadership experience
 - ♦ Performing arts
 - ♦ Special training/certification
 - ♦ Employment experience
 - ♦ Travel (include mission trips)
 - ♦ Internships/apprenticeships
 - ♦ Sports
 - ♦ Mentoring/job shadowing
 - ♦ Clubs
 - ♦ Volunteer work/community service
 - ♦ Hobbies/interests

The high school transcript is a one-page summary of all courses taken during the high school years, along with the high school credit and final grades earned. (This is not the document in which to list extracurricular activities.) ✍️

Simplify Your Recordkeeping and Transcript (hslida.org/SimplifyRecordkeepingTranscript) helps you understand the types of records parents should keep for their teens and how those records are used after graduation. This e-book will help you produce a professional transcript for your teen.



Transcript

With academic records in hand, you are now ready to create your teen's transcript. A transcript is a concise and accurate record of the academic courses your teen has taken during high school. By beginning to compile the transcript when your teen is in 9th grade and adding to it each year, you will avoid last-minute frustration and any mistakes you might make in the rush to meet deadlines. Yearly progress ensures that the transcript will be ready to send when requested.

Transcripts are usually one page long and include the following information:

- Teen's name, address, phone number, email address, birth date, and parents' names
- Homeschool name, address, phone number, email address, and contact person
- For each school year, the teen's grade level and course information (courses taken, credits awarded, and final grades)
- Grading scale (optional)
- Grade point average (GPA) for each school year (optional)
- Cumulative GPA
- Date of graduation
- Signature of parent

SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT

Smith High School Academic Transcript 20XX–20XX

Jane Anne Smith
123 Main Street
Anywhere, USA 12345
123-546-7890
smithfamily@home.com

School Name (if applicable)
123 Main Street
Anywhere, USA 12345
123-546-7890
smithfamily@home.com
Contact: Julie Smith

Freshman Year			Junior Year		
20XX–20XX	Final Grade	Credit	20XX–20XX	Final Grade	Credit
English 9	A	1.0	English 11	A	1.0
Algebra 1	A	1.0	Geometry	B	1.0
United States History	B	1.0	Gov’t and Economics	B	1.0
Physical Science	B	1.0	Chemistry/Lab	B	1.0
Spanish 1	B	1.0	Spanish 3	B	1.0
Physical Education	A	0.5	Health	A	0.5
Guitar	A	<u>0.5</u>	Computer Applications A		<u>0.5</u>
Total Credits		6.0	Total Credits		6.0

Sophomore Year			Senior Year		
20XX–20XX	Final Grade	Credit	20XX–20XX	Final Grade	Credit
English 10	A	1.0	English 12	A	1.0
Algebra 2	A	1.0	Speech 101	A	1.0
World History	B	1.0	Precalculus	B	1.0
Biology/Lab	B	1.0	Physics	A	1.0
Spanish 2	B	1.0	Art	A	0.5
Personal Fitness	A	0.5	Keyboarding	A	0.5
Choir	A	<u>0.5</u>	Debate	B	<u>1.0</u>
Total Credits		6.0	Total Credits		6.0

Total Credits Earned: 24

Cumulative GPA: 3.50

Grading Table:

Grade	Points
A = 93–100	4
B = 85–92	3
C = 76–84	2
D = 70–75	1
F = below 70	0

Date of graduation: June 3, 20XX

Parental Certification:

We, John and Julie Smith, do hereby certify and affirm that this is the official transcript and record of Jane Smith in the academic studies of 20XX–20XX.

_____ John P. Smith, father/administrator	_____ Julie T. Smith, mother/teacher	_____ Date
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A high school timeline

The following proposed timeline can serve as a convenient, simple framework for the high school years. In addition to reminding you of major deadlines and important to-dos, it can help you confidently assess your teen's progress toward his or her post-high school goals. ✂

Before high school

Get ahead of the game! During your teen's junior high years, help her to become academically prepared for high school, work with her to set goals, and make a plan to attain those goals.

- ☐ Begin discussing future goals with your teen.
 - ✓ Do her future plans include college, a career, homemaking, or the military?
 - ✓ What post-high school education or training should be considered?
 - ✓ What preparatory high school courses should be taken?
- ☐ Have your teen brush up on academic skills.
 - ✓ Solidify basic math skills and the understanding of fundamental math concepts.
 - ✓ Focus on using good grammar and increasing vocabulary.
 - ✓ Develop writing skills and the ability to organize and express ideas clearly.
- ☐ Research curriculum and recordkeeping.
- ☐ Develop a four-year blueprint for high school that includes possible core courses, electives, and outside course options.
- ☐ Have your teen begin keeping a reading list that includes books read for academic courses and books read for pleasure.

Freshman year

A new era in your teen's life has begun! Encourage her to make the most of these four years.

- ☐ Plan academics.
 - ✓ Select courses.
 - ✓ Teach study skills.
 - ✓ Help your teen develop time management skills.
 - ✓ Research college admissions tests—SAT, ACT, and CLT (Classic Learning Test).
- ☐ Investigate nonacademic opportunities.
 - ✓ Help your teen choose a few interests, including extracurricular activities, volunteer and service opportunities, part-time employment, and summer employment.
 - ✓ Encourage activities that build leadership skills.
 - ✓ Record these activities (dates, hours, duties, and supervisors' contact info).
- ☐ Begin researching careers. Consider creating a career development elective and having your teen take a career test.
- ☐ Encourage your teen to save money for her future goals. A financial management course could be another good elective.
- ☐ Have your student add to her reading list.
- ☐ Create a transcript for high school courses taken thus far.
- ☐ Write a course description for each course completed in 9th grade.

Sophomore year

As your teen continues to grow and mature, give her increased responsibility and cheer her on!

- ☐ Consider an outside class or two: online classes, co-op classes, community college courses, and Advanced Placement (AP) courses if appropriate.
- ☐ Continue with extracurricular activities.
- ☐ If college is the next step:
 - ✓ Consider preparing for and taking the PSAT 10 or the PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT / National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test)—for practice only—this year. Register for the PSAT at a nearby public or private high school. Use state-specific homeschool codes, found at collegeboard.org.
 - ✓ Prepare for and possibly take the SAT (homeschool code: 970000), ACT (homeschool code: 969999), or CLT.
 - ✓ Research college requirements.
 - ✓ Begin exploring college websites.
 - ✓ Attend a college fair.
- ☐ If a career or the military is the next step:
 - ✓ Consider a short- or long-term internship (formal or informal) in a field of interest.
 - ✓ Research career and military possibilities.
- ☐ Have your student update her reading list.
- ☐ Record 10th-grade courses on transcript.
- ☐ Write a course description for each course completed in 10th grade.

Junior year

The junior year is a time to firm up future plans.

- ❑ Stress academics.
 - ✓ Consider dual enrollment at a community college.
 - ✓ For motivated teens, consider AP courses and prepare for the College Board's spring AP exams.
 - ✓ Use CD/DVD or online courses if desired.
 - ✓ Employ tutors if extra help is required.
- ❑ Help your teen create a personal resume of extracurricular activities. Include:
 - ✓ Work experience
 - ✓ Community service/volunteering
 - ✓ Competitive activities: sports, debate, chess, etc.
 - ✓ Awards and honors
 - ✓ Cultural interests: music, dance, drama, art, sculpture, etc.
 - ✓ Hobbies, clubs, interests, etc.
 - ✓ Travel
- ❑ If college is the next step:
 - ✓ Plan to take the PSAT/NMSQT again (to qualify for the National Merit Scholarship).
 - ✓ Prepare to take the SAT, ACT, or CLT (tests can be taken more than once in order to increase scores).
 - ✓ Narrow down list of prospective colleges and visit college campuses.
 - ✓ Investigate financial aid and scholarships.
 - Federal financial aid
 - State financial aid
 - Scholarships awarded by colleges
 - Community scholarships
- ❑ If a career or the military is the next step:
 - ✓ Consider taking a career test.
 - ✓ Choose high school courses in areas of interest.
 - ✓ Investigate internships in areas of interest.
 - ✓ Participate in extracurricular activities related to future goals.
- ❑ Update reading list, transcript, and course descriptions.

Senior year

Not only does the senior year mark the end of high school, but graduation signals the commencement of brand-new opportunities. Encourage your teen to finish strong!

- ☐ Continue to stress academics and include courses of special interest.
- ☐ Have your student update and finalize extracurricular-activity resume.
- ☐ If college is the next step:
 - ✓ Take the SAT, ACT, or CLT in the fall, if desired.
 - ✓ Complete college applications.
 - Fill out online.
 - Write essays.
 - Request that test scores be sent from the College Board, ACT, or Classic Learning Initiatives.
 - Request letters of recommendation in plenty of time to meet application deadlines.
 - Update transcript to show 12th-grade courses in progress.
 - ✓ Fill out financial aid and scholarship forms.
 - ✓ Respond to letters of acceptance.
 - Notify colleges of private scholarship awards.
 - Complete tuition, housing, and meal forms for college of choice.
- ☐ If a career or the military is the next step:
 - ✓ Network; research job opportunities.
 - ✓ Practice interview skills.
 - ✓ Seek job/recruiter interviews.
 - ✓ For military enlistment, practice for and take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test *prior* to enlisting.
- ☐ Have your student update her reading list.
- ☐ Finalize transcript.
- ☐ Award diploma and plan a graduation celebration with family and friends. You've earned it!

Post-high school options



There is an array of opportunities for young people to pursue after high school. Is your daughter looking at an art institute to further her talent? Is an apprenticeship or internship in the making for your son? Or is he interested in a military career? Maybe college is the goal. Some of these options will require further training while others will not. No matter where your high schooler is headed following graduation, you can design a high school program that will uniquely equip him or her to achieve those goals!

The best place to begin is at the end! Develop a high school program that includes courses helpful to your teen's future goals. (Refer back to "Planning the High School Years" on pages 1–6 for suggestions or to the e-book *Develop a High School Plan*, which provides more detailed information.) Then choose a variety of electives and extracurricular activities to round out your student's high school

program. Be sure to keep records, create a transcript, and award a high school diploma at the end of the journey! 📎

THE HOME FRONT 📎

Some high school graduates choose to stay home or become self-employed following high school graduation. These pursuits can last for a short season or develop into lifetime endeavors. Accordingly, plan to use the high school years to teach the skills your teen will need to succeed.

Some electives that will help students prepare for future employment include: business skills (accounting, entrepreneurship, principles of marketing), computer skills, financial management, consumer math, foreign language, home economics, and child development.



📎 More resources at hslda.org/HSGuide

THE MARKETPLACE

To embark on a career in the marketplace following graduation, your teen will need help in laying out a comprehensive plan. Begin by exploring with him the many different career categories, taking time to talk about his strengths, weaknesses, and preferences to ascertain which careers might be most suitable.

Then, you'll want to provide a strong academic foundation during high school. In addition to the core courses, electives might include career development, computer skills, math, culinary arts, and public speaking. It is also a good idea to have your teen take career interest tests or receive career counseling to help narrow the list of potential occupations.

Questions such as these can help you investigate career training requirements:

- Is certification or licensing required?
- Is further training/instruction needed?
- Will your student need accreditation from a training company, a professional organization, or the state?
- What internship/apprenticeship opportunities are available?
- What is the advancement capacity of this career?

Finally, make job preparation a priority:

- Research the field.
- Create a resume.
- Practice interview skills.
- Develop a network of contacts.

THE MILITARY

Military enlistment

Enlisting in the military is a worthy and viable path that benefits all Americans by protecting our freedom. We applaud all homeschoolers who choose to serve our country in this way and thank them for their dedication.

Homeschoolers wanting to enlist should be prepared to submit a high school diploma, high school transcript, and verification of compliance with any state homeschool statute. HSLDA will assist its members as necessary.

Prior to enlisting, your student should:

- Pursue a strong high school academic program.
- Participate in extracurricular activities: sports, community/church involvement, skill-building opportunities, overseas/cross-cultural experience.
- Become an independent learner.
- Develop motivational skills, accept responsibility, cultivate respect for authority, and develop perseverance.

Military academies

Teens who are interested in attending a military academy will need to follow the specific entrance stipulations laid out by each academy. In exchange for the free college tuition

and strong academic education that students receive from these academies, students agree to serve in the military for a specified number of years.

Acceptance at a military academy will necessitate completing a rigorous college prep plan (see “Planning the High School Years,” pages 1–6, and the e-book *Develop a High School Plan* at hsllda.org/DevelopHighSchoolPlan). In addition, keep detailed records of each course description (textbooks, resources, reading material, publishers, course overview, grading percentages, credit, and grade), and students should prepare to score well on the SAT/ACT. (See “Records Made Easy,” pages 9–13.)

Each academy highly regards students who have demonstrated leadership skills in extracurricular activities. Recommended organizations include CAP, JROTC, and Scouts, and other recommended extracurricular activities include varsity athletics, community service, volunteer work, and academy summer sessions.

Finally, keep in mind that the academies require students to have a congressional or presidential appointment in order to be admitted. Contact your U.S. congressman or U.S. senators to begin the process.

COLLEGE

Do you have questions about the college admissions process and how best to prepare your teen for the rigors of college academics? We have answers! First, map out the college prep guidelines (pages 5–6) onto the four-year high school plan form (page 3). Seeing the coursework laid out over four years helps you concentrate on curriculum for only one high school year at a time. Then decide which entrance tests your teen will take, narrow down the selection of colleges, and plan ahead to avoid potential roadblocks. Some students may even decide to take an alternative route to a college degree.

Setting out

The strength of your student's high school program depends on the number of credits earned and the number of advanced courses taken. Consider AP or dual-enrollment courses (taken at a local college or through a distance learning program) to show that your teen is ready for college-level work.

Here are three typical college prep programs:

Average—Usually a minimum of 24 credits

Strong—Approximately 26–28 credits with higher-level math and science courses as well as additional social science, history, and foreign language courses

Rigorous—28 or more credits with AP and dual-enrollment courses strongly recommended

For more details related to planning out your program, refer to “Planning the High School Years” (pages 1–6) or our e-book *Develop a High School Plan* (hslda.org/DevelopHighSchoolPlan).

For all college prep programs, the senior year of high school should consist of a full course load with advanced-level courses. Colleges consider the senior year a good indicator of the student's college readiness, so it should be academically challenging.

Showing that your student has taken classes from outside sources and that others have evaluated the coursework is helpful in the college admissions process. Consider outside instructors as excellent choices for letters of recommendation. Carefully assess your teen's maturity and academic abilities before signing up for outside courses.

The benefits of taking outside classes include: interactions within a group setting, exposure to different teaching styles, evaluation of grades by a third party, development of note-taking skills, deadlines for coursework, college credit for dual-enrollment courses, and development of time management skills.

Tests for college

Most colleges require the submission of ACT or SAT college entrance test scores for admission purposes. A growing number of colleges accept the CLT. Scholarship committees may also request these test scores. Teens should prepare to do their very best by using test prep books, computer software, online tutorials, group classes, or private tutors. Usually test scores improve upon retaking the exams.

The timeline for taking these tests will differ with each student, but most students will begin taking college entrance tests during their junior year. The latest time to take a test and submit the scores by the application deadlines is generally fall of the senior year. The tests are offered numerous times per year. You may register for a specific date and test location online:

ACT—act.org

SAT—collegeboard.org

CLT—cltexam.com

Using special homeschool codes when registering for the SAT (970000) or ACT (969999) will allow test scores to be sent directly to the student's home rather than to the testing location.

Some students take the PSAT as a way to familiarize themselves with the testing environment. Students

can take the PSAT 10 in the spring of the 10th-grade year. In 11th grade, students can take the PSAT/NMSQT (National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test), given only once a year in October.

Contact a local public or private school in early summer for information about registering for the PSAT. Special state-specific homeschool codes are needed for the PSAT and may be found on the College Board website (collegeboard.org).

Choosing a college

Being organized in your approach to choosing a college makes the process more manageable. Begin by making a list of “must have” parameters, such as your teen's proposed major, college size, location, public or private, religious affiliation, cost, campus ministries, and proximity to a good church. Much of the research can be done online by visiting college websites or making use of a college search engine such as that found at collegeboard.org.

After narrowing down your search to a reasonable number of schools, it is time to schedule some college visits. You'll gain an invaluable view of the campus and student life by visiting classes, scheduling an appointment with an admissions officer, checking out

the cafeteria food and meal plan options, and researching campus ministries. Some colleges offer prospective students access to classroom lectures followed by an overnight dorm visit in order to witness the dynamics of living in a dorm and experiencing the typical student schedule. Encourage your teen to ask questions of current students to find out their likes/dislikes about the school. During your outing, take time to visit churches in the area, noting transportation options available and the churches' outreach to college students.

College costs are substantial. Begin early in your teen's high school years to investigate various sources of funding, including scholarships, loans, and work/study programs. Encourage your teen to save a portion of her earnings and monetary gifts toward these college expenses.

The application process

Once your student identifies her top college choices, the application process can begin. Most colleges prefer that applications be filed online. Double-check that all sections of the application and other requested documents (including financial aid forms) are completed and submitted before the deadlines.

Prepare a concise, one-page transcript listing all of the

high school courses your teen completed. If applicable, ask any previous schools or community colleges to also send copies of transcripts.

If applying to college as a freshman, your teen will probably need to submit at least two letters of recommendation. Select people who know your teen's academic abilities well, and give them plenty of lead time to write their letters. Follow the college's instructions when submitting these letters.

The guidance counselor section of the application may be completed by the homeschool parent or by a person leading the umbrella program or correspondence school associated with your homeschool.

Some colleges request that your teen write several essays. Remind her to do her best and to carefully edit the essays before submitting.

If the college requests an interview with your teen, prepare for this by practicing mock interviews and reviewing high school coursework and extracurricular activities.

Art majors should compile a portfolio showcasing their best work in various mediums. Voice or instrument majors should prepare audition songs that showcase talent and ability. Students will either audition in person on preselected days or prepare a DVD for the audition process.

Alternative routes to college credit

Independent study (earning college credit off campus) can offer significant savings in time and money. Although certain majors require on-campus residency, many students complete general education requirements through independent study. Verify with the four-year college about its policy for transferring credits from community colleges, AP exams, or CLEP tests.

Some independent study options include:

- Dual enrollment—Teens take courses through a community college while still in high school, earning both high school and college credit—at a fraction of the cost!
- Distance learning (DL)—University courses may be

taken from the comfort of your home. Although DL credits generally cost the same as onsite enrollment, your teen saves room and board and other costs associated with on-campus living.

- Credit by examination—College Board Advanced Placement (AP) exams in various subjects are given in May at public/private high schools. Colleges require students to earn a certain minimum score on an AP exam in order to receive college credit. College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and DSST tests also enable students to earn college credit. The score necessary to earn credit is determined by each college. Some colleges will not accept these test scores, while others may limit the number of credits earned in this way.

Need more help?





Carol Becker



Joyce Blankenship



Stacey Wolking

Homeschooling Thru High School is here for you!

HSLDA developed its Homeschooling Thru High School program to equip and encourage parents who are homeschooling their children during the high school years. On our website, hsllda.org/highschool, you'll find extensive information about teaching your teen. While there, sign up for our free monthly email newsletter at hsllda.org/highschool/newsletter.asp—it's full of pointers and practical help!

HSLDA High School Consultants Carol Becker, Joyce Blankenship, and Stacey Wolking homeschooled their own children through high school, and they bring a wealth of experience and friendly advice to share. As an exclusive HSLDA benefit, they provide personal consultation by phone and email to HSLDA members who need specific answers or advice about homeschooling their high schoolers. To contact them go to hsllda.org/contactstaff or call 540-338-5600.



Home School Legal Defense Association
One Patrick Henry Circle • Purcellville, VA 20132
540-338-5600 • highschool@hsllda.org

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Purpose

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