

Yes, You **CAN** Homeschool High School!

A ROADMAP BY PHILLIP CAMPBELL
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**HOMESCHOOL
CONNECTIONS**

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You *Can*
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High School!**

A Roadmap

Written by Phillip Campbell with Maureen Wittmann

To my children, Jenna, Lucy, Phillip, Felicity, and Eleanor.

To my son Joseph, whose laughter and wit always bring me joy.

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Introduction

So you are contemplating homeschooling your high schooler. I commend you for taking up the challenge! High school is a pivotal time in your child's cognitive and social development. Besides preparing them for college, the high school years are a sort of "dry run" for adulthood in general. It is during this time that children hone the skills they will need to function independently as adults: living, working, and loving out in the wide world.

Perhaps you are intimidated by the prospect of it all. Maybe a bit afraid that you'll mess something up? Sometimes when we embark upon a great task, the voice in our head is ready to provide us with a litany of reasons why we shouldn't try. For example:

"What if I am not smart enough to teach specific subjects my child needs?"

"What if they get bored with me?"

"What if they are missing out on opportunities provided by conventional schooling?"

"What if I lack the organization and discipline to do this well?"

"I didn't do well in high school; I don't feel qualified to guide my child to success."

"Will they be adequately socialized?"

"What if homeschooling high school makes it difficult for them to get into college?"

Does any of this sound familiar? If so, it's totally understandable. Experiencing uncertainties before any undertaking is normal! This book is meant to help you face and overcome these uncertainties.

But before we can overcome them, we must understand them. All your worries about homeschooling high school: what is at the root of them? You'll notice that these concerns ultimately boil down to one, fundamental fear: "What if I do more harm than good?" We all want the best possible education for our children, but we fear that our own weaknesses may scuttle our efforts.

Fortunately, you are not alone! Every homeschool parent has grappled with this uncertainty at some point. Homeschooling all the way through

the end of high school is a long journey, sometimes marked by twists, turns, and surprises. Like any journey, your chances of arriving at a happy conclusion to the homeschooling adventure are greater if you have a map. Unfortunately, you can't just ask Siri for directions like on a physical journey, but you can draw on the accumulated wisdom of those of us who have come before you, who have homeschooled high school under diverse circumstances with wonderful results. You can follow the road map others have charted, forging your way ahead with confidence and success.

Yes, you *can* homeschool high school. And that's not just good news; it's great news!

There are many wonderful benefits to homeschooling high school. What are these benefits? Why should you homeschool high school? To be successful, it's essential for you and your student to understand the *why*. Take pencil to hand and write down the reasons homeschooling high school is a good and positive choice for your family. Gather as a family and make a list together.

Here are just a few reasons families decide to homeschool high school:

- To raise young adults with a faith-based curriculum.
- To customize a curriculum for a teen's special interests and learning style.
- So students can work at their own pace.
- So students can have a flexible schedule for job shadowing, sports, homeschool clubs, etc.
- Home education takes less time, so time can be added for extracurricular activities and intellectual passions.
- Flexibility! The calendar can be adjusted for family events, camp, competitions, vacations in the off-season, etc.
- Education can take place year-round, giving a teen the opportunity to graduate early or earn dual-enrollment college credit.
- To promote family unity.
- To reduce negative peer pressure or remove a student from a bullying environment.
- To take advantage of a supportive homeschool community.

This is just the beginning; I'm sure you can add many more reasons to this list! Isn't it amazing how much perspective can change things? When you

look at homeschooling from the vantage point of what can go *right* instead of what can go wrong, it becomes much less daunting.

There is an old saying: “There is only one way to eat an elephant: one bite at a time.” Your child’s education is a big deal, and high school has plenty of variables to consider. In this book I am going to break them all down for you, sorting through each variable so you can tackle this “one bite at a time.” With each bite you take, you will understand more, your confidence will grow, and you will flesh out your own “road map” that will guide you and your student. You’ll be ready to blaze your own homeschooling trail, equipped with gobs of practical knowledge and armed with the collective experiences of all of us who have gone before you. *Isn’t that exciting!?*

Each chapter will be devoted to a particular consideration—and there are many! I will cover each one in detail, and as I do, those anxieties we listed above will fall like dominoes. But for now, just be assured that you *can* do this! Not only can you do this, but you can excel at it. You can give your student a high school education academically superior to anything they would receive at a public school, with greater flexibility and more extra-curricular opportunities. You can provide them with a high school experience that will set them up to take on life with confidence, and for which they will remember with gratitude.

Ready to get to work on your road map? Let’s get started!

CHAPTER 1

Homeschooling is Simpler in High School

Many homeschoolers who are comfortable homeschooling in the younger grades question their ability when it comes to high school. “Things are a breeze when children are little!” they say. After all, it is easy enough to teach a child their ABCs, count to 10, and learn shapes, right? Reading time with your little first grader snuggled up on your lap looking at a book together is blissful. And you don’t have to worry about ACTs, high school transcripts, or college admissions. Oh, for those idyllic days of homeschooling simplicity!

Of course, the truth is not so straightforward. There are pros and cons to everything. Teaching little children can be easy in terms of *content*, but issues like behavior and attention span present their own unique challenges. We also tend to wax nostalgic about homeschooling the younger years because our children were little, sweet, and adorable and we miss that as they get older. But the reality is that homeschooling young children requires more energy. This is because you need to be much more engaged during the elementary years. As we say in education, teaching elementary requires more “time on task” since young children don’t possess the discipline to work as independently as older children.

Viewed from this perspective, homeschooling for high school is much simpler. Yes, you heard that right! How can this be? There are a variety of reasons. In this chapter, I am going to highlight all the different ways that homeschooling high school is simpler, easier, and less of a hassle than you might think!

Homeschooling high school is simpler because high schoolers possess six traits that will make life a lot easier on you as a homeschooling parent! Let’s take a look at these one at a time.

1. More Self-Direction

Self-directedness is the ability to know what one ought to be doing and do it without external compulsion. A self-directed person does not always need to be told what to do. Whether it is work or recreation, self-directedness is a habit of “regulating” one’s own routine.

Now, no human being is ever *perfectly* self-directed. We all have days sometimes where we need prodding just to get off of the couch. It is more of a spectrum, with persons who more or less have self-direction existing at various points along the continuum.

Ask yourself this: in general, who possesses more self-direction, a 16-year-old, or a 6-year-old? Who is more likely to say “I’m bored” five times a day? Who is more likely to make a mess and not clean it up? Who can’t be left home alone unsupervised? Who needs to be constantly reminded about what they need to be doing lest they forget?

That’s right! Younger children possess less self-direction than teens. High schoolers are much easier in this regard. They are better at keeping a schedule without having to be reminded constantly. They can assess what they are supposed to do and get it done on their own. And best of all, they can work *unsupervised*.

Obviously some high schoolers struggle with this, but in general older students possess more self-direction than their younger counterparts. Of course, they will still need your guidance and input. But you do not need to expend as much energy managing the minutiae of your high schooler’s daily routine—and that’s great news for you!

2. Better Study Habits

What are study habits? Study habits are actions students perform regularly and habitually to accomplish the task of learning. They are effective or ineffective depending upon whether they serve the students well. Examples of study habits are reading, taking notes, working in groups, or studying for a test.

It takes a long time to develop effective study habits. For example, think about the act of reading a textbook for comprehension. It sounds simple, but there is a great deal of skill that goes into learning from a textbook! First, the student needs to simply read the text and understand the raw meanings of the words. Then they need to use textual cues such as section headers and topic sentences to understand the main point of what they are reading. They will need to use context to figure out the meanings of new vocabulary words. The student will also need to know how to read undistracted and take notes for maximum retention.

How do children learn to do all this? It doesn’t come naturally. It takes years of practice to develop effective study habits. A high schooler is going to be far more experienced with positive study habits than a younger

student. Better study habits mean study is more productive (i.e., less time can be spent studying, leaving more room for living life!). They also increase a student's confidence, competence, and self-esteem. These are all more realizable for a high school student than a young child who is only beginning their educational journey.

3. More Focused on the Future

High schoolers are more focused on the future than younger students. While young children do not think about graduation and college, high school students have begun to contemplate their lives after school—will they go to college? If so, where? What will they study there? What will they do with their lives?

This means a high schooler has an elevated sense of the seriousness of their studies. Elementary kids—God bless them!—are so innocent about why they are learning. They are simply told “Today we are learning multiplication”, and they go along without question. Older teens think more about *why* they must complete their studies, relative to their future plans. Perhaps they want to get accepted to a certain college program or test out of some general ed requirements. Maybe they want to maintain a certain GPA for military enlistment. It could be as simple as, “Mom said I have to do well in math if I want to go to summer camp.”

Whatever the rationale, you will find your high schooler possesses more focus than younger students. They take their course work more seriously, which means you won't have as much headbutting with them over why they should be studying. They are aware of the importance of their studies and how school affects their future.

4. Can Access Online Resources

Most homeschoolers have a love-hate relationship with the Internet. On the one hand, it puts the entirety of human knowledge and experience at our fingertips—an inestimable blessing for any home education program! On the other hand, it also puts the entirety of human vice and ignorance at our fingertips—a regrettable fact every parent must reckon with. Its value and universality mean we can scarcely do without it, while its less savory aspects mean it should only be accessed with great caution.

Thankfully, high schoolers are much more capable of utilizing the Internet than younger children. Of course, proper safeguards and oversight need to be in place whenever *any* child goes online. Even so, high schoolers

can use the Internet with greater effectiveness. They can access and read emails from their tutors on their own. They can use search engines to do research with minimal assistance. And they have begun to develop a sense for what are and are not reliable sources of information.

Add to this the fact that their technological capabilities in general are going to be greater: they know the basics of using programs like Word, Power Point, and Excel to complete their assignments. Sometimes they are more adept than their parents!

Used appropriately, the Internet is a wonderful resource—a resource high schoolers are fully capable of utilizing to the benefit of your home school.

5. Capable of Independent Study

For me, this is the major benefit of homeschooling high school: the high schooler's capacity for independent study. It is an exhilarating feeling when you wake in the morning to find your 10th grader is already up getting a head start on the day's math exercises. Or when you can go grocery shopping and trust your 12th grader to complete his history reading while you are gone. Or when your junior works through her science project quietly while you are helping your younger children with their writing.

There are two wonderful benefits to independent study: first, it definitely makes things easier on you! When your children get to a place where they do a lot of their work on "autopilot", that's a great feeling! Second, independent learning enables your high schooler to take ownership of his or her own education. And that's ultimately the end goal of all our educational endeavors—to get our children to the point where they are willing and able to educate themselves.

6. They Are More Responsible

I suppose this sixth point is really a summation of everything we've reviewed thus far—homeschooling high school is easier because high schoolers are simply more responsible than young children. This responsibility means more of the nuts 'n' bolts of homeschooling can be assumed by the teenager as they approach graduation. As your children grow into teens, they are equipped to actively engage in their education. Include them in the decision-making process and course planning. Give them the opportunity to exercise their growing responsibility for their own benefit and for yours!

There's much more that could be said, but hopefully this chapter has helped you see that homeschooling for high school isn't as complex as you fear. Obviously not everything I covered will apply universally (for example, special needs students might still require a more "hands on" approach throughout high school), but in general homeschooling for high school is inherently simpler than homeschooling young children. This should give you a big boost of confidence as you plan for the high school years.

CHAPTER 2

Scope and Sequence: The Basics

Now that you have concluded that you *should* homeschool high school and that you *can*, it's time to start filling in your road map. Let's start with the big picture: what courses does your high schooler need to complete before graduation, and how will you distribute them over the four years of high school?

We are now getting into questions about *scope and sequence*. A scope is the depth and breadth of content to be taught. A sequence is the order in which the content is to be taught. In other words, a scope and sequence is a plan of *what* and *when* to teach specific subjects and courses.

Most homeschooling parents looking for scope and sequence are essentially trying to figure out which classes they will teach which years, and how these are woven together in the big-picture tapestry of their high schooler's education. It is to ask questions like "How much math do we need to get through before graduation?" "In what semester will we cover U.S. government?" "Will my student's curriculum focus on Humanities, STEM, or something else?" "Are we able to work in dual-enrollment courses during senior year?" "What is a reasonable pace to complete everything we need to do?" These are the sorts of questions we think about when addressing scope and sequence.

You are going to be disappointed if you were hoping I would simply tell you what to teach and when. I wish it were that simple! The reality is that a good scope and sequence depends upon a host of factors, such as state requirements, college aspirations or other post-graduation plans, curriculum focus, and of course the individual interests and aptitude of your child.

While I cannot simply tell you what you should be teaching and when, I can walk you through the steps you should go through when crafting your scope and sequence. In this chapter, we will look at some basic considerations for developing your scope and sequence; in the following chapter I will present some samples to get your mind working.

1. Determine what courses are needed to meet basic graduation requirements.

This is fundamental, as it concerns what your child *must* take, either in terms of college entrance requirements or state requirements. Homeschool Connections has a handy guide to help to get you started: [Basic Scope and Sequence for College-Bound Catholic Students](#). You also ought to google your state's requirements as a base to start. This is important, as each state has its own requirements for homeschoolers.

2. Review and write out your child's coursework completed to date.

Reviewing what your child has accomplished to date gives you a better perspective to determine what they still need. The best way to figure out where you are going is to understand where you came from!

3. Make a list of courses still needed for graduation.

Once you've figured out what you need, make a list of these courses. Determine how you will spread them out over the remaining high school years. You will need to balance what needs to be accomplished with what is a reasonable pace for your child.

4. Ask your child about future goals.

A student who wants to be a programmer will take different courses than a student who wants to be a chemist. To the degree you have a choice about what content your student is studying, it should be informed by your student's interests and future goals.

5. Determine your student's strengths and weaknesses.

Considering the strengths and weaknesses of your child can help you narrow down what specific classes are best suited to their gifts. For example, a student who struggles with language but learns well using a multi-sensory method (dyslexic children often fall into this category), may do better with American Sign Language than with Spanish.

6. Take into consideration your student's passion.

An example would be a student who loves to write stories. That student could take more fiction-writing courses. They will still learn important

writing skills (in addition to learning literary analysis). The bonus is that they will enjoy learning it more in a creative-writing atmosphere.

7. Review your course options and create your plan

Once you have taken the above steps, you will have a very good idea of where you want to go in the future. Now it is time to start crafting your scope and sequence. If you are working with [Homeschool Connections](#), open and save the Homeschool Connections course catalogs and review all the options available to you.

8. Look for other resources to help you and your child meet goals.

There is a cornucopia of resources available at your disposal. Take advantage of them to flesh out your academic goals! Books, websites, local co-ops, online course providers, apprenticeships, and more. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination.

9. Seek out advice from other homeschooling parents.

Don't forget, your most valuable resource is not going to be a website or book, but other parents who have walked the walk. If you're having trouble with a needed course or can't decide on the best path to take, go to your local or online support group. We are also here to help you at homeschoolconnections@gmail.com.

10. Of course, do all of this prayerfully with an open heart to God's will.

"A man's heart plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps" (Prov. 16:9). Do your research and make your plans, but never get so attached to your program that you can't "bend with the wind", if need be. God's plans are bigger than our plans, and God's ways are higher than our ways. One reason we homeschool is because of its inherent flexibility. As homeschoolers, we can adjust our individual children's scopes and sequences as their academic careers progress, based on their interests, learning styles, and abilities. Revisit your plan from time to time with an open heart.

Now that we have covered the basic steps in crafting your plan, we will take a look at some sample scopes and sequences in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

Scope and Sequence: Examples

In our last chapter I introduced the concept of scope and sequence and reviewed the basic questions every homeschooling parent needs to ask themselves before settling on a scope and sequence. Now that I've got your mind working, let's take a look at some examples of scope and sequence plans.

Remember, these scope and sequence plans are not meant to be copied and implemented without alteration. As a parent, *you* are the primary educator of your children—you know your child best! These plans are only suggestions to get the wheels turning; you are encouraged to adjust these samples based on your child's special interests, academic level, and relevant state requirements. They are merely templates.

For our first example, we are going to look at a scope and sequence for 7th and 8th grade. We will break each year down into Fall and Spring semesters. Shameless plug: Since this is a Homeschool Connections publication, all classes listed will be from the Homeschool Connections catalog, although of course you can substitute courses from wherever! Let's look at the outline first, then I will offer some observations.

7th Grade Fall

Writing: Writing Essentials 1: Punctuation & Grammar I (MS 6/7-1)

Writing: Writing Essentials 2: Excellent Sentence & Paragraph Writing I (MS 6/7-2)

Latin: Middle School Beginning Latin, Part One

Religion: Middle School Catechism, Part One

Science: Middle School Life Science, Part One

Literature/History: Spring Tide: Living History Through Literature (Medieval Era 5)

Literature/History: Augustine Came to Kent: Living History Through Literature (Medieval Era 6)

Math: Middle School Math 2 (Glencoe), Part One

7th Grade Spring

Writing: Writing Essentials 3: Punctuation & Grammar II (6/7-3)

Writing: Writing Essentials 4: Excellent Sentence & Paragraph Writing II (MS 6/7-4)

Latin: Middle School Beginning Latin, Part Two

Religion: Middle School Catechism, Part Two

Science: Middle School Life Science, Part Two

Literature/History: Red Falcons of Tremoine: Living History Through Literature (Medieval Era 7)

Literature/History: Door to the North: Living History Through Literature (Medieval Era 8)

Math: Middle School Math 2 (Glencoe), Part Two

We have six subjects for each semester: Writing, Latin, Religion, Science, Literature/History, and Math. Literature and History are considered one course here because, in this sample plan, history is being taught *through* literature, thus combining both disciplines into a single class. That's right, you can pull stunts like that when you're homeschooling!

This sample 7th grade line up is an excellent example of how you can use the *à la carte* options available through Homeschool Connections to craft something personalized for your student. You will notice that each semester featured *two* courses in writing and literature/history. This is because each writing and literature/history course is only six sessions. In this scope and sequence, two six session Writing courses have been paired up each semester to create a full semester of writing. And the same for literature/history.

Let's take a look at 8th grade now:

8th Grade Fall

Writing: Simplified Writing for Middle School 1: Foundations of Composition I (MS 7/8-1)

Writing: Simplified Writing for Middle School 2: Introduction to Essays & Papers I (MS 7/8-2)

Latin: Middle School Intermediate Latin, Part One

Religion: Middle School Beginning Apologetics

Science: Physical Science, Part One

History: All Ye Lands: World History, Part One

Literature: The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings for Middle School, Part One

Math: Pre-Algebra (Glencoe), Part One

8th Grade Spring

Writing: Simplified Writing for Middle School 3: Writing the Excellent Essay (MS 7/8-3)

Writing: Simplified Writing for Middle School 4: Writing Form & Style (MS 7/8-4)

Latin: Middle School Intermediate Latin, Part Two

Religion: The Mass Explained for Middle School

Science: Physical Science, Part Two

History: All Ye Lands: World History, Part Two

Literature: The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings for Middle School, Part Two

Math: Pre-Algebra (Glencoe), Part Two

You will notice we have now ratcheted things up a bit to get *seven* subjects instead of six, having now split literature and history into two distinct subjects. Again, two six-session writing classes have been lumped together to create a single semester of writing for the fall and spring.

In the above examples, the approach was to plot out all the courses in every subject over a given time frame to get a big picture of what the 7th and 8th grade years of middle school would look like. We can also build a scope and sequence for an individual subject. In the example below, I have taken the subject of history and planned out a student's history courses from 7th grade all the way through the end of high school, aligning history courses chronologically (i.e., starting at the dawn of history and working ourselves up to the present day). Most years I chose two full semester courses, but you can see that for 9th and 10th I added in some 4- and 6-week courses to get to a full semester.

7th Grade

Dawn of History: Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, Persia (12 weeks)
The Glory of Ancient Greece (12 Weeks)

8th Grade

The Life and Time of the Ancient Romans (12 weeks)
Making of the Modern World, Part One (12 weeks)

9th Grade

Making of the Modern World, Part Two (12 weeks)
Foundations of Christian Historiography (4 weeks)
An Archeological Survey of the Old and New Testaments (10 weeks)

10th Grade

Catholic Middle Ages (12 weeks)
Roots of the Revolt (1417-1560) (6 weeks)
The Age of the Religious Wars (1560-1648) (6 weeks)

11th Grade

Early American History (1492 to 1763): Discovery to the Dawn of Revolution (12 weeks)
U.S. History: Revolution, Republic and Union (1763-1865) (12 weeks)

12th Grade

Modern American History; 1865 - 2000 (12 weeks)
World History: 12 Inventions That Revolutionized the World (12 weeks)

Sometimes doing a content specific scope and sequence is more manageable than trying to tackle everything at once—it is more in line with the “eat the elephant one bite at a time” approach I discussed in the introduction. After you have made a scope and sequence for each content area, you can smooch them all together to get your master plan!

There’s a lot more than can be said about scope and sequence, but the issue is so individualized that it is challenging to go beyond generalities. A good scope and sequence is born of the union between your child’s interests/abilities and the requirements of your state.

Do you want to see more examples of scope and sequence? An internet search will turn up more examples than you could ever wade through, but if you want to see more specifically Catholic homeschooling samples, visit Homeschool Connections' Scope & Sequence page at the following URL:

<https://homeschoolconnections.com/resources/scope-sequence/>

CHAPTER 4

How to Handle Tough Subjects

I remember the conundrum I faced when my daughter Lucy began high school. I needed to work two years of foreign language into her high school scope and sequence. I was fully capable of teaching Latin, but there was a problem: Lucy had already taken four years of Latin. She needed something different, and I lacked the knowledge to give it to her. To complicate matters, Lucy told me the language she wanted to study was Japanese.

Rather than throw my hands up or force her into more Latin she neither wanted nor needed, we decided to see what we could do to make Japanese a reality. I did a bit of scrounging and called up the director of the Asian Studies department at the University of Michigan. I explained the situation to her. She told me, “We have some graduate students from Japan who are here studying how to teach Japanese to native English speakers.” What an amazing coincidence! She put me in touch with one of her students who was interested in tutoring Lucy. We hammered out a schedule and fee structure we were happy with. It’s been two years now. In that time Lucy has been blessed to work with not one but two different students from the University. And she’s fluent in Japanese!

This chapter is about the situations when your student needs a “tough” subject. A “tough” or challenging subject is a subject whose content is way out of your league. You don’t know anything about it. You don’t know how to answer questions about it. You may not even understand the parameters of what the homework is asking for. I remember my eldest daughter Jenna coming to me with her Algebra book asking me to help her work through a problem. I read the question. I read the question again. I read the question out loud to myself. I furled my brow. Then I handed her the book back and said, “Jenna, I don’t even understand *what* this is asking let alone how to help you.”

Do you ever fear getting into such situations? Perhaps you’ve already been there! One of the biggest concerns of new homeschooling parents is how they can teach such challenging subjects. “How do I teach calculus? How can I teach physics?” The good news is you don’t have to be an

expert in every subject area to oversee your student's home education. There are many resources available to help you!

Here is a handy blueprint to follow when confronting "tough" subjects:

First, *be willing to learn alongside your student.* We tend to carry a prejudice that it is a sign of weakness or incompetence to admit we don't know something. How often does it happen that we are asked about a subject we know little about, but we flub and fluff our way through the conversation to make ourselves appear more knowledgeable than we are? Part of this is just human nature. And as parents and educators, we instinctively want to have an answer ready whenever our knowledge is put on the spot by a child's question.

But we need to realize that it's okay to admit ignorance, especially as a teacher. The greatest teachers in the world know that the best way to respond to a tough question is to simply say, "I don't know the answer. But I will look into it and get back with you." That takes integrity, and it sets a good example for your student. It demonstrates humility and eagerness to learn. Emotions are contagious. If your student sees that you are interested and willing to learn a tough subject, it will encourage your child to learn, too. When your child comes up to you and says, "How do I use the quadratic formula?", before you give up on homeschooling and go hide in your room with a bottle of Scotch, why not say "I'm not sure, but let's learn it together!" Then work with your child as you *both* discover the answer.

Second, *take advantage of outside programs and specialists.* Of course, there are some subjects you simply will not be able to learn alongside with your student no matter how willing you are. The learning curve would be so steep as to be impractical. In these situations, remember that just because you are homeschooling doesn't mean you have to do it all yourself. Take advantage of local educational cooperatives, tutors, and online classes. While you'll still be the primary educator overseeing the coursework, you can have an expert in the field handle the one-on-one instruction for you. In my story above, this was what I did when my daughter wanted to learn Japanese. The world is full of exceptional people skilled and educated in a dizzying variety of subjects. You'd be surprised what kind of resources you can turn up by putting the word out in your network that you are looking for a tutor. When my eldest daughter needed to learn about finances, we heard there was a man teaching in a local Catholic co-op who was a financial adviser with 25 years experience! I got her into his class for the semester, and it worked out great.

If you want to look further abroad, why not check out your online options? If you need someone to step in and handle your calculus or French or some other tough subject, Homeschool Connections has your back! Peruse our live and recorded course offerings at <http://homeschoolconnections.com>.

Of course, you will always need to stay actively engaged in making sure work is being completed to the best of your child's ability. You may not be handling the instruction, but you are always providing oversight.

Finally, on subjects where you plan on taking the lead in instructing, *look for teaching resources in those content areas*. There is so much stuff out there to help you: teachers' guides, audiobooks, pre-prepared lesson plans, video lessons, and so much more. There are entire websites dedicated to collecting these resources and making them available. I often use a website called Teachers Pay Teachers (<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com>). It is a service where teachers upload their Power Points, lesson plans, and resources to sell to other teachers. There are *millions* of resources uploaded by tens of thousands of educators representing homeschoolers, private schools, co-ops, and conventional schools. The prices are usually nominal (some resources are even available for free), and you can search by subject matter.

There's a whole world of resources out there waiting to be tapped. Homeschooling has been around long enough that you can find a cornucopia of help on any and every subject imaginable!

In conclusion, I get that it's scary thinking that *you* are going to be responsible for teaching your child trigonometry, or biology, or statistics. The good news is just because you are responsible for it doesn't mean you have to do it alone! Leverage the abundance of resources and professionals out there to bring the skills you need to your class. Even if a subject is tough, it need not be an obstacle to realizing your homeschooling goals.

CHAPTER 5

“But what about socialization?”

“You’re going to homeschool? But what about socialization!?”

Anyone involved in homeschooling has gotten this question at one time or another from concerned friends and family. It is understandable. Most children in the United States attend some sort of traditional school, public or private. That fact alone ensures that school will be the primary context for their social lives. Removing a child from that context sparks concerns that they will be stunted socially.

But fear not! Those of us who have homeschooled for a long time can attest that the socialization skills of homeschool students can be superior to their public-school counterparts. There are a few reasons for this:

More multi-generational engagement

Homeschooled children have much more interaction with people of all ages than public-schooled children. Usually, they are learning in a home environment with siblings of varying ages. Because they aren’t away at school all day long, they tend to get brought along with parents as they run errands. They tend to be more engaged in their community through volunteer and work opportunities. All of this means they spend more time with people of all ages—and get a lot more experience interacting with adults.

Now, compare that to a conventional school where a student will be segregated all day with other children of *only* their own age group. If anything, the homeschooling experience provides a more balanced approach to socialization than the public-school routine.

More self-reliance means greater confidence

As discussed in previous chapters, homeschooled children generally grow in independence throughout their homeschool career. By the latter years of high school, some may even be essentially schooling themselves with minimal direct engagement. Independence and self-reliance build

confidence; that's true for anyone, but especially for young people. And confidence is one of the best gifts you can instill in a young person when it comes to socialization. Going into social situations with confidence can make the difference between enjoying socializing and dreading it. A homeschooled child who has learned academic self-reliance will be well equipped to approach post-high-school socializing with confidence.

Freedom from the toxic high school social scene

In this book I have been trying to argue for homeschooling high school based on the positives of homeschooling, not by dunking on public school. And that's a pattern I intend to continue! *But...* I am going to make an exception here, because the hyper-stratified, cliquish social-caste system can be absolutely debilitating to a young person. How many teens develop social anxiety because of the peer pressure and cliquishness of high school? One of the best things you can probably do to foster healthy social skills in your student is to give them a reprieve from the crippling social scene of many public high schools.

All well and good. But what opportunities will your homeschooling teen have to socialize with other teens? Because teens definitely need to connect with other teens in a special way. This is going to depend upon the options *you* pursue. You are going to need to intentionally create space for your teen's socializing. Fortunately, there are many options!

For example, you can start by joining a local homeschool support group. These days they exist in almost every county. But if you don't have one, why not start one? Find local homeschool teens and invite them to meet up at the local coffee shop for an hour once a week. This could be for a book club, Socrates Café, pro-life club, or just to hang out.

Here are a few other socialization opportunities outside of the home:

- Church youth group
- Sports
- Dance, drama, or music groups
- Martial arts
- 4-H
- Volunteer opportunities
- Working a part-time job with other teens
- Job shadowing

As you can see, all these recommendations are extracurricular. When you are building out your scope and sequence for high school, you will want

to structure in some time for extracurricular activities. These not only provide opportunities for socialization, but are also a welcome rest from the academic grind.

While the maladjusted, socially awkward homeschool is a perennial stereotype, the truth is that most homeschoolers socialize just fine. But don't take my word for it! If you want to see what the research shows about the socialization of homeschoolers, I recommend the study "Homeschooling Grows Up" from the Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA). You can find their report online at the following link: <https://hsllda.org/docs/librariesprovider2/public/homeschooling-grows-up.pdf>

One final thought on socialization with your high schooler: if you are homeschooling high school, socialization is something *you* must plan for, just as surely as you plan your child's curriculum. It will not take care of itself. I won't lie; poorly adjusted homeschoolers do exist. Just like poorly adjusted public schoolers exist. Whenever *anyone* does not learn proper social skills, it is because they have not been given the opportunities and support to do so. Do you want your high schooler to have a healthy social development? Give them the occasions to develop it.

CHAPTER 6

Accreditation

Like it or not, we are a culture that places a high premium on credentials. We attach a lot of importance to things like training, licenses, insurance, certifications, degrees, and all the varied ways our society puts a gold star on something to deem it approved. Conversely, to lack the proper credentials subjects one to immediate suspicion as an outlier, a fraud, or a mischief maker. Consider the emotional weight of words like “unlicensed” and “non-insured.” They conjure up images of sketchy contractors doing shoddy work in our home, or a reckless driver hitting our car and then fleeing the scene. To be without credentials seems to put one outside the realm of normally accepted business.

Credentials serve a valuable function in society by separating those who have a minimum amount of competence in a field from those who don't. We must also realize, however, that it is entirely possible to focus too much on credentials, especially when no credentialing is necessary to do a good job with something. And here we get into the question of homeschooling accreditation. When planning your high schoolers' homeschooling years, you may wonder whether you need to sign them up for an accredited home study program. This is a question we get frequently at Homeschool Connections. The answer depends upon the family's individual circumstances.

But before we get into that, let's cover some basics.

What is Accreditation?

“Accreditation” is one of those words tossed around in academia to signify that an education program is legit. We've all heard the term used in advertisements for colleges or other study programs. But what does accreditation mean exactly?

Accreditation is a voluntary process initiated by schools and performed by private agencies to ensure the school meets minimum educational standards. Accreditation began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a way for colleges and universities with high academic standards to distinguish themselves from institutions that claimed to be colleges

but provided curricula closer to high school. Today, accreditation can potentially help parents make sure a school is a legitimate educational institution, not merely a diploma mill or part of an educational scam.

This is a helpful service, but who bestows accreditation? Contrary to popular belief, accreditation is not given by the government. In fact, there is no central control of accreditation at all. Accreditation is offered through a patchwork of private agencies with no central control or government oversight. Because there are both good and bad accrediting agencies, parents need to make sure the accrediting agency itself is legitimate. Accreditation alone is not an assurance that an educational institution is superior to a non-accredited institution. There are great schools that are not accredited. Conversely, there are bad schools that are accredited. The status alone means very little.

Okay but why wouldn't a school or homeschool program seek accreditation?

Good question! For one thing, obtaining accreditation is an expensive and time-consuming process. It adds to the cost of tuition and therefore puts an added financial burden on parents. Since Catholic homeschool programs are not massive corporate entities with bottomless budgets, most are reluctant to go through the time, tedium, and expense of obtaining a credential that is not essential to their mission.

Speaking of mission, accreditation can compromise a program's ability to follow its own educational vision. Accreditors may restrict an institution from offering nontraditional programs in order to be approved. A school that wants to offer an "out of the box" curricula, or give parents more authority in choosing curricula, may find their hands tied by their accrediting agency. For Catholic homeschooling programs that already exist far outside the educational "norm" in the West, this is obviously a matter of grave concern. Many curricula providers—including Homeschool Connections—prefer to forgo accreditation in order to maintain unfettered control over our curricula offerings.

Finally, we should remember that accreditation itself does not create or develop curricula, it only gives a "stamp of approval" to them. It adds no inherent value to a program. Therefore, the staff of non-accredited schools and programs sometimes find that marketing and recruiting are the only advantages to accreditation. It really possesses only so much importance as you attach to it.

To sum up, there are a whole host of reasons why a Catholic program

would not seek accreditation. There is no practical benefit to doing so. The cost and complexity outweigh the benefits (which are marginal at best), and the academic independence of the program becomes compromised. Homeschooling is ultimately about *you*, the parent, determining what is best for your child, with or without the stamp of some agency.

Is Accreditation Ever Necessary?

Generally speaking, accreditation is not necessary for homeschool programs. However, there are some cases where an accredited transcript or diploma could be required. Even if you don't anticipate needing accreditation, you should be aware of these situations just in case.

If you plan to put your child into a site-based high school after homeschooling a few years, check entrance requirements with the prospective school. Some public and private high schools will require an accredited transcript before accepting your child. In most cases, the school will have an option of allowing your child to test into their grade level without an accredited transcript—if they require testing at all.

Children seeking scholarships from the NCAA (National College Athletic Association) do not currently need to have an accredited diploma to be accepted. However, speak with your NCAA contact first, as the rules have changed over the years.

What about college acceptance? Many parents assume that accreditation is necessary for college acceptance. Always check with prospective colleges, as requirements can change, but it is extremely rare that accreditation is necessary. Colleges have a long history of accepting students from private schools and homeschools that are not accredited. They will base acceptance on an evaluation of the student's application, the results of their SAT, ACT, or CLT scores, and/or their high school transcripts and grade point average (GPA).

It is good to be aware of all these situations, even if they don't apply to you. But the main takeaway is that cases when accreditation is mandatory are rare.

What if I want to design my own curriculum or use a non-accredited program but am one of the rare cases where accreditation is necessary?

If you do happen to need accreditation, that does not mean you must give

up on your homeschooling aspirations! There are several accreditation agencies that will review your course of study and issue an accredited transcript or diploma for a fee. These programs include, but are not limited to:

- [Clonlara](#)
- [NARHS](#)
- [West River Academy](#)

I also want to mention [Kolbe Academy](#). Kolbe is an online Catholic academy in the classical tradition. Besides being an excellent program in its own right, Kolbe will also accredit pre-approved outside courses. (If you are utilizing Homeschool Connections and need to obtain an accredited transcript, you can do so through Kolbe Academy.)

There are many more options out there beyond what is listed here. These flexible options allow you to continue to follow your own homeschooling vision even if you need accreditation. As always, do your research to find the best accrediting agency for you.

Some Concluding Thoughts

One of the issues newer homeschooler parents deal with is feeling like they need to replicate every element of institutionalized schooling in their own home. The biggest mental shift after the initial decision to homeschool is when you realize that homeschooling isn't just about educating in a different place, but in a different way.

Accreditation is an issue that unnecessarily burdens parents. In most cases, it is not required. You as the parent are the ultimate authority when it comes to your children and their education. Homeschooling does not involve attending a school, and the focus should be on providing the best education for each individual child. Sometimes the best education will be enrolling in an accredited home study program and sometimes it will not.

As private homeschoolers, parents are the ones who provide "accreditation" for their children's education. The quality of home education should be assured by parents first and foremost.

CHAPTER 7

Grading Guidelines

There's an old saying that the only things certain in life are death and taxes. We could apply a modified version of this saying to schooling: the only things certain in education are work and grades! Grading is a universal part of the school experience. It can, however, become a real stressor for parents and students. Like it or not, we live in a world where a lot hinges on a student's grades. Consider:

- Grades are considered the standard determinant of a student's aptitude in a given subject
- In public school, class credits may be awarded proportional to grades
- Grades and grade point average (GPA) are core factors considered by colleges when evaluating applicants
- Students are prone to internalizing their grades as a reflection of their self-worth

Given that a student's academic future and their own self-esteem can be tied up with grading, it is no wonder grades can cause anxiety. This means that when we consider grading as homeschooling parents, several factors come into play. We need approach grading in a way that:

- Provides an accurate assessment of a student's aptitude
- Is understandable by colleges and other institutions that may review your child's transcripts
- Does not cause you and your child excessive pressure or stress
- Is faithful to your own homeschooling ethos

That's a lot of balls in the air at once! But don't worry! With a little bit of guidance, you'll navigate your way through this like a pro. Let's start with the fundamentals.

What is the purpose of grades?

Have you ever wondered where the word grade comes from? It is derived from the Latin word *gradus*, which means a step. This helps us recall that grades are not a final judgment; they are part of a process towards mastery. A high grade means a student is at the top of the "staircase" for a

particular subject matter; a middle grade means they have made progress but still have a way to go, while a low grade means they've only just begun to climb the staircase of mastery.

A grade is an *assessment*—a tool to help understand where your child is relative to mastery of a subject. Grades are like when a cook sticks a meat thermometer into the roast to see how done it is. They give you an understanding of a student's aptitude at a particular point in time.

This means a grade tells you more about what a student needs in the *future* rather than judging their past performance. When you stick a thermometer in the roast, the reading tells you how much longer you still need to cook it—it is showing you where you are *now* for the purpose of figuring out what to do *next*. This is an important point. People tend to think of grades as a final judgment, carved in stone, on work already done—and certainly, grades are assigned based on work completed. But if you aren't also viewing them as a tool for taking the next steps up the staircase of mastery, you're missing out on the real value grades provide.

The goal is mastery, not grades

I've used the term "mastery" several times in this chapter. What is mastery? Mastery means a student understands the content enough to be confident demonstrating or applying it. They have internalized the lesson and are ready to move on to the next level.

Mastery is the goal the grading helps your student attain. Grades are not an end in themselves. Grades only signify how much (or little) your student understands the content. Mastering the content is really all that matters. What help is it to get a solid grade if the content isn't mastered? If your student hasn't mastered the content of Algebra 1, how will they succeed in Algebra 2? If your child is still struggling with 10th grade content, how will they fare in 11th grade? Understanding the content is way more important than what letter grade is assigned.

Remembering this helps us keep grades in perspective. Did your child get a C- in math? It's no big deal. All it does is tell you that there's some more work that needs to be done before moving on. It's the equivalent of saying, "The roast needs to stay in for 20 more minutes." Understood this way, a low grade can actually be your friend; it tells you plainly what you still need to do before advancing to the next level.

Thinking of it this way also helps insulate your student from the negative self-talk that can emerge in the wake of a bad grade. In other

words, we need to remember Thomas Edison's philosophy. It is estimated that the inventor of the light bulb failed almost 10,000 times before he came up with a functional bulb. When asked how he felt about these failures, Edison said, "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." Applied to your student, the take-away is not, "I am a failure at chemistry," just "I learned that I need to understand atomic mass better before I move on."

Consider this: a student who starts the semester with Ds and moves up to a B- has demonstrated more progress than a student who maintains straight As throughout the semester. The fact of the B- is not nearly as important as the *movement* from a D to a B-. The grades are simply points on a line, locations on a map, steps on the staircase. They are meant to help guide you towards mastery.

Grading Guidelines

We've spent a lot of time so far discussing how the letter grade isn't as important in the big scheme of things. However, if a student's goal is college or the military, then grades certainly have relevance, as they are required on a transcript. A college admissions officer or recruiter, who does not personally know your child, will need to make an academic assessment in order to determine acceptance and scholarship eligibility. This will likely be determined by the college admissions form, an application essay, standardized testing, and/or grades on your homeschool transcript.

This means whatever grades you record need to be recorded in a certain standardized format that is coherent to whatever outsider is looking at it. Sounds easy, but if you've never graded before, it can be thorny. If you've never had to grade systematically, here is a table that will help you, using content mastery as the goal post all grades are oriented towards:

A	Student demonstrates complete mastery of the content
B	Student has almost mastered the content but could tighten up on a few areas
C	Student has a working knowledge of the content but still struggles with some concepts
D	Student's comprehension is spotty and disorganized; student doesn't grasp key concepts
F	Student lacks any comprehension of the material

Some educational institutions have an additional grading category, the E. Both an E and an F signify “failing”, with this distinction: an F is assigned when a student has completed the coursework and failed, whereas a E is assigned when a student never completed the coursework to begin with. For example, a student who does all the homework but gets all the answers wrong gets an F, while a student who simply fails to ever turn in homework gets an E. Hopefully you never have to worry about Fs and Es in your homeschool, but it is good to be familiar with how these systems are utilized.

Grades are usually assigned based on a point system. Assignments and tests throughout the semester are worth a certain amount of “points.” At the end of the semester, points-earned and divided by total points-possible to get a percentage out of 100. The percentage correlates to a letter grade. Many public high schools use a 10-point scale for assigning letter grades:

- 90-100 A
- 80-89 B
- 70-79 C
- 60-69 D
- 59 and below F

More selective schools use a 7-point scale:

- 93-100 A
- 85-92 B
- 77-84 C
- 69-76 D
- 68 and below F

Either grading scale is acceptable. Whichever one you choose, make sure to list the grading scale on your student’s transcript form. This helps the college admissions folks understand your grading system, so they know what your letters mean.

If you are a veteran homeschooler of younger children, this stuff about grading is not news to you. You’ve probably been doing it for years! But whether you are a veteran homeschooler or entirely new to it, it’s important to remember that high school grading requires you to be a bit more systematic.

Remember, you set the standard!

Ultimately, grading is subjective. Just as different schools and different

teachers will all use different criteria in determining a student's grade, even within the same program, you have the freedom to set your homeschool's grading criteria. You set the standard based on your knowledge of your child, their strengths, weakness, and progress.

Challenge your child and make him work hard to earn good grades. Set standards for learning mastery. Determine if your student is working to his full capacity. As the primary educator, use your best judgment to discern how to best evaluate and grade your child's achievements.

CHAPTER 8

Record Keeping

Because high school transcripts are used by colleges, military recruiters, and other programs your student may be involved in post-graduation, it is important to keep accurate records from high school.

What sort of records are sufficient? In many cases, a transcript is all you will need upon graduation, and so as long as you have the transcript put together, you will be fine. There may be times, however, when more detailed records will be needed; for example, your state may require homeschoolers to keep such records for graduation. Detailed record keeping will also help you assess your student's progress each year and plan for the future; reviewing records is an integral part of tweaking your scope and sequence.

Furthermore, it's a good idea to have more detailed records on hand in case you are questioned about your child's transcript. Suppose your child's transcript shows a course for AP Chemistry with a grade of a B+. A college may say, "We will accept this credit, but to make sure the class meets national AP science standards, we'd like to see examples of coursework and know what textbook you used." In such cases, it's important to have records on hand to answer questions about your student's high school coursework.

Record keeping for high school is important, but it is not as daunting as it sounds. It can be a fairly simple exercise. In this chapter I will provide you with some resources and recommendations to make your record keeping a breeze.

When to record?

Without a doubt the best time to record class information is in *real time*. Do not wait for summer or the following school year or the end of high school to start cobbling together your records. You may feel too busy at the time; or think "It's okay to wait until the summer. I won't forget." And maybe you won't. But maybe you will. The longer you wait, the greater the risk is that you forget important information—or that you simply forget to record at all. You definitely want to record class info while the class is happening, or as soon as possible after it concludes.

I speak from bitter experience here. When my eldest daughter Jenna graduated high school, I realized too late I was remiss in keeping adequate records for her. I found myself trying to patch together a transcript from memory. “Hey Jenna, what science class did you take in the fall of your freshman year?” “Do you remember what textbook we used for history two years ago?” “Remember that time you took Algebra 2 at that co-op? What grade did you get in that class?” As you can imagine, proceeding this way can be extremely stressful, especially when college admission is on the line. Do yourself and your student a favor and record all this information in real time instead of trying to reconstruct everything later.

What to record?

What sort of information ought to be recorded? Ultimately, the stuff that goes on a transcript is most important: name of the course, year and semester it was taken, and your student’s final grade.

But if you want to be safe, I would also record the following information:

- General description of class and course objectives
- Where was the course taken? Was it through conventional homeschooling, an online curriculum provider (such as Homeschool Connections), a distance study program (like Mother of Divine Grace), a homeschool cooperative, etc.
- How many hours a week was the class?
- What textbook was used?
- What did coursework consist of?
- Samples of coursework
- Records of major test scores, such as midterms and finals
- Standardized test results (PSAT, SAT, ACT)
- Additional books read, even if for pleasure
- Immunization records

If you can get your hands on a course syllabus, these are great to hang on to as they usually have most of this information in one place.

How to record?

There is no single method for how grades and other important information must be recorded. That being said, there are more or less effective ways to organize this data. Homeschool Connections has done a lot of the leg work here by putting together a comprehensive library of free forms and templates for all your recording needs. Check out these resources

at <https://homeschoolconnections.com/free-homeschool-forms/>. At the Homeschool Connections website, you will find:

- Standard transcript templates and instructions
- Grade school diploma template
- High school diploma template
- Record keeping forms for individual classes
- Single student grade book (that will automatically calculate your student's grade!)
- High school grade book
- Four-year plan for high school
- Year-end review form
- Annual course of study
- Yearly schedule: monthly goals
- Quarterly course plan
- Weekly itinerary
- Reading journal
- Reading log
- Library log
- Literature checklist
- Unit study checklist
- Historical studies timeline book template
- Certificate of course completion template

As you can see, Homeschool Connections makes it easy to really go down the rabbit hole with forms and record keeping. Do you need all these forms? Definitely not. By now you should know that the mantra of homeschooling is *customization*: different families have different needs. Part of homeschooling high school is understanding what your specific needs are and how to meet them. Homeschool Connections' free forms empower you to record only what you need.

Storing records

Keep a virtual file and a physical file. Having a physical file is an obvious precaution in case virtual files are erased or corrupted. But you definitely want to have everything available digitally as well because I promise you are going to have to email these at some point.

In conclusion, record keeping is important, but it need not be daunting or complicated. Keep tabs on things in real time, use the Homeschool Connections free forms to fill out what you need, and keep everything organized and stored safely and you'll be fine.

CHAPTER 9

Will a Homeschool Diploma Be Accepted?

Even if you are organized, informed, and confident about homeschooling high school, you may have concerns about how your child's diploma will be perceived in the post-high school world. Perhaps you are worried that a homeschool graduation will be considered of less value than a conventional diploma. Have you ever found yourself thinking any of the following?

“Will my daughter's homeschooling diploma be considered a ‘real’ diploma by prospective employers?”

“Will my child's homeschooling diploma be accepted by a college?”

“Will the military accept my child's homeschooling diploma?”

“Does my child need to take the GED for his diploma to be accepted?”

If you've ever found yourself fretting about these concerns, this chapter is for you!

First off, *don't worry!* Homeschooling diplomas are not only broadly accepted by employers, colleges, and the military—they are often sought out and considered premium value. Some colleges and military recruiters actively recruit homeschool graduates. They recognize that homeschool students, as a whole, test better on standardized testing, tend to be more engaged in their community, and are self-directed learners. Research has consistently shown that homeschooled students perform much better than their counterparts in institutional schools. Consider the following:

- Studies show that 69% of homeschooled students succeed in college and adulthood.
- Homeschooled students tend to perform above average on ACTs and SATs.
- In these standard achievement tests, the homeschooled students average between 15% and 30% higher than public school students, regardless of parents' income and education.
- Homeschooled students average 72 points more than the nationwide mean performance in SATs.
- Homeschoolers have an average graduation rate of 67% compared

to the 57.5% graduation rate for students from public schools.¹

Given these statistics, we can see why homeschool graduates are so eagerly sought after! Homeschool graduates are promising candidates for employment, higher education, and military careers.

That being said, you will still need to make sure your child's documentation is in order for these institutions to consider them for admittance. In most cases, all you will need is your homemade transcript and completion of a college entrance exam, in addition to the application. Colleges and the military may check to make sure the grades on the transcript align with the ACT, SAT, or CLT scores. An employer usually requires nothing other than the applicant affirming that they have completed high school.

What about a GED? Would it be helpful for your homeschooler to obtain a GED, just so they have something "official" on hand if challenged?

It is generally recommended not to get a GED (General Education Development). The GED is a high school equivalency test for students who did not graduate from high school. It is a test that says, "My student did not graduate high school, but nevertheless possesses knowledge roughly equivalent to a high school graduate. Your homeschooling student *did* graduate from high school, so the GED is not geared for homeschool graduates.

Additionally, the GED test is often taken by high school dropouts so it can carry a negative connotation with colleges. You may want to note, in some states the GED is referred to as the HiSET (High School Equivalency Test) or the TASC (Test Assessing Secondary Completion). Whatever its name, these high school equivalency tests are not meant for homeschooling graduates, are not necessary, and may actually have a negative impact on your graduate.

Also note that while the military accepts diplomas issued by homeschooling parents, they take few GED candidates. Military admissions are considered on a tiered system. Tier 1 applicants are those with a high school diploma and/or at least 15 credits of college. Tier 2 applicants have earned a GED. Getting your child a GED will push him or her down into Tier 2. According to military statistics, less than 5% of accepted recruits come from this category.²

Speaking of the military, how do the United States Armed

1 <https://www.thinkimpact.com/homeschooling-statistics>

2 <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-109publ163/pdf/PLAW-109publ163.pdf>

Forces approach homeschooled applicants? The military has sought homeschoolers for years because of their critical thinking skills and self-discipline. In 2012 and 2014, Congress amended the National Defense Authorization Act to specifically recognize homeschooling diplomas on equal footing with traditional diplomas. This means your homeschooling graduate may qualify for all the same incentives, including up to \$40,000 for enlistments. That's great news! ³

What do you need to enlist your homeschool graduate out of high school? Just a few things:

- A homeschool high school diploma
- A high school transcript
- Verification compliance with any state law during high school
- Take the ASVAB test and the Assessment of Individual Motivation test (AIM), which is 20-minute pencil and paper test. The AIM test score is used to obtain data and does not affect qualification for enlistment.

The military does have a standard on who qualifies as a homeschool graduate. For your student to be considered a homeschool high school graduate, they must have been homeschooled for at least the last nine months of high school.

To learn more about homeschooling and the military, I encourage you to check out the resources provided by HSLDA, especially their article "Preparing to Enter the Military: Your Mission." It can be found online at <https://hsllda.org/post/preparing-to-enter-the-military-your-mission>.

There once was a time when getting institutions of higher learning to recognize a homeschooling diploma was fraught with difficulties. Fortunately, the landscape for homeschoolers has improved dramatically since the 1970s and 80s. Today, homeschooling diplomas have gained broad acceptance in academia, the military, and the workforce. The opportunities for your homeschooled graduate have never been brighter.

3 <https://ged.com/blog/can-you-get-into-the-military-with-a-ged>

CHAPTER 10

College is Not the Goal for Everyone

Part of homeschooling for high school is determining what plans your student has after graduation. Your child's post-secondary goals will help you determine what sort of high school curriculum you will require to set them up to achieve these goals.

For many families, traditional four-year college is still the go-to option for post-graduation plans. Traditional four-year college is increasingly being questioned, however. The rising costs of college, student debt crisis, and poor social environment in many colleges are leading families to reevaluate whether four-year college is right for their children. This chapter will give you some food for thought on the question of alternatives to four-year college.

One reason we homeschool is so we can craft a personalized education for our children. If we personalize high school education but act as though every child must go on to a four-year college, we undermine a core ethos of homeschooling. The fact is, not every person is destined for college, and we ought not think otherwise. Every student, along with his parents, needs to carefully discern whether to continue his education upon high school graduation. And, if it is to be continued, what does that look like?

If your student decides that a four-year college is not for them, here are some other post-secondary educational options to consider:

Vocational / Trade school

A vocational or trade school is a school meant to train students for particular jobs, primarily in the skilled and mechanical trades. Popular trade school programs include HVAC technician training, welding training, electrician training, truck driving classes, cosmetology, and hospitality. Trade school programs are generally brief, ranging from three months to three years (the national average trade school program takes one year). Students come away with an associates degree or a professional certification.

The benefits of trade school are manifold: a shorter path to a new career, practical experience, and career counseling/job placement assistance

available through the trade school. Not to mention the incredible cost advantage: as of 2021, trade school education in the United States costs \$33,000 on average; the typical four-year college costs \$32,000 *per year*.⁴

Community College

If four-year college is not right for your student, community college might be an ideal alternative. Attending a community college for two years is a great way to reduce the costs of a college education and avoid some student loan debt. But is this the right choice for your child?

A community college—also known as a junior college—is a publicly funded institute offering two-year (associates) degrees. Four kinds of associate degrees are available: Associate of Arts (general education), Associate of Applied Arts (vocational training), Associate of Science (for fields such as medicine, engineering, business, and computer science), and Associate of Applied Science (more technically oriented). They also offer professional certifications in fields as diverse as hospitality management, real estate, medical coding, and automobile repair. One field where students can earn a plethora of certifications is in information technology. With the rapid growth of IT, this could be ideal for students interested in computer skills.

The price is also a better deal. At a typical university, a student pays \$400 to \$600 or more per credit hour, which means each course will cost \$1,200 to \$1,800. Community colleges typically charge \$45 to \$250 per credit hour, depending on residency status. This means community college offers students a savings of up to \$1,425 per course, which is a huge cost advantage.

One other point to make is that community colleges usually have flexible schedules, allowing students to maintain jobs outside of class. Their local campus means students can often commute, sparing students the expensive residency fees that come with living on campus.

Online College Courses

It may be that your student wants a four-year degree but for various reasons needs to stay home while working towards it. These students may want to consider online college courses. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, many colleges were offering flexible online alternatives to

4 http://www.doleta.gov/OA/eo/pdf/Apprentices_and_Job_Seekers_Fact_Sheet.pdf

traditional in-person classes. Since Covid-19, it is easier than ever to get an education online. The website Online-U has a comprehensive list of online colleges; they also let you search for online colleges by program and desired degree level. Check out their online college page at <https://www.onlineu.com/online-schools>.

Non-School Options

Perhaps your student wants to consider non-school options for graduation. In prior generations, only a minority of high school graduates went on to college. The rest pursued non-school plans after graduation. Though college has become considerably more common these days, there are still plenty of viable non-school choices for students who are not inclined to pursue continued study. Your student could:

- Take on an apprenticeship
- Join the military
- Start a business
- Sell real estate
- Volunteer
- Join a religious community
- Jump right into the workforce

In case you are worried that lack of a college degree will impair your child's ability to find work, consider that about one quarter of college grads are currently working in jobs that don't require a degree. And of the thirty fields projected to grow the fastest over the next decade, only seven require a standard four-year degree. For more ideas, check out the article "[Is College for Everyone? | | Alternatives to the Traditional 4-Year College](#)" at the excellent website *Art of Manliness*.

Remember, too, those who go to a four-year college lose four years of earning potential while they are in school. When they finish their degree program they will likely be broke and/or in debt. Obviously the hope is that college has prepared them to find a decent paying job to counterbalance this. But in terms of savings, work history, building credit, and things like that, a student who has gone right to work will have the upper hand. A student who does not go to college but enters a standard three-year electrician apprenticeship out of high school will be making an average of \$60,000 a year at age 21 with 75% less debt than a four-year college grad.

5

5 <https://financesonline.com/trade-school-college-statistics/>

Taking a Gap Year

Some students may not be ready to make a decision about post-high school life. Or perhaps a student would like to go to college but is simply not ready, due either to maturity, finances, health, or any number of reasons. For these students, it might be best to consider a gap year; that is, take a year off from school in between high school and college. Students can make excellent use of a gap year. During a gap year, the student can:

- Work full time to earn money for tuition
- Do volunteer work while discerning their future
- Research possible careers
- Attend school part time
- Travel

My eldest daughter Jenna ended up graduating high school early. Her accelerated homeschool scope and sequence had her graduating just as she turned seventeen. We all felt like seventeen was too young to go off to college, so she took a gap year. She spent six weeks in Paris. Took a couple of different jobs. Saved a bunch of money, established credit, and bought a car. That year was instrumental in helping her spread her wings and “grow up” a bit. Now that the gap year is over, she’s taking general ed classes at community college with plans to pursue dance at a four-year college next year. A gap year can be an excellent opportunity for a young person to spread their wings, collect themselves, and prepare for the next stage of life.

When is College a Must?

I hope this chapter is not coming across as “anti-college”, because that is not at all my intent. There are pros and cons to everything; this chapter is meant to help you see that if your student doesn’t seem a good fit for college, that need not be a con. There are many other rewarding and financially viable alternatives to traditional four-year college.

Of course, there are situations when college is an absolute must. If you are going into any of the STEM professions (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) college training is generally mandatory. If you plan on working in the medical field as anything higher than a CMA, you’re likely going to need college. Additionally, some companies will not consider non-degreed candidates even for entry-level positions.

Conclusion

We've covered a lot of ground here, and hopefully you have some things to chew on. There really are plenty of options out there for students averse to traditional four-year college. Contemporary society has definitely stigmatized not going to college as a sign of academic failure. As demonstrated in this chapter, that is certainly not the case. Like all things related to education, make your decisions based on what is best for *your* child and their particular strengths and interests—don't do anything just because everybody else is doing it.

CHAPTER 11

Diplomas and Graduation

Ah, the diploma! What would high school be without a diploma as the symbol of the successful completion of twelve years of study? In this chapter we are going to review diplomas, graduation, and all things pertaining to the ceremonial conclusion of high school.

I say “ceremonial conclusion” because ultimately diplomas and graduation ceremonies are symbolic. A student who has completed a high school curriculum has finished high school, regardless of whether they have the little piece of paper or the ceremony. That’s not to say these symbols aren’t important; human beings are ritualistic, and we attach great importance to symbol and ceremony. If you decide these things are important to you and your student, how can you partake in them outside of an institutional environment?

The Diploma

Diploma comes from a Greek word that signifies a folded piece of paper; it calls to mind the official documents that emissaries of the king used to carry. To have “diplomatic papers” made one “official”, signifying one’s credentials were *bona fide*. Similarly, the diploma today represents that one has “officially” finished high school.

If you graduated from public school, your diploma was prepared by your school and handed to you when you walked across the stage at graduation. Fortunately, today there are many other means of generating a professional looking diploma for your student. Homeschool Connections’ forms page has several resources for generating diplomas. You can visit our free forms page here: <https://homeschoolconnections.com/free-homeschool-forms/>. There are many other diploma templates available out there that can be easily found with an internet search.

Regardless of where you get a diploma, there are a few standard elements you will want to include:

1. Student name
2. Parent signature

3. Statement that the student graduated from high school and the graduation date
4. Statement that this is a “high school” diploma

There are a number of services that will charge you a fee to create a homeschool diploma. You'll have to evaluate these services on their own merits; sometimes a paid service will give you a much more professional looking product in the end. You can create your own or download one for free online, though.

Does it matter that your student's diploma is self-generated and not issued by an institution? Extremely unlikely. We have never had an employer, prospective college, or recruiter ask to see a diploma (as opposed to a transcript). However, it is good to have one on hand just in case. Additionally, it is a rite of passage for a student to receive a nicely framed diploma upon graduation.

The Graduation Ceremony

A diploma is traditionally presented in the context of a graduation ceremony. How do you do a graduation ceremony as a homeschooler?

The first thing you need to consider is whether you are going to hold an individual ceremony for your child alone, or whether you want to partner with other homeschool graduates in your area to do a group ceremony. The answer to this will determine how you proceed.

If you are doing an individual ceremony, it is pretty straightforward. When my daughter Jenna graduated high school, we set a date, reserved a pavilion at the local park, and sent out some invitations. We decorated it with some balloons and party décor, got a Costco cake, and some coolers of beverages. Piled some dogs and burgers on the barbeque (manned by Grandpa) and set up a table with a box for cards and some photos of my daughter. Then we just chilled all day. The atmosphere was more of a big day-long party, as my daughter did not want a specific ceremony. But if you did, you could easily do something similar and just incorporate the presentation of the diploma at a certain time.

When Maureen's children graduated, they partnered with other families in their local homeschool support group. They had a special Graduation Mass at the Cathedral where the students were presented with their diplomas by the priest. This was followed by a potluck attended by the local communities and the graduates' extended families, all complete with caps & gowns, speeches, and lots of pictures. Don't hesitate to pool

resources with other homeschooling families and do something a little more formal: a special venue, caps and gowns, or a guest speaker.

I once gave a commencement address at a homeschool graduation. There were eight graduates, and the families had rented the hall of a local church for the evening. It was a lovely event.

The blog *7 Sisters Homeschool* has an excellent run down of all the things you can consider when orchestrating your own homeschool graduation ceremony. Check out their advice here: <https://www.7sistershomeschool.com/how-to-create-a-simple-homeschool-graduation-ceremony/>

Like everything else about homeschooling, it's really up to you what you want to do with diplomas and graduation. You can opt for something very simple and informal or go all the way up to the formal ceremony with rented caps and gowns, professional photographers, and the whole shebang. Whatever you choose, begin discussions and planning with your spouse and child well ahead of time to make sure everybody is on the same page.

CHAPTER 12

Finding Support

No matter how well you prepare for homeschooling high school, there will be times when you feel overwhelmed. There will be situations where you second-guess yourself or your decision to homeschool. There may be times when you feel confused about how to proceed, inadequate for the task, or just plain burned out.

If that happens, it is totally okay! Every homeschooling experience comes with highs and lows. It doesn't reflect on your abilities or your decision to homeschool; it's just how life is. When you find yourself in a slump, that's when it is especially important to have a support network around you to turn to. A homeschooling network can provide you with the encouragement, recommendations, and the experience you need to bolster your own efforts, especially when the going gets tough.

How does one plug into a homeschool support network? There are plenty of options:

Local homeschool groups.

These days most regions will already have an established homeschool support group you can plug into. You can usually find these groups on social media or through the homeschooling grapevine. If you are in an area with lots of Catholic homeschoolers, you might be able to find an exclusively Catholic group, but many groups are ecumenical; some don't have a religious angle at all. But anyone who is homeschooling is an ally, regardless of what church they may or may not go to, so we encourage you to reach out and make contacts. Your biggest support will come from others working through the same experiences as yourself!

Local homeschool mom night out.

A moms' night out is a great opportunity to chat, share experiences, and make friends. Call up a handful of other homeschooling moms in your area and propose an evening out. Dads could do the same; why not invite other homeschooling fathers over for a barbeque or go out to socialize?

The more homeschooling parents connect with one another, the better. All ships rise together.

Local co-ops.

Is there a local homeschooling cooperative you can reach out to for support? Homeschooling co-ops are excellent resources, as they give you access not only to homeschooling families but also to families who have experienced homeschooling communally, which is a tremendous boon.

Parish groups.

Usually, homeschoolers within a given parish know each other and might have a small parish homeschool group. If you know other homeschoolers at your parish, ask them. If not, reach out to your pastor. Pastors are generally in the know about who the homeschooling families in the parish are.

Prayer groups.

Does your church have a prayer group? A prayer group may not be a homeschooling group in particular, but the opportunity to plug into a network of prayerful people who are there to support one another is a tremendous blessing.

Online support.

Today there are endless opportunities for networking and support through online forums. This morning I did a Facebook search for “homeschooling support” and found 20+ groups in my region alone. Instagram also boasts tons of homeschooling parents who share helpful tips. There are homeschooling blogs where experienced homeschooling parents share their thoughts and take questions. Reading these blogs can be very helpful, but you can also make online friends by getting involved in the combox threads. Homeschool Connections also has its own online community at <https://community.homeschoolconnections.com>. Don't forget about podcasts! Homeschool Connections has the [Homeschooling Saints podcast](#); there are scores of others as well.

Finding local support through an online community.

The [Catholic Homeschool Community](#) is an online forum through Mighty Networks with a large national and international membership. You can search the membership to find homeschool families in your own city. Reach out, connect, and make local friends!

Attend homeschool conferences.

Before the Internet, regional homeschool conferences were a staple of homeschooling in the United States. Conferences provided opportunities for homeschoolers to mingle, review and buy curricula materials, and hear experienced speakers. There are fewer conferences these days than before the pandemic, but they are still out there and worth going to if you can find one nearby. Many conferences have moved online; an excellent new online conference is The Catholic Homeschool Conference (easy to remember that name, right?). Founded in 2020, [The Catholic Homeschool Conference](#) provides access to hundreds of speakers and vendors in live and recorded formats with gobs of helpful information. They also provide resources to local communities to start their own “mini-conferences.”

Start your own support group.

When all else fails, why not start your own support group? If you find yourself in a geographic region with little homeschooling support, you can be sure there are other parents around you in your situation. Homeschooling has exploded in recent years. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, less than 5% of children in the United States were homeschooled. Since Covid-19, studies estimate between 11-19% of U.S. children are being homeschooled, which is defined as being taught at home and not simultaneously enrolled in a public or private school. You are *definitely* not alone! Get the ball rolling and see where it leads!

These are just a few ideas. The important thing is that you have someone to turn to for support when you need it. Because you *will* need it. Homeschooling may mean you take personal initiative for your child’s education, but it doesn’t mean you have to be isolated.

CHAPTER 13

Preparing My Student for Life After High School

This book has been focused on navigating the joys and challenges of homeschooling high school. I hope you have found the guidance in this book helpful, inspiring you to dig into those high school years with confidence!

Ultimately, though, homeschooling high school is just another stage in the homeschooling experience, and not the final one. As you move through high school and get your feet under you, you'll need to start thinking about preparing your student for life after high school. I'm not talking about the particulars of choosing a college program (although that's part of it), but, rather, preparing your students for the world they will be thrust into after graduation. In this chapter, we will offer some basic guidelines for preparing your student for life after high school.

Faith Foundations

One of the goals we should have in our homeschools is to give our children the tools to live a successful life on their own without us. Part of that is providing them with a solid foundation in our Catholic faith. We all want our kids to continue to practice the faith on their own as they grow up. The best way to secure that is to live your own faith joyfully. A joyful, faithful Christian is a better witness to the faith than a hundred books.

It is also important to pass on the intellectual heritage of the Faith. The option of wrapping faith formation into education is one of the principal reasons Catholics choose to homeschool. Tie the faith into your curriculum: teach them formal logic, Catholic philosophy, and theology, and practice apologetics. These things will all serve them well when they get out on their own.

Vocational Discernment

Every Catholic should engage in vocational discernment. Is your child destined for marriage? Or perhaps is God calling them to priesthood or consecrated life? Have your child prayerfully discern his or her vocation. Pray in quiet, preferably in front of the Blessed Sacrament, and listen

for God's call. If there is the possibility of a vocation, have them attend vocational discernment retreats or vocational events sponsored by the diocese. Religious and priestly orders usually offer similar discernment opportunities. The important thing is not to pressure them; encourage your child to explore their call, then give them space to sort it out with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Career Exploration

Start researching possible careers (including religious vocations as well as stay-at-home mom). Have your child spend a semester on this project, preferably sophomore year, presenting a full research report to you at the end of the semester. The student should investigate the benefits and drawbacks of potential careers, required education, necessary skills, earning potential, long-term outlook, etc.

[The Catholic Homeschool Conference](#) has an excellent event called the Life After High School Conference. The conference provides a plethora of resources and advice for preparing for that transition from high school to adulthood. Additionally, Homeschool Connections offers courses on the topic of career exploration if you find you need assistance in this area.

Work

Many high schoolers get anxious to work and start building up their own income. There's no strict rule for when a child is ready to start working. I took on my first job as a dishwasher in a restaurant when I was 14 years old and haven't stopped working since. Other students may want to wait until senior year or even after high school to get into the workforce. This is something you must sort out based on your child's specific interests and responsibilities. But in general, a part-time job can be a great experience for a student in many ways.

High school is a great time to take on job shadowing. For example, if your student wants to be an engineer, find a mentor in the field who can provide your student with an insider's view and on-the-job shadowing.

One important note: it should be remembered that stay-at-home mother is also a viable path to take. If your daughter feels a strong desire to be a stay-at-home mother, you should make opportunities for her to learn and grow in preparation for this role as well.

Personal Growth and Introspection

Teenagers typically feel an intense desire to establish an identity for themselves apart from their family. While this sometimes manifests itself in expressions of teenage “rebellion”, it need not be so. Children should be encouraged to learn about themselves, practice introspection, and grow with intentionality. “The unexamined life is not worth living”, said Socrates.

There are many ways to go about this. Many people find value in taking personality tests. Personality tests are not hard science, but they can offer interesting insights into one’s personality and motivations. One popular assessment is the Myers-Briggs Personality Test. The DISC test, HEXACO assessment, and the Workplace Personality Test are other options. One concept I have found personally helpful is the principle of *Ikigai*, a method that helps a person visualize the right balance between passion, profession, mission, and vocation.

Emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual growth are all integral to healthy development. Encourage your child to explore these parts of himself. A firm grounding in one’s own identity also helps inoculate a person against ideologies and groups that prey on people insecure in their self-identity.

College Planning

We have talked about college prep extensively in other chapters, so I won’t say much about it here, save that if your child plans to attend college, help them with the preparation. Research colleges together. Aid them in understanding their options and walking through the application steps. Homeschool Connections offers test-prep courses to get your child ready for college preparatory tests (ACT; SAT; and CLT).

Adult Skills

The latter years of high school are a great time to introduce your child to some of the nuts ‘n’ bolts of adulthood. I’m talking about the sorts of skills that any person needs to be competent in to ace adulthood. When my daughter Jenna was 16, we opened a junior bank account for her that became an adult account when she turned 18. At 18, I helped her get a credit card with a small limit and start building her credit. When the time came, I helped her shop for cars and pick out one that suited her. I taught her to change a spare tire and do other basic car maintenance. I showed

her how to shop for insurance. I taught her to monitor her credit and understand her bank statements. I walked her through filing her taxes and file for unemployment when she got laid off during the Covid-19 pandemic. I showed her how to fill out a FAFSA form, explained how to find out who to contact at various colleges, and how to complete a college application.

I could give more examples of this sort of thing, but I'm sure you get the point. These sorts of skills are the things a child should pick up from parents as they transition into adulthood. They aren't about job skills or higher education, but just about navigating the adult world in general.

Conclusion

There's so much that can be said on this subject that it has been difficult to summarize. But I hope you get the basic idea: high school is a time to help your students spread their wings and get ready for the adult world they will be hurled into after graduation. The more supported your child feels in this regard, the more successful they will be—intellectually, professionally, emotionally, and spiritually.

CHAPTER 14

Time Management

When you first start homeschooling, you may think, “This is wonderful! Since I’ll be totally in control of our homeschooling schedule, we will have all the time in the world!” Ah, such blissful naivete!

The truth is, managing your own schedule can be a blessing or a curse depending on your discipline. Time management can become downright complex when you are homeschooling multiple children across different age groups. I remember one year homeschooling five kids by myself; the youngest was a toddler and oldest a high school senior. With so many children needing oversight, allocation of time becomes a serious challenge.

There’s no generic right way to manage your time. It all depends on how many children you are homeschooling, their ages, the amount of help you receive from your spouse, the rigor of the curriculum, and your own educational style. A good time-management style will take all these factors into consideration.

Perhaps a better way to evaluate your time management is to ask yourself two questions:

1. Do you feel in control of your time?
2. Does your current time management allow you to meet your goals?

These questions are simple, but incisive. The first is a gut-check of your feelings, the second a more analytical assessment; both should help shed light on the matter. If your homeschool goals are not being met, then clearly your current time management is not suited to your schedule; either the schedule must change, or your way of managing time. And if you don’t feel in control of your schedule, then a fundamental premise of homeschooling is being undermined—after all, we homeschool to have *more* control over our children’s education. If our time management leaves us feeling out of control, then it’s time to shift gears.

So, while there is no one “right” way to manage your time, I can offer some best practices for homeschooling time management. Consider these not as hard and fast rules, but as guideposts to light your way as you find your groove.

Think of Time Management as One of Your Goals

When you began homeschooling, you probably had some goals you laid out for your educational endeavor. Perhaps it was better academics, or more focus on creative projects, or faith formation. Successful time management should also be one of your goals alongside your curriculum and faith formation goals.

Think of it this way: Have you ever resolved to get in shape? If so, what works better, simply thinking, “I should work out”, or a clearly defined set of workout objectives broken down into a daily routine? Anyone who has ever exercised knows that without a clearly definable goal it just doesn’t happen. Similarly, if you hope to be serious about time management, make this one of your explicit homeschooling goals.

Remember Your Priorities

I remember years ago I met a young couple who were just beginning to homeschool. The mother had spent hundreds of dollars buying about ten different curriculum packages with all the bells and whistles: supplemental activity packets, flash cards, bonus DVDs, subscriptions to online tutorials, and everything under the sun. She was so excited, God bless her! I laughed to myself and said, “She’s going to end up using about one fourth of that stuff.” Sure enough, I caught up with the family nine months later and most of her materials were still in the packaging.

As we progress through homeschooling, there is a tendency to want to add more and more to our program. It’s understandable! There are so many excellent homeschooling resources out there. But this tendency to accumulate will lead to time crunches if we are not careful. When picking our curriculum materials, remember your core priorities as determined by your scope and sequence. This will help you avoid the “mission creep” of overextending yourself.

Set a Daily Schedule

What is the best way to structure your educational day? This will depend on your content, number of kids, and their teaching styles. For example, there was one year where I was homeschooling a 3rd grader, 6th grader, and preschooler simultaneously. I structured my day so that the two older children were doing independent work first thing in the morning, leaving me free to do hands-on stuff with my preschooler. I would get all the preschooler’s classwork out of the way first thing, then give her free time.

During her free time I worked with the older children directly. After lunch was when I did lighter classes (like art) or quiet reading time.

Your daily schedule might not look like this. Some parents like to put more demanding courses earlier in the day and lighter stuff at the end, while others prefer the opposite. You need to think about what the best daily schedule for your situation is. Then do your best to stick to that!

Don't Procrastinate!

Having a daily schedule will aid you to avoid procrastination. Procrastination is one of the great pitfalls of home education. As I said above, managing your own schedule is a blessing and a curse. Procrastination can become a problem if you do not work against it with intentionality. The best remedy for procrastination is to stick to the task at hand. Work from your daily schedule. The most important thing is simply to start; you'll be surprised how motivated you are to finish once you begin.

Baby Steps

When under pressure, you may feel that multitasking is the way to get more done. This is actually not true; studies have conclusively shown that multitasking is counterproductive because our brain can only focus on one task at a time (for example, see the article “Multitasking Damages Your Brain and Career” by Travis Bradberry in Forbes, October 8, 2014). Multitasking generally ends with getting less done at lower quality than if we just would have handled things sequentially. Productivity can drop as much as 40% when you are multitasking.

At the beginning of this book, I offered the analogy of eating an elephant for tackling homeschooling—one bite at a time. Take baby steps. Do one task at a time; plug away at your daily list, and resist the attempt to try to do multiple things at once.

Establish Deadlines

Set up deadlines for yourself. Deadlines establish a mental “finish line” to cross when you accomplish your task. People react to deadlines differently, yet in general people accomplish more when there is a deadline to adhere to. But it's more than just setting a deadline—you need to commit to meeting your deadlines!

Structured Breaktime

We've talked a lot about discipline, deadlines, and schedules. But even the most diligent homeschooling parent needs time for regeneration. Structure in breaktime throughout the day so you have time to relax and recharge. When I homeschooled, every day at 2:00 PM I let the children have 45 minutes of free time and I'd literally go take a nap. Pure bliss.

Besides structuring in daily breaktime, you should also schedule rejuvenation days. Even in public school, teachers have "teacher workdays" or "inservice days" throughout the semester; you deserve the same! Schedule a monthly day where there is no school. Use the day to reflect, pray, relax, catch up, or do whatever makes *you* feel on top of things.

Learn to Say No

Finally, jealously guard your own time. The world is full of people who will impose upon your time if you let them. Learn to be assertive about the value of your own time. It's okay to tell people, "I'm sorry I don't have the time for that right now." If something is not a priority, say "no" to it. That could be people, parish events, extracurricular activities, recreational events, social commitments, or even school projects. Be relentless in the protection of your time. It's precious and can never be retrieved once gone. Don't let people waste it.

These tips should give you a firm foundation in time management. As a homeschool family, you really don't have an option here: you must master time management to do home education successfully.

Time management is also important for students, and to that end I recommend Homeschool Connections' "How to be an Excellent Student" and "Organized for Success" courses. These courses will equip students with the basic skills of successful "studenting": organization, planning, comprehension, study habits, test taking, note taking, and more.

CHAPTER 15

Accountability Mentoring

Many homeschooling parents find that high school children occasionally benefit from being accountable to an authority figure other than their parents. There are various reasons for this, including:

- After years of homeschooling, the student may be “burned out” from doing school with Mom and Dad. Outside accountability can stir up some fresh enthusiasm.
- Parents may need to bring in outside help for students who struggle with the organization and discipline high school requires.
- Many parents simply want to aid their child in the development of life skills such as organization, communication, and punctuality.

If any of this resonates with you, then perhaps you should consider accountability mentoring for your high schooler. An accountability mentor is someone who coaches your student to help them fulfill their commitments and attain their goals. Working with an accountability mentor can result in increased focus and commitment to academics, enhanced organizational skills, enhanced discipline, and a stronger overall work ethic. Quite a litany of benefits!

For some students, accountability mentoring is optional; for others it may be a necessity. What are some indicators your student may need an accountability mentor? A major sign is if your student struggles with follow-through across all subjects in general. We are not talking about a student who, say, does bad in math because they don’t get it; rather, we are talking about a student who struggles with staying organized and on task in *all* their courses.

Does your student constantly struggle to finish assignments and turn work in on time? Turn in work that’s incomplete? Struggle to stay motivated about school despite your best effort? These are all signs your son or daughter could really benefit from an accountability mentor.

How Accountability Mentoring Works

Accountability mentoring programs are varied in their methods, but they all generally focus on helping students identify and move forward with

their educational and life goals. You can keep it simple and work with a family member or friend to mentor your student. Or, you can hire a professional.

Pine Meadows Academy, a Catholic organization, offers a professional [accountability mentoring program](#). The mentor will meet with your student for 30-45 minutes per week. During that time together, your teen is kept on track with skills development and encouragement for timely completion of each and every assigned schooling task. All subjects are tracked, and your student learns how to effectively organize his or her assignments. The mentor also offers personal training on how to effectively use a planner and checklist system for increased academic success.

Parents may also meet periodically with the Mentor, usually 10-15 minutes for a review of exactly what skills your teen is learning and how they are performing—with a full update on your student's progress, challenges, and accomplishments. You also get to follow up with any concerns and ask any questions. With strong communication between the parent and Mentor, your teen's team-support approach allows you to step back and give your teen the tools to be a responsive, responsible learner.

Accountability mentoring might not be for everybody, but for some students it is a tremendous blessing. Not only can it help them get a handle on their school schedule, but it will grow skills they will find useful for the rest of their lives.

One final thought: if you are the one struggling with organization, discipline, and follow-through, consider accountability mentoring, or coaching, for yourself. This could be as simple as connecting with a local, experienced homeschool parent who agrees to mentor you. Another option is to hire a professional for homeschool parent mentoring such as [Susie Lloyd](#), who offers one-on-one coaching. If you prefer group coaching, check out [Thrive](#), another Catholic resource for you.

CHAPTER 16

Understanding High School Credits

In conventional public schools, a student's completed coursework is tracked using "credits." Though, as homeschoolers, we need not keep our thinking tied to what the public schools are doing, the credit system is something we cannot neglect. Colleges almost universally use the credit system to evaluate an applicant's academic experience. Thus, whether or not you choose to adopt the credit system for your personal record keeping, you need to be able to "translate" your student's experience into credits for the sake of college admissions.

As the specific credits required for high school graduation vary from state to state, it is far beyond the scope of this chapter to give a comprehensive list of what credits a student needs to be recognized as a high school graduate. If you need to know what credits your specific state requires for graduation, please contact the Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) for more information.

What we want to know here is simply how many hours—how much work—constitutes a credit?

A credit is usually measured based on several factors: course content, instruction time, and the time a student spends completing coursework. Thus, there are several different ways we can calculate credits. [HSLDA](#) recommends one of three approaches:

The Textbook Approach

Traditional textbooks are typically written as the basis for a course. If you are using a traditional textbook, the credit value is already structured into the textbook—working through the text means earning the credit. A good rule of thumb is that the student should complete 75%-80% of the textbook content to claim the credit. Textbooks may be worth 1 credit or half a credit depending on whether they are meant to be completed in a year or a single semester.

Logging Hours

If you are not using a traditional textbook—for example, if you are cobbling together your own curriculum from a variety of sources—then logging hours may be a better way to determine credits. Logging hours means keeping track of how much reasonable time your student spends on coursework. For a core course like math, science, or English, you want your student to log at least 150 hours for one credit. The number of hours can vary for different types of courses (i.e. for AP courses or science classes with labs, 180 hours may be appropriate, whereas you can get by with 120 for an elective).

You can break this down to figure out the weekly time on task you need. For example: suppose a 150-hour class is broken up over a 36-week school year. $150 \div 36 = 4.16$ hours per week. We can further subdivide this to get daily time on task (e.g., in a 5-day school week, divide $4.16 \div 5 = .832$ hours a day, or approximately 50 minutes). Knowing this can help you structure your day.

Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment is when a student takes college level classes while still in high school; some states call it concurrent enrollment or post-secondary enrollment options (PSEO). Usually dual enrollment is done in the context of a program offered through a college or university (for example, Homeschool Connections has a dual enrollment program with Franciscan University of Steubenville whereby FUS agrees to accept certain HSC courses for college credit). If your student completes a dual enrollment course worth 3-5 college credits, this can be converted to 1 credit on the high school transcript. This is a good rule of thumb.

These tips should help you organize how your student's high school credits are assigned. And knowledge of what goes into a credit is also valuable in case a college or other institution ever has follow-up questions about your student's transcript.

CHAPTER 17

Test Prepping for the SAT or ACT

As we've discussed throughout this book, part of homeschooling high school is preparing your children for life *after* high school. If college is part of your son or daughter's future, then at some point your child will have to take the SAT or ACT test. In this chapter we will do a deep dive into everything relating to the SAT and ACT: what they are, how to prepare, and when to take them.

What are the SAT and ACT tests?

The SAT and ACT tests are both standardized examinations generally used for college admissions in the United States. An evaluation of your child's SAT/ACT scores is a common part of the college admission process. The tests are general education exams; that is, they are meant to shed light on an applicant's college readiness in various categories.

All colleges will accept either an SAT or ACT, as they are both designed to assess the same thing: college readiness. Both tests cover essentially the same content and are (more or less) equally difficult. That being said, there are a few differences you should be aware of when deciding which test is right for you. Let's review the differences between the SAT and ACT:

SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test)

- In use since 1926
- Owned by the College Board and administered by the Educational Testing Service, two private non-profits
- Consists of three content area tests: Reading, Writing and Language, and Math (an optional essay has recently been discontinued)
- Reading test is 65 minutes, Writing and Language is 35 minutes, Math is 80 minutes
- No dedicated science section, but science-based questions may be found in the other content area tests
- Asks "evidence-support" questions: students are asked to read a selection and identify what part of the reading provides textual support for certain statements
- Fewer questions than the ACT

- More time allotted than the ACT (average 68 seconds per problem compared to 49 seconds per problem on the ACT)
- Scores each section on a range of 200-400

ACT (American College Testing)

- In use since 1959
- Owned and administered by ACT, a non-profit of the same name
- Consists of four content area tests: English, Mathematics, Reading, and Scientific Reasoning
- English test is 45 minutes, Math is 60 minutes, Reading is 35 minutes, Science is 35 minutes
- There is a dedicated science section, but it's not about specific scientific knowledge so much as using graphs and charts properly.
- Comprehension essays give you a set of arguments and ask you to pick the best of three options
- More questions than the SAT
- Less time allotted; more fast-paced (average 49 seconds per problem compared to 68 seconds per problem on the SAT)
- Each section is scored on a range of 1-36. The scores are averaged to create a composite score. Colleges receive your composite score as well as individual section scores

Preparing for the SAT/ACT

Preparation is an integral part of successful SAT/ACT testing. Fortunately, there are many avenues available for thorough test prep.

Your most valuable resource will be the practice tests published by ACT and College Board. These tests approximate the structure, content, and difficulty of the ACT and SAT, allowing students to get a feel for what the test will be like. These practice tests are readily available on Amazon or can be purchased directly from ACT and College Board. You can also purchase preparation materials specific to particular content areas.

In addition to this, there are free online practice tests available from third parties such as Varsity Tutor and Power Score. A quick Google search for “free ACT/SAT practice tests” will yield plentiful results.

Homeschool Connections also offers test prep. We have multiple online test preparation courses for the ACT and the SAT, both for the tests in general as well as specific content areas. For more information on Homeschool Connections ACT and SAT test prep options, visit: <https://homeschoolconnections.com/category/test-prep-act-sat/>

How long should your student prep for the test before taking it? For most students, a good rule of thumb is three months before their first attempt; students who struggle with a content area or who have a learning disability may require six to nine months.

When to take the SAT/ACT

When is the best time to take the SAT or ACT? As you've probably figured out by now, when it comes to homeschooling, the answer is always "It depends." A couple factors you may want to consider:

- Is your student on a conventional four-year high school timeline, or are they planning to graduate early and/or take college classes concurrently with their senior year of high school?
- How much wiggle room should you include in the event your child does poorly on the test and wants to retake it?
- Does your child have dyslexia or any type of learning disability that necessitates extra time for preparation?
- How finalized are your child's college plans? Do they already know where they will attend and what they want to major in? Or is this still up in the air?

For conventional high school students on a basic four-year track, testing is usually done the second half of Junior year. Start your test prep around January with the first attempt at the test in March-April. If the student needs a retake, you still have the rest of the summer and fall to study and test again.

If your student is a hotshot who is finishing high school in three years and probably graduating early, it may be best to take the SAT/ACT during the summer before Junior year begins. Use spring of Sophomore year for test preparation. This also leaves plenty of time for retakes if needed.

If your student has a learning disability, you want to stretch out the preparation period. Consistent low-intensity prep spread out over a longer period is ideal. You probably want to begin test prep fall of Junior year with a goal of testing in the spring or early summer.

A Third Option: The CLT

While the SAT and ACT continue to be the norm for most colleges, I also want to draw attention to a third aptitude test that is quickly gaining currency in American academia: the Classical Learning Test, or CLT. Launched in 2015, the CLT aims to provide an alternative standardized

test that draws on the rich corpus of ideas found in traditional liberal arts curricula. Unlike the SAT/ACT, the CLT is focused on the humanities and pulls from the great writings of western civilization for its content.

At the time of writing, the CLT is accepted by over 200 colleges and universities. If your child is going on to a Catholic liberal arts focused college like Wyoming Catholic, Christendom, Magdalen, or Benedictine, the CLT will be much better tailored to those institutions. To learn more about the CLT (including a list of all colleges that currently accept it), visit them online at <https://www.cltexam.com>.

Like everything else in the world of homeschooling, standardized examinations like the SAT, ACT, and CLT are a lot less daunting if you come at them fully informed with clear expectations. With the resources available and with a little planning, your child should be amply prepared to succeed!

CONCLUSION

Encouragement and Resources

We have covered a lot of ground in this book. Hopefully you feel more encouraged to tackle homeschooling high school. It is our sincere hope that you will prayerfully consider the possibilities and positive outcomes of doing so. It is a unique and rewarding experience for both yourself and your highschooler!

Of course, it is not possible to cover every possible angle and answer every conceivable question in a little eBook. To that end, I'd like to conclude by making you aware of some of the excellent resources Homeschool Connections offers to help you along your homeschooling journey.

If you are new to Homeschool Connections and need help understanding our online courses and how they work, please give us a call at 1-888-372-4757 and we will be happy to walk you through the basics and answer all your questions.

If you've already signed up for online classes and could use some pointers on how your student can get the most out of their online experience, we have two articles you may find of use: [How to Succeed with Homeschool Online Classes \(Live\)](#) and [How to Succeed with Homeschool Online Classes \(Recorded\)](#). These two articles contain a lot of pointers about setting up for class, taking notes, making the best use of time, etc.

If you need some more in-depth help, Homeschool Connections offers personalized homeschooling coaching services. These coaching services will help you to pursue your homeschooling goals, understand what is standing in the way of attaining them, and find out what you can do about it! You will learn how to set your goals and match your methods to sustain progress. [Click here for more information on our personalized coaching services.](#)

For help preparing your teens for college, we have two helpful articles: [FAQs for HS Juniors and Seniors Who Are Planning to Go to College](#), and [Building Your Teen's College Skill Set](#). These articles will point you in the right direction for college prep.

All that's left for you to do now is get started: start your curriculum planning, make your goals, and go achieve! You *can* homeschool high school

