

Stages & Ages: College

Common Questions Parents Ask

One question that all parents of high school homeschool students face is the question of college.

Before we get to the question of "How does my child get in to college?" we need to consider the following:

- First, should my child consider college? Is God calling him or her to college?
- If yes, should he consider a 2-year Associates Degree, 4-year Bachelor's Degree, or Bible College?
- If yes to any of the above, why? How will these serve this individual child in his/her life goals?
- If yes to college, should the college be local, or remote? If remote, how remote?
- Do I have other goals for my child besides education? What about my child's social and church life?
- Where will my child live if he's away at college? Dormitory? Board with a family?
- Even if my child chooses a local school, should he/she choose to live in a dormitory or commute?

Once I decide that my child wants to attend a college, how do I apply?

- Start by asking people you respect and trust what they did at your stage about college questions.
- Go on to the Internet and download admissions standards and applications for schools where you think your child might attend. Then, craft his high school program to fulfill admissions expectations.
- A centerpiece of your high school program should be to teach your child to write strong essays and research papers.
- One task your child is sure to be asked to perform is to write admissions essays. See more on this below.
- See more on college admissions, below.

Can my child earn college credit in high school?

- Yes! Many homeschool high school students take courses at local community colleges, and this credit often (but not always) transfers.
- Yes! There are tests that allow your student to earn college credit through successful scores: CLEP tests, AP tests, and SAT II tests. Be aware, though, not all colleges give credit for these tests, even with successful scores.

What kind of college transcript do I need?

- There is no one, standard format. A sample that we crafted is below. Any such document will be acceptable to almost all colleges.
- Please be aware, though, that college admissions officers do have "check boxes," - categories they commonly use to evaluate a variety of applicants. The more your records dovetail with their established system, the easier it will be for your student to be fairly evaluated. Basically, if your records are in Greek, and the admissions officer speaks English, your child may be the most brilliant student alive, but the barrier for admission will be insurmountable, and your child will be rejected.

- Below, we discuss and present two common systems for keeping records and generating transcripts. We call them the "Traditional System" and the "Alternate System." (These are just our names; you won't encounter them elsewhere regularly.)
- Keep in mind that all transcripts focus on *academic achievement*. Resist the temptation to find a way to give your child credit for a vast variety of extra-curricular activities. For instance, don't give Home Economics credit to girls who do household chores, baby sit, and fold the laundry. Colleges are looking at transcripts to see what core, academic work the student has done. Almost without exception, colleges provide an extra page that allows you to give glowing reports of all the community, church, club, and other activities. Colleges *want to see* this page filled up! They want well-rounded students. But, they don't consider these activities to be *academic* achievements; these are considered *extra-curricular*, and therefore don't belong on a transcript, except under that heading, as in the sample below.

Transcripts

How do I establish credits for my high school students when using *Tapestry of Grace*?

The Traditional System:

In traditional public and private high schools, all subject matter has been divided into five major subjects and a handful of minor electives, plus extra-curricular activities. This reflects the discussion above about the transcript being primarily about *academic* achievement.

The five major areas of study are: Math, Science, History, English, and Foreign Language. These are generally offered at two levels: regular and honors. Christian high schools add Biblical Studies, or Church History as a sixth, equal subject area.

In addition, high schools will often only give up to 2 Elective credits *over the four years of high school*. Within these electives, their goal is variety, so that a student may demonstrate that he does not spend all of his time in core academic pursuits.

In most schools, sports are included as PE. Students are given "letters" - Varsity or Jr. Varsity to put on their extra-curricular activities, or on a resume if the student is going straight into the work force. Systems vary from school to school. Here is one example from one of our local high schools: if a student plays 3 team sports (seasons) per year, he or she can earn up to one half-credit per year; but, they can earn no more than one credit total for their entire high school career. Students may also substitute 45 minutes of exercise twice a week for participation on a sports team in a given season, and thus earn credit equal to participation in a team sport, even though there are obviously much fewer hours involved. (The philosophy is that schools want to encourage regular exercise for well-rounded students.)

The advantage of adopting the Traditional System is that you do not have to keep a record of hours. If the student completes the content outlined in the chart below, you can give him a credit and determine a grade. The disadvantage is that the student does not appear to receive as much credit for actual hours required by the curriculum (for instance, in the Alternate System, for English you give 1 Literature Credit *and* one 1/2 Credit in Writing. But, be assured that Honors English does carry clout with admissions officers, whereas a transcript listing many many credits (and thereby not following traditional categories) might actually cheapen the student's record in the mind of the admissions officer (by appearing to pad the student's transcript).

The Alternate System:

Because *Tapestry of Grace* as originally conceived as an integrated program, it relied on "Carnegie Units" to compute credits for high school students. Each high school student is instructed by parents to plan his work each week in a planner or on a scheduling sheet, and then log the time he spends on each assignment. Using this system, a student who puts in at least 150 hours on a given subject (at a given level - Rhetoric) can then claim one high school credit for that subject. These are then recorded on a [transcript](#) (see example).

Homeschool students are finding it easier and easier to get in to colleges, but if you adopt the above system, we would still recommend keeping a thorough portfolio of your child's high school work, especially if he or she will be competing for merit-based scholarships or awards. The most important record of this type is a cumulative reading list, which is easily generated using copies of weekly Reading Assignment Charts, with books the student has actually completed checked off.

This is a discussion of how we feel "regular" and "honors" can be determined for *Tapestry of Grace* subjects:

We feel that a student who follows the *Tapestry of Grace* curriculum as written *at the Rhetoric level* should be given Honors credits. Here are the details of this statement:

Subject Area	Honors	Regular
<p>History</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student completes <i>all</i> "History Core" assignments in the Reading Assignment Charts at the Rhetoric level only on a weekly basis. • Student also regularly prepares <i>all</i> Thinking Questions and has a weekly discussion of his reading. • Student also regularly completes all suggested Geography and Time Line work each week. • Student <i>may</i> also complete weekly evaluations, or unit tests (currently generated by parents), but these would tell more about his <i>grade</i> than about his <i>credit</i>.¹ • Note that assignments listed on the Reading Assignment Charts in the "History Supplement" row are truly supplemental: they offer the interested student the opportunity to learn more about the subject, but do not add to his credit for History. Doing these assignments would contribute to the student's achieving a higher <i>grade</i>, however. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student completes at least 3/4 of the "History Core" assignments at the Rhetoric Level in the Reading Assignment Charts weekly. The other "History Core" assignments are chosen from the Dialectic-level column. • Student also regularly prepares many Thinking Questions and has a weekly discussion of his reading. • Student completes many, but not all of the suggested Geography and Time Line assignments each week. • Student may also complete weekly evaluations, or unit tests (currently generated by parents), but these would tell more about his grade than about his credit.¹ • Note that assignments listed on the Reading Assignment Charts in the "History Supplement" row are truly supplemental: they offer the interested student the opportunity to learn more about the subject, but do not add to his credit for History. Doing these assignments would contribute to the student's achieving a higher grade, however.

<p style="text-align: center;">English</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student completes all "Literature" assignments listed at the Rhetoric Level in the Reading Assignment Charts weekly. • Student also regularly prepares <i>all</i> questions offered in Student Activity Pages, and has a weekly discussion of his reading. • Student completes <i>all</i> the weekly writing assignment offered at Level 9 or above. • Student either follows a Grammar curriculum appropriate for his level, or engages in a high school level Foreign Language study. • Student <i>may</i> also complete weekly evaluations, or unit tests (currently generated by parents), but these would tell more about his <i>grade</i> than about his <i>credit</i>.¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student completes at least 3/4 of the "Literature" assignments listed at the Rhetoric Level in the Reading Assignment Charts weekly. For 1/4 of these assignments, he may elect to read an easier version of the classic being recommended listed in the Dialectic column. • Student also regularly prepares <i>all</i> questions offered in Student Activity Pages, and has a weekly discussion of his reading. • Student completes 5/6 of the weekly writing assignment offered at Level 8 or above. (In other words, he may skip up to 6 weeks' worth of writing and still receive credit.) • Student either follows a Grammar curriculum appropriate for his level, or engages in a high school level Foreign Language study. • Student <i>may</i> also complete weekly evaluations, or unit tests (currently generated by parents), but these would tell more about his <i>grade</i> than about his <i>credit</i>.¹
<p style="text-align: center;">Electives</p>	<p>Electives generally aren't given honors credit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art History: To earn a total of one credit over four years, students should regularly read the suggested assignments about the history of Art: visual arts, music, architecture, etc. Evaluations <i>may</i> be included in awarding credit. • History of Philosophy: To earn a total of one credit over the four years, students should regularly read the <i>Pageant of Philosophy</i> assignments and complete suggested writing assignments. Evaluations <i>may</i> be included in awarding credit.
<p style="text-align: center;">Church History OR Biblical Studies OR Theological Studies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students should read <i>all</i> suggested core assignments in the Rhetoric-level "Church History" row of the Reading Assignment Charts. • Students should regularly answer questions on their reading in writing. • Students should hold a weekly discussion of their reading with a teacher. • Students should complete extra writing assignments given in their 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students should read 3/4 of the suggested core assignments in the Rhetoric-level "Church History" row of the Reading Assignment Charts. They may opt to complete 1/4 of their readings for this course from the Dialectic-level column. • Students should regularly prepare to answer questions on their reading. • Students should hold a weekly discussion of their reading with a

	<p>Student Activity Pages from time to time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional suggested readings may be omitted. • Student <i>may</i> also complete weekly evaluations, or unit tests (currently generated by parents), but these would tell more about his <i>grade</i> than about his <i>credit</i>.¹ 	<p>teacher.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may elect to complete extra writing assignments given in their Student Activity Pages from time to time. Teachers should determine whether these assignments are to be completed. • Optional suggested readings may be omitted. • Student <i>may</i> also complete weekly evaluations, or unit tests (currently generated by parents), but these would tell more about his <i>grade</i> than about his <i>credit</i>.¹
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¹ The two are interrelated, though. The student must achieve a grade of "D" or better in order to receive his credit. With homeschool students, usually if the student is doing the assignments thoroughly, he is achieving at least a passing grade. In public schools, failing grades are usually the result of the child not doing the work.

Transcripts are primarily intended to make admissions officers' lives easier.

As you think through your options, remember *why* you are preparing transcripts. If you want to transfer into a public high school, the public school officials may be very picky about what they will accept and what they will not accept. By contrast, employers and college admissions officers are interested in what the child has learned, not what grade they were in when they did so.

A few states are now offering public school diplomas to homeschool graduates. These states, like the high schools, will probably not accept eighth grade work as satisfying the requirements for a state-issued diploma. But if your primary interest in filling out a transcript is to help your child get into college, you can usually count work done at the high school *level*, regardless of the age/grade of the child completing the assignments.

Here is our best guidance on how to break out credits for high school students using *Tapestry of Grace*:

Disciplines		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
History	Possible titles	History of the Ancient World OR World History I	History of the World: Fall of Rome to 1800 OR World History II: Colonial America	History of the World: the 1800s OR History of the World III: America in 1800s	History of the World: the 1900s OR History of the World IV: America in 1900s
	Traditional Credit System*	1 Honors History Credit OR 1 History Credit	1 Honors History Credit OR 1 History Credit	1 Honors History Credit OR 1 History Credit	1 Honors History Credit OR 1 History Credit
	Alternate Credit System	1 Credit History AND 1/4 Credit Geography (awarded as an elective)	1 Credit History AND 1/4 Credit Geography (awarded as an elective)	1 Credit History AND 1/4 Credit Geography (awarded as an elective)	1 Credit History AND 1/4 Credit Geography (awarded as an elective)

English	Possible titles	Classic Literature of the Ancient World, Composition & Grammar.	Classic Literature of the Western World: 500-1800 AD, Composition & Grammar.	Classic Literature of the Western World: 1800s, Composition & Grammar.	Classic Literature of the Western World: 1900s, Composition & Grammar.
	Traditional Credit System*	1 Credit Honors English OR 1 Credit English (both include all Literature, Grammar, and Composition)	1 Credit Honors English OR 1 Credit English (both include all Literature, Grammar, and Composition)	1 Credit Honors English OR 1 Credit English (both include all Literature, Grammar, and Composition)	1 Credit Honors English OR 1 Credit English (both include all Literature, Grammar, and Composition)
	Alternate Credit System	1/2 Credit Literature* AND 1/2 Credit Grammar & Composition	1 Credit Literature AND 1/2 Credit Grammar & Composition	1 Credit Literature AND 1/2 Credit Grammar & Composition	1 Credit Literature AND 1/2 Credit Grammar & Composition
Fine Arts	Possible title	History of Fine Arts: Ancient World	History of Fine Arts: Medieval to 1800	History of Fine Arts: the 1800's	History of Fine Arts: the 1900's
	Traditional Credit System	Elective: 1/4 Credit	Elective: 1/4 Credit	Elective: 1/4 Credit	Elective: 1/4 Credit
	Alternate Credit System	Base your credit allotment on number of actual hours given to this subject. Include readings, hands-on projects, and Art/Music lessons.	Base your credit allotment on number of actual hours given to this subject. Include readings, hands-on projects, and Art/Music lessons.	Base your credit allotment on number of actual hours given to this subject. Include readings, hands-on projects, and Art/Music lessons.	Base your credit allotment on number of actual hours given to this subject. Include readings, hands-on projects, and Art/Music lessons.
Church History OR Theological Studies	Possible titles	Bible Survey / History of the Early Church	Church History: Middle Ages to 1800 OR Theological Studies I	Church History: the 1800s OR Theological Studies II	Church History: the 1800s OR Theological Studies III
	Traditional Credit System	1 Honors Credit OR 1 Credit (title of your choice)	1 Honors Credit OR 1 Credit (title of your choice)	1 Honors Credit OR 1 Credit (title of your choice)	1 Honors Credit OR 1 Credit (title of your choice)
	Alternate Credit System	1 Credit Bible Survey AND 1/4 Credit Early Church History*	1 Credit Church History OR Theological Studies	1 Credit Church History OR Theological Studies	1 Credit Church History OR Theological Studies
Worldview Studies	Possible titles	History of Philosophy: the Ancient World	History of Philosophy: Part II	History of Philosophy: the 1800's	History of Philosophy: the 1900's
	Traditional Credit System	Elective: 1/4 Credit	Elective: 1/4 Credit (when revised in '04)	Elective: 1/4 Credit	Elective: 1/4 Credit

	Alternate Credit System	1/4 Credit Worldview Studies	1/4 Credit Worldview Studies (when revised in '04)	1/4 Credit Worldview Studies	1/4 Credit Worldview Studies
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*In Year 1, we read significant portions of the Bible in a true Bible Survey course all year, and in Unit 4 we read a significant amount of Church History. Because of this, we cull some time that in other Year-Plans is devoted to Literature, which works out well because there is not as much Literature to read in Year 1 as there is in other Year-Plans. Therefore, in Year 1 (Alternate System) you should give 1/2 Credit for Literature and 1 Credit Bible Survey AND 1/4 Credit Early Church History.

What problems might I encounter when preparing a transcript for my high school students?

Some of our users have suggested that you keep these things in mind:

I wanted to make one comment about starting to count [courses] as high school credit before [your children] are actually in high school. I suggest you ask your umbrella school or whoever you report to to actually confirm this. My umbrella school does not allow this unless the child is in high school in EVERY SUBJECT. In my state (TN), I actually don't know of anyone who allows this.

- Dana, TN

Most states, but not all, have made some kind of arrangement in law now for granting high school credits to those students who complete high school coursework in junior high or earlier - but not all states. You have to check your own state's laws. You might find this information out if you call the gifted education consultant in your state's Department of Education.

The other option, if you have a younger child who is completing high school work but isn't yet in 9th grade, is to officially have the child "skip" a grade or do the equivalent of two grades in one year, then simply list them in the higher grade when you file your letter of intent, or homeschool approval forms, or whatever your state requires.

- Christine, PA

Sample Transcript: Using Alternate System

Student: Nathaniel Dawson Gray	Birth date: November 14, 1980
264 Ledgeway Row	Enrolled: September, 1986
Westminster, MD 21157	Graduated: May, 1999

Course Name	Credits	Performance	Extra-curricular
1994-95 (8th Grade)			
Latin	1.0	Pass	
1995-96 (Freshman Year)			
English Grammar and Writing	0.5	87.7 percentile	Congressional Action Program
English Literature	0.5	Pass	Adventures in Science
History of the World: to 1450	1.0	Pass	Christ Church School

			Chess Club
General Science	1.0	Pass	Teens Loving Children
Algebra I	1.0	96.9 percentile	
Physical Education (soccer)	0.5	Jr. Varsity	
Latin II	1.0	Pass	
Christian Doctrine	0.5	Pass	
1996-97 (Sophomore Year)			
English Grammar and Writing	0.5	99.9 percentile	Congressional Action Program
English Literature	0.5	Pass	Teens Loving Children
History of the World: 1450-1815	1.0	Pass	Christ Church School Chess Club
History of Science and Philosophy	0.5	Pass	
Algebra II	1.0	94.8 %ile	
Physical Education (soccer)	0.5	Varsity	
Spanish	1.0	Pass	
Introductory Logic	0.5	Pass	
Engineering Technology 184	0.5	A	
1997-98 (Junior Year)			
English Grammar and Writing	0.5	97 percentile	<i>Godspell</i> - Sound Crew
Poetry	0.5	Pass	Teens Loving Children
Drama	1.0	Pass	
History of the World: 1815-1914	1.0	Pass	
Algebra III (Part I)	0.5	81 percentile	
Biology	1.0	Pass	
Music (Drums)	0.5	Pass	
Physical Education (soccer)	0.5	Varsity	
Introductory Logic	0.5	Pass	
Engineering Tech. 184	0.5	A	
Engineering Tech. 284	0.5	A	
Understanding the Times	0.5	Pass	
1998-99 (Senior Year)			
Modern World History	1.0	A	Christ Church Sound Crew
British Literature	1.0	Pass	Teens Loving Children
Calculus	1.0	Pass	<i>Pilgrim's Progress</i> - Sound Crew
Networking 100X	1.0	A	
Networking 102X	1.0	B	
Networking 201	1.0	A	
Networking 230	1.0	B	

Total Credits: 27.5

Certification: I hereby certify that this student took each of the courses listed above, and that all letter grades were computed by an objective third party or through some other objectively verifiable method. Each credit represents one or more of the following: (1) 150 hours of class time, not counting homework; (2) successful completion of at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of a standard high school textbook, including all publisher-prepared problems, quizzes, and tests; (3) private high school courses worth one traditional credit; (4) community college courses worth at least two credit hours; or (5) private courses taught by a private school teacher.

NOTE: Credit and grades are two different issues! Pass/fail is perfectly acceptable as a grade. As you can see, we also used Nathaniel's scores on standardized (Iowa) tests as grade indicators (see percentile, above). Admissions officers are far more impressed by content of the material and SAT scores than by grades that parents assign. This was an actual transcript (with some details altered solely to protect privacy). This young man received a two-year merit Honors scholarship (all expenses paid, including a month in Cambridge, England, during his first summer) at his local Community College, where he earned an Associates Degree, and then admission into Hillsdale College for his second two years, with a \$7,000/year merit scholarship each year. All this to say that Alternate System transcripts do work!

Writing Admissions Essays:

One skill your child will need is the ability to write attractive admissions essays. Below are links to sites that can help prepare him to do just that:

- [Princeton Review](#) has loads of helpful information, and we found this very interesting page there.
- [Interested in Business schools?](#) Princeton Review has this article on writing essays for admission to them.
- [Interesting alternate for Level 11, Week 10 Writing Assignment](#) on college essays.

Kathi Kearney wrote:

I just found this link which I think will be very helpful for anyone who has a high school senior this year who will be going through the college admissions process.

This is a monograph published by the National Research Center on the Gifted & Talented, entitled (long, long title):

[Helping Gifted Children and Their Families Prepare for College: A Handbook Designed to Assist Economically Disadvantaged and First-Generation College Attendees](#)"

Now, pay NO attention to either the "gifted" or the "economically disadvantaged and first generation college attendees" part of that title! I reviewed this monograph a few years ago and felt that it was one of the best resources I've seen so far for home schoolers who don't have access to a high school guidance office to assist in the college admissions process. This book is like having a college admissions school guidance counselor in your back pocket! It tells exactly how to manage all the steps of the college admissions process.

And best of all - it used to cost \$10, but they have just put the entire monograph on the Internet for FREE! Click on the link above, or access it as a .pdf file:

<http://www.sp.uconn.edu/~nrcgt/nrcgt/m93201/wok93201.pdf>