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[Home](#) > [Resources](#) > Printer-friendly PDF

# Let the Records Show!

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Dear Friends,

Now that another school year is well underway, you may be wondering what records are necessary and how to document your teen's courses and extracurricular activities. On the other hand, is recordkeeping still on the back burner of your mind—something you know you should do but keep putting off? Since you are your teen's school record keeper, now is a good time to set up a system. Staying on top of this responsibility will spare you from panicking when it is time to create your teen's transcript. He or she will bless you for your efforts especially when compiling a resume or completing a college or job application.

## Why Keep Records?

Although no one may ever ask to see the records we suggest you keep, they are important nonetheless. "Legally, recordkeeping enables you to demonstrate that you are providing an appropriate education for your child," writes HSLDA Chairman Michael Farris in his book *Home Schooling and the Law*. "Whether it is true or not, courts often assume that good records equal a good education." Colleges, employers, scholarship committees, the military, and others may ask for varying information. Recordkeeping also allows you and your teen to take note of the progress that he or she is making while heading towards high school graduation.

## What Records are Necessary?

The records you maintain depend on a number of items. Check the HSLDA [homeschooling legal analysis](#) for the state in which you reside. Some states require you to track days of attendance, hours of instruction, or curriculum used, while others have few requirements. HSLDA members may contact HSLDA's legal department with questions they may have. If you are enrolled in an umbrella or oversight program, be sure to ask the oversight group what records it deems mandatory.

Since you put much time and effort into the courses that you teach, it's a good idea not to rely solely on your memory for the course work your teen completes. Take a few minutes when you receive your curriculum each year to compile this information. We provide you with a handy [4-year plan form](#) to track your teen's progress by logging courses already taken and penciling in future courses.

We suggest you note for each core academic or elective course:

- Curriculum, books, and resources used.
- Scope and sequence of the course (Summarize major concepts covered or if a high school textbook is used, simply make a copy of the table of contents.)
- [Grading guidelines](#) (may include tests, quizzes, papers, projects, daily assignments, etc.).
- [Credit awarded for each course](#).

These details should be kept for parent-taught, online, dual enrollment, or co-op classes that your teen completes.

All of this academic information will enable you to [create your teen's transcript](#). Simply put, a transcript is a record of the academic courses your teen completes during high school. No need to fear it! We've made it easy to create this document by providing samples, step by step instructions, and an explanation for calculating a grade point average (GPA). Resist the urge

of waiting until the senior year to begin working on the transcript.

In addition to the academic details, it is a good idea to catalog information relating to your child's extracurricular activities such as sports, music, community service, job experience, or internships by jotting down:

- Hours participated (weekly or monthly)
- Skills acquired
- Instructor, coach or employer's name and contact info

When your teen wins an award, acquires an honor, takes part in performances, recitals, or tournaments, you'll want to briefly chronicle this information. Not only will you wish to retain the memory, but colleges, employers, and others are interested in your students' outside interests and talents.

Scores from achievement tests, PSAT, SAT, ACT, CLEP, AP, and career tests (if taken) should be kept in one place so they are accessible when needed. Our website has info regarding these tests and how to register for them.

HSLDA's brochure, *Recordkeeping for High School: Simplifying the Process*, summarizes these tips. You may request a hard copy of the brochure by calling 540.338.5600, or emailing [info@hslida.org](mailto:info@hslida.org), or simply printing it off our website to refer to during high school.

### **Is Recordkeeping an All-Consuming Task?**

No, it doesn't have to be. The key is to design a simple system that works for you, and then regularly input your information. For example, set up a file folder for each high school subject you teach. Include a cover sheet with the info noted above, major tests, quizzes, or papers, as well as a sampling of daily assignments. The folder can also include a simple grading sheet to record grades. Your teen can be part of the process by filing his coursework into the proper folder as soon as it's completed or on a weekly basis. Then pinpoint a specific place to keep all these files. It can be a file drawer, a plastic storage bin, the infamous milk crate (!), or a cabinet in your kitchen. One strategic aspect to good recordkeeping is being able to put your fingers on that information at a moment's notice.

Others of you may want to keep records on your computer. In that event, don't forget to back up your records.

There are also a variety of recordkeeping products and software available for purchase, and free helpful printable recordkeeping forms online that may make your task easier.

### **Who Will be Interested in Your Records?**

Colleges, employers, scholarship committees, military recruiters, and others will be interested in your teen's high school records. In fact, we receive phone calls from parents who have been asked to produce details of their teen's high school record many years after the teen graduated. For example, high school records may be important when gaining additional certification, being promoted at work, or applying for admission to a police academy. It is possible to gather this information many years later, but it will be a very time-consuming task. Trust us—gray hairs, sleepless nights, and queasy stomachs can be kept at bay by being diligent in documenting vital details in a timely fashion.

What if I'm "Record-Challenged"?

For some of you, just the thought of recordkeeping makes you nervous. We understand. That's why we encourage you to begin now, this year. Ask your spouse for uninterrupted time (maybe 30 minutes a week) for the task. Requesting that a friend hold you accountable to stay on top of your records can motivate you. Soliciting ideas from your most organized friend may help you stay the course. Or call us to chat about your questions!

An additional tip to control your recordkeeping and keep it manageable is to de-clutter. Every quarter or semester, enlist your teen's help to weed out papers or miscellaneous items that can be thrown away. We can hear you now—what can be thrown away? The article, "Recordkeeping: Is It Worth the Trouble?" in the 2009 issue of the Court Report magazine, will give you information on what records to retain in your files, especially those records that you should keep permanently for your children.

Be encouraged and don't give up on recordkeeping. You'll benefit from developing a systematic and efficient plan.

Join us next month as guest writer Dean Sandra Corbitt of Patrick Henry College shares her tips for preparing homeschooled high schoolers for college.

Rooting for you as you dive into the records,

Becky Cooke and Diane Kummer  
HSLDA High School Consultants



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**Author:** [Becky Cooke](#)  
[Diane Kummer](#)

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