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High School Science--Bane or Delight?

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Dear Friends,

April is the time of year when the deadness of winter suddenly bursts forth with new life and color. The wonders of science are all around us from the blooming plants to the starry skies to the cake baking in the oven!

What conjures up in your mind when you hear the word science: experiments, chemicals, fossils, plant life, medical discoveries, or the intricacies of all of God's creation? Cathy Duffy aptly describes a proper viewing of science when she said, "Science, in terms of education, means the study of God's creation, its purposes, its functioning, and its beauty. We often limit our definition of science education to memorization of plant structure, the names of bones, the periodic table, and other such laborious data without seeing beyond to God's purposes for each aspect of creation." For many of us, science was that difficult or "uninteresting" subject we were required to study in school. However, in retrospect, we realize that without science, we cannot know God and appreciate His creation.

With this fresh way of looking at science, let's focus on answering some of the many questions we receive regarding how to effectively teach the high school level lab sciences in the homeschool setting and how to stimulate and keep your teen's interest in these courses. Hopefully, the suggestions and resources listed below will increase your confidence and ability to teach science and perhaps even provoke in your teen a desire to pursue a science-related career!

First of all, it is important to know which science courses are required at the high school level. If your child is planning to attend college, then physical science, biology, chemistry, and physics are courses to consider. Most colleges require at least two to three years of science including two lab sciences. If your child is not pursuing college, it is still wise to provide at least a couple of these high school level science courses, simply for your child to gain an appreciation of God and His creation and to understand differing worldviews such as evolution vs. creation.

The next decision to make is how to provide these science courses. If you will be teaching these subjects, choosing homeschool friendly curriculum will make your task easier since many providers design experiments and labs that use easily accessible materials. These providers are also available to give you support should you need help in answering your teen's questions. Another option to consider is organizing a co-op where you can share the load or find a mom or dad with a science background to teach the course.

Some families decide to teach the non-lab sciences at home and then have their children take the lab sciences at the community college. This allows the children to satisfy both the high school and college general education requirements simultaneously. If you choose this option, remember that one semester of biology at the community college, for instance, will be equivalent to one year of high school credit on your teen's transcript.

Families who decide to tackle the lab sciences at home may choose to join together with other homeschool families, collectively buy lab equipment, and hold lab days at one of their homes. You may already have a favorite source for purchasing science materials. If not, [on our website](#) we list a couple of lab science equipment providers: [Wards Natural Science](#) and [Home Science Tools](#). Both of these companies offer discounts to HSLDA members. Another company, [Bio Corporation](#), has an extensive catalog of science-related equipment and resources.

However, if you don't want to invest in lab equipment, store chemicals, or open the refrigerator to see lab specimens staring you in the face (or, are those leftovers from last month :) there are [curriculum providers](#) who offer video science courses complete with videotaped labs. Even though these labs do not provide hands-on experience, they are very graphic in showing and explaining the various experiments. In addition, there are also [online science courses](#), which provide your teen with high

school credit.

Another idea for labs is to use virtual labs. For a physical science course, check out [SEED](#) and try some of the online experiments. For an example of a biology dissection website, try [Froguts](#), where your teen can actually dissect a frog without the smell permeating your kitchen! Or for chemistry, watch a virtual lab demonstration at [Virtlab](#). Your teen can mix chemicals without explosions or injury. As you will see, using the internet wisely can enhance your own teaching of science courses.

Once these foundational high school science courses have been completed, if your child is eager to continue the scientific quest, consider adding courses such as anatomy and physiology, astronomy, or marine biology to name a few. Maybe your teen is interested in the environment, so providing an ecology course may be beneficial for investigating whether this is a field he or she will wish to pursue.

If your teen's post high school goals include a science-related field, "required" sciences in more depth by taking an Advanced Placement course such as advanced biology. On our website, we offer a [sampling of Advanced Placement course providers](#) for you to investigate. Or, should your son or daughter know for certain he or she is interested in a medical career, then taking an anatomy course rather than, say, a physics course during high school may be beneficial.

With all the innovative, interesting ways of teaching and learning science, you may find that the whole family will not want to miss out on the lessons or experiments. So when you think science, think of the many opportunities to: Search, Calculate, Investigate, Explore, Notice, and Calibrate Everything. Even though neither of us were Einsteins, the Lord provided each of us with a way to teach high school science at home, and He'll do the same for you!

Next month, join us as college admissions officers answer questions relating to homeschool applicants. Until then, enjoy the beauty of God's creation.

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**This resource is an article from the
Homeschooling Thru Highschool newsletter
(4/3/2008), and is provided by the Home School
Legal Defense Association as a service to the
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Source URL (retrieved on 05/18/2013 - 6:51am): <http://mache.org/resources/article/11-26-2011/high-school-science-bane-or-delight>