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High School Graduation Requirements - Part II

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Dear Friends,

"Christmas is coming; the goose is getting fat...." It's that season of the year again and we are delighted to extend our Christmas greetings to each family. In the hustle and bustle of your preparations, we encourage you to set aside time to enjoy the true meaning of Christmas and receive refreshment from the newborn King.

As you remember, last month we began a two-part series on high school graduation requirements. We covered your state's graduation requirements for homeschoolers (if any), your child's post high school goals, and your child's personal interests. To review this information you can go to <http://www.hslda.org/elink.asp?id=3533>. This month before you break for Christmas, we want to complete the series by discussing how to structure your child's high school program to include the five core academic subjects, electives, and extracurricular activities.

CORE ACADEMIC COURSES

Let's begin with the high school academic requirements. There are five core academic subject areas: English, Math, Science, History (Social Sciences), and Foreign Language. These academic courses are typically a year long and are 1 credit courses (notable exceptions would be semester-long courses such as U.S. Government or some Geography courses which would be 1/2 credit courses). When planning out your program, always be sure to use high school level textbooks/resources. Your homeschool may also desire to consider Bible as a core academic course; however, most colleges will consider Bible courses to be electives.

For help in evaluating credit, go to <http://www.hslda.org/elink.asp?id=3523>.

Also, for more information about the types of courses available to fulfill these core courses, take a look at our brochure on [Sample Four-Year High School plans](#).

ELECTIVES

Electives are not as academically rigorous as core academic courses, but they still have educational value. Electives supplement the core courses and provide your child with the opportunity to examine the fine arts (including, for example, such areas as Art, Music, Photography, Drama), to acquire a practical skill (some examples: Home Economics, Auto Mechanics, First Aid, CPR), or to be well-equipped as an adult (for example: Computer Skills, Financial Management, Nutrition).

Phys Ed and Health are important electives and most high school programs include them. Choose your electives well and consider a wide variety from many different categories. Having your child assist you in choosing and planning which electives he or she will complete helps to involve and motivate your child, especially when the electives chosen are in areas of interest to them. These courses can help introduce them to a possible career/vocation.

A couple of great electives you could include are [Career Development](#), [Current Events](#) (at <http://www.hslda.org/elink.asp?id=3526> and <http://www.hslda.org/elink.asp?id=3527>), or a study in [Worldviews](#).

An SAT or ACT test preparation course will be a valuable use of time. See <http://www.hslda.org/elink.asp?id=3529> for test prep

resources. Also, don't forget the great [SAT/ACT test prep CD](#) offered by HSLDA for \$9.95.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

We are asked many times how extracurricular activities differ from electives. In most instances electives and extracurricular activities are differentiated by how the activity or course is reflected in your child's high school record. An elective is considered a part of the academic program and it will be noted on the high school transcript. An extracurricular activity is considered outside of the academic record and is not reflected on the transcript.

Here's an example: Let's say your son participates in the summer swim team. His practice times and swim meets may be considered an elective (Phys Ed) and you would note this item on your transcript. However, your friend's son may be on the same swim team, but your friend chooses to treat the swim team participation as an extracurricular activity. In this instance, the swim team activity would not be reflected on the transcript, but Swim Team Participation would be noted on job or college applications as an extracurricular activity.

So, as you can see, not all activities that your child is involved in need to be recorded on the transcript. Purposefully, keep activities off of the transcript so that you can fill up an extracurricular sheet with those activities to show your child had a life "outside of bookwork or academics." Employers and colleges expect students to be involved in their communities and to have an active life, so don't feel the need to translate everything your child does into credits and schoolwork. Community service, church involvement, missions work, and other activities are wonderful and worthwhile additions to your child's extracurricular activities.

One of the advantages of homeschooling through the high school years is the opportunity you have to tailor a high school program to fit your child. Your child does not have to squeeze into the one or two tracks offered by most private and public schools. The possibilities are endless. Enjoy planning out your high school program, and let us know how we can assist you.

Next month is the beginning of a new year, a time for new resolutions, new beginnings, and new goals, so we want to bring you a word of renewed hope for 2007. We all need hope to survive! You may be finding it difficult to look beyond the temporal or you may be generally concerned about your child's well-being. On the other hand, you may be enjoying a season of blessing and prosperity but you desire to be an encourager to others and give others hope for their journey. Whatever state you currently find yourself in, we trust the January newsletter will lift you up and keep you running the race for which you are called.

Merry Christmas,
Becky & Diane



This resource is an article from the *Homeschooling Thru Highschool* newsletter (12/7/2006), and is provided by the Home School Legal Defense Association as a service to the homeschooling community.

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