

# Homeschool to College! – Frequently Asked Questions

From: *Countdown to College* [www.mother-lode.blogspot.com](http://www.mother-lode.blogspot.com)  
<http://homeschooltocollege.weebly.com/>

## How do I calculate credit hours?

There are a number of methods for calculating credit hours (sometimes called Carnegie units) in a home school setting. Choose the one that best suits the course you are considering.

- ☞ One credit hour is equal to one year of high school study.
- ☞ One semester of community college work.
- ☞ One credit hour is equal to about 135 – 150 classroom hours (plus homework). Inge Cannon, in [Mentoring your Teen](#), discusses this issue, pointing out that although school administrators tend to assume that homework hours will expand this to 200 hours per credit, they also understand that only about 40% of in-school time is on-task for curriculum mastery.
- ☞ One credit hour can also be seen as a percentage of mastery; i.e. if you covered 80% of a high school textbook on your subject, you can count a credit hour.

## What should I require for graduation?

It depends on what you are aiming for. If you are aiming for college, then you need to look into what the colleges you are considering require for entrance. If you think that you don't want to go to college, you should still look at college entrance requirements for your state, because later in life, you may want to go to college in order to advance or to change your career.

So graduation requirements should match the college entrance requirements for your state colleges or for the colleges you wish to enter. Ivy Leagues want to see a good academic curriculum, including four years or more in each of these "solid" subjects:

English

Math (Algebra 1 & 2, Geometry, Calculus)

Hard Sciences (Biology, Physics, Chemistry, etc.)

Foreign languages (at least 2 years of each language studied. Preferably 4 years of the same language)

Social Sciences (History, Economics, Government)

Plus, you'll need a challenging selection of "semi-solid" and elective courses:

Semi-solids: Journalism, ethics, art history, psychology, etc.

Electives: Music, home economics, computer science, etc.

Your student should have between **23 and 28 credit hours** to graduate. Anything over 32 hours is incredible to a college admissions officer.

You may also want to list a minimum number of community service hours as part of your graduation requirement. This is becoming a new standard in many school districts. You may also have some personal or family benchmarks you want your student to reach before he graduates. For instance, you might require that your child run a home-based business for a while or get a job or internship in a designated field or for a designated time.

## What is an AP class?

Without exception, you can only afford to list as Advanced Placement (AP), those classes for which your student has taken an AP exam and has earned a grade on that exam that you want to display to an admissions officer. An AP exam tests the student's learning at a college level.

## What is an Honors class?

An Honors class should be taught at a college level, and might be listed without an AP exam to back it up. However, without an AP validation, an admissions officer won't know what your Honors designation means. So you'll need to find a way to validate the accelerated nature of your course work: academic competitions, professional certifications, business experience, etc.

## What tests should my student take?

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For college entrance, a minimum battery of tests would be simply the SAT twice – once for practice and once for ‘real’. But few homeschoolers are really able to get the verification they need with SAT alone.

Even if your college doesn’t require the ACT, it can cross-reference your SAT scores. The PSAT may open scholarship possibilities. And many colleges now look at multiple SAT scores, taking the best score in each section from among the several times the student took the test to produce a maximized SAT composite.

For academic validation of specific courses, see the question below.

## What are the differences among PSAT, SAT, ACT, SAT2, AP and CLEP tests?

**PSAT** – qualifies for National Merit Scholarship. Practice in sophomore year, qualify in junior year.

**SAT 1** – Reasoning test. Standard for most college admissions.

**ACT** – Less universally accepted test for college admission. Focuses on skills.

**SAT II** – Series of subject-area exams. Used for placement in college courses by top colleges. Used for outside verification of high-school level achievement for any college.

**Advanced Placement (AP)** – Subject-area exams. Used to determine whether a student has already done *college-level* work. Used for outside verification of achievement. Each college decides whether and how much credit to give for each score in each subject. Even if you get a top score on an AP exam, you may not get any college credit, but you may get advanced standing (i.e. you can start with a 2<sup>nd</sup> semester level course).

**CLEP Tests** – Developed to test returning military personnel to assign college credit for work experience. Pass/fail grade commands little respect from colleges. This may provide a good outside verification of *high school level* work, but generally won’t command college credit. There are a growing number of online and distance-learning institutions that offer college degrees based solely on CLEP testing. These institutions are very new and there is no information about whether their graduates will be able to gain entrance to graduate schools or whether their degrees will be respected by employers.

## Can’t my student CLEP out of a lot of college classes?

Each college determines whether it will award credit for CLEP tests, and how much credit it will award. Because CLEP uses a pass/fail grading system, the best grade colleges can assign for the subject tested is a C. Colleges are reluctant to award credit in this case, unless they are required by law to do so. The only case in which colleges are required to recognize CLEP for college credit is for military personnel testing to receive credit for work experience.

Colleges are more likely to grant advanced standing for CLEP tests than they are to grant credit. So your student might be able to skip those first-year or first-semester classes with a CLEP test and go directly to more challenging work.

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**How should I record a passing CLEP grade on the transcript?** *For instance, if my child did not take a US History class, but just took the US History I CLEP test and scored a 53, am I allowed to simply list US History I on the transcript as a PASS and grant ONE CREDIT towards high school graduation? Or should I mark it as a C grade based upon the College Board grading scale (which I don't really want to do) in order to get the ONE CREDIT?*

If you are doing a lot of CLEPing, then putting a PASS on the high school transcript for a large proportion of your child's credit hours, could be viewed by college admissions officers as a way for you to disguise poor grades and pad the GPA. Even if you only do it once, it might cause a college admission board to regard your transcript with suspicion.

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Since the College Board recommends that you give a C on the high school transcript for a PASS on the CLEP that would be the safest course. Remember, a college admission board would be completely within their 'rights' to view a PASS as a D (which is, after all, a passing grade). That is why the CLEP tests aren't well respected by colleges and scholarship committees in general.

### **What is “double-dipping”?**

“Double-dipping” is a strategy for upperclassmen to receive both high school and college credit for the same class. There are several ways high school junior or senior can earn double credit.

Take community college classes. This is a surer way to college credit than AP or CLEP testing, because if the student passes the class, there is no question that she completed work on a college level. Many states have credit-recognition agreements between the state university system and the community college system within the state. In those states, public universities accept community college credit without any discount of hours. You may also want to list a minimum number of community service hours as part of your graduation requirement. This is becoming a new standard in many school districts. You may also have some personal or family benchmarks you want your student to reach before he graduates. For instance, you might require that your child run a home-based business for a while or get a job or internship in a designated field or for a designated time.