# Homeschool Portfolio/Evaluations for High School-Age Young People: FAQs

Thanks to Teresa Giardina and Hannah Mackay from The Dandelion Project for this information.

## The Basics

All homeschooled students, ages 6+, must get an evaluation at the end of every homeschool year (by June 30). High school-aged (14+ years old, or 9th+ grade) homeschooled young people are encouraged to create a transcript as part of their end-of-year homeschooling portfolio. At age 18/grade 12/when 15 credits have been achieved, this collection of transcripts make it possible for the parents to generate an official high school diploma, signed off by the evaluator, recognized by the state. This diploma is equivalent to a conventional high school diploma or GED. Getting a diploma is not required, but it is certainly handy when transitioning into the adult world. You can also sidestep the parent homeschool diploma altogether and earn a high school equivalency option (GED test, HiSET test, or 30 college credits), instead of the parent-issued diploma. We suggest making a transcript, no matter what route you take.

# What are the requirements for the diploma?

In order to earn a high school diploma, the student must show a transcript that meets the state's requirements. A complete transcript will include proof of:

- 4 English credits (including a language component, literature, speech practice, and composition)
- 3 Math credits (including geometry and algebra)
- 3 Science credits (very loose)
- 3 Social Studies credits (including geography, civics, world history, PA/US history)
- 2 Arts/Humanities credits

#### What is a credit?

In a conventional school, 1 credit = 1 year of a class. In homeschooling, 1 credit = 120 hours. In the unschooler world, this doesn't have to be documented rigorously, so don't stress about the exact minutes/hours. You can also document .5 credits and .25 credits for smaller endeavors and count those towards the totals. You can complete these credits on your own timeline; you do not have to line it up by years. For example, you could complete 1 course of algebra (for example, work through a textbook, complete a Khan Academy course, demonstrate how you've used it in a personal business you're running) in 2 months and that would count as 1 credit. You could do 2 science credits in one year. You could do 4 mini units focusing on different areas of literature in 1 year and call that 1 English credit. You can also get credit for learning/experiences that don't involve books at all, like "extracurriculars" you're involved in (sports, theater, service). Everything is learning, so pretty much everything can count. Focus more on the content and your interests than the timing.

## Can I see a sample transcript?

Yes, check it out here.

At the bottom of each page there is a key indicating where each "class" took place.

# If we're not keeping track/haven't kept track of all that we've done, what do we do?

First, take a breath. It will work out! This is what you figure out in the evaluation at the end of the year (or with your partner before then). You'll bring your portfolio (see details below), your memories of this past year, and you and the evaluator will work together to figure out how activities, interests, classes, and experiences can be placed into tidy classes with credits attached to them. Some things will be marked as 1 credit while smaller interests will become .5 or .25 credits. You may also choose to give yourself a grade, to count towards a GPA. You can give yourself a number or a Pass/Fail grade (the evaluator will explain this).

## Is this process legitimate?

Yes! By the time they get to 18 years old, unschoolers usually have those 15 required credits and an abundance of electives. There will be certain areas that are easy to accrue credits in because it aligns with your existing interests. Other areas may require a little more planning or finessing (which is good to know by 16, if you don't want to scramble at the end). As you become aware of your goals, interests, and tendencies, you'll be able to plan around how you want your future years to look.

## But really, are these transcripts acceptable for college, jobs, or other things?

Yes, this transcript can go into a college application. Because unschoolers have such a personalized education, colleges often like to do an additional interview to get to know their background. You can use your transcript as a talking point - "Look at all these things I've done..." Jobs, summer programs, etc - all of them will receive this diploma and transcript as well

**Edit May 2025**: We now encourage homeschooled high schoolers to send their homeschooled transcripts to a website like <a href="https://fasttranscripts.com/">https://fasttranscripts.com/</a> to make a legible and recognizable transcripts before graduating (do it in 12th grade). This will help the whole college process. We suggest the \$18 or \$30 option.

#### What should I bring to the evaluation?

Watch Teresa describe it here:

■ How to - Homeschool Evals and Portfolio with Evaluator Teresa G - March 2025 (Jump to 37:00 for info about high school evals)

#### OR Read it here:

- Proof of attendance of 180 days
  - Can be as simple as a calendar, no formal proof needed
- Reading list
  - Can be a sample doesn't have to be everything you read
  - Not just books; Any kind of media can be included: podcasts, documentaries, YouTube, textbooks, magazines, etc.
  - Goal for high school level: This list is thorough enough to track what themes emerged and can be translated to credits ("You watched 3 shows about animal life, followed a YouTuber veterinarian, and visited a working farm? Animal Science, .5 credit")
  - Have a hard time keeping track of what you read/consume? Make an account on <u>www.goodreads.com</u> to track your books, make playlists on YouTube of what you

watch, or review your queue on Netflix. You'll figure out something that works for you.

- Project samples
  - 10 samples of learning experiences try to make it a diverse selection (not 10 photos of cooking projects)
    - These are typically pictures, but could be other formats
  - Goal at high school level: The young person is keeping track of this and adds a reflection to each of the 10 projects - could be written beforehand or spoken during the evaluation
    - In the reflection, write or speak about why the project was meaningful, what you learned, what you would have done differently, etc.
- Overall: Be prepared to talk about what you've done this year so you can work with the evaluator to translate it into credits for the transcript.

And no, you don't need to include something for every subject that you are earning credits in.

# Who is in the meeting with the high schooler?

The focus is on the young person, but a parent can join if they wish.

# **How long is the meeting?**

It usually takes 45 min - 1 hour.

## What happens during the evaluation itself?

The evaluator looks over the portfolio and talks with the young person about what they've been up to in the past year. Then they brainstorm about how to categorize these activities and co-create the transcript for that year, including class names, credits, and a grade. If you don't get to the whole transcript in the meeting, the evaluator will take the information from the meeting and make a draft of the transcript for the parents to review. When all are happy with it, the evaluator will sign it and you can return it to the school district.

## What if there is a gap, or there hasn't been any focus on a particular topic?

You'd be surprised what falls into certain categories and what can add up to a credit. The evaluator will get creative with you. If earning the diploma is a goal for the young person and the gap is obvious, they may want to create a plan about how to get credits in those areas they're not as excited about. That may involve finding a class, creating a reading/media list about the topic, or finding something in that area that aligns with existing interests. Natural Creativity is here to help meet those goals.

## What format is best for the portfolio?

Whatever is simple and works for you. Powerpoint, Instagram account, photo album, scrapbook, whatever. Keep it simple.

## Sample transcript items

Regular babysitting → Child Development w/ Work Study (.5 credit)
Read *Harry Potter*, watch the movies, write a fanfic → Comparative Lit (.5 credit)
Regular ballet classes → Ballet 1 (.5 credit)
Make family dinner weekly → Culinary Arts (.5 credit)
Family chores → Family + Consumer Sciences (.5 credit)

Group time at NC  $\rightarrow$  Group Discussion Seminar (. 25 credit) Create wood projects at NC  $\rightarrow$  Woodshop 1 (.5 credit) Complete Cricket programming app course  $\rightarrow$  Intro to Computer Science (.25 credit) Duolingo French  $\rightarrow$  French 1 (1 credit) ...and so on

# What's the most important thing to remember in this process?

Keep it simple.

By 10th grade at the latest, a high schooler should understand the expectations around the high school transcript requirements. This can help them organize their high school years, if they're looking for structure.