

# Creating a plan to homeschool your high schooler....You CAN do this!

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*You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes.*

*You can steer yourself any direction you choose....*

*And will you succeed? Yes! You will, indeed! (98 and  $\frac{3}{4}$  percent guaranteed.)*

*Dr. Seuss*

*If Plan A doesn't work, the alphabet has 25 more letters.*

*Claire Cook*



## What are Indiana's homeschool graduation requirements?

As a "homeschool/non-accredited private school," you as the parent-administrator set the graduation requirements for your homeschool. (You also provide the diploma.) If you leave a public school after high school has begun, you may have received (or have been asked to sign) a document stating that you should provide "instruction equivalent to that given in public schools." This language is also used on the DOE website. (<https://www.doe.in.gov/school-improvement/home-school/homeschool-help-sheet>) However, those standards are ultimately determined by you. Indiana only requires that attendance records (180 days of instruction per year) be kept.

## Will colleges accept my homeschooled student?

Yes! Most colleges think very highly of homeschooled students because their college graduation rate is generally higher than public school students. Some colleges will even recruit homeschoolers or have admissions counselors specifically for homeschooled students. Are there colleges where being homeschooled is a disadvantage? Possibly (I don't know of any specifically), but there are many, many more who are happy to have them. Occasionally, there are some scholarships that homeschooled students aren't eligible for (usually because they require an official class rank.) Most doors are wide open for homeschoolers, and some doors are created especially for them.

## **Begin with the end in mind...Create a Four Year Plan! (For every student...College bound or otherwise)**

This is a document that maps out the courses a student is planning to take in high school. It serves as a “road map” for planning high school curriculum. It tells what subjects the student will take every year, for all of high school, and is revised each year as needed. In schools, guidance counselors may use it to meet with students and parents yearly, select courses, and check to make sure graduation requirements will be met. This document is for the use of you and your student. Ideally, you will both have a copy and select some courses together. Whatever your student’s plans after high school, a 4 year plan is helpful.

### **When Should I Make a 4 Year Plan?**

Ideally, a simple plan should be made before high school begins. This is meant to be a working document for you and your student (Don’t write in pen! 😊) It can (and most likely will) change multiple times.

### **Help! I Didn’t Do That!**

Don’t panic! Just go back and fill in what you’ve actually done, and then go from there. If you have any gaps in subject areas, you can double up later.

### **How do I know what classes my student should take? I’ve heard of the Core 40. Does it apply to me?**

The Indiana Core 40 is the minimum set of classes that Indiana’s 4 year public colleges require. If your student is planning on a different career path than a four year university, you have more flexibility here, but this is the most common set of classes that public school students are required to take. Although there is no one uniform “college prep” curriculum, many selective schools and programs throughout the country, including IU, will want to see Core 40 with Academic Honors type of classes. (Note: Again, you as the parent-administrator determine what constitutes an “honors” diploma in your homeschool, and you designate academic honors on the diploma/transcripts if your student meets those standards you’ve set.) In general, the more your coursework resembles the Core 40 and the more academic your student’s class load, the more possible school choices and scholarship opportunities you’ll have. Please remember, though, that there are many routes to “success” in career choices!

*Bottom line: Knowing your student, challenge them without overwhelming them.*

### **Indiana’s Core 40:**

<https://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/student-assistance/core-40-and-honors-diploma-summary-class-2016-updated-june-2018.pdf>

## Why is it called the Core 40? Is this common core?

It is called Core 40 because it consists of 40 credits that are considered “core” to a well-prepared student. (Your student will probably earn significantly more than 40 credits.

Common core refers to actual course content (Ex. What topics should be presented in math at which grade levels) and how some states align their curriculum and choose materials and textbooks. You might see some homeschool material advertised as aligned with common core.

## What is a credit? What makes up a credit?

In the world of high school requirements, 1 semester of coursework=1 credit. Yes, “one semester of coursework” is somewhat subjective. As a rough guideline, if you split a biology textbook in half and covered the material in it, that would be one semester’s worth. Most “Core” subjects (English, Math, Science, Social Studies) take 2 semesters to complete a full class.

You don’t have to have 7 courses each semester as shown in the example on the next page, but this is an average number for a traditionally scheduled high school. You will see additional required credits for the state’s honor diplomas.)

## How do I choose classes? How do I know if a curriculum is up to par?

There are many (good) choices out there and too many individual scenarios to account for to recommend any one thing for all students, but here is a great resource: The Indiana Dept. of Ed has put together a list of approved course titles and course descriptions for its public high schools. For each course, it lists course objectives and tells what the course counts toward (Subject area, Core 40, “directed elective”, etc.).

It can be found at: <http://www.doe.in.gov/achievement/ccr/course-titles-and-descriptions>

You can compare your curriculum with the descriptions to see how they compare. This may give you great ideas for classes you hadn’t thought of or explain what constitutes a course or elective in certain areas, but as a homeschooler, you are not tied to this list. If you are at all considering college, fulfill the Core 40 requirements, and use your freedom to best fit your students’ needs. In other words, you may be following the Core 40 guide lines/ college prep for college admission, but your student is not earning a “Core 40, State of Indiana Certified Diploma.” They are earning a diploma from your homeschool, and you have the freedom to make that diploma reflect your curriculum choices.

## HIGH SCHOOL FOUR YEAR PLAN

This is a basic outline for a “college prep” curriculum. Remember that, as always, individual circumstances may vary. The boxes shaded in gray represent Core 40 requirements. Dual credit courses may be used as Core 40 courses.

<b>Credit Units</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Freshman Semester I</b>	English	Math	Science	SS	Foreign Language	PE	Fine Arts Elective
<b>Freshman Semester II</b>	English	Math	Science	SS	Foreign Language	Career Exploration	Fine Arts Elective
<b>Sophomore Semester I</b>	English	Math	Science	SS	Foreign Language	Health/Wellness	Elective
<b>Sophomore Semester II</b>	English	Math	Science	SS	Foreign Language	PE	Elective
<b>Junior Semester I</b>	English	Math	Science	SS	Foreign Language	Elective	Elective
<b>Junior Semester II</b>	English	Math	Science	SS	Foreign Language	Elective	Elective
<b>Senior Semester I</b>	English	Math	Science	SS	Elective	Elective	Elective
<b>Senior Semester II</b>	English	Math	Science	SS	Elective	Elective	Elective

SS=Social Studies

## I've heard about earning college credits in high school: What is dual credit? What is AP credit? What are CLEP tests?

You may have heard about how to get college credit while your student is still in high school. This is a great option! Not only will it give you a jump start and a challenge, but it adds validity to your homeschool transcript. These options are typically taken during the junior and/or senior years. Here are some possibilities:

AP (Advanced Placement): These are advanced courses that prepare your student to take an AP test (offered at high schools around the country). If passed at a certain level, the test qualifies your student for college credit from colleges that approve them (Most colleges do.). Courses are offered in a variety of subjects and are usually taken at coops, online, or at local high schools. Typically, classes last one year (two semesters). Students may still receive high school credit for the class even if they don't take the test or pass the test at a high enough level to receive college credit.

A few words of AP caution: AP tests tend to cover LOTS of material and can be very difficult to earn a high score. Students are now required to decide (and pay for) tests, usually at their local public high school, in the fall at the beginning of the class year. Learn more at [ap.collegeboard.org](https://ap.collegeboard.org)

Dual Enrollment: This is when students enroll in a college course, either online or in a campus classroom, while still in high school. Upon passing, students receive credit for both a high school class and toward a college degree. The more general the course (Intro. to Composition, Speech, Foreign Language), the more likely it is to be widely accepted at four year universities. However, the sky is the limit for what you could take! Locally, Indiana Tech offers a fantastic deal for dual credit classes, and Ivy Tech offers many choices that tend to transfer well.

A word of caution: Although this is probably the most common choice of homeschools and an option that I would recommend, not all colleges a student may want to eventually attend will accept these credits. Since these classes are typically taken in a student's junior or senior year of high school, your student will probably have ideas of where they would like to apply after high school. It's always a great idea to check with these schools about transferring credits!

CLEP Testing (College Level Examination Program): This is where college credit is granted in a given subject when a student passes a test. Students can use any source to learn the subject. Students do not receive high school credit for passing a CLEP test, although high school classes can certainly prepare students for a CLEP test. Some colleges are picky about what CLEP tests they will accept. CLEP tests can be a wonderful way to save money, but I always recommend checking with your destination college first before you register and pay for CLEP test. Learn more at [clep.collegeboard.org](https://clep.collegeboard.org)

**A final note:** Earning college credit in high school is a wonderful thing! However, make sure you don't get "too much of a good thing" until you have a clear picture of where your student is headed. Here's why: College class designation (freshman, sophomore, etc.) goes by credits earned, not by actual year in school. If you have a really gifted student who enters with tons of credits, they may be considered past "incoming freshman" status, which can sometimes affect scholarship/financial aid categories for certain schools. If you have one of these students, ask the college or financial aid department before you let your student go past 9 college credits earned (9 college credits is typically 3 college courses.) Then, if it the benefits outweigh any potential risks, let them go crazy and earn credits!

## What are Indiana's new Graduation Pathways requirements?

Beginning with the Class of 2023, all public and accredited private school students in IN are required to complete a 3 part Graduation Pathway to graduate. The idea behind this is to offer more options than passing the ISTEP+ to public school students and also attempt to better prepare them for their future career. The Pathway consists of these three requirements:

1. Earn a Core 40 diploma.
  - a. The “product” is the diploma.
2. Demonstrate Employability Skills (aka “soft skills” like communication, teamwork, etc. This is done through participation in an extra curricular activity, holding a part time job or internship, volunteer work, service learning, etc.)
  - a. The “product” is a signed page from an employer, coach, “adult in charge” stating that the student has demonstrated employability skills through the activity and ideally a reflection piece, presentation, portfolio, etc from the student
3. Demonstrate post-secondary readiness (generally through test results showing college readiness SAT/ACT or military readiness ASVAB OR earning an honors diploma OR participation in a set of specific classes in a career area)
  - a. The “product” is the test score or honors diploma (also fulfills first requirement) or set of classes taken

You can see a visual summary of Pathway options here:

[https://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/graduation-pathways/3-graduation-pathways-infographic-english-final.pdf?utm\\_content=&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_name=&utm\\_source=govdelivery&utm\\_term=](https://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/graduation-pathways/3-graduation-pathways-infographic-english-final.pdf?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=)

## Should I try to have my student complete a Graduation Pathway?

In my opinion at this point, Pathways are driven more by the state legislature than by college admissions boards. If you look at the requirements, most college-bound homeschoolers are already meeting them. So, while it's wise to document extracurricular activities and skills learned and collect letters of recommendation, I would not stress about Pathways at this time. Of course, this is something to be aware of as it's new and standards can change.