

How to Choose the Best Electives for Your Teens

Vicki Tillman 7SistersHomeschool

Every teen is unique! One of the best things about homeschooling high school is that we can help them choose electives that are meaningful to them and help build the life skills that they need (as well as an awesome transcript). We will discuss 10 different categories of electives as well as traditional and creative ways to earn those credits.

Electives for Homeschool High School: How do you know how many electives your teens should complete?

As you know, there's not ONE right way to homeschool high school. But it helps to have guidelines.

How many electives does your teen need?

That is up to you and your teen. Iowa does not have a set number of electives required for graduation.

Here's something important you need to know:

It is a good idea to include at least one elective each year. This is not hard to do.]Also, know that your homeschool high schoolers CAN graduate with more than 24-26 credits. They can put as many credits as they desire on their transcripts. SO, build as many elective credits as your teens need.

Here are 10 different kinds of electives to help you plan

1) Explore an interest

Many teens already have interests. Some teens have hobbies, arts, sports, fitness, school subjects or service areas that they have naturally developed on their own. They are already working on an elective without even trying.

This is an "organic" elective, because your teen naturally does them. (Remember, all of life is education, so capture these organic electives on the homeschool transcript.)

To capture these credits for the transcript:

- Complete a textbook on the subject. For instance, many teens who are interested in Science will take extra Science courses that will be counted as Science electives. These can be topics like: Marine Biology, Anatomy and Physiology, and Astronomy.

- Log hours on what they are doing with their interest and have write a [course description](#) for your records. [Here's a post on how to earn credits that explains logging hours.](#)
- For instance, you can combine book-learning and experiences. A good example of this is History elective. Teens with a special historical era or historical topic of interest can build a unique History elective.



2) Develop a skill

Homeschool high schoolers, like all teens, need life skills. Several important life skill electives include:

- Home Economics
- Home Maintenance
- Financial Literacy
- Thinking and Reasoning
 - [Debate](#)
 - Philosophy
 - [Logic](#)
 - Critical Thinking
- Public Speaking
 - Many teens have access to Red Cross courses that will prepare teens in First Aid, Babysitting and CPR skills. (These could instead be included in a Health credit.)



3) Discover a New Interest or Skill

Many teens will tell you they do not really have an interest yet. This is often embarrassing to them because they feel pressure to be "interested" and involved. I always tell them not to worry! They simply have not found their interests yet. However, they probably will not until they explore a bit. Do new things. Take some completely different courses. Here are some examples that we have seen inspire some teens:

- Early Childhood Education (usually textbooks are used for this course)
- Marine Biology (usually textbooks are used for this course)
- Astronomy (usually textbooks are used for this course)
- Local History (logging hours is a good way to earn this credit)



4) Steward a gift

God gave each teens gifts. Here are a few gifts we've seen and a way to nurture that gifting:

- **Working with their hands.** Find apprenticeships (see below).
- **Visual Arts.** Log hours taking local courses, earn college credit at local community college.
- **Music.** Same as Visual Arts.
- **Drama.** Log hours with homeschool or other youth drama programs.
- **Words:** writing or speaking. Earn an elective credit in Creative Writing or Public Speaking with textbooks, logging hours or group classes.
- **Kindness and compassion:** log hours in work that builds these skills such as: missions trips or apprenticing helping at an animal shelter
- **Sports:** Any Phys Ed or Fitness credits above those needed for graduation, such as: Baseball, Equestrian, General Fitness Training, Gymnastics, Hockey, Karate or Yoga



5) Cover basic needs like Career Exploration and Drivers Ed

Most teens will take Drivers Ed during their high school years. This is often a 1/4 credit course with a Pass/Fail grade. It should go in the elective section of the transcript as "Drivers Education".

Career Exploration is also a basic need for many teens. Use texts and/or logging hours.



6) Cover a basic need for graduation

While your teens will cover their core courses that are state requirements for graduation, teens who are bound for college may need additional courses in the core category. Check college websites that are of interest to your teens and see what they are looking for.

Some examples: Higher-level maths and sciences (such as Pre-Calculus, Calculus, Physics) are sometimes admissions requirements.



7) Build a Strong Transcript for College Arts and Creative Subjects

These credits are usually earned using textbooks, logging hours or courses taken at local co-ops or colleges.

- Art (even non-artsy teens can earn a "discover an interest" credit)
 - [Fine Arts Appreciation](#)
 - Drawing
 - Painting
 - 3D
- Blogging
- [Creative Writing](#)
- Dance
- Drama

- Fashion Design
- [Filmmaking](#)
- Graphic Arts
- Interior Decorating
- [Music](#) (Vocals, Instruments, Theory)
- Quilting
- Podcasting
- Sewing
- Woodworking
- [Young Arts competitions and events](#)

History

Any topic of interest above and beyond the normal History credits. Often these credits are earned through logging hours and reading “real books”. Here are some History electives that our teens have earned:

- Histories of a country of their choice
- History of Fashion
- Native Americans
- Presidents and Their Families
- World Wars

Social Sciences

These credits are usually earned using textbooks or courses taken at local co-ops or colleges.

- Psychology
- Sociology
- Human Development

Stem

These credits are usually earned using textbooks or courses taken at local co-ops or colleges.

- Advanced Biology
- Advanced Chemistry
- Animal Anatomy and Care
- Anatomy and Physiology
- Any math beyond basic Calculus (for example, Statistics)
- Botany
- Computer and other Technology (for example: Coding, Programming, Game Design)

- Environmental Studies
- Introduction to Engineering
- Marine Science
- Web Design

World Languages

Some teens like World Languages so much that they want to learn languages above and beyond the basic requirements. Thus, any other languages that are studies can be electives. Some additional languages that our teens have explored are:

- [Cherokee](#)
- Chinese
- Korean
- Latin
- Norwegian



8) Prepare for a Vocation

Here are some elective credits that teens we know have earned. Often these credits are earned through logging hours and reading “real books”.

Agriculture

- 4H Activities
- Introduction to Agriculture
- Animal Husbandry
- Horticulture

Business

- Barber training
- Barista training
- Business Math
- Culinary Arts
- [Entrepreneurship](#)
- Leadership

Trades

Teens can begin training for trades with several resources such as their community college or local unions. Some trades that our local homeschool high schoolers have included:

- Carpentry
- Electrical
- Painting
- Plumbing



9) Prepare for the Military

- [Army Split Training](#)
- [Civil Air Patrol](#)



10) Build their faith

Many teens naturally engage in spiritual development. Why not show their work on the transcript? Here are some elective credits that our local homeschoolers have earned.

- Apologetics (Check out 7Sisters' [FREE Apologetics](#) curriculum)
- Bible Studies
- Missions Trips
- Theology

There are endless possibilities for choosing electives!

