



# College Credit *in High School* White Paper

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The HomeScholar, LLC

Helping Parents Homeschool High School

Critical Tests that Increase Admission  
Chances and Decrease College Costs

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## Understand the Purpose of Subject Tests

AP® and CLEP® are subject tests taken in high school that can increase the chances of college admission. Whether required or optional, understanding these tests are helpful in planning for college-bound students. Since these tests might earn college credit, they can decrease college costs. This guide will explain these tests simply for homeschool parents new to the maze of testing acronyms.

Why are high school subject tests important? They provide outside documentation of high school accomplishments and demonstrate college readiness. They show understanding of academic subjects. Colleges know there are poorly educated public and private school students. They need outside documentation to be sure that a high school transcript matches what a child actually knows.

Most often universities see test scores as the primary source of outside documentation. This documentation is often limited to the standard SAT® or ACT®. The SAT® demonstrates achievement in English and Math, while the ACT® includes proof of understanding Science concepts.

SAT Subject Tests™ were previously used for outside documentation. Those tests are no longer available.

There can be other forms of outside documentation beyond tests. When a student is not a brilliant test taker, look beyond tests for demonstration of college readiness. Some options include dual enrollment in college classes, great letters of recommendation, a professional and accurate homeschool transcript, thorough course descriptions, work resume, activity list, performance, competition or interview. These will allow colleges to complete a holistic review of your student, even if subject tests are not available. You do not need to become a test-taking machine to succeed in college admission.

There are two different high school subject tests to choose from. Perhaps you have already heard about the AP® Test or AP® classes. Maybe you have wondered about

CLEP® tests after hearing them mentioned at a convention seminar. Let me explain them all, plain and simple in one quick overview, to get you started in the right direction.

In this white paper, you will learn the 5 W's High School Subject Tests, the 5 Rights of Subject Tests, and how to choose the best study guides for each test. Finally, I'll show you how to choose the subject test that is best for your student.

## **The 5 W's of High School Subject Tests**

### **Who – College Bound High School Students**

College bound students, especially those destined for selective schools, should consider taking subject tests. Subject tests can be helpful because they are a common measurement of a student's understanding of the material.

Many colleges understand these tests, and some require them for admission. Most colleges require either the SAT® or ACT® test as outside documentation, but some want more in the form of subject tests. Few require AP® Exams. No colleges require CLEP® tests, but some accept them, to strengthen the college application.

### **What – AP® Test, CLEP® Test**

AP® Tests are three hours long, most include essays, and they measure a college amount of knowledge. AP® Tests assume that a student has taken rigorous AP® classes approved by the College Board. Special AP® classes are not required, however. Anyone can take an AP® test, even if they have not taken an AP® course.

Tests may be used to earn college credit. Each AP® test may receive college credits from the university the student attends. AP® Tests are scored from 1-5, indicating how qualified the student is to receive college credit. A score of 5 means "extremely well qualified" and is equivalent to a grade of A. A score of 4 means "very well qualified" and is equivalent to a college B grade. A score of 3 means "qualified," and is equivalent to grade of C. A score of 2 is "possibly qualified" and a 1 is "no recommendation." AP® scores may even be used in the calculation of college GPA, so performing well on tests is critical.

CLEP® Exams are computer-based, multiple-choice exams offered year-round that can provide college credit. CLEP® exams are college level tests that assume a student has learned naturally through reading, visiting museums, reading the paper, and engaging in

hands-on learning. These exams are often a great fit for homeschoolers because they don't assume everything was learned in a classroom setting.

CLEP® tests may also be used to earn college credit. CLEP® scores range from 20 to 80. They recommend that colleges provide college credit for a score of 50 or higher, but each university will set their own policy on scores receiving college credit, and it often varies depending on the test.

### **Where – Tests Locations**

Public and private high schools usually host AP® Exams. They are offered at schools in May when AP® classes are ending.

CLEP® exams are not commonly given in high schools, because they are typically taken by adults, or students who are not in public high school. They are given at computer test centers at colleges, technical schools, or community colleges.

### **When – After Studying Each Subject**

Most students take subject tests in their sophomore and junior years so their results are ready to present to colleges with their applications in the beginning of senior year. Some students take them earlier. In most cases, tests should be given immediately after study of the subject is completed, so the information is still fresh. In other words, have your child take the chemistry exam right after they finish their chemistry class.

### **Why – Demonstrate Knowledge of Specific Subjects**

Subject tests are useful to prove your child has learned a subject thoroughly. In an objective, measurable way, these tests demonstrate achievement in one subject at a time. The SAT® or ACT® test can demonstrate a general understanding of reading, writing, and math, but they aren't specific. It can be helpful to take a subject test in each broad subject category: math, English, history, science, and foreign language. If a college wants two subject tests, have your child take the two tests they will do best at, in the subject they enjoy most.

## **How – Ensure Passing Scores**

Register for each test months in advance so you don't miss the deadline, but don't let your student take a test unprepared. Have your child take a sample test at home, to make sure they know the material. Then help them study for the test using study guides at home, filling in any small gaps in the information. Sit your child down to take a full-length, timed sample test, to be sure the student can succeed with the timing and the format of the test. Then have them take the real test at a testing location.

The bottom line is, never have your child take a test if you believe they will not pass. It can hurt their future testing ability and cause problems with your child's self-perception. Pre-test at home to make sure your child is comfortable with the material and the test format. Only have them take a real test once you are confident they can pass it. If you aren't certain your child will earn an acceptable score, don't have scores sent to colleges until after you have seen the results.

## **The 5 Rights of High School Subject Tests**

Now that you know the basics about subject tests, there are other things to consider. It's unusual for a child to go to college classes or take a college test without feeling some stress. A bit of stress can be helpful, so children can learn to deal with stressful test situations. On the other hand, you don't want to build anxiety up in your child needlessly until they develop a phobia of tests. You don't want to ask them to take a test they aren't comfortable with. When I worked as a nurse, we were taught to avoid drug errors by using the "five rights" of medication administration: the right patient, the right drug, the right dose, the right route, and the right time. Using that same strategy, here are the "five rights" of high school subject test success.

### **1. The Right Test - Decide Which Tests are Best**

Choose the best test for your child. If your child is taking advanced classes and wants to attend a selective college, an AP® test may be best. Independent learners with advanced knowledge might do best on a CLEP® test. If your child is working at grade level, but not taking honors classes, using the SAT® or ACT® alone might be the most helpful test.

### **2. The Right College - Know What Your College Wants**

Subject Tests may be required by a college. It can help to know which tests your chosen colleges might require ahead of time, and then try to exceed their expectations for college admission and scholarship success. You can meet or exceed their expectations by taking tests that make your student look most desirable. Do an online search for the names of your college choices plus "admission requirements." Remember that college policies change over time, so contact the college directly, before senior year, to find out any additional, updated information.

### **3. The Right Day – Watch the Calendar**

Once you have decided on which tests you want your child to take, keep track of test dates. Each year, add important dates to your calendar or planner: registration deadlines,



the date of each test, and dates you will receive results. Include the location and test code you will need on test day (See [Homeschool Codes for Tests](#)). Send the test results to each college during senior year, if you haven't already.

#### **4. The Right Preparation – Study for Tests**

There are four steps for test preparation. First, your child has to learn the subject, using curriculum and resources that match their learning style. While the subject is still fresh in their mind, pick up a study guide for the test, to prepare your child for the exact questions they will encounter. Next, you need to identify the information they haven't learned yet - topics that might be on the test but weren't covered in the curriculum. Take the time to fill any gaps. Finally, have your child take sample tests repeatedly, to practice timing, speed, filling in bubbles, and writing essays. This will help them earn the maximum scores. If sample test scores aren't good, consider other tests or options.

Study is important, but there are many things you can do to improve your child's test score beyond test preparation. Sleep, nutrition, and hydration are remarkably important! A few weeks in advance of each test, slide your child's sleep schedule back so they will be ready to work the morning of the test. On test day, make sure they have a good breakfast. They should also bring a snack and water for breaks. Be sure to check the test location in advance, so you know exactly where it is and can ensure your child arrives rested and unhurried. Don't forget to bring ID for the test, because they are careful to prevent cheating.

#### **5. The Right Resources – Find Information for Each Test**

Choosing a study guide and resources can be a challenge. Read online reviews first, because study guides change frequently. The resources in the next section will help you decide on the right test, check out the format, and locate independent study guides you can use at home.

## Recommended Study Guides

I recommend resources you can use independently at home that will best imitate the test questions that will be used.

### AP® Tests

Research AP® Subject Tests: [CollegeBoard.org - AP® Student Home](https://collegeboard.org/ap-student-home)

Take Sample AP® Subject Tests: Practice Questions on CollegeBoard.org

Choose Study Guides: [Cracking the AP® U.S. History Exam, 2020 Edition](#)

### CLEP® Exams

Research CLEP® Exams: [Collegeboard.org CLEP Basics](https://collegeboard.org/clep-basics)

Take Sample CLEP® Exams: [CLEP® Official Study Guide by The College Board](#)

Choose Study Guides for CLEP® Exams: I prefer [CLEP® Study Guides by REA](#)

If you need additional help, look to the test prep companies specifically geared to the test you need, such as [Kaplan](#) and [The Princeton Review](#). You can also hire a tutor. While a general tutor may be helpful for general subjects and test taking strategies, specific tests may require targeted preparation. Look for tutors and classes with specific expertise.

## How to Choose the Best Subject Test

I know that some parents are completely in over their head, near-tears right now, and possibly panic-stricken. Don't stop homeschooling merely because all these different subject tests exist! You only *need* to think about the tests your college requires. Here's a simple summary of how to choose.

### Reasons for Choosing AP®

1. Confidence that your child will have every test that might be required
2. Reduce cost of college by earning college credit for work done in high school
3. Success with college studies because AP® study mimics college work

Don't get caught up in the hype of testing. You don't need a million AP® Tests in high school. In fact, you really shouldn't have too many, because your teen won't have enough time for activities. So how many should your student take? One or two AP® Tests has the biggest benefit, and four to six are suggested for Ivy League schools. More is not necessarily better. Having more than 4-6 AP® Tests doesn't improve success, so have your student take a reasonable number for your student's goals

### Reasons for Choosing CLEP®

1. Earn a college degree by taking many exams that are accredited by a college
2. Reduce the cost of college by taking a few exams for college credit
3. Validate learning in specific subjects, so colleges know the sum of your child's knowledge

Once subject tests are done, you have the option of including test scores on your homeschool transcript. It's completely optional. If the scores make your child look smarter (good scores), then include them on the transcript. If the scores do not make your child look smarter (bad scores), then leave them off the transcript.

While you do need to meet college admission requirements, if these tests aren't right for your child, there are other ways to earn outside documentation. Dual enrollment, letters of recommendation, comprehensive homeschool records, excellent application essays, and a work resume can also increase your child's chances of earning college admission and scholarships.

## **Executive Summary**

Know your child and trust your own judgement. As always, do what's best for your child.

### **The 5 W's of High School Subject Tests**

1. Who – College Bound High School Students
2. What - AP® and CLEP® Tests
3. Where – Tests Given at Schools
4. When – After Studying the Subject
5. Why – Demonstrate Knowledge of a Specific Subject
6. How – Ensure Passing Scores

### **The 5 “Rights” of High School Subject Tests**

1. Right Test – Decide What Tests are Best
2. Right College – Know What Your College Wants
3. Right Day – Watch the Calendar for Registration and Administration
4. Right Preparation – Study Carefully for Tests
5. Right Resources – Read Information About Each Test

### **Reasons for Choosing AP®**

1. Student does well with timed essay tests.
2. Confidence student has every test that may be required
3. Reduce the cost of college by earning college credit in high school
4. Demonstrates successful preparation with college-like expectations

### **Reasons for Choosing CLEP®**

1. Student has learned a subject naturally, perhaps without curriculum.
2. Earn college degree by taking multiple exams accredited by a college.
3. Reduce the cost of college by earning college credit in high school.
4. Validate learning in specific subjects for outside documentation.

## Suggested Resources

### **The Comprehensive Record Solution**

#### **Open Doors with The Comprehensive Record Solution**

Create comprehensive homeschool records colleges will love.

Easily make transcripts, course descriptions, activity lists and more.

Training, tools and support make comprehensive record preparation a breeze.

#### **Core Modules**

- Encourage: motivation to start strong with lots of examples of success
- Equip: downloadable templates and course descriptions to cut and paste
- Educate: eBook training to produce records, additional documentation explained
- Empower: Opportunity for additional coaching and support to answer any questions

#### **Bonuses**

1. Transcript Pack: emergency help for making your transcript quickly
2. Planning Pack: planning calendar to keep you on task with college in mind
3. Record Keeping Pack: record keeping and grading explained in detail
4. Silver Training Club: training and support for continuing education provides 5 recorded workshops each month. First 30 days free, then \$27 per month. Cancel anytime.

### **Purchase the Comprehensive Record Solution**

[ComprehensiveRecordSolution.com](http://ComprehensiveRecordSolution.com)

#### **Online Resources for Homeschool Solutions**

[Total Transcript Solution](#): everything you need to solve your transcript worries

[Comprehensive Record Solution](#): create records for college admission and scholarships

[High School Solution](#): start high school strong and understand every age and stage

[College Launch Solution](#): prepare to successfully launch your teen into college and life

[Gold Care Club](#): support and encouragement with personal coaching

[Silver Training Club](#): Do-it-Yourself Resources with Monthly How-to Training

#### **Books Available in Paperback and Kindle**

[How to Motivate Homeschool Teens: Strategies for Inspiring Slug-Slow Students](#)

[The HomeScholar Guide to College Admission and Scholarships](#)

[Setting the Records Straight: Craft Homeschool Transcripts and Course Descriptions](#)

[Finding the Faith to Homeschool High School: Weekly Reflections for Weary Parents](#)

[TechnoLogic: How to Set Logical Technology Boundaries and Stop the Zombie Apocalypse](#)