

# THE US AIR FORCE ACADEMY AND THE HOME SCHOOLED CANDIDATE

## Introduction

The United States Air Force Academy is one of our nation's best colleges as well as the finest officer training facility in the world. The Academy's purpose is to produce leaders who will lead the Air Force into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. Just one look at our mission statement and you will understand why it is vital that we select young men and women with the knowledge, character and motivation essential to provide this leadership for the future. An emerging source of highly qualified candidates is the home schooled student, a tribute to the quality education parents are instilling in their children. This pamphlet is designed as a complement to the Admissions Catalog to help the home schooled student prepare for admission to the Air Force Academy as well as prepare for success as a cadet and Air Force officer.

## I. Prepare for Admission

Home schooled students make up a small but increasing number of applicants to the Air Force Academy. We offer the following guidelines to assist in preparing and competing for an appointment.

Each year over 13,000 applicants vie for 1100 appointments. Home schooled students compete against the same high standards as students from a traditional school setting. The competition is keen. Anything you can do to better prepare and increase chances for success should be considered. In our admissions formula, academics account for 60 percent of the overall score. This is a combination of SAT or ACT scores, grade point average and class standing. Extracurricular activities, both athletic and non-athletic, make up 20 percent with the remaining 20 percent coming from a combination of Admission Liaison Officer Evaluation, the candidate physical fitness test and Selections Panel review.

### A. Academics

#### 1. Required Courses

The Admissions Catalog and recruiting literature specifies the required courses to take in high school. To review, we recommend the home-school curriculum include the following courses:

ENGLISH – 4 years (to include Literature, Composition, Creative Writing)

COLLEGE PREP MATH – 4 years (to include Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry and, if possible, Calculus)

SOCIAL STUDIES – 3 years (to include U.S History, World/European History, Civics/Government)

FOREIGN LANGUAGE – 2 years

SCIENCES – 4 years (to include Earth Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics)

COMPUTER SCIENCES – 1 year

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In addition, some background in laboratory sciences and proficiency in typing will be very beneficial. Home schooled students should transition to a traditional classroom lecture format sometime during their high school years to learn note taking skills, study habits and test taking skills. There are several ways to achieve this, some home school curriculum use video tape instruction in a class lecture format, while many home school associations offer cooperative classes for the laboratory sciences (chemistry, biology and physics). Also, an increasing number of students enroll in local junior college courses. Consult with school administrators in your area for details and agreements.

## **2. Documentation**

Be sure to document courses studied throughout the 4 years of high school. Let us know if your school is recognized by your local school board or the State Board of Education. Home schooled students must provide a transcript and as a minimum should consider the following academic information:

COURSE/CLASS TITLE:

LENGTH OF COURSE AND DATE COMPLETED:

GRADE:

GRADING SCALE:

GPA:

CURRICULUM/COURSE DISCRIPTION:

TEXT/MATERIALS USED:

FIELD WORK/TRIPS:

SUPPLEMENTARY RESEARCH OR STUDY:

## **3. Standardized Tests**

To accurately assess a student's academic potential and to compensate for the variety of curriculum and grading criteria nationwide, a greater emphasis is placed on standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT. These tests serve as a common denominator to compare and evaluate a student; therefore, you should attempt to score as high as possible on these tests. To do this we suggest taking the test several times. We will take the highest score attained in the math and verbal portions on any test date and combine them for your overall score. Other schools may have different methods of calculating your highest test scores. The following are suggestions to help you succeed on the standardized test:

- a. Understand the test. Know how it is set up, what are the time constraints and if there are penalties for guessing. Information supplied by the testing company is very helpful.
- b. Take the test often. Even a 10 point increase in SAT scores can make a person more competitive.
- c. Take an SAT or ACT prep class. Use a study guide book or a computer program to help you do better on the test.

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## B. Extracurricular Activities

Although many home school students are able to qualify academically for admission, sometimes their overall record is not strong enough to compete due to a significant weakness in the area of extracurricular activities. This is the portion of the application process we use to predict leadership potential. This is extremely critical because, as mentioned previously, the Air Force Academy is about producing Air Force leaders. **Do not overlook this important area!!!!** Participation in extracurricular activities provides opportunities for the student to develop as a “whole person”, one who is well balanced, able to work well with others as a team and learn leadership skills through leadership opportunities.

Some states and local school districts allow home schooled students to participate with public school children in interscholastic activities. Also some private schools, Christian and secular, will allow home schooled students to participate in selected activities. If this is not the case where you live, seek creative alternatives. The following are some suggestions that may be helpful:

### 1. Athletic Activities

- Swimming, tennis, gymnastics - join a local team, develop skills and participate in competitions.
- Baseball-play in summer leagues affiliated with Babe Ruth, Little League, American Legion, etc.
- Track and cross country-regularly participate in 5k and 10k races, even marathons.
- Basketball - YMCA, Boys/Girls Club, CYO, Community league.
- Martial Arts - study as well as enter belt competitions.
- Golf - play regularly and compete in tournaments.
- Rifle, Skeet shooting - compete in tournaments.
- Hockey or Soccer - join local, select or traveling teams

Be sure to document any success in your sports. If you are accomplished in a sport consider contacting the athletic department for consideration as a recruited athlete.

This list is by no means exhaustive. What we are looking for is participation in athletic endeavors that shows commitment and discipline to a particular sport and excellent physical conditioning. The Air Force Academy is located 7,250 feet above sea level, and the military training program is extremely physical. We want to be sure you will be able to meet the demands of this rigorous program, therefore, as part of the admissions process, a candidate fitness assessment (CFA) is administered. The CFA is described in the catalog and the Instructions to Candidates booklet. Average scores are listed for each event. Candidates should strive to meet and exceed the averages. Remember, the better you do on a test of this nature the more competitive and more qualified you become. Regular physical conditioning and early preparation for the events described in the fitness test with scores of average or above will increase your potential for success.

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## **2. Non-Athletic Activities**

-Participate in leadership of a church youth group, parish council, serve as a Sunday School teacher, VBS worker, nursery worker.

-Music lessons and recitals

-Public speaking - give speeches to groups such as Rotary, Lions, or Kiwanis, also church sermon for youth, etc.

-Community service such as hospital or nursing home volunteer, food drives, Big brother, Big Sister, Literacy programs, tutoring of other students

-Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts, Pioneer Girls, AWANA, Royal Ambassadors

-Civil Air Patrol, Junior ROTC, flying lessons

-Work - after school work, creating your own business

Again this list is by no means exhaustive. In the non-athletic activities area we are again looking for leadership, regular commitment and dedication to meaningful activity, not just resume filling. The values we mentioned earlier in our mission and value statements are those of integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do. These are the values we are looking for in our leaders. The extracurricular activities provide opportunities to develop and demonstrate these attributes. These are areas where you can and should take advantage of leadership opportunities and develop leadership skills. Initiative, responsibility and concern for others all indicate the character traits essential to strong, effective leadership. Develop these skills now and they will serve you for a life time.

## **C. Additional Considerations**

### **1. Paperwork**

The application process to the Air Force Academy is not a difficult one, however, it is lengthy. Paperwork completion and submission, scheduling of appointments and interviews should not be delayed. Promptness will ensure adequate time to correct any discrepancies.

### **2. Nomination Process**

While applying to the Academy for admission, you must also apply for a nomination from a variety of sources. We recommend attaining a nomination from as many sources as you are eligible for, President, Vice-president, Senators and Representatives. This will improve your chances for success if one source does not nominate you. Consult the catalog for details.

### **3. Candidate Evaluation and Liaison Officer Interview**

Much of the application process is a quantitative assessment of your high school career. However, numbers alone do not present an accurate picture of a candidate. In order to determine a more qualitative analysis of a candidate a personal interview will be conducted by an

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Admissions Liaison Officer. Preparation is the key to success in any important interview. Be familiar with the catalog, know about the Academy from cadets, brochures or a personal visit, be properly groomed and be eager to make a positive impression. Prepare a resume of your involvement throughout high school to include summer activities. Be yourself, poised and relaxed but communicate effectively. Make eye contact, speak with expression and speak properly. Be positive in your tone. When you discuss an activity you were involved in, be specific, detailed and accurate. Tell of your actions and the results they produced. Remember, your L.O. is evaluating you as a person and not as a number.

## 4. Help

In addition to the help and advice of an Admissions Liaison Officer in your area you also have Admissions Counselors at the Academy to answer questions concerning your records and scheduling. They are there to help you, use them.

## II. Prepare for Success

The second major area of discussion is the necessity for you to prepare for success as a cadet and later as an Air Force officer. While admission to the Air Force Academy is the first difficult hurdle to clear, staying, succeeding and graduating from the Academy are even more formidable hurdles that must also be successfully cleared. Here are some guidelines that will assist you in preparing for success. Before we proceed any further, let's discuss two important areas of concern—motivation and criticism.

**Motivation.** Too often candidates pursue an Air Force Academy appointment due to the prestige of the appointment or undue pressure of parents, peers, girl friends or boy friends. No matter how well intentioned this external pressure is, it is no substitute for the personal motivation and desire to attend USAFA. Candidates should seriously consider the gravity of this undertaking as well as counting the personal cost involved in a life of military service. Settle the issue in your heart by thoroughly researching this decision and gather facts from your Admission Liaison Officer, cadets and graduates of the Air Force Academy. Talk to your parents about your decision and your concerns. Once your decision is confirmed within you, your motivation will sustain you during difficult times.

**Criticism.** Some have criticized home schoolers as being “too sheltered”, not in the “real world” or (the old standard) “not socialized”. While some of this may, to a varying extent, be true, many benefits uniquely prepare home schoolers for USAFA. It is important to note that transition to cadet life is a challenge for everyone. However, those home-schooled students, attracted to the Air Force Academy because of the discipline and high standards set in the home, need to be prepared for the diversity and wide spectrum of beliefs and worldviews of other cadets. This must be understood and allowances made to avoid disappointment with the values of others. Our cadets are fine, upstanding individuals, who all come in with their own beliefs,

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backgrounds, values, and worldviews which add to the diversity of the Air Force Academy. Understanding, patience, and mutual respect go a long way in working together.

## **A. Academics**

Academics at the Air Force Academy are extremely challenging. The semester course loads are heavy, varying from 18-21 credits in addition to military duties and intramural and intercollegiate sports. While any one requirement may not be difficult in itself, the combination of all the activities is extremely challenging. The following guidelines will assist you:

### **1. Time Management**

The single most important skill to help you manage a busy schedule is time management. Planning, prioritizing, preparation and proper use of one's time will aid in success. Use of a pocket planner to remember important due dates and commitments is helpful. Short but effective study periods throughout the day are more beneficial than marathon cram study sessions. Prioritizing activities and determining appropriate levels of completeness to a project or paper is important in pacing your activities. Daily preparation of each class prepares you for learning.

### **2. Study Skills**

Develop and use effective study skills and habits for classes and exams. Use time effectively to review class notes, study material, assignments and text books.

### **3. Note taking Skills**

Learn, develop and use effective note taking skills. Learn to format and outline class lectures, these are important for study later. Practice this skill throughout high school in class and other instructional settings. Practice taking notes during an instructional video, lecture, Sunday school class or sermon. Have parents review them for organization and clarity of instructional points.

### **4. Determine What Is Important**

A class session or lecture will always have a point to it. Ask, "Why am I learning this material?" Your answers are often the learning objectives to a class and may be stated in the lecture or assumed to be obvious. Be certain of what the class objectives are. In many of the introductory and core courses throughout high school and college, nomenclature and terminology and their accurate definitions and usage are essential to basic understanding of material. Mastery of "buzz" words demonstrates comprehension of the material and proper use of these "buzz" words should be used in essays and term papers.

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## **5. Goal Setting**

Goal setting is the springboard a student will use to prioritize and focus their efforts. Students that have written goals and concentrate on achieving them will outperform their peers. The goals should be attainable, measurable and cause the student to live outside their “comfort zone”. Goals vary in duration: they are: short range - the next minute, hour, day or week, medium range - the next month, semester or year and also long range - one year, five years, a career or a lifetime. Setting high goals in every area of life (academic, athletic, spiritual and social) is essential for success.

## **6. Use of Available Resources**

Coming from the home schooled environment a student may not realize all the academic assistance available. A fellow student’s tutoring, group study sessions and, of course, your class instructors for some personal, one-on-one, extra instruction are available, but you must seek it!

## **B. Extracurricular Activities**

As mentioned earlier military duties, intramurals and intervarsity sports make up much of the extracurricular program at the Air Force Academy. However, there are many other activities available to students to help meet the needs of the individual. It is important for home schoolers to participate in activities that help them to be the person they want to be. Some home schoolers from religious homes may feel “different” than their traditionally schooled peers. However, it is not their schooling that makes them different but possibly their values which are different. Therefore, it is important for home schoolers to find like-minded friends for mutual support and encouragement. The following are some extracurricular activities that may help develop one’s character and friendships:

- Cadet chapel related activities, Bible Studies, retreats, student ministry activities on and off-base like Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Baptist Student Union, Officer Christian Fellowship, etc.
- Big Brother/Big Sisters, and other community service organizations.
- Cadet Clubs, drama groups, choral groups.

There are many things to do and become involved in. It is through these activities that you develop your character and the relationships that build you up. The danger of any individual is to be isolated from others when they might otherwise mutually benefit from such associations and friendships.

## **C. Military**

By now you realize the Air Force Academy is not like your typical college. While the Academy offers the same academic majors as a regular college there is one very unique aspect to the Academy - the military. Know for certain you are entering the profession of arms, the long,

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honorable and noble military tradition of the United States Air Force. The freedom enjoyed today by millions was purchased at a great price by those who have preceded us. As you follow in the footsteps of great men and women there is much you need to learn. Air and space power have proven to be decisive in modern warfare. Your knowledge and proper use of this power will be vital to the freedom of future generations. You will study to become a professional military officer. All the academic training you will receive is to train your mind to think, clearly, logically, decisively and completely. Knowledge, understanding, judgment and wisdom are gained through experience, either yours or through others. The military studies classes, summer training programs, leadership and character development seminars and personal contact with experienced Air Force officers combine to give you a foundation upon which to build as a professional officer. Commit yourself fully to your military studies, exercise discipline and excellence in all you do, develop a mentoring relationship with senior officers and live by the highest moral and ethical standards. The military is a noble profession, pursue it as a professional.

## **Summary**

This pamphlet is designed to provide guidance to the home schooled candidate seeking an Air Force Academy appointment. Preparation is the key thought throughout. Preparation for admission discussed various aspects of academic and extracurricular activities that must be addressed in order to gain admission. Preparation for success identified important skills and habits that will aid you as a cadet and future Air Force officer.

Because of such keen competition in seeking an appointment to the Air Force Academy, many good candidates miss earning an appointment by a very small margin. If you are committed to the Air Force Academy as your choice of school, we encourage you to reapply the next year. Preparatory School or a year at a local college may be a wonderful opportunity for an individual to grow and mature and gain perspective that will be valuable when you enter the Academy the following year. Many candidates became cadets and excellent Air Force officers by not giving up seeking their goal.

We hope this information is helpful in understanding the admissions process and the demands of the Air Force Academy. This information is presented in a frank and forthright manner, to assist the home schooled student gain admission to the Air Force Academy. It is not intended to be critical or prejudicial of any persons, race, color or creed. We in Air Force Academy Admissions wish you the best of success in this endeavor. If you need any further information, please contact us at:

**HQ USAFA/RRS  
2304 Cadet Drive, Suite 2300  
USAF Academy, CO 80840-5025**

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The following organizations may be helpful:

**The Home School Legal Defense Association**  
17333 Pickwick Drive  
Purcellville, VA 20132  
(540) 338-5600  
<http://www.hslda.org>

**The Moore Foundation**  
Box 1  
Camas, WA 98607  
(360) 835-5500

The following books may also be helpful:

**College Admissions: A Guide For Home Schoolers**  
by Judy Gelner

**Handbook For College Admissions**  
by Thomas Hayden

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## ADMISSIONS CHECKLIST

WHEN	ACTION REQUIRED	COMPLETED
<b>Spring of Junior Year</b>	Contact your L.O.	_____
	Read entire catalog	_____
	Take SAT/ACT more than once	_____
	Request USAFA Application	_____
	Complete USAFA Application	_____
	Condition for CFA-push ups, sit ups, pull ups, and run	_____
<b>Summer before Senior Year</b>	Request nomination form all sources, Congressman	_____
	Each of two state Senators	_____
	President/Vice President	_____
	Receive USAFA Candidate Kit	_____
	Read Instructions to Candidates	_____
	Condition for CFA	_____
<b>Fall of Senior Year</b>	Return Candidate Kit and forms	_____
	Complete nomination packages	_____
	Sched/Retake SAT/ACT	_____
	Sched DoDMERB Medical Exam	_____
	Complete CFA	_____
	Complete DoDMERB Medical Exam	_____
<b>Winter of Senior Year</b>	Prepare for Congressional Interview	_____
	Receive Congressional Nomination	_____
	Contact LO for formal interview	_____
	You will not be considered for appointment until all the following is completed (Contact Counselors)	_____
	All paperwork is complete	_____
	All medical follow-ups complete	_____
<b>Spring of Senior Year</b>	CFA complete	_____
	LO interview complete	_____
	Continue working out for USAFA	_____
	USAFA selections made and notified	_____
	Return Letter of Acceptance	_____