

Questions and Answers

1. What are the benefits of joining the National Home School Honor Society?

This is an organization to recognize the academic achievement of homeschooled students. Members may list their membership on high school transcripts, college applications, and scholarship applications. Members will be acknowledged at a recognition program at the annual SCHEA Convention held in June in the Columbia area. The Rho Gamma chapter is specifically for homeschooled students who have legal residency in South Carolina. Rare exceptions of residency will be made on a case-by-case basis.

2. What is involved with joining this state chapter of the honor society?

Send in your student's completed application with all of the required paperwork and membership fee (see checklist on the back of this page) and meet the required deadlines. If your student is accepted into the honor society, the student will receive an acceptance letter and membership card within 4-6 weeks of the October 31st deadline. After sending in their community service records, which **must** be postmarked by April 1st, members will receive an honor society certificate.

3. Why is an e-mail address required on the application?

E-mail is an inexpensive, quick form of communication, and it is a favored form of communication among today's students. E-mail enables us to reach most honor society students and their parents quickly and efficiently. This is why e-mail addresses are required on applications.

4. How is the membership fee used?

Rho Gamma chapter requires annual re-application and payment of a membership fee. Some of the other chapters require one-time membership and dues payment—this is an obvious advantage of joining your local chapter rather than this one. Your membership fee to Rho Gamma goes to pay for office supplies (i.e. envelopes, paper, print cartridge) as well as certificates and postage. It also is used to purchase small gifts for all participants in the annual recognition ceremony at the SCHEA Convention and for the social that follows the recognition ceremony, and it helps us cover fees for students from families in need for whom payment of dues is a financial hardship. No person receives payment for services from dues money.

5. At what age can I join the honor society?

Eta Sigma Alpha, at the national level, originally accepted only high school students. However, they have allowed us now to accept junior high students for membership in the Rho Gamma chapter. The same standards for membership apply.

Students may apply for membership as they enter 6th, 7th, and 8th grades, using a copy of their report cards to document a 3.5 GPA. Obviously, it helps if students have numerical grades (94, 96, 97, etc) rather than letter grades (A, B, C) in order to document this. Junior high students must send in test scores showing achievement in the 90th percentile or higher on the Iowa or Stanford achievement tests, taken within 12 months of the time of application. Community service requirements are the same as well, with students required to turn in documented 20 hours of community service by April 1st of this school year.

Eligibility ESA membership is limited to homeschool students only. Only those students who meet the HSLDA definition of a homeschooler are eligible for ESA membership. This rule states that a student must complete 50% of his/her studies at home under the direct supervision of the parent. Co-op programs, group classes, and community college courses are acceptable as long as the 50% rule is followed. Students enrolled in public school programs, charter school programs, public-school-at-home programs, full-time college programs, or other programs where more than 50% of the school time is spent in the supervision of a school setting or where the public school receives 50% funding for the student's attendance or where the public school system, umbrella school, or online school assigns the grades without parent participation, are

not eligible for ESA membership.

Students must re-apply each year for renewed membership. Each new or renewing application **must** include:

- Completed application form
- Updated transcript (high school students) or report card (junior high students or rising 9th graders)
- Copy of test scores
- Membership fee (check or money order)
- Service record, if complete.

Please include a check for your membership fee with your application—it is not deemed complete without your membership fee.

The only difference between the two chapters will be in the type of certificate issued to students. The junior high version will look different than the high school version.

Membership, therefore, is open to 6th through 12th graders. Your student may apply at the end of his or her 8th grade school year (you will send in the student's 8th grade test scores), if applying as a high school student, and your student may apply at the end of his or her 5th grade school year (you will send in the student's 5th grade test scores) if applying as a junior high student. See more details about this below. Students must re-apply to Rho Gamma every year. If you are a member, you will automatically be e-mailed another application for the next year, so that you can re-apply with your latest test scores, updated transcript, and new community service hours.

6. Are there any deadlines?

The deadline to apply is October 31st. Students are accepted into membership for the current school year. The deadline for community service records is next spring, April 1st to give students time to complete service.

These are firm deadlines, determined by postmarked date on envelope. Applications and records with later postmarks will be returned to sender. Thus, late applicants will be denied membership for the current school year.

7. Why is there a testing requirement for the National Home School Honor Society when the public school National Honor Society does not require such?

Joanne Juren, founder of the Alpha Chapter of the National Home School Honor Society, says, "The test scores provide an accepted method of measuring the homeschooled student's achievement against national and standardized norms." The non-homeschool community, including colleges and scholarship boards, embraces this high standard as credible evidence of the academic abilities of homeschooled students.

8. What are the testing requirements?

An applicant must have taken one of the following nationally-recognized tests and scored at least:

- *6th-8th graders*: 90th percentile on the composite battery of the Iowa, Stanford, or California achievement tests taken within twelve months of application
- *9th-11th graders*: 90th percentile score on the composite battery of the Iowa, Stanford, or California achievement tests taken within twelve months of application, OR a minimum of the respective scores from one of the tests listed below, taken anytime during the high school years (9th-12th grades).
- *12th graders*: must be one of the following: SAT 1800 (verbal-math), ACT 26, PSAT 180 taken during high school years. Students taking the new SAT have the option of submitting a combined 1800 score on the three-part verbal-math-writing test.

All tests must be administered in a group setting. Parent administered tests are not acceptable, and the test scores should be from previous year only (not older).

Please Note Changes This Year

The test requirement has changed slightly to reflect the requirement of our charter with the Eta Sigma

Alpha National Home School Honor Society. California Achievement Test scores and parent-administered test scores, which previously were accepted, are no longer accepted, due to respective changes at the national level. The local chapters of ESA are bound by charter agreement to adhere to these guidelines and no exceptions will be made to the test requirements. The Core Total will not be used to compute scores. Only the composite or complete battery scores will be used.

Because the math computation portion of the nationally-normed standardized tests has been eliminated from the composite score, this portion of the test is not required—applies to Iowa, Stanford, and California tests. Therefore, parents should add the verbal and math scores to come up with a composite score of 90 or greater.

If an applicant has scored sufficiently high on the SAT, ACT, or PSAT during the high school years to meet the test requirement for honor society qualification, that same test score may be used in subsequent years for re-application to the honor society. It is not necessary (or recommended) to take subsequent SAT, ACT, and PSAT tests unless the student desires to do so.

Because the testing requirement is part of our charter with the national group, please do not ask us to make exceptions for this requirement, even if your student scores only slightly below this standard. The test score is a requirement, not a suggestion. Please do not send in applications with test scores that are below this standard, as this causes unnecessary work for our staff to process these applications, and the added stress of turning students down for membership, which we hate to do!

9. Since the new SAT is now in effect, why do the honor society requirements not reflect the 2400 standard of the new SAT?

All colleges do not yet require the writing portion as part of the SAT score of incoming freshmen (it has not been normed yet), so we don't either. (Some colleges are requiring students to take the writing portion of the SAT, but are not actually including the score in the composite when considering SAT entrance scores.) When colleges begin using the 2400 standard for college entrance, we will also.

10. What if my student's SAT, ACT, or PSAT scores will not be back before the October 31st deadline?

You will still need to send in:

- Completed application form
- Updated transcript (high school students) or report card (junior high students or rising 9th graders)
- Membership fee (check or money order)
- Service record, if complete.

Remember: Your application will not be considered without your membership fee.

You will need to include a note with your application stating when your student expects to take the test and that the copy of your student's test scores will be sent when you receive it (approximately December). It is **your** responsibility to follow through and send your student's test scores to our staff. We will hold your membership fee check until after your student's test scores are received. If your student's scores do not meet the minimum standards for admission into the Rho Gamma chapter of Eta Sigma Alpha, your check will be returned to you. If your student's test scores have not been received by our staff by January 1st, your student will no longer be eligible for membership.

11. What should my transcript look like?

The transcript that accompanies this application should look similar to the one you plan on sending with your student's college application. It should have your student's personal information at the top and the list of completed high school courses with grades/credits below. Personal information includes name, address, parents' names, graduation date, and total number of credits earned. Colleges require name of school and social security number; we do not. It is understood that students who are still in high school will only have a

partial transcript, with current GPA based on courses that are completed. You may list courses currently being taken, with no scores listed beside those.

While we accept wide diversity on high school transcripts for honor society application, we encourage you to make your transcript look “normal” for college admissions. Colleges expect transcripts to be typewritten on 8-1/2-11” paper. Normally, students only earn one English credit per year, and this one credit encompasses literature, composition, grammar, and vocabulary; separate grades are not normally given for these sub-units. Spelling is not considered a separate subject in high school. Normally, there is only one credit issued for each high school subject, i.e. one credit for Biology I, one credit for Algebra I.

Test scores may be listed on this transcript, but an actual copy of test scores needs to be sent with this application. PLEASE DO NOT SEND ANY ORIGINALS OF ANYTHING; PLEASE SEND COPIES ONLY. Contents of your student’s admission packet will not be returned to you.

If your student is joining the honor society as a rising 9th grader, and has not completed any high school work thus far, please send in your student’s last report card with grades and a grade point ratio (from 8th grade).

A GPR is required for all honor society applicants. Numerical scores, not letter grades, are required as grades for coursework on the transcript. Starting in Fall 2006, we will require numerical scores based on South Carolina’s Uniform Grading Scale for computation of scores for the transcript. At the bottom of the student’s transcript, you must write, “Student’s grades and GPR computed according to South Carolina’s Uniform Grading Scale.” This is to help parents, since colleges request numerical scores on transcripts, and applicants for the LIFE and Palmetto scholarships are required to follow the South Carolina Uniform Grading Scale. To access the grading scale, go to <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/cso/ugp/> and click on either the WORD link or the PDF link to see a copy of the Uniform Grading Policy and the Uniform Grading Scale with explanations in either Microsoft WORD or Adobe Acrobat Reader PDF format.

12. What about community service? Can volunteer work at church count?

Members must document on the sheet provided at least 20 hours of community service. Community service is defined as any service performed by the student for which he does not receive monetary/financial remuneration. For our state honor society’s purposes, members may begin counting service hours from April 2 of this year through April 1 of next year.

Suggestions for community service projects: working in a community soup kitchen; ringing bells for the Salvation Army; helping with a community project to provide toys for needy children at Christmas; helping build a house as part of Habitat for Humanity; delivering Meals on Wheels; volunteering in a hospital or nursing center; visiting with and reading to the elderly residents of an assisted living center; adopting an elderly or disabled neighbor and doing things for him or her throughout the year; offering babysitting services for moms in your support group. Because we hope that students will be active in their respective churches, we consider service in the church to be a valid service that meets the purposes of this community service requirement. Therefore, volunteer service in church nursery, children’s church, construction projects, or other church ministry can be counted toward this requirement. Although we encourage students to be active in the community, some students do an extraordinary amount of service in the home, and this is to be commended. We recognize any work done in the home as “service” that fits this requirement IF such unpaid service is above and beyond the normal chores that would be expected of a family member living in the home. Such service might include babysitting younger siblings for Mom to have a special weekend away, helping care for elderly grandparents living in the home, or volunteering to do the annual spring cleaning for your mom.

If your student is part of a Key Club, Teen Council, or other service club as part of your homeschool group, your student can use his or her service hours from that club to fulfill the requirement for this honor society, but your student still must complete the honor society community service record sheet and turn it in by April 1st.

Your student has the option of turning in a completed service sheet with his or her application in the fall to avoid having to remember to mail it in later in the school year. You may make up your own documentation sheet or use the one provided with this membership application. If you write your own, please

specify the type of project, short description of what was done, contact person for the project, and hours per project. Please total the hours at the bottom—they must equal or exceed twenty hours. E-mailed service records are acceptable, as long as they include all of the necessary information.

13. Are there any required meetings?

Because this is a state chapter and we all live hours apart, there are no required meetings. There also are no officers, as there are with local chapters. We will have a recognition service of some kind at the end of the school year, and possibly a combined service project at that time.

Local chapters offer the benefits of members who live geographically close to one another. We encourage students to seek membership in their local chapters first, so that they can take full advantage of leadership opportunities, group service projects, and social contacts with these local groups. Please note contact info below.

14. Can honor society members wear special regalia at their high school graduations?

Yes. The National Home School Honor Society offers several items for its members to buy, and encourages members to wear these at their graduations or other applicable events: member pin; graduation stole; t-shirts; etc. Items may be purchased by visiting the National Home School Honor Society's website at www.etasigmaalpha.com. Each member will automatically receive a certificate and be recognized at a Recognition Ceremony during the annual SCHEA convention. The Rho Gamma chapter does not offer these items, and, at this time, we do not have t-shirts available.

15. What is the Recognition Ceremony?

At the annual SCHEA Convention held each year in June, we recognize the Eta Sigma Alpha honor society members from all five state chapters at a joint recognition ceremony. Participants are given a small token of remembrance. In addition, special awards are given to outstanding students of Eta Sigma Alpha in South Carolina to recognize such things as academic achievement, community service, and writing. Leaders from all of the chapters are invited to participate in this short program. A social follows to which all honor society member students and their families are invited.

On this day, the students put together a service project that they have worked on ahead of time. Our first year, the students gathered donated curricula from their respective homeschool groups and brought it to the convention in Columbia. After the recognition ceremony, they set up and manned a Shop for Single Moms (and families in need) where single moms could pick out used curricula for free. For our second year's project, students assembled art and science kits, as well as birthday party kits, to send to homeschool families overseas as part of Operation Kit Lift.

We anticipate that the particular project will be different every year.

16. What if I mailed in my student's application and then didn't hear from you?

You should receive e-mailed confirmation upon the receipt of your student's application, but please do not expect to receive any written confirmation in the mail before mid-November. The deadline for application submission is October 31st, and all of the applications are processed at one time in mid-November. Your student should receive a written acceptance letter and membership card by postal service by the beginning of December. Those students who have submitted their community service records also will receive their certificates at this time. Those students who choose to wait until April 1st to submit their service records will receive their certificates after we receive their service records.

If you mail in your application, and you do not receive an e-mailed confirmation within two weeks, please e-mail us at the contact information below.

17. What if my student qualifies for membership in this honor society, but we cannot afford the membership fee?

Please send us your student’s completed application by the deadline, along with a note stating financial need. We delight in being able to waive the application fee for those families in need.

18. What if, for some reason, my student’s application for membership in Honor Society is declined?

As a general rule, students are only refused membership if they lack one or more of the stated requirements. Please do not submit applications if your student does not meet the stated requirements. If your student is refused membership for any reason, you will receive a written letter stating so, and the reason for the refusal, along with your application/membership fee. You should receive this by the beginning of December. Applications and other copies are not returned.

19. Regarding the membership fee, how do I know if I’m a SCHEA member or not?

Please verify that you are a current SCHEA member before sending in the reduced fee as a SCHEA member. You would have had to join SCHEA sometime in the last 12 months, either as an individual family (perhaps at the state convention) or as part of a support group or accountability group that is a member of SCHEA. Not all support groups and accountability groups are member groups of SCHEA. If your group is a SCHEA member, this gives you the ability to join SCHEA as a family at a reduced membership fee. You would have had to join SCHEA within the last 12 months.

If you are not sure if you are a member, please check with your local group first, and then contact SCHEA to verify membership: secretary@SCHomeEducatorsAssociation.org. Membership in your local group does not necessarily make you a SCHEA member. Membership in SCHEA must be renewed each year; if you were a member years ago, your membership might have lapsed. Please confirm before sending!

Need more information?

Contact SCHEA at EtaSigmaAlpha@SCHomeEducatorsAssociation.org for more information or to receive an application.

Other Information:

If you live in the areas of South Carolina noted below, we strongly encourage you to join the local chapters of the National Home School Honor Society already formed in those areas:

York County area:

Cynthia Spratley 803-628-5451
spratleys@houseontherock.net
Lambda Gamma Chapter

Upstate area

Cheryl Hatfield 864-244-8084
markcheryl_hatfield@juno.com
Cindy Worley 864-306-6719
worleysc@earthlink.net
Phi Beta Chapter

Charleston:

for LCHEA members only
LCHEA Chair Rene Myers
rrsdjmyers@bellsouth.net
Brenda Burdine
riversofwater@aol.com
Sigma Chapter

Florence, Marion, Horry, Lee, Kershaw, Lexington,
Richland, Dillon, Williamsburg, Darlington counties of SC:

Rebekah Feagin 843-667-9777
bekerssc@yahoo.com
The Excelsior Honor Society
Gamma Zeta Chapter

Checklist for Application:

Many applications are delayed in their processing because of missing items in the application packet. Please double-check this list BEFORE mailing your application to make sure EVERY item is included. Please write legibly, as this information is used for certificates, mail-outs, and e-mail communication. All applications must be postmarked by October 31 to be considered for membership.

- Membership application form with every blank filled in, including type of test, test score, GPR, and signatures. Make sure you have included your e-mail and a check – both are required.
- Dues: \$10 SCHEA members, \$15 non-SCHEA members
- Make check payable to: SCHEA with “Honor Society” written in memo line. If you are a SCHEA member, please note whether you have an individual membership or whether you joined SCHEA through your local homeschool group (and write down the group).
- Copy of transcript using SC Uniform Grading Scale (or last year’s report card if in 6th - 8th grades, or in 9th grade not having taken any previous high school work).
- Copy of test results that meet the stated standard
- Community service documentation (if you wish to include it w/application, otherwise due April 1).

Mail to: SCHEA National Home School Honor Society, Rho Gamma Chapter, P.O. Box 2707 Irmo S.C. 29063