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WHICH SAXON HIGH SCHOOL MATH COURSES CAN BE TRANSCRIPTED AS HONORS COURSES?

Almost two decades ago – when I wrote the book on how to use John Saxon's Math books – I did not include a chapter on honors courses because I mistakenly thought that by then everyone knew about them. My apologies, but the subject should have been included in the book. Since it was not, I thought I would publish the subject in the monthly news articles and make it available for homeschool educators to print a copy as an addendum to the book. (**Click Here** for a printable copy)

I would like to say that all of John Saxon's math books are honors courses. The contents of John's math books are no-nonsense, straightforward, rigorous, challenging, and conceptually sound. These outstanding math books enable mastery of the concepts, not just memorization; however – I would be stretching the accepted definition of honors courses. Generally, the title of honors course when applied to math courses is reserved for the higher-level math courses that cover more material and are therefore more rigorous and challenging than regular courses.

Yes, the term honors course can be applied to non-math courses as well; however, in this article, I will restrict use of the term to just mathematics – and more specifically – to John Saxon's math courses.

Unless your State Board of Education has created its own standards regarding who can certify an honors curricula, the classroom mathematics teacher can authorize an honors course. There are no official rules or standards that list what defines an honors course. However; the term is generally applied to high school courses considered to be more rigorous and therefore more academically challenging. With some exceptions, a student must acquire the classroom teacher's approval to enroll in an honors course along with an overall grade average of a B or higher in prerequisite math courses.

I am a qualified state certified secondary mathematics teacher with more than twelve years' experience teaching high school mathematics while using John Saxon's math books from algebra through calculus. There is no doubt in my mind that the courses in John Saxon's high school math curriculum that qualify for honors courses are the Saxon Algebra 2 (only the 2nd or 3rd Ed), Saxon Advanced Mathematics (2nd Ed. – whether taught in a single year or in three or four semesters) and the Saxon Calculus textbook (1st or 2nd Ed). Let me briefly state why each of these qualify as honors courses.

Algebra 2, 2nd or 3rd Ed. Why not the new 4th Edition? In my opinion, the new fourth edition of this book will not allow the student to satisfactorily enter the Advanced Math textbook – nor would it qualify for the title of "Honors Course." This new edition was not created by John Saxon. It was created by a publishing company that stripped all references to geometry from the fourth edition textbook. You can read more detail about the potential problems with using this non-Saxon edition in my **Nov 2019** News Article. The challenges and rigorous nature of John Saxon's Algebra 2, 2nd or 3rd Ed. textbook have been reduced to a standard high school algebra 2 textbook in this new non-Saxon 4th Ed. version.

Now, what is it that makes the 2nd or 3rd editions of John's Algebra 2 textbook qualify as honors courses? When using the 2nd or 3rd Ed. of John's Algebra 2 textbook, students have 30 problems to tackle every day through all 129 lessons as well as a weekly test to determine their mastery of the material. Unlike a regular algebra 2 course, students must not only master the daily menu of some very rigorous algebra 2 concepts, but they must also master the rigorous geometry concepts found in the first semester of a high school geometry course – plus the introduction of trigonometric functions midway in the book as well.

It is acceptable to use Algebra 2 w/Geom (1 credit) on the student's HS transcript and in an appropriate place indicate honors credit for that course. Don't forget when a student takes an honors course, the GPA is scored differently: an A is worth 5 pts, a B is worth 4 pts, a C is worth 3 pts, and a D is 2 pts – the grade of F is still 0.

I recall at a homeschool convention several years ago, a homeschool parent told me that she was told by a homeschool friend you could not award a semester of HS geometry because there were no two-column proofs in the Saxon Algebra 2 (2nd or 3rd Ed) textbooks. My reply was "Your friend did not finish the book, he probably stopped at lesson 122 ("Venn Diagrams"), because there are more than 15 rigorous two-column proofs in the six lessons between lesson 123 and 129 (the end of the book).

As I promised my students and their parents – and I will promise you – if students get no further than successful mastery of the Saxon Algebra 2 textbook (2nd or 3rd Ed) when they graduate from high school, they will be able to pass any freshman college algebra course from MIT to Stanford – provided they attend class every day, pay attention, complete assignments, and do not sleep in class. Oh, and – one more minor requirement – show up on test days!

Advanced Mathematics, 2nd Ed: John designed this course to be taken in three, or four semesters. I taught the textbook as a four semester (2 year) course. If you would go to this link on my website, you can watch a short seven minute video on why and how you transcript the course: **https://usingsaxon.com/flvplayer.html**

Unless textbooks have drastically changed in the field of collegiate freshman mathematics, this textbook is tougher than any collegiate freshman algebra textbook I have seen or previewed. Students who complete the entirety of the textbook and successfully master the material presented will score in the 90th – or higher – percentile on either the ACT or SAT math score. As described in the referenced video, both of the course titles described in the four semester use of the book qualify as honors courses.

Calculus (1st or 2nd Ed.): Both calculus textbooks qualify as honors courses in a high school environment. And, while successful completion of all 117 lessons of the older 1st edition textbook prepares students for the AB portion of the College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) program for calculus, I recommend you use the newer 2nd edition. That edition prepares students for both the AB (through lesson 102) – and the BC (all 148 lessons) portions of the College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) program for calculus. The 2nd Ed. of John's Calculus textbook contains 31 more lessons than the older 1st Ed.

Lastly, the new 2nd Ed. of John's Calculus textbook has the added feature of the lesson reference numbers which appear in parenthesis under each problem number as used earlier in the third editions of Saxon's Algebra 1 and Algebra 2 textbooks. They direct students to the lesson that introduced the concept of that problem they may need to revisit. It saves the student wasted hours of valuable time trying to find the lesson that introduced the concept without knowing the correct terminology of what it is they are looking for.