Get Classically Educated

DEVELOPING THINKERS, NOT TEST TAKERS

FREE DOWNLOAD · AGES 14–18

RHETORIC STAGE

10 ways a classical approach to high school prepares your teen for college, career, and an AI-shaped world

A free guide for parents of 14- to 18-year-olds from Get Classically Educated

Grammar	Dialectic	Rhetoric
Ages 8–11	Ages 12–13	Ages 14–18
		THIS GUIDE

Hi friend,

High school can feel like the stakes just went up. College applications. Career choices. Records you keep yourself. And now AI that can write an essay in ten seconds. If you've ever lain awake wondering whether you're preparing your teen for a world that keeps changing, you're not alone.

Get Classically Educated was started by two Florida homeschool families, and we've felt that pressure too. Here's what gives us confidence: the skills that matter most aren't changing. Classical education calls these the Rhetoric years, the final stage, when students learn to put everything they know into clear writing and confident speech.

Here are 10 ways a classical approach prepares your teen for college, career and an AI-shaped world. Each one comes with a real fact you can check for yourself and something simple to try at home.

THE 10 THINGS AT A GLANCE

1. In an AI world, the #1 skill employers want is still thinking
2. ChatGPT made up court cases. The lawyers who trusted it paid $5,000.
3. When AI writes the essay, the brain doesn't keep it
4. Frederick Douglass spent 50 cents on a book of speeches. It helped change history.
5. Today's ads still use three tools Aristotle named 2,300 years ago
6. Only about 1 in 4 high school seniors write at a proficient level
7. About 1 in 3 seniors read below the most basic level
8. In college, students are expected to study two hours outside class for every hour in it
9. Worried about transcripts? You're already keeping the records that build one
10. "The unexamined life is not worth living." Teens are ready for that question.

THE 10 THINGS

1 In an AI world, the #1 skill employers want is still thinking

Nearly 90% of employers look for problem-solving skills on a new graduate's resume

In a 2025 national survey, **nearly 90% of employers said they look for problem-solving skills on new graduates' resumes, and at least 70% look for strong written communication.** And the World Economic Forum's 2025 jobs report found that **nearly 70% of employers rate analytical thinking as an essential core skill, more than any other.**

That's reassuring. As AI does more of the routine work, the people who can weigh evidence, spot a weak argument and make a sound judgment become more valuable, not less. Those skills don't come from one class. They come from years of discussing hard questions, writing clear arguments and defending them, which is exactly what the Rhetoric years are built on.

TRY THIS AT HOME:

When your teen uses an AI tool for anything, ask one question: "How would you check that?" Make it a habit, not a lecture. And the next time your family has a real problem to solve, like planning a trip on a budget, let your teen research the options and present a recommendation with reasons.

2 ChatGPT made up court cases. The lawyers who trusted it paid $5,000.

$5,000 fine for lawyers who filed fake court cases invented by ChatGPT

In 2023, **a federal judge in New York fined lawyers $5,000 after they filed a legal brief citing court cases that ChatGPT had made up.** The cases sounded real. They weren't.

AI can be confidently wrong. That's why one of the Five Common Topics, Testimony ("Who says so, and how do I know?"), may matter more now than ever. A classical education trains teens to check before they trust.

TRY THIS AT HOME:

Ask an AI chatbot a few questions about a book your teen knows well. Then fact-check the answers together. Finding the mistakes is half the fun.

3 When AI writes the essay, the brain doesn't keep it

83% of people who wrote with ChatGPT couldn't quote a single sentence from their own essay

In a 2025 MIT study, people wrote essays either on their own, with a search engine or with ChatGPT. **Afterward, 83% of the ChatGPT group couldn't quote a sentence from the essay they had just written, compared with about 11% in the other groups.** It was a small study of 54 people and hasn't been peer-reviewed yet, but it's worth paying attention to.

AI isn't the enemy. But a teen who lets it do the thinking misses the learning. Classical education teaches students to do the hard thinking first, so AI becomes a tool they use well, not a crutch.

> **TRY THIS AT HOME:**
> Make a family rule: write first, AI second. Your teen drafts their own ideas, and only then can they use AI to check or polish. Ask them to explain what they changed and why.

4 Frederick Douglass spent 50 cents on a book of speeches. It helped change history.

50 cents from odd jobs bought the book Douglass carried for years

Around age 12, while enslaved in Baltimore, Frederick Douglass used 50 cents he had earned to buy *The Columbian Orator*, a book of famous speeches. He kept it for years. A young Abraham Lincoln studied the same book.

Douglass went on to become one of the most powerful speakers in American history. Rhetoric isn't fancy talk. It's the ability to be heard, and to move people toward what's true and right.

> **TRY THIS AT HOME:**
> Have your teen choose a great speech, like the Gettysburg Address or one of Douglass's own, and deliver a short part of it to the family. Talk about what makes it powerful.

5 Today's ads still use three tools Aristotle named 2,300 years ago

3 tools of persuasion: ethos, pathos and logos

In his book *Rhetoric*, Aristotle described three ways people persuade: ethos (trust in the speaker), pathos (emotion) and logos (reasoning). Turn on any commercial, and you'll still see all three.

Teens who know these tools can use them well, and they can spot when someone is using them on *them*. That's a big part of what the Rhetoric years teach.

> **TRY THIS AT HOME:**
> Watch three commercials together. For each one, ask: Is it asking us to trust someone, feel something or think something through? Which one worked best on you?

6 Only about 1 in 4 high school seniors write at a proficient level

27% of 12th graders scored proficient or above on the most recent national writing test (2011)

On the most recent national writing test, given in 2011, only about 27% of 12th graders scored proficient or above. Writing is how colleges and employers see how someone thinks, and most students aren't getting enough practice.

The Rhetoric years write constantly: essays, arguments, revisions, then more revisions. And here's an encouraging story. As a young teen, Ben Franklin taught himself to write by taking notes on essays he admired, setting them aside for a few days, rewriting them from memory, and comparing his version to the original. He didn't start out gifted. He practiced.

> **TRY THIS AT HOME:**
> Try Franklin's trick. Pick a short, well-written paragraph. Have your teen jot a few notes on it, put it away for two days, rewrite it from the notes, then compare the two side by side.

7 About 1 in 3 seniors read below the most basic level

32% of 12th graders scored below Basic in reading in 2024

On the 2024 national reading test, **about 32% of 12th graders scored below the Basic level.** Only about 35% were estimated to be ready for college-level work.

The best way to get better at reading hard things is to read hard things. Classical education has students read original sources and great books, not just summaries of them. Hard at first, then less hard, then normal.

> **TRY THIS AT HOME:**
> Read the first two paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence out loud together. Then each of you rewrites one sentence in today's words. Compare notes.

8 In college, students are expected to study two hours outside class for every hour in it

2 hours of study outside class for every credit hour in class, at schools like Rutgers

Rutgers University tells students to expect at least two hours of study outside class for each credit hour spent in class. In college, most of the learning happens when no one is checking in.

That's why independence matters in high school. In the Rhetoric years, much of the work happens on your teen's own schedule, with live discussion once a week. They get to practice managing real deadlines while you're still close by to help.

> **TRY THIS AT HOME:**
> On Sunday night, let your teen plan their own week: what gets done each day and when. On Friday, look at it together. What worked? What would they change?

9 Worried about transcripts? You're already keeping the records that build one

2 years how long Florida home education parents keep their portfolio of records

If you homeschool in Florida, the law already asks you to keep a portfolio: **a log of what your teen studied, with the titles of the books they read, plus samples of their work. You decide what goes in it, and you keep it for two years.**

Here's the encouraging part. That portfolio is the raw material for a high school transcript. As the educator of record, you're the one who puts the transcript together, and plenty of homeschool parents do it every year. GCE doesn't issue transcripts, but the weekly Agenda lays out the reading and assignments for each week, which makes keeping good records a lot easier.

> **TRY THIS AT HOME:**
> Start a simple transcript file now, even in 9th grade. Each semester, list the courses, the main books and one or two pieces of work your teen is proud of. Senior year, you'll be so glad you did.

10 "The unexamined life is not worth living." Teens are ready for that question.

399 BC the year Socrates said it at his trial

At his trial in 399 BC, Socrates said that "the unexamined life is not worth living," according to his student Plato. More than 2,400 years later, the line still makes people stop and think.

Teens are ready for the biggest questions: What is good? What is true? What is worth doing with my life? Classical education doesn't hand them easy answers. It gives them great books, good conversations and the tools to think it through.

> **TRY THIS AT HOME:**
> Once a week, ask one big question at dinner, like "What makes someone a good friend?" or "Is it ever right to break a law?" Listen more than you talk.

Does this approach suit your teen? Signs to look for

This isn't a test. Most teens show some of these, and the rest grow with practice.

- They have strong opinions and like to defend them.
- They'd rather discuss a big idea than memorize a list for a quiz.
- They want more independence and more say over their schedule.
- They notice when an ad, a video or a news story is trying to manipulate them.
- They like a good debate, a good mystery or a hard question.
- They're starting to wonder what they want to do with their life.

When it might not be the right fit (yet)

We'd rather tell you now than have you find out six weeks in. GCE may not be the best fit for your family right now if:

- **You want a program that does all the teaching for you.** With GCE, you stay in charge of your homeschool and you're involved every week. We plan it; you lead it.
- **You want grades, credits or transcripts handed to you.** You're the educator of record. GCE doesn't issue grades, credits, transcripts or diplomas, and you keep your own records.
- **You need a math curriculum.** Math isn't included, so you'll choose your own.
- **You'd rather have mostly video lessons.** GCE is planned online but learned with real books, paper and conversation.
- **Your teen needs a lighter load right now.** High school work in the Rhetoric years runs about four hours a day.

And if your teen doesn't check every box above? That's okay. That's exactly what the free sample week and the 15-minute call are for.

See a real GCE week, free

The high school years go fast, and you don't have to plan them alone. With GCE, you get a pre-planned weekly Agenda for the whole year, and you stay in charge of your homeschool. For the Rhetoric years, you can add optional live classes: a GCE mentor leads discussion on

Zoom one day a week for four hours, with no more than 12 students. Someone else asks the hard questions, and your teen learns to answer them.

Here are three free, no-pressure ways to see if it fits your family:

1. Look at a real week. Browse actual sample weeks, hour by hour:

See a GCE Week

2. Try a live class. Fill out a short form, and a real person from GCE will set your teen up in a class:

Try a week for free

3. Talk it through. A free 15-minute call about your teen and your family:

Book a discovery call

Have a question? Just reply to the email this guide came in. A real person reads every one, and we'd love to hear from you.

Warmly,

The Get Classically Educated Team

SOURCES

- **#1 What employers look for:** NACE Job Outlook 2025
- **#1 Analytical thinking:** World Economic Forum, *Future of Jobs Report 2025*, via FM Magazine
- **#2 Fake court cases:** *Mata v. Avianca* (2023), via LawSites
- **#3 Writing with ChatGPT:** MIT Media Lab, "Your Brain on ChatGPT" (2025, not yet peer-reviewed), via Make Tech Easier
- **#4 Frederick Douglass:** National Endowment for the Humanities
- **#5 Ethos, pathos, logos:** Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, via College Transitions
- **#6 Writing proficiency:** 2011 NAEP writing results, via Education Week. Franklin's method: Excellence in Literature, from his *Autobiography*
- **#7 Reading:** 2024 NAEP 12th-grade results, via Chalkbeat
- **#8 Study time in college:** Rutgers University catalog

- **#9 Florida home education portfolio:** Florida Statutes 1002.41, Home education programs
- **#10 Socrates:** Plato, *Apology*

FOR THE FRIDGE

All 10 “Try this at home” tips

Get Classically Educated · Ages 14–18 · getclassicallyeducated.com

1. **CHECK IT, SOLVE IT**
When your teen uses an AI tool for anything, ask one question: "How would you check that?" Make it a habit, not a lecture. And the next time your family has a real problem to solve, like planning a trip on a budget, let your teen research the options and present a recommendation with reasons.

2. **FACT-CHECK AI**
Ask an AI chatbot a few questions about a book your teen knows well. Then fact-check the answers together. Finding the mistakes is half the fun.

3. **WRITE FIRST**
Make a family rule: write first, AI second. Your teen drafts their own ideas, and only then can they use AI to check or polish. Ask them to explain what they changed and why.

4. **GIVE A SPEECH**
Have your teen choose a great speech, like the Gettysburg Address or one of Douglass's own, and deliver a short part of it to the family. Talk about what makes it powerful.

5. **SPOT THE APPEAL**
Watch three commercials together. For each one, ask: Is it asking us to trust someone, feel something or think something through? Which one worked best on you?

6. **FRANKLIN'S TRICK**
Try Franklin's trick. Pick a short, well-written paragraph. Have your teen jot a few notes on it, put it away for two days, rewrite it from the notes, then compare the two side by side.

7. **READ THE ORIGINAL**
Read the first two paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence out loud together. Then each of you rewrites one sentence in today's words. Compare notes.

8. **PLAN THE WEEK**
On Sunday night, let your teen plan their own week: what gets done each day and when. On Friday, look at it together. What worked? What would they change?

9. **START THE FILE**
Start a simple transcript file now, even in 9th grade. Each semester, list the courses, the main books and one or two pieces of work your teen is proud of. Senior year, you'll be so glad you did.

10. **BIG QUESTIONS**
Once a week, ask one big question at dinner, like "What makes someone a good friend?" or "Is it ever right to break a law?" Listen more than you talk.