



BookShark 

HOW TO START HOMESCHOOLING

A Beginner's Guide to Making the Choice, Getting Started, and Building the Family Life You Envision

Introduction

Whether you were homeschooled yourself, have been considering it since your child was born, or just withdrew your child from school last week, homeschooling is a significant decision which will affect all areas of your family's life.

For many this transition is filled with fear and trepidation, but hopefully this guide will make the process a little easier and help answer some of the endless questions that arise when making an alternative educational choice.

Keep in mind, homeschooling is a **process**, and you won't begin that first day with everything figured out. Over time you will change, and your children will change; therefore, **your homeschool will also change.**

At times you will slip and stumble while homeschooling, but by focusing on the big picture, you will find you footing quickly. Let's get started on this journey to homeschooling.



Deciding to Homeschool From the Beginning

For many families, deciding to homeschool is a natural progression starting the day their child is born. Babies learned to walk and talk at home. They've learned their colors and numbers at the kitchen table and on the living room floor. *Why wouldn't you just continue this journey of learning as a family by homeschooling?*

Homeschooling from the start doesn't mean you won't struggle with your decision at times or that you'll be forever free from doubt. You'll still have to decide on a homeschooling method and other countless choices. But easing into homeschooling from the preschool years at home is somewhat easier than pulling your 10-year-old from public school.



Transitioning from Public or Private School

Maybe you had no intention of homeschooling. Quite frankly, you thought homeschoolers were crazy. Don't they need a break from their kids? However, something has made you realize you should explore the idea of homeschooling.

- Perhaps your child struggles with a learning difference.
- Maybe your child is bored and restless in a classroom.
- Sadly, maybe your child has been the victim of bullying from other children or school staff.
- It could be that your child has a health issue affecting school attendance.

There can be many reasons you decide to homeschool, but no matter what they are, here you sit. You may feel the weight of the world on your shoulders, but you're brave and you move forward.

What do you do now? You take the next step.



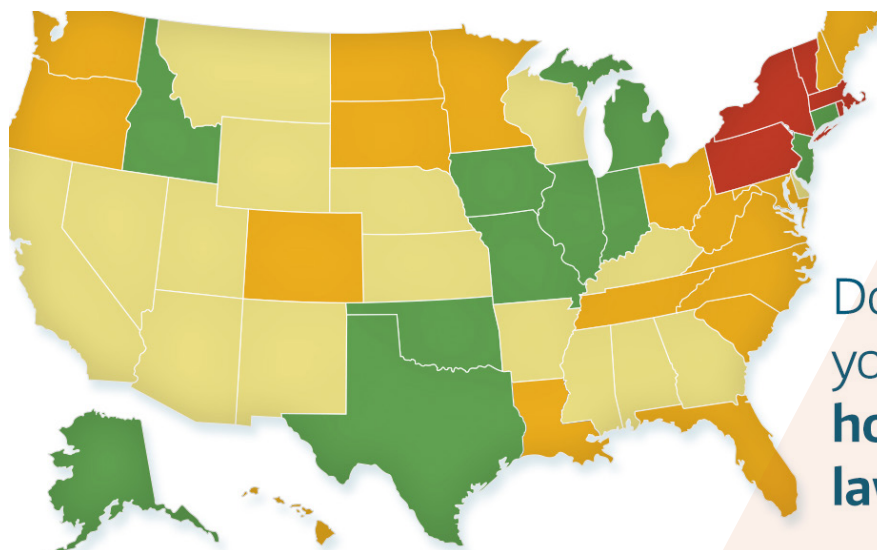
Complying With State Law

The first requirement when deciding to begin homeschooling is to ensure you are complying with state law. Every state is different, and the requirements can vary from complete autonomy to various levels of oversight, including annual testing, declaration of intent, and more.

If you wish to withdraw your child from public school, there may also be additional requirements when informing the school district. A note of warning: don't accept what the school tells without first checking the

law for your state. Very often schools will ask for information that isn't necessary or withhold information you have a right to obtain.

Most states have a statewide homeschool organization that will be happy to give you everything you need to know to proceed with homeschooling legally. [Homeschool World, for example, has a database of various homeschool groups organized by state.](#) This is a great place to start when researching your state laws.



Do you know
your state's
**homeschool
laws?** [EXPLORE >>](#)

What Are Typical Requirements?

1) Declarations of Intent

Many states require a **Declaration of Intent to Homeschool**. This is an official document stating you will be homeschooling and not attending public school. The information required will vary state-by-state but typically includes child's name, date of birth, and perhaps grade level.

2) Standardized Testing

Some states also require standardized testing; however, the requirements and timetable are different everywhere. Some states want testing completed every year, whereas others only in specific grades. Other states want all scores reported to the school district or Department of Education, and others just want you to keep them on file. States can also vary in what tests are acceptable. Research the requirements for your particular state.

3) Portfolio Review

Some states allow a portfolio review instead of standardized testing. A portfolio review is a review of your child's work for the year done by a licensed teacher or another authorized individual. This professional looks at the sample of your child's work to determine **sufficient educational progress**. Many parents choose this option instead of standardized testing, especially for younger students or those who do not perform well under the pressure of a test.

4) Umbrella School

In some states, **umbrella schools**—which may also be called **cover schools**—are required for homeschoolers. The umbrella school is often organized as a private school and maintains records to ensure families are complying with state law.

There are several reasons a family might choose to operate under a cover school:

- complying with homeschooling laws
- the convenience of maintaining records
- having a diploma (or report card) issued by a more official-looking entity
- receiving guidance about curriculum

5 Charter School

In relation to homeschooling, the definition of a **charter school** can also vary from state-to-state. Many states offer an online virtual academy, which is essentially public school online. If you choose this option, you often won't have to comply with other homeschooling laws because by definition your child is a public school student.

However other states, such as California, blur the line a little more, and participation in a publicly funded charter school is yet another way

to meet the state's laws regarding homeschooling. These often provide funding for curriculum and access to extracurricular activities such as music and sports.

BookShark is currently offered at select charter schools in Alaska, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Washington, and Wisconsin. Those charter schools will provide funds to purchase BookShark curriculum for your children.

6 Instructional Plan

Some states require the reporting of your intended instructional plan. These can have different names depending on the state. In New York, it is called an *Individualized Home Instruction Plan*, whereas in Vermont it is simply called a *Narrative* and is only required under certain conditions. Again, you need to know your state's homeschool requirements.

Creating Your Family's Homeschool Vision

Now that you know some of the legalese and you've researched what is required in your home state, it's time to craft **a vision for your homeschool**.

When you first decide to homeschool, it's common to transfer the structure of institutional school to your home. It's all most of us know. You might envision seven subjects a day and wonder how you'll ever keep that up for six hours a day, five days a week.

Good news! The beauty of homeschooling is that you have the freedom to craft an environment in which your child—and you—thrive. There are no set rules (outside of state mandates), and you are free to do school any way you like. However, knowing a little bit about different methods of homeschooling will give you a starting point from which to craft your unique homeschooling vision.

Let's take a quick look at some of the most popular methods of home education.



POPULAR METHODS OF HOME EDUCATION.

1. Traditional School-at-Home/Textbook Approach

Some parents don't wish to reinvent the wheel, or perhaps they prefer the structure and accountability of the traditional school schedule. Whatever the reason, some families choose to create a structure at home that mimics that of a typical public school.

Often they use a pre-purchased, complete curriculum that includes **textbooks** for every subject. They may give tests and often give grades as is done in school.

2. Classical Homeschooling

Classical homeschooling is based upon a three-part system called the trivium—three stages of learning, based on a child's development:

- grammar (grades 1-4)
- logic (grades 5-8)
- rhetoric (grades 9-12)

Children in the **grammar** stage are just beginning to acquire the building blocks of learning. They often enjoy memorization, so during this time, there is usually a focus on memorizing facts which are expanded on in the second stage.

The **logic** stage is the start of the *why* stage of learning. No longer do memorized facts suffice; children now want to know **why** something is true. Children begin to notice cause and effect, how different fields relate, and how facts start to fit together.

Classical homeschooling considers **rhetoric** to be the final stage of the trivium. During the high school years, teens apply the knowledge acquired in previous phases to draw conclusions and further specialize in areas they find interesting.

Using these three stages as a framework, classical education is considered systematic and rigorous.

3. Literature-based Education

With a literature-based education, great books are the foundation upon which limitless learning is built. Often called a **living books approach** (in contrast to textbooks), this method relies heavily on reading biographies, historical fiction, and non-fiction.

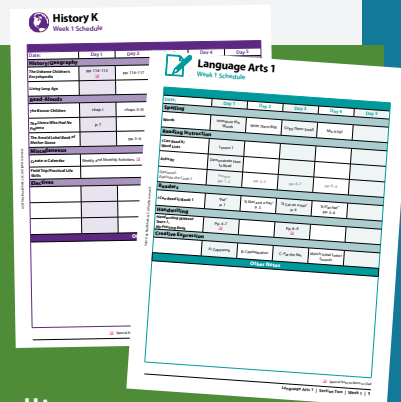
While a literature-based education may include workbooks and hands-on activities, the emphasis is on reading—both reading silently by the student and reading aloud by the parent. After reading, the typical follow up activity is some form of narration such as discussing what was read or, in middle school and high school, written summaries of what was read.

Children of several ages are often taught together using a single set of great books because reading is such a flexible way of learning.

For families who love reading, cherish a home library, and don't feel a need for a lot of written work, a literature-based education is a natural fit. A literature-based education is considered enjoyable, gentle, and family-centered while still being mentally rigorous.

BookShark 4-Day Structured Homeschool for Flexible Families

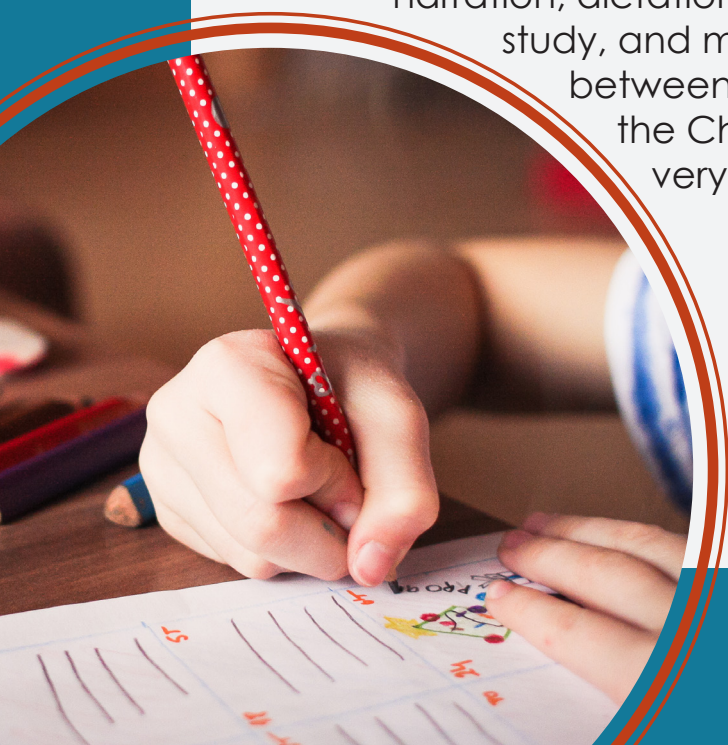
Learn with great books—historical fiction, biographies, literary classics, and illustrated non-fiction. No textbooks. No busy work.



4. Charlotte Mason Method

Some people subscribe to the Charlotte Mason method of education. Mason was a British educator who lived at the turn of the 19th century, a time when children were educated in accordance with their social class. Mason, however, became a vocal proponent of making a liberal arts education available to *all* children. Eventually, Mason formed a training school for governesses and others working with small children.

A Charlotte Mason education focuses on habits, living books—not textbooks and not twaddle (inferior books), narration, dictation, nature study, artist study, composer study, and more. There are many similarities between a literature-based education and the Charlotte Mason method, and they very often overlap.



5. Unit Studies

With a unit studies approach, all academic subjects are taught through a central topic or theme. For example, if you were studying the American Revolution, you might cover the following lessons:

- read a novel set during the time period (history)
- map the 13 colonies (geography)
- discuss Benjamin Franklin's use of a lightning rod (science)
- learn some patriotic tunes (music)

Unit studies strive to bring subject matter together and show how all disciplines are related. Unit studies work particularly well for large families who find it challenging to navigate a separate curriculum for every child and want to instead combine their children in a single program.

6. Unschooling

Unschooling has lots of different labels—interest-led, child-led, or delight-directed. The primary characteristic is that it **doesn't follow a set curriculum** but instead allows a child's natural curiosity to set the pace and subject matter for learning. If a child is interested in insects, you study insects. Perhaps a child develops a fascination with cooking, so you cook.

One interest is not given priority over another just because it's a traditional school subject. All interests are seen as valuable and conducive to learning. An unschooler's role is to support and provide experiences in which a child is exposed to different things and given the opportunity to learn.

Your Homeschool Should Reflect You

Reading through all of these homeschooling options may have confused you even more. Who knew there was such a wide range of possibilities, right? You may have thought there were just two options—school and homeschool.

Don't panic! You don't have to make any lasting decisions on the first day of homeschooling. You are free to change your mind and try different approaches year by year or even week by week! Over time, your homeschool will become unique and fitted for your family.

Before you embark on this transformational journey, it's good to think about what your priorities are. Why are you homeschooling? What do you believe about education?

Some states allow a portfolio review instead of standardized testing. A portfolio review is a review of your child's work for the year done by a licensed teacher or another authorized individual. This professional looks at the sample of your child's work to determine sufficient educational progress. Many parents choose this option instead of standardized testing, especially for younger students or those who do not perform well under the pressure of a test.



Create a Homeschool Mission Statement

Many families find that creating a **homeschool mission statement** helps on the days when they are questioning every decision. A homeschool mission statement keeps you focused on what is most important for your family. Secondly, it can help you remember **why you chose to homeschool** on those days when the school bus is looking mighty inviting. It will also keep your goals at the forefront of your decision making.

Having a well thought out homeschool mission statement helps you focus on **your** homeschool and **your** family, not the latest post on the internet or Facebook group. Finally, it can help you narrow down your homeschool method and curriculum choices.

The beautiful thing about your homeschool mission statement is that it will be like no one else's. Each family chooses to homeschool for unique reasons. So start by thinking through these questions before defining your mission:

Why did you choose to homeschool?

What are your long-term homeschool goals?

What do you believe about learning and children?

What homeschool method appeals to you & why?

Do you have a particular teaching style?

Do your children have different learning styles?

How do you want your home and family to feel?

Notice these questions don't address whether you'll teach cursive or when you want to begin pre-algebra. Creating a mission statement is designed to get you thinking about the **big picture**. Understanding that big picture view will help you to make those smaller, daily decisions about everything from curriculum to schedules.

So before you read further, take a day or two to focus on the goals and vision for your homeschool. Use the journaling sheets in the Appendix to guide you. By doing so, you'll make the next steps so much easier and hopefully be happier with your decisions.

Being Confident as a Homeschooler

You've researched your state laws, learned about homeschooling methods, and even created a mission statement for your homeschool, you're pretty confident now, right?

Not necessarily.

Even veteran homeschoolers lose their confidence on occasion, so how can you gain the courage to make decisions that seem so monumental for your family?



Consider Learning Styles, But Not Too Much!

There are four types of learning styles:

- auditory
- visual
- linguistic
- kinesthetic

These are simply **preferences**. An auditory learner would prefer to hear information when learning. They may love facts set to music or enjoy audio books. On the other hand, a visual learner may prefer pictures, charts, or diagrams to present information.

Linguistic (verbal) learners are usually happy to read information in a book or have someone explain in words how to do something. Kinesthetic learners like to be active and moving. They would rather do and touch than simply read about something.

Remember, these are merely preferences. Most people benefit from information being presented in multiple ways. We may have a slight preference for one method but

benefit from various activities. Additionally, these preferences can change over time. Babies would undoubtedly be described as auditory and kinesthetic learners. However, we grow, and our preferences change. Once we can read and process abstract information, our abilities to obtain information from other learning styles increases.

It's important to be aware of learning styles so you aren't attempting to force countless hours of textbooks on a child that would rather be rebuilding an engine, but don't overdo it either.

Decide What to Teach

As we've discussed, most states have guidelines for what they require of homeschoolers. Though a subject-by-subject breakdown is not always included, you can typically search your state's scope and sequence of a given grade. Remember that grade level expectations and topics covered per grade are mostly arbitrary, so you use this information only as an general outline.

Likewise, most curriculum providers also offer a scope and sequence which you can use to compare to your state's outline or use to compare programs.

When you get to this point in your homeschool journey, it is a good idea to revisit your mission statement. As you consider each topic to teach, as yourself what you want to achieve in your homeschool and if studying this subject help move you toward that goal.

For example, your indecision over including Latin in your homeschool may have more to do with outside expectations rather than the necessity of Latin for your overall homeschool success.

Deciding **what to teach** can be a difficult decision for new homeschoolers because this isn't something they've spent a lot of time pondering. If you are drawn to a particular homeschool method, that's a great place to start when making these decisions.

Most importantly, this isn't a make-or-break decision. You can change your mind at any moment, and your child won't forever be behind because they learned American history in sixth grade rather than in fifth.



BookShark Scope & Sequence

See the schedule of topics and skills taught in every year of BookShark curriculum for K - high school.



Make a choice and move forward confidently.

Continue with Self-education

A fantastic benefit of being a homeschooling parent is that you get to learn along with your child. Can't remember how to divide fractions? Find a math book and jog your memory. It will come back faster than you think.

Children are also more interested in things when their parents are interested. If you find history fascinating and are always watching documentaries, your child will usually develop an interest as well.

Knowing subject matter will give you the confidence to teach it to your children; however, it isn't a necessity. Learn as you go and take them along for the ride.

Meet Other Homeschooling Families

One of the most significant boosts to the new homeschooling parent is to meet other homeschooling families—especially parents with older children who are a little further down the road.

When you first decide to homeschool, you may worry that your children will have no friends and that they will lack socialization. However, meeting homeschooled teens and their families will do wonders to curb your fears.

By hearing the stories from other parents about the year the kids hated

the math curriculum or the time they didn't study science for six months, you'll find that in the big picture, these worries carry little lasting weight.

Outsource Classes

When all else fails, and you don't see any way you can help your child learn physics, you have another option: outsource it!

If you lack the confidence to tackle a certain subject, it is entirely okay to outsource a class to someone better qualified to teach that subject.

Outside classes also give your student the feel of a traditional classroom, which may be beneficial if they intend to attend college. Bonus: they also provide a different type of socialization that an older student may crave.

Finding Your Confidence

It may take some time and a few struggles before you find your confidence, but it will come. You often start homeschooling with overwhelming fears of ruining your child's future, but these fears are unfounded.

If you genuinely attempt to give your children the best education and rich experiences, you won't ruin their future. You will have set them on the path of a fulfilling and successful life.

Planning the Homeschool Year

Big Picture Planning

Planning is something we all seem to either love or hate, and that's okay. Luckily, you can plan your homeschool year as detailed or as loosely as you desire.

If you love to plan, you probably don't need this section because you have already created color-coded checklists. However, the rest of us need to be intentional about creating a framework to keep our homeschool days on track.

Big Picture Planning

An excellent place to start is with the requirements of your state. Does your state require a certain number of days or hours? Armed with this information, you can begin to determine a start and end date. Usually 32 to 36 weeks comprises a school year. Be sure to

Weekly and Daily Outline

factor in holidays and other breaks. You may even want to model after your local school system's schedule.

It's important to keep these typical school schedules in mind, but not be **tied** to them. One of the most significant benefits of homeschooling is taking vacations when everyone else has gone back to school and taking breaks when your kids most need them.

Weekly and Daily Outline

Next look at the curriculum you have chosen and other commitments you have planned. Will a homeschool co-op keep you busy every Friday? Does your math curriculum have 180 lessons? All this information is essential once you begin the next step of planning your weeks and days.

Filling in the Details

At this point, it's tempting to think we can do it all—all the subjects, every day! We can do that, right? When you decide to homeschool, you are suddenly thrust in front of an extensive and enticing **buffet of great ideas**. There are beautiful books and interesting programs, but we have to learn to say no. Trying to cram in everything will only lead to burnout and exhaustion or, worst case scenario, children who hate homeschooling.

So let's break down that school year into smaller segments.

Are you going to do lessons five days a week? Or would a 4-day week better suit your lifestyle? For example, maybe you have a homeschool co-op every Friday, but you want to get through

180 math lessons this year. What do you do? Consider doing math every day, Monday through Friday, and keeping the rest of Friday free to enjoy co-op.

Also remember that just because public school covers a subject every day doesn't mean you must. You could spend two days on history and another two on science. You could take this idea even farther and study subjects on a weekly or monthly basis. An intense month of history study can follow a month of biology. This is the beauty of homeschool flexibility.

Another consideration when developing your schedule is your energy level. We are all different, and while some extroverts thrive on activity, there are others who need more downtime. It is so important to reflect on your needs as a homeschool parent when creating a routine and committing to outside activities.

Whatever weekly and daily plan you create is up to you and your family. There is not one right schedule that will work in every situation, so be open and flexible while finding what works best at this time.

Things will change and your family will evolve, so be open to creating a rhythm and routine versus a set-in-stone schedule.



Homeschool Planning With Multiple Ages

Homeschooling two, maybe three, children is chaotic, but you manage. However, as the number of children increases, so can the stress over fitting everything into your schedule. If you are homeschooling multiple children, there are a few ways to get it done without becoming tied to a schedule.

Focus on the Basics

We live in a world where information is everywhere. Our children can't help but learn in their everyday lives. Therefore, when our time is short, the most important things for us to focus on are the basics—reading, writing, and math. If our children are adept at these three core areas, they can learn anything. So when your schedule overflows, prioritize these three things over the others.

Read Aloud Often

Fortunately, there are endless books to be enjoyed by all ages that will add to your homeschool atmosphere. By reading aloud, you can bring the entire family together, and everyone can participate. Reading is one of the simplest ways to create a family culture of learning. Read, discuss, and repeat.



Work Towards Independence

When you have multiple children, it can be especially helpful for your older children to become independent in their work. If you have a daily plan laid out for them, teach them to get started without you. It also helps if they can move to the next thing when they reach a point where they are stuck. Independent children are so helpful on those days when it seems everyone is calling for

Group Children

If you have children of similar ages or skill levels, it can also be easier to group them for their lessons. It is very stressful to have multiple children, in various grades, all using different books and studying different subjects. It just doesn't make sense in most families. How can a parent be relaxed while teaching about the American Revolution, Ancient Greece, *and* the Middle Ages all at the same time? Make homeschooling easier and do as many content subjects as possible (such as history and science) together as an entire family.

Organizing All the Stuff

Homeschooling can include a lot of *stuff*, which is often proportional to the number of children you are teaching. Some parents are minimalists in this department, but even *they* need to organize the stuff they do have.

There is nothing more frustrating than knowing what you wanted to do next, but not being able to *find* it. Before you know it, the kids are running around in the backyard, and you'll never get them back. Therefore, a system of organization is needed to have things accessible and easily located.

1. Keep Out Only What You Need

Although this can be difficult, it is best to keep accessible only what you are using at the moment. It's wonderful to have all the books on hand, but you don't want to be flipping through them every day when you're only reading from a couple. It's great to have a shelf or bookcase dedicated to the current resources.

2. Keep Those Pencils Together

It's hard to do math when you can't find your pencil! Surely, homeschoolers keep up with their pencils, right? Well, not exactly. Those small items end up in a couch cushion quickly, so it's important to have a spot to store them at the close of each homeschool day.

So they can easily find what they need each day, it's helpful for each child to have a supply box of their own to keep pencils, erasers, scissors, etc. You may also need a central cabinet where you can hold less frequently used school supplies like tape, stapler, hole punch, and glue.



TO ALL THE PENCILS...

Wherever you are,
I hope you are **happy**
and know that you are
missed.

3. Children Need Their Space

Many families find it helpful for each child to have a bin or shelf where they keep their workbooks and supplies. You can also give designated work areas for each child, so there isn't a daily argument about who sits where.

Having a space for their things creates a sense of ownership and makes keeping track of and maintaining supplies partly their responsibility. Some parents use a label maker to keep supplies distinct while others use a color coded system—red supplies for Zach and blue for Shelly.

4. You Need a Space, Too

The homeschool parent needs space as well to store their teacher's guides and calendars. The more children you have and the older they get, the *more*

needed this space will be. By having your teacher's guides in one location, you can easily find the required book to grade the math or dictate the spelling words. It makes life easier.

5. Organize All the Paperwork

The amount of organization needed for paperwork may depend on your state requirements for reporting and how much you wish to keep for your records. If you need to create a portfolio each year, careful organization of all the completed work will make pulling that together less stressful.

So consider how much you need to keep and what would be the best system to maintain paperwork. It's also a good idea to periodically go through these papers and keep only the best samples of their work. Otherwise, you will be drowning in papers within a few months.

6. Maintain Flexibility

Even with all this organization, it's important to maintain flexibility. Homeschooling doesn't have to take place in a designated school room. Math can be learned even while sitting on a couch. Stay organized, but don't become so rigid you lose the freedom of homeschooling wherever and whenever you like.



Homeschooling and Keeping Up With Life

Let's admit it; the demands of maintaining life can be overwhelming. There are bills to pay, laundry to fold, and appointments to make. So how do we manage to homeschool in *addition* to all our other routine responsibilities?

It can be difficult, but there are a few ways to help manage homeschooling with all the other household demands.

Prioritize

The idea of setting priorities can seem a little cliché, but if done intentionally however, this can be very useful in accomplishing both goals of homeschooling and homemaking. Create a list of the things that must be accomplished today, this week, this month, etc.

A word of warning—don't overload this list. More than three things that must be done is probably too much; otherwise the list will begin to feel overwhelming. It's much better to have a short list that gets done than a long list that lingers forever.

Include the Kids

A significant benefit of homeschooling is that our children engage in the workings of the world. They learn that maintaining a life includes things like laundry and grocery shopping. So include them where you can in the operations of the household. They learn skills they will need throughout life, and *you* have the help you need to keep everything functioning.

Adjust Your Standards

It's a big adjustment for many new homeschoolers to realize that you are now living in your home every day nearly all day instead of spending a few hours at home each evening and then during sleep. There will no longer be kid-free hours where things are in order. The time children have to create messes dramatically increases.

By adjusting your standards, you aren't accepting your house will be a perpetual disaster, but you are acknowledging it will be lived in. There may be owl pellets in the kitchen, paint in the dining room, and LEGO scattered through the living room, yet it will be okay. This variety is what makes homeschooling so beneficial.

Homeschooling and Earning an Income

A roadblock for many families that wish to homeschool is the potential loss of a second income, or perhaps neither parent is wanting to give up their income and career completely. Either way, homeschooling gives a family flexibility in scheduling which can make it possible to devote yourself to your child's education, while also providing for your family monetarily.

Many parents find creative ways to earn extra income while also being at home, such as childcare, tutoring, or teaching music lessons. There are also alternative work-at-home options to consider such as freelance writing, teaching online, or selling through Etsy.

More traditional jobs are also possible alongside homeschooling if a family is committed. Parents can work part-time or alternating shifts, or maybe their company provides a generous telecommuting arrangement. Perhaps you have arrangements for childcare during the day and homeschool on the nights and weekends. This really is okay; learning isn't confined from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

If you think creatively, you can most likely find a way to homeschool while you generate income for the family. But it takes commitment, creativity, and a great deal of personal discipline.



The Secret to Doing It All

Lean in close. Here's the secret to doing it all.

You can't. No one can.

We may see some other homeschooling family that *seems* to have it all together and never skips a math lesson and always manages to make the science experiments work out right. But we don't know that for sure, so let's not set unreasonable expectations of ourselves and our children.

Homeschooling is not only a big responsibility but a considerable commitment of time and resources. So when you're standing in the middle of your messy house wondering where the day went, remember it's **normal**. You don't have hours every day of an empty house to make everything perfect. As you clean up one mess, someone is making another.

If you want to be happy and successful at homeschooling, you need to set your priorities and be satisfied with meeting those expectations. Don't be upset at all the things you didn't do if they don't contribute to the overall goals for your family.



Common Concerns and Obstacles to Homeschooling

You've decided to homeschool, and you're so excited to get started, but then you start telling friends and family about your new adventure and they are not quite as enthusiastic. They may actually be downers, raining on your parade with a barrage of concerns.

After the fifth person asks you about socialization, you start to wonder if everyone else is right. Maybe this is a terrible idea. Let's talk about some of those tired concerns.

1) What About Socialization?

You'll hear this one over and over again; it just never gets old. It's hard to believe this myth still exists with the number of homeschoolers who have graduated and gone on to lead successful lives. Somehow the idea that homeschoolers sit at home around the table and never venture out into the world still permeates despite the ever-increasing numbers of homeschooled students and options for socializing available.

In most respects, homeschoolers excel at socialization because of

exposure to many different ages and environments. Children in school only learn to socialize within the confines of school. Homeschool children learn to navigate daily life in a way foreign to children who spend their time with same-aged classmates.

So the next time someone asks you the dreaded socialization question, "Aren't you concerned about socialization?!" you can simply reply, "No, not at all." And leave it at that.

2) But They'll Go to High School, Right?

Another popular opinion is that homeschooling is fine when they're young, as long as they go to "real school" during the high school years. While some families do make the decision to send their children to high school, it certainly isn't required. You can homeschool—well and successfully—all the way through high school graduation!

Somehow, it is universally believed that high school is when school starts to "count," and therefore homeschoolers should defer to the professionals at that point. Of course, you are free to make that choice, but your child will *not* be forever warped by foregoing the high school experience.

3) But How Will You Teach Algebra? Chemistry? Calculus?

How to handle advanced science and math subjects is yet another frequent question about homeschooling. Most people believe something can't be learned unless it is formally taught in a class setting. It's as if it has never occurred to them that a teen could learn about a subject independently without sitting through lectures.

However, most homeschool parents guide their children towards self-education by their teen years. If a child can read and do math, hopefully, they can learn anything they need. We homeschoolers also have more resources than ever to outsource difficult subjects, whether through a live class at a co-op or via an online format. Tough subjects are no obstacle for homeschoolers.

4) But What About College?

After fielding questions about socialization and algebra, the next question that pops into people's mind is that of college. How will a homeschooler get into college?

However, a 2016 study done by the National Homeschool Education Research Institute found that homeschool students score 15 to 30 percentage points **higher** on standardized tests and graduate from than their peers and college at a higher rate, too.

Being a homeschooled student is not a disqualifier from college admissions. Homeschool students benefit from a customized education that often includes travel, volunteer work, local service projects, and athletics. In many ways, homeschoolers are arguably *more* socialized than traditionally schooled graduates and therefore, *better* prepared for the rigors of college.

5) What About Prom?

For some people, this can be a big concern. They worry about children missing out on certain rights of passage such as prom and Friday night football games. However, in many places, all of

these events are available to the homeschool community. If prom is that that important, homeschoolers will find a way to make it happen.

5 Unsupportive Family and Friends

The constant questions of strangers and store clerks can get on your nerves, but when the criticism comes from family and friends, it is even harder to take. Why don't they see what we see—that homeschooling is wonderful!

Unsupportive friends and family are harder to deal with because you can't simply choose a different family like you can avoid a nosey cashier at the grocery store. Instead, you go to Thanksgiving dinner, knowing your children will be quizzed and your decisions questioned.

The objections of parents, in-laws, and siblings can be hard to hear and may make us question your own decisions. The conflict can

even strain familial relationships and cause discord.

However, we need to remember that in most cases their concerns are coming from a place of love for our children. They only want what is best for them, just as we do.

In relationships such as this, it's best to let them air their concerns and then tell them again why you have chosen this path. From there, it is best to **agree to disagree**. They can have their opinions, but their views don't have to impact your choices.

You get to make the best decisions for your family and children.

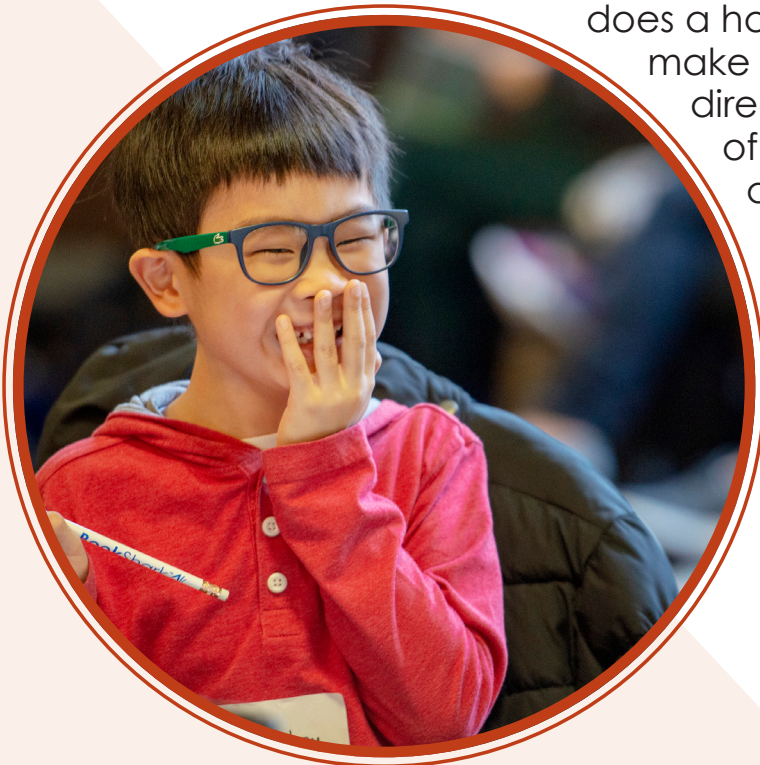
An Exciting Adventure

By homeschooling, you've intentionally chosen an exciting adventure—one that changes and evolves month by month, year by year. The decisions can seem overwhelming, but if you begin by clearly outlining the goals and the mission of your homeschool, those decisions will begin to make themselves.

Homeschooling gives you the freedom to live life with your children in a way few families can imagine. Ask a room of veteran homeschool moms and dads whose kids are grown or in college about their decision to homeschool. They will, nearly without exception, all express gratitude for the joys and treasures homeschooling gave their family, many of which they never fully appreciated until looking back in hindsight.

Remember, not one day, nor even one year, does a homeschool make. You *will* make mistakes and veer in the wrong direction at times, but the benefit of homeschooling is that you are allowed to change course.

If you ultimately decide that homeschooling **is** the best path for your family, take advantage of all the liberties homeschooling affords!



Appendix A: Create a Homeschool Mission Statement

To help you devise your homeschool mission statement, meditate on these questions, and jot down your thoughts on the printable journal pages. Then let them sit for a day or two. Revisit your answers and make any changes now that you've had time to let your thoughts simmer.

Finally, combine all of the ideas into a guiding principle for your homeschool—your homeschool mission statement—and write it neatly onto the bordered page. Hang it where you can see it or put it into the front of your planner.

Remember you can change your mission statement as desired! It's a work in progress.

HOMESCHOOL *Mission Statement*

PART 1

Why did you choose to homeschool?

● _____

What are your long-term homeschool goals?

● _____

What do you believe about learning and children?

● _____

What homeschool method appeals to you and why?

● _____

Do you have a particular teaching style?

● _____

Do your children have different learning styles?

● _____

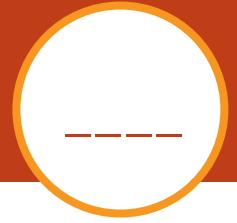
How do you want your home and family to feel?

● _____

Appendix B Printable Homeschool Planner Pages

Use the undated pages that follow to help you outline yearly, monthly, weekly, and daily plans for your homeschool. Print as many as desired.

YEARLY *Homeschool Planner*



1 January

2 February

3 March

4 April

5 May

6 June

7 July

8 August

9 September

10 October

11 November

12 December

MONTHLY *Homeschool Planner*



WEEK 1

--	--	--	--	--

WEEK 2

--	--	--	--	--

WEEK 3

--	--	--	--	--

WEEK 4

--	--	--	--	--

WEEKLY *Homeschool Planner*



M

T

W

T

F

S

S

GOALS

- _____
- _____
- _____

TO DO

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

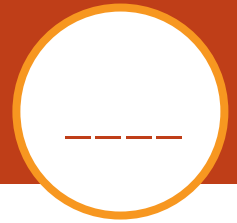
NOTES

WEEKLY *Homeschool Planner*



	History	Language Arts	Science	Math	Electives
M					
T					
W					
T					
F					
S					
S					

FIELD TRIP Planner



JAN Destination: ___/___/___

FEB Destination: ___/___/___

MAR Destination: ___/___/___

APR Destination: ___/___/___

MAY Destination: ___/___/___

JUN Destination: ___/___/___

JUL Destination: ___/___/___

AUG Destination: ___/___/___

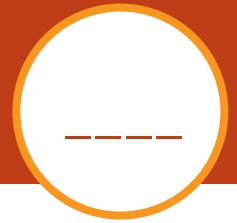
SEP Destination: ___/___/___

OCT Destination: ___/___/___

NOV Destination: ___/___/___

DEC Destination: ___/___/___

DAILY ATTENDANCE *Record*



	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
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