How to Get Started with Homeschooling

Written by Heidi Johnson
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Homeschooling is not a new idea. Many people in the early days of our country homeschooled their children. Home education has been around for thousands of years with parents being their children's only instructors. Just during the last 400 years has school outside the home become more popular. I've heard that the literacy rate up until the early 1800's was actually higher than it is today.

**Questions**

Parents getting started in homeschooling always have many questions. Socialization is always a hot topic. If you talk to any homeschool parent and ask them about socialization, they will probably roll their eyes at you because they know very well that their children have no problem with social skills and interacting with others. If you have some unanswered questions about homeschooling you can check homeschool questions and browse over the questions and answers there.

Many people wonder if homeschooling is legal. Yes, homeschooling in the United States is legal. You can find out more about the exact laws for your state at state homeschool laws.

As you are beginning or looking at beginning a homeschool journey, it's always a good idea to read some good homeschool books. Here are a few recommendations to get you started:

- **Homeschooling for Dummies**
- **Home Grown Kids**
- **Successful Homeschool Family Handbook**
- **Homeschooling Methods**

If you find yourself getting too overwhelmed, then just stop reading and think over what you have read.
**Planning:**

While you are planning or thinking about homeschooling, here are a few things you can do with your children to help them keep learning:

1. **Read to them.** This may sound boring or simple to you, but it truly is a very important aspect of homeschooling. If your child is in high school, then this is not needed, but if your child is younger, it is essential. If you don't have books of your own, then borrow them from the library or a friend. Nothing sparks a good reading time at our house more than a trip to the library.

2. **Journal.** If your children are young, just have them copy words or sentences. If your children are older, have them write about anything they want to write about. *Any Child Can Write* can give you some great ideas of how to incorporate writing into any day.

3. **Play games.** It's amazing what children can learn from playing games. They can learn math skills, social skills, history and science facts and so much more. They will enjoy spending time with you too. If you don't have many games at home, you can also borrow these from the library or find them at garage sales or thrift stores. Here are some of our favorites. *Guess Who, MouseTrap, Chutes and Ladders, SkipBo, Othello*

4. **Do Art and Science projects as they come up.** Play playdough, use a microscope or magnifying glass when looking at flowers, mix different things together in the kitchen, draw items in your house or outside, etc. If you need help in this area, the e-books *101 Activites You Can Do With Your Preschool Child* and *101 MORE Activities Parents Can Do With Their Preschool Child* will give you TONS of learning ideas.
Supplies

What kind of supplies do you need for homeschooling? This is not a comprehensive list, but gives you a good place to start. You might not even need everything on this list. Pick what's most important to you (less is better).

1. **Paper** of all kinds. Construction, notebook paper, plain paper, card stock, tracing paper, sketch paper, or any other kinds of paper you think you will like.
2. **Writing utensils** – pencils, markers, any kind of fun writing instrument.
3. **Basic office supplies** like glue sticks, stapler, 3 hole punch, glue, paper clips, etc.
4. **Books**. Children's picture books, chapter books, good literature books, and any curriculum you want to purchase. Good bookshelves are also essential here.
5. **Computer** – I couldn't homeschool without my computer and high speed Internet access, but many do without these. If you're able to have these, you are blessed.
6. **Couch or comfy chair** for all those great reading times.
7. **Table** with chairs for seat work and projects.
8. **Art materials** – paints, brushes, crayons, chalk, etc.
9. **CD player or some type of music player** – Many children learn better from music than anything else. It also helps to play classical music very quietly while your children are working. It helps them think and learn better.

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**How Long Should I Homeschool?**
The traditional school year in the United States is 180 days which comes out to about 900 hours of instruction. Some states require parents to provide written documentation to prove this and other states just want you to take attendance. You will just have to look at the laws in your state or talk to other local homeschoolers who know the laws best.
Don’t let the “900 hours of instruction” requirement scare you. We all know that children learn all kinds of things on weekends and in the evenings. Riding bikes, playing games, helping cook dinner, going to interesting places, and more all count towards those “900 hours.” Some parents choose to homeschool year-round with longer breaks several times a year and some parents choose to follow the local school calendar. Some even choose a combination of the two. As long as you are meeting the requirements of your state, the days you choose to homeschool are up to you.

It is said that the one-on-one interaction that children get in public school can range anywhere from 30 minutes per day up to 3 hours per day for an older student. Think of yourself as a tutor. Tutors don't have to work with a child for 6 hours. They can get much more done in a shorter amount of time.

Limit television viewing and computer time until after your child's daily work is done. If you can limit it even after their work is done, your child will learn to work on projects and entertain himself and be much further ahead than children who spend a lot of time watching TV or playing on the computer.

**Scope and Sequence**

If you really need to know what your child needs to be learning when, then you can check World Book here. This will give you a list of what children in that grade are supposed to learn. Don't get too tied to this list. Only check it if you really think you HAVE to know :)

**Work on Skills**

Basically, what you will be doing all through your child's homeschool years is working on skills. When your child is young, you work on reading, basic writing, and basic math skills. As they grow older, the skills grow more advanced. Your child needs to keep progressing and
increasing in their skills and knowledge from year to year. If you see steady progress, then you will know that you must be doing something right.

Work on phonics until your child reads well. Work on handwriting practice until your child writes well. These are some of my favorite resources.

Use books appropriate for your child and don't worry too much about grade level.

**Prayer** is the most important aspect of homeschooling. If you don't believe in prayer, then I guess you are on your own. If you DO believe in prayer, then USE it. The God of the universe created you and your children and knows all of you best. He didn't bring you this far to let you down now. If homeschooling or choosing homeschool curriculum is getting stressful or complicated, it can often be smoothed over with some concentrated prayer time.

**Learning Styles**

I believe it is essential to know yours and your child's learning style to truly know what types of books and resources you will need and use with your child. The best learning style assessment test is at Coaching for Learning Success.

They go beyond the general visual, kinesthetic and auditory learner. They help you understand how your child thinks, what he enjoys best and how he looks at the world around him. It might even help your children understand each other better too.

You might save yourself years of frustration and lots of money on purchasing the wrong books by using this simple learning style test. If your child is under 8, you might want to wait until he is that age to use this test.
Homeschool Schedules

Once you start homeschooling you start wondering what other people are doing and how they do it. There are as many ways to homeschool as there are families who homeschool. There is no right or wrong way. Just make sure you have some goals and focus for the day. Here are some sample homeschool schedules if you still need some advice or guidance on how to organize your day.

Styles of Homeschooling

Some of the more popular styles of homeschooling are:

**Traditional Curriculum** – Abeka, Bob Jones, Calvert

**Principle Approach** – [www.principleapproach.org](http://www.principleapproach.org)

**Eclectic** – using more than one method of homeschooling and choosing resources from many areas.

**Montessori** – for younger children up through grade 6. [www.montessori.edu/homeschooling.html](http://www.montessori.edu/homeschooling.html)

**Unschooling** – Using a child's natural interests to help them learn. It's kind of hard to describe this method in just one sentence.


**Charlotte Mason** – Instilling a love of learning through great literature, narration and creating nature notebooks and other types of notebooks.

**Unit Studies** – using a certain topic or time period and building a series of lessons or experiences around that topic or period. Konos, Five in a Row and material by Amanda Bennett (the queen of unit studies in my book) are used by many parents who use the unit study method.

**Classical** – Focuses on grammar, logic and rhetoric often called the “Trivium”. Helps children develop leadership and thinking skills. The Well Trained Mind, Story of the World and Greenleaf Guides are used by parents using this method.

More homeschooling programs and subjects
You will find your own style, but some people feel better fitting into a group and following a certain type of style or curriculum. Again, whatever works or fits for your family is the best. Just because one method works for one family, doesn't mean that it is the right method for another family. That is the benefit of homeschooling – being able to tailor your day in the way that benefits you and your children the best.

**What Books Should I Buy?**

There are some guidelines you should use to help you choose the best resources, but chances are you will make some curriculum choices that you will later regret. Just do the best you can knowing your style and how your children learn best, and move on from there.

**Here are some questions and answers you can consider when starting out in homeschooling…**


Where should I get homeschool books?

Ten questions to ask yourself before buying homeschool curriculum.

What is your homeschool budget?

**How Do I Pay for Homeschooling?**

Parents who are pulling their children out of private school can just funnel that money into homeschooling, but most people just have to find the money somewhere in their budget. Over the years, many people have homeschooled with little or no money. It can be done! There are ways you can [homeschool for free or almost free](http://www.homeschool-how-to.com).
If you have the financial resources available to purchase what you need, then you are blessed. Otherwise you will have to trade some of your time and creativity for money and look for ways to provide a great education without spending a lot of money.

**What are your Goals?**

Some parents begin goal setting by making a list of the character qualities they want their child to have by the time they are 18 years old. You can then work on some of those each year or reinforce them a little at a time all the way through. Will your children attend college? You will need to tailor their high school years accordingly.

Do you want your child to learn to read this year, read more fluently, learn to write better, learn to spell better, learn their multiplication facts, master their multiplication facts, learn the parts of speech, learn about the Civil War, learn the names of the planets, learn the names of the states and their capitals? There are many items you could insert in the above sentence.

Think about what you want to work on this year. Don't worry about next year or the year after that or what they will be doing for college. Just focus on one year at a time and pray about the rest when that comes up.

**Homeschool Planner**

I have developed a free homeschool planner at [http://www.homeschool-how-to.com/homeschool-planner.html](http://www.homeschool-how-to.com/homeschool-planner.html) that you can use to help you plan out your subjects for each child for the year.

This is the method that I have been using that I find works best for me. If it doesn't work best for you, then find another method and run with it.
**Placement Tests**

There are several free placement tests available on the Internet to help you find your children’s math and reading levels. Check [Home School Placement Tests](http://www.homeschool-how-to.com) for more information.

**Subjects**

For a complete list of homeschool subjects and some recommendations for each subject, you can check [here](http://www.homeschool-how-to.com). Remember you have many years to teach them all they need to know. Don't try to cram it all into one year. You can choose one period of [History](http://www.homeschool-how-to.com) and one area of [Science](http://www.homeschool-how-to.com) to teach every year. By the time they graduate, they will have covered it all.

Use [field trips](http://www.homeschool-how-to.com), hands-on activities, [Art](http://www.homeschool-how-to.com) and [Music](http://www.homeschool-how-to.com) to reinforce what you are learning. Mapping and current events can provide even more fuel for great learning. Focus on the three R's (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic) at first. Then when you know what you want to use for those, move on to History, Science and the rest. Don't get overwhelmed. You can do this!

**Record Keeping**

Depending on the laws in your state, you can usually just keep a log book of the books you read and have a folder handy where you can file each of your children's papers as they complete them throughout the year. Then at the end of the year, you can just take each child's folder and your log book when you get ready to have your child assessed, if that is what you choose to do. Some states require testing and others will accept [academic assessments](http://www.homeschool-how-to.com).

Using the Internet – With the age of the Internet upon us, why not use it for homeschooling? Some people use only the Internet for homeschooling, and others use books along with the Internet. If you are overwhelmed by all the information out there and don't know where to
start, I have written an e-book to guide you along the way. I have reviewed over 350 websites that can be used for homeschooling. They are listed, review and classified by subject in this handy little book. You can click right to the Internet site from the book. If this sounds like something you could use, you can get more information at http://www.hjresources.com/book

**Kindergarten**

If you are going to be homeschooling Kindergarten, you might enjoy the book that I have written called *How To Homeschool Kindergarten*. It is a complete guide on what I did for homeschooling for all four of my children. It is a low stress, high success approach. I love this age and have a passion for helping other parents enjoy and teach their children at this age.

My goal in helping homeschoolers is to remove as many obstacles as possible so that they can homeschool for as long as possible with the highest degree of success. I hope I have done that for you.

**Homeschooling Resources:**

How to [Homeschool Preschool](http://www.homeschool-preschool.com)

My [Favorite Homeschool Resources](http://www.homeschool-resources.com)

How to [Start Homeschooling](http://www.start-homeschooling.com)

[How to Homeschool Kindergarten](http://www.homeschool-kindergarten.com)
More free ebooks:

"How to Homeschool Using the Best Resources"

"How to Get Started with Homeschooling"

“Time Saving Kitchen Tips"

"How to Lose Weight When Nothing Else Has Worked"

More ebooks by Heidi Johnson:

Internet Resources for Homeschooling

How to Homeschool Kindergarten

Smart Way Cooking

Cooking From Your Cupboard

Getting it All Done and Other Myths Women Believe

Please feel free to email me if you have any questions or problems. I also offer a phone coaching program that is just $25 for one hour of my time along with a month of free email access after that.