

# Everything You Want To Know About **Home Schooling**

*Your Ultimate Home Schooling Resource*



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## **What Is Home Schooling**

The term 'home schooling' basically refers to the process in which one or more children of not more than 2 families are instructed by parents or legal guardians, or a member of either household. The laws that define home schooling vary from State to State. The legal requirements for establishing a homeschool also vary with the State.

For most children, the actual process of learning begins much before school. Many children already know their alphabets, the names of animals, colors and other more complicated stuff before they reach school. This is mostly due to the hard work of a member of the family who has taken the time to teach the child. Home schooling is just a natural progression from here. Instead of sending their children to a public school, parents make their own curriculum and teach their children in ways that best suit the child. This is home schooling, in its most simplistic form.

Before you decide to go in for home schooling, there are certain important matters for consideration. First off, meet with parents of other homeschoolers. Find out the pros and cons of home schooling. Then ask yourself why you would want to adopt this method. This is a very important aspect, as the success of the program depends on the clarity and sincerity of your purpose.

Next, it is time to consider the expenses of home schooling. It may cost anywhere between a few hundred dollars to a few thousand every year. More importantly, you are also effectively shutting out any job opportunity for one of the parents. It is only obvious that one parent will have to stay at home full time to manage the homeschool. A home-based business however is a great alternative.

Are you qualified to take on home schooling for your children? Teaching is a continuation of your own learning process. With the advent of the internet, information is aplenty. There are various books and resources for those interested in home schooling. Go through the various methods of home schooling and choose one that is most suited

to you. It helps if you know what kind of learning style your child has. Also, find out what your child feels about home schooling before you start.

Every state has its own laws regarding home schooling. For instance, in North Carolina, you must first file a 'Notice of Intent' to start a home school. In this you have to mention if the school is a 'Private church' school or a 'qualified non-public school'. The persons providing the education are required to have at least a high school diploma. You have to maintain an annual record of the child's attendance and disease immunization. Every year, the child is required to undergo a standardized test. Each student attending the eleventh grade has to take a nationally standardized test. These are the requirements in North Carolina, but it is enough to give you a good idea of what home schooling entails.

Home schooling may seem like a lot of fun and freedom from the outside. However, things are seldom as simple as they seem. Home schooling is a lot of added responsibility and hard work. But, if successful, it will forge a strong bond of love and respect between parent and child, while providing your child with the best form of education he needs.

## **Think "Home Schooling" Not "School-At-Home"**

One of the greatest things about home schooling is that you are not in any way limited like you are in a standard academic environment. There is no need for your children need to sit, back-straight, at a table for a strict hour long lesson. Try and think of what you're doing not as "school at home" but "home schooling." There is an important difference between these two ideas, one of philosophies: home schooling is much more than conducting standard lessons and schoolwork at home - the "home" becomes part of the schooling itself.

So let's say you're teaching science, and Galileo's theory that when objects fall they increase their velocity at a standard rate, regardless of mass. That sort of thing might not resonate too well with a child when taught in a classroom, explained on a blackboard while sitting a desk. If you go outside and drop a tennis ball and a rock off the roof, however, your child will no-doubt be astounded when the objects fall at the same speed, and the lesson will stick. In a similar way if you're teaching biology don't hesitate to take the children outside to examine an ant colony or some plants.

By home schooling you open yourself to a world of teaching opportunities that simply aren't practical in a public or private classroom. You can take advantage of the fact that children often learn better in a more comfortable and flexible setting: if your child wants to listen to his math lesson while sitting on the couch, let him. While you want to be careful, of course, to avoid encouraging a lack of discipline in teaching, you want to use "home schooling" to expand the educational experience. Proper home schooling means that the entire home, and all the time spent there, can be incorporated into the educational process, allowing for a more hands on, and in many ways more effective, education.

## Home Schooling vs. School At Home

Home schooling has become a viable option for many parents seeking to expand and improve their child's educational experience. The public and private school systems are limited, for practical reasons, as to how far they can go to meet a particular child's educational needs. With home schooling, on the other hand, the entire process is geared towards your child in a one-on-one manner. You can create a particular curriculum suited to your child, and teach in a way works best for him or her. It is for these reasons, not to mention the economic benefits when you consider the costs associated with private schools that many parents choose to homeschool their children.

When you decide to homeschool your children, you're going to have to come up with a plan for how the subject matter is going to be taught, and a system to execute that plan. An important distinction you should make yourself aware of is a philosophical one of "home schooling" vs. "school at home." The latter method is overly simplistic, and doesn't take advantage of the benefits that home schooling can truly offer. While every parent is justifiably concerned about creating a disciplined academic environment, if you simply "teach at home" both you and your child will be missing out.

As a teaching philosophy, it's important to think of the process as "home schooling" -- this means that "home" and "school" become one: it's not simply a case of school being conducted in a home environment. So instead of creating regimented lessons at set times - instead of your children sitting stiffly at a table while you give them lessons - be always ready to use the flexibility of home schooling to your advantage. If your child has a question about a particular subject in biology, take him outside and show him nature at work. If he's interested in a certain aspect of history, take him to the museum.

One of the greatest things about home schooling is that it doesn't have to be a regimented system: a day of learning that ends at 4 PM, Monday to Friday. When home schooling is properly implemented, your child is always learning. During a unit on Shakespeare for example, maybe you'll decide to take him to a performance of the play

on the weekend. If he's interested in computers, allow him to use his computer for a research project.

Although in some ways you do need a certain regimen when home schooling, realize that your child's education doesn't have to end when you are finished for the day. Incorporating other educational activities into your daily home life will both expand your child's education and make it more engaging.

Most children learn better in settings that they are comfortable in, and what setting is more comfortable than the home? So if your child wants to hear his math lesson while sitting on the couch, let him. If he wants to watch a movie in the evening, direct him to an educational one.

By blurring, as much as possible, the line between "home" and "schooling" when home schooling your children, your children will benefit from a much more valuable educational experience than could be offered from the public or private school systems.



## **Come Up With A Clear Plan**

It is imperative when home schooling that you have a clear outline of achievable goals for each subject. If you don't do this it will become easy to suffer from a lack of direction. The first thing you should do is outline some general goals in terms of home schooling: why do you want to homeschool? What do you want your children to learn? By answering these questions for yourself, you'll be able to come up with some clear goals, along with an appropriate timeline in which to reach those goals.

After coming up with a general plan for your home schooling, begin to break it down into the individual subject areas that you plan to teach. For each subject area, come up with a timeframe within which different aspects of the subjects will be mastered, as well as an ultimate expectation of how educated your children will be in a subject by the "term's" end. Speaking of which, you may benefit from thinking of your home schooling curriculum in "terms" mirrored after those in the public school system. Setting goals within these terms will ensure that your children are becoming educated at the same pace - or ahead of -- their peers.

Setting up and implementing your own specific curriculum will allow you to better gauge your children's progress, and to implement a teaching strategy more effectively.



## **5 Home schooling Tips**

In recent years more and more families have elected to homeschool their children. Home schooling not only allows children to spend more time with their families, but a home schooling parent has the ability to tailor a curriculum as he or she sees fit. Compared to the cost of a private school, especially for multiple children, home schooling is also a much more economical choice for many people. Below are some **home schooling tips**.

### **Read Widely**

This is one of the most important aspects of home schooling your children properly. It is imperative that you read extensively on a wide variety of topics. Remember that you are attempting to provide your children with a better education than the public school system, so you want your reading to be on a broad range of subjects.

Although you will definitely want to read some books on the subject of home schooling itself, don't rely entirely on these books. It's important that you are knowledgeable not only on how to teach, but on the subjects themselves. You will benefit yourself more from a broad knowledge base from which to teach, then specific knowledge of a particular pedagogical style.

Read general works on subjects like history, science, literature, and philosophy. Think of the range of subjects your children would encounter in the public school system, and gain a general knowledge of each. While all this reading may seem daunting, remember that you needn't become an expert in these subjects. What will usually suffice is a general "history of" or "beginner's guide to" the various topics.

You want to avoid, of course, having your knowledge of a given subject depend entirely on one person's opinion or work, but at the same time be realistic: a few, short general works on the subjects should be sufficient to start.

As you and your children start exploring the subjects in more depth, you may find new and different areas that you become interested in, and at that time you may seek out other books that cover the subjects in more depth. A good rule of thumb (assuming your children are young) is to read at least what a typical high school student would have to read on the subjects you plan to teach.

## **Home Schooling Laws**

Many parents, for many different reasons, make the decision to homeschool their children. Home schooling allows for a specific educational experience designed to suit your child's particular needs, and in many cases goes above and beyond what can be achieved in a public or private school system. If you make the decision to homeschool your children, it is important that you do so legally, and understand the laws in your area. It is absolutely crucial that you do this, because if you fail to meet legal standards when home schooling your children you will inadvertently rob your children of postsecondary educational opportunities.

Home schooling laws vary from state to state, so you have to look up the specific laws in your home state. The basis of state laws on home schooling is the result of truancy laws that require children to attend school. The basic idea is that these laws exist to distinguish a home schooled child from a child that is simply not going to school, which is of course against the law. Generally, states will require that you submit a "notice of intent" to homeschool your children before the upcoming academic year, and the state will then respond with the appropriate paperwork for you to fill out.

Besides familiarizing yourself with the particular laws of your state you should also consult a home schooling association for advice. In some cases parents will be dealing with school officials who want to discourage them from home schooling, and in these situations it is important that you understand your rights. In the state of New York, for example, parents are not required to meet with school officials. School officials may request a meeting with the parents in order to discuss home schooling, but the state may not revoke the right to homeschool if the parents refuse this meeting.

It is also required that your child take standardized tests. This is so the state can legally assign your child to a given grade level. The laws vary from state to state but in most cases you will have a certain amount of leeway in non-standardized tests. New York allows for non-standard tests every alternate year between grades 4 and 8, for example.

Although it may seem intimidating at first, home schooling your children legally is ultimately not that complicated. You just have to make sure that you follow every step, and don't overlook any paperwork. While some state restrictions or rules may seem unnecessary or cumbersome, in the long run you'll save yourself a ton of headaches if you fill everything in properly and on time.

The best thing you can do when you begin to homeschool your children is to consult other home schooling parents and advocacy groups. Looking up legal jargon online can be confusing, but any home schooling group will give you solid, plain-English instruction on how to properly and legally set up home schooling for your children. Remember: it's impossible to overestimate the importance of studying your state laws in regards to home schooling - if you overlook or violate any of them, you could lose your right to homeschool altogether.

## **Making Your Child A Part Of The Home Schooling Process**

There are a myriad of different reasons why people choose to homeschool their children: there is the economic benefit of avoiding high private school fees; there is the convenience of scheduling schooling around other family activities etc. One of the most important benefits of home schooling is the flexibility with which you can tailor your child's education. It is a well known fact that every individual has individual needs, and home schooling allows you to create a learning environment that suits your child particularly.

When you undergo home schooling, it is important that you have a clear curriculum and mind and a plan to execute it. But within that plan, you should understand that you have a tremendous amount of flexibility: there are many different ways that a child can learn something, and many different things to learn in a given subject.

One of the best ways that you can ensure a high level of learning retention is to encourage your child to take a personal interest in his or her education. Although this may seem obvious, many people growing up who went through a traditional school system will probably agree that their education was received in an authoritative way: schooling and your education was something that was done to you, not with you.

When home schooling, however, you can take advantage of the almost unlimited flexibility at your disposal and let your child take a more active role. While you can't, obviously, let your child do whatever he or she wants education-wise, you should always explain to him or her a given education plan, and see what he thinks.

For example, when you start your school day, outline the plan for the day with your child. Depending on his or her age you can also explain the reasoning behind the plan. If there are any things the child seems averse to doing, try and take them seriously. You should not, of course, avoid certain subjects or activities simply because your child doesn't like them. You should, however, ask your child why he or she doesn't like

something in the day's plan, and to suggest alternatives. In many cases you will be pleasantly surprised by what your child comes up with, and be able to incorporate it into the day's work.

As much as possible, you should have a list of alternatives in mind for assigned activities. The idea is to try and think of alternative activities that accomplish the same task. If your child protests against a certain exercise, then, you can offer them an alternative. This can be extremely effective in getting your children to learn material that they dislike.

Oftentimes the child simply has to feel that he or she is more in control of the situation to enjoy it. Even though you are ultimately controlling your child's education, by granting them small allowances and choices, while still sticking with the larger picture, everybody wins: your child feels he is doing what he wants to do, and you are still teaching your child what you want him to learn.

## Come Up With Projects When Home schooling

Due to its many benefits, many parents are choosing home schooling for their children. Home schooling allows for a more flexible educational experience, and curriculum can be easily tailored to your child's individual needs. As the costs of private schools continue to rise, home schooling becomes a viable economic decision as well.

When you decide to homeschool your children, you need to become knowledgeable on a broad range of subjects so you can prepare an adequate educational plan. Once you have established a plan, which should include targets for different subject areas, you should consider the idea of unit projects.

You're probably familiar with projects, as you likely did one or two if you came through the public school system. Projects are a great way to implement and test knowledge acquired through an educational unit. A good plan is to have a multi-week unit set up for a given subject, and at the end of the unit assign a week-long project that will make use of what your child has learned.

For example, if you and your child study a biology unit, a great week long project is to create an ecosystem. This can be done with an old aquarium, and your child's goal will be to create an environment that can be self-sufficient in the sealed aquarium. In learning about the water table and the different cycles of nature, encourage your child to think of the best way to make his or her ecosystem. After your child has come up with a plan, take him to a store to buy the requisite materials with which to begin his project. Once it is started have him track the ecosystem's progress every day.

The reasons that projects like this can be very effective is that they serve multiple educational purposes: your child will not only be learning as he goes, but he will be learning in an engaging way, and most likely with a higher level of retention. A project can also engage other members of the family. The ecosystem, for example, could be placed in a prominent location, and other family members will no doubt take interest. It's



a great educational experience when your child can not only excitedly report on a project's progress to his parents, but actually show the work at hand. Every parent has witnessed a child from the public system describing a project they're doing at the dinner table, but as a home schooling parent you have the benefit of having "home" and "school" being one: your child can not only tell, but show.

When you homeschool, you're not limited by the practicalities necessary in a public or private school system. Project ideas are only limited by you and your child's imagination. For each and every unit, encourage your child to come up with long term project ideas and use their learning in a practical way. Not only will the project allow your child to learn more about the subject, it will carry over into the home as a whole: other family members will take interest, and the whole process of buying the materials and planning the project will become part of your child's educational experience.

## **Come Up With Projects**

When setting out your goals and educational plans, come up with some unit studies to be conducted within a given subject area. For example, if you have a multi-week timeframe for biology, within that timeframe set aside a week for a project to be conducted in a specific area.

Towards the end of your biology unit, for example, you may decide to set up a unit study on building an ecosystem. This could be done using an old aquarium, and would require that your child plan and implement a small self-sufficient ecosystem in the aquarium. The child would decide on plants, soil, and insects that would complement each other, applying knowledge acquired during your biology "unit." You could then take the child shopping for the items and allow him to implement his plan and track its progress.

Besides being a practical way to use and test knowledge, the project engages not only your child but the whole family. The aquarium could be in a prominent place in the household and will no doubt attract interest from other family members. Your child will excitedly respond to questions about his ecosystem, and explain its progress to the wage earner when he or she comes home from work.

In a standard public or private classroom setting, projects are few and far between. This is for practical reasons - not only must the school be thinking in terms of a budget, but they have to be realistic about a modest project that 30 children can do simultaneously in the classroom. You, however, as a home schooling parent, won't be held to these constraints, and in most cases projects will be limited only by you and your child's imagination. While keeping in mind the desired educational goals, encourage your child to explore a project that interests him keenly - if he's interested in computers, for example, you could assign him a project of creating an educational electronic presentation on the history of the civil war.

## Learn Together

One of the most important things as a teacher is that you enjoy and are interested in the subject you are teaching. We've all had the experiences of having both good and bad teachers, and if you think about it I'm sure you'll notice that all your good teachers seemed rabidly interested in the subject matter, while the bad ones seemed bored. Nothing is worse than study topics that don't interest you, as this boredom will quickly rub off on your child, and a situation will be created where neither of you are enjoying yourselves.

This doesn't mean, of course, that in home schooling your children you should simply do whatever you want - there is no way to avoid the fact that the major subject areas must be studied closely - but keep in mind that many of these subject areas have a very broad range of exercises that can be done within them.

If you're studying literature for example, remember that you don't necessarily have to read the "standard book" for your child's grade level. The subject of literature is about reading and getting familiar with good writing and in many cases one good book can be replaced with another. Think of how much more exciting your literature unit will be if you select a work that interests both you and your child - you will be able to enjoy the experience of good literature together, and have a much more valuable learning experience.

Home schooling is most valuable when it is a shared educational experience between the parent and child. Learning together not only increases family bonds, but ensures more retention of subjects. So don't hesitate to select projects or units of study that interest you as well. If you went through a public school system, there are no doubt many aspects of certain subjects that you wished you explored more - now's your chance to do that with your child. As you learn together, you'll realize that doing so is one of the greatest benefits of home schooling.

## **Planning Your Home Schooling Effectively**

Many parents make the decision to homeschool their children, and in doing so are privy to some clear benefits. Home schooling allows you to tailor a specific education to your child's individual needs, something that is often lacking in the public or private school systems. Home schooling also allows you and your child to learn together, creating not only a valuable learning experience but strengthening family bonds. Add to this the fact that it is often prohibitively expensive to send multiple children to private schools, and we can see why home schooling has become increasingly popular.

One of the most important aspects of home schooling your child is coming up with a clear plan and set of goals. One of the greatest aspects of home schooling - its complete flexibility - can also be one of the most difficult if it is not approached directly. Without a clear plan, you run the risk of creating a scattershot education that puts your child out of place with his or her peers.

So when you begin home schooling, you should come up with a clear set of general goals. Think about why you want to homeschool your children, and what you want them to get out of the experience. What, generally, do you want your child's education to encompass? Once you have answered these general questions for yourself, begin to split your child's education into various subject areas. For each subject area, you want to come up with a timeline and set of goals.

A good place to start in terms of a timeline would be to look at the standard curriculum for your child's grade in a public or private school. While it is almost certainly true that one of these reasons you've selected to homeschool your child is to go beyond and outside this standard curriculum, you also want to make sure that your child does not fall behind his or her peers in a given subject area.

Come up with your plan by looking at the standard expectations for a given subject level and then working backwards: how do you want to achieve that level of knowledge?

What are the targets for each week? By setting these targets you can establish a timeline and curriculum that allows for effective home schooling.

Clearly, one of the points of home schooling is its relative flexibility, and you by no means need to stick to a plan in a completely rigid manner, but don't let this tempt you into avoiding one: although it may seem wonderful to have an entirely "organic" education for your children, this can easily go awry. If you constantly let your child's learning be dictated exclusively by his or her interests, gaps will appear in her knowledge. Instead make a clear educational plan that allows for flexibility. Plan what your child is going to learn, but leave the "how she will learn it" some breathing room: as you begin the process of home schooling you'll learn how your child learns best, and can begin to incorporate this into the lessons.

By coming up with a clear educational plan you arm yourself with one of the most essential tools to effective home schooling.

## **Read Widely And Become Better At Home Schooling**

For many people, home schooling is a desirable alternative to the education offered by the public and private school systems. When you homeschool your children you have the flexibility to create an educational curriculum more suited to their needs. Home schooling also makes economic sense, especially when you consider the costs involved with sending multiple children to a private school. If you've made the decision to homeschool your children, the first step in establishing a viable curriculum is to read widely.

To begin with, you have to ensure that you educate yourself on a wide variety of topics. While it may be tempting to focus exclusively on books teaching you how to homeschool your children, you shouldn't rely on these too heavily. Keep in mind that pedagogical method is only as important as your knowledge of a subject, and focusing your reading entirely on how to homeschool your children will leave you lacking in the practical knowledge necessary to execute it.

At first, the reading required in order to homeschool your children may seem daunting - after all, a teacher is only required to be knowledgeable on the subjects they teach, but you're going to be teaching all of the subjects. Keep in mind, however, that you needn't be an expert in every subject - one of the great things about home schooling is that you can learn together with your child. Instead, it's more important that you have a good general knowledge of the history of the subjects being taught.

In most cases, a good "history of" on the subjects you plan to teach should be sufficient. Because it is impractical to read an entire bibliography for multiple subjects, you want to instead read a couple books on each subject that provide you with a good home schooling starting point. In other words, you're not going to be an expert, but you're going to know the general concepts and be able to answer basic questions. Most importantly, you'll know which writing to explore further if you and your child's interest takes you in that direction.

The amount that you have to read will depend of course on your child's age and the level and depth of the subjects you'll be teaching, but a good starting point is to read a standard book that a high school student would have to read for a given subject. Remember that specific areas of a subject can be explored as you go, so you needn't be able to answer every question your child might have in depth before you start. Instead, you need a good knowledge of the history of the subject, so you can arrange a curriculum that makes sense in a liner way: you want to know how the subject works, and how it is taught. You want to know the "building blocks" - what concepts to teach first, and how to build on those first concepts.

By reading widely in this way you'll arm yourself with the necessary tools for home schooling your child effectively, and provide yourself with the basic knowledge from which you and your child can explore particular areas of subjects further.



## **Developing Reading Skills When Home Schooling Your Child**

The extreme amount of flexibility offered by home schooling creates many educational benefits. One of them, of course, is that "home" and "school" become one, so that the educational experience doesn't have to begin and end with the ringing of a bell. By incorporating educational activities into your home life as a whole, your child will gain a more valuable educational experience.

One of the best things about home schooling is you can come up with an educational plan that suits your child's particular needs. By working one on one with a child, you can create an individual learning system that can be more beneficial than the learning techniques used in a public or private school. When coming up with an individual education plan for your child, make sure you place focus on reading.

Much of the philosophy of home schooling is about not being subject to the limitations of the public school system, and an area where the public school system commonly falters is in reading. Many public school students perform poorly on standardized reading tests, which is unfortunate as reading skills are crucial to a child's education.

Reading can't really be emphasized too much when home schooling your child. While there should be a good balance of subject areas taught throughout the teaching day, reading should be encouraged during your child's free time. While it may be difficult to get a child into doing math or science work in his or her free time, reading is a different story.

As soon as your child can read, he or she should always be reading something. As long as you find the subject matter appropriate, allow your child to read whatever he wants in his free time. Develop the habit at a young age of getting your child to always have a book on the go. By finding books that your child enjoys, your child will, from a young age, associate reading with a fun experience, which will do wonders for his further education.

You must also understand how important it is to set your own example. Try and set time aside during the day in which you read, and in the evening hours, when most children would be watching television, sit down with your child and read together. When it gets close to the child's bedtime, imply that you will be going to be soon as well - because you have a good book to read.

Reading is a fantastic educational opportunity because it is the basis for which your child will learn many other things. When a child is reading a book they are not only bettering their reading skills, they are becoming privy to knowledge contained within the book. It is important that reading begins at a young age because mastering it is a slow process, and you will be doing your child a serious disservice later in life if you choose not to focus on reading early.

Every education should be well rounded of course, but reading is a building block from which other education follows. When home schooling your child, encourage him or her to read from a young age. If you so do you stand a good chance of instilling a lifelong habit that will benefit your child until the end of his days.

## Having Fun When Home Schooling

Home schooling has many benefits for a child's education. One of the most obvious is that it allows you, the parent, to tailor a specific education geared towards your child's particular needs. It also allows you to teach in a style that suits your child -- as we all know, different people learn better in different ways. When you decide to homeschool it is important to remember that as well as being a parent, you are now taking on the role of a teacher. This is, of course, not a responsibility to be taken lightly, and you have to make every effort to be the best teacher you can be.

Everyone has had the experience of having both a good and bad teacher. If you stop and think about it, I'll think you'll notice some things that your good teacher's had in common. The most important is that they were genuinely interested in their subject areas. Nothing makes a teacher better than enthusiasm for a subject. I think you'll also notice that most of the bad teachers you had didn't seem particularly interested in the subject they were teaching. It is for this reason that it is crucial that you create a home schooling experience that interests both you and your child.

While your child's education should come first and foremost when creating a home schooling curriculum, you shouldn't be shy to think of your own education as well. When looking at things to study in particular subject areas, think about things that interested you in those areas that you didn't get to explore as much as you liked to when you were in school.

It cannot be understated how valuable an experience it is to learn with your child. You will be strengthening a family bond, and your shared interest and excitement in a topic will ensure that your child retains the information. A way to do this is to understand the balance between rigid ness and flexibility in a home schooling curriculum.

A certain amount of formality is required in a general curriculum: you have to have set goals and timelines in which certain things must be learned. But within those timelines, you have a lot of flexibility, and you should use it to your advantage. When studying

literature, for example, understand that the goal is to read and learn about good literature, not necessarily to read a particular book. So instead of studying a "standard" novel that you've already read, consider a book that is new to you as well. With both you and your child interested in the book, the experience of reading it together will be enjoyable for both of you, as you will both be excited about the outcome.

This concept needn't be applied only to literature, think of things in science or music, for example that you've always wanted to learn about. If you make sure that you are interested in the subjects as well, your child will sense your enthusiasm and become more drawn into the subject, ensuring a much more valuable educational experience.

## Home Schooling Hours

How many, how often and when? These are some oft-repeated questions when it comes to home schooling hours. Flexibility is of course one of the key underlying principles behind home schooling. This flexibility applies not only to the curriculum but also to the number of hours. It is only natural that parents, especially if they have just started out on home schooling should feel that their children should be at their books all the time when regular school-goers are at school. This is not only fallacious but can also be damaging and counter-productive.

One of the most ignored but glaring drawbacks of the public schooling system is the sheer waste of time and energy that it causes. Many periods are simply wasted away and the child effectively derives only 1-3 hours of study everyday. Then, there are days when the studies become too intensive and other days when it's only games and no work at all. There is a lot of 'invisible wastage' involved here.

Early on in your home schooling practice, work out a schedule. It is advisable to stick to the same hours everyday. A routine makes it easier to learn and gives structure to the learning experience. It also tells the students that parents are strict about their learning. A routine also allows your child to free his mind from other activities and concentrate on studies. He knows that a particular time is strictly set aside for learning.

The actual number of hours that you need depends on the curriculum you have chosen and the learning style that suits your child. If you are dealing with a subject that seems to be more complex, you may need to sit with the child for a longer period. Using various techniques, it may be necessary to demonstrate what you are trying to teach. For instance, a lesson in Algebra may take more time than a lesson in English.

Home schooling does not refer to the practice of sitting in front of the books and learning the printed matter. Field trips, watching documentaries, visiting factories and libraries also make up an important slice of the home schooling process. It makes sense

to intersperse these activities so that learning becomes fun. You may want to finish off the few hours of textbook learning in the morning and dedicate the afternoons to these kinds of activities.

Given the fact that too many public school hours are wasted in meaningless activities ranging from talking to extra-curricular activities, do not allow public school hours to dictate the time you should spend teaching your child at home. Remember that at home, he is getting a high-quality one-to-one time that is highly productive. About 1-3 hours of study is enough in the primary level. It is of course true that the more number of hours you put in, the more learning takes place. This is also the reason why home schooling children are much smarter and more balanced than regular school going children.

## Grading In Home Schooling

Grading in home schooling is done by the teacher-in-charge. In most of the cases, this means mom! In this situation, grading can get a bit tricky because it can be a little difficult to grade your own child. There is no benchmark against which you can evaluate your child's performance. In most cases, you also have no awareness of how well other children are doing. So, obviously the traditional method of grading is perhaps not the best method to follow.

When grading a child undergoing home schooling, it is more important to assess whether the child has understood the subject that is being taught. Inherent in this is the fact that if the child has not understood something, you will go over it again. This will work in your child's favor in 2 ways. Firstly, the child knows that if he or she fails to catch on, the topic will be repeated till it is mastered. Secondly, the child also knows that once the topic has been mastered, he or she will get full credit for his hard work. Getting full reward for the hard work put in is a great motivational factor, especially for kids.

When assessing your child's abilities, do not allow emotions to overcrowd your rationale. Do not yield to the cries and tears of your child if he or she resists certain topics or subjects. If mastering these skills is necessary, then you as the teacher (and not as the parent alone) have to go over the topic over and over till it sinks in. When dealing with tougher concepts, the child may get restless and may even show frustration or belligerence. When the child is still young and unable to understand the importance of his lessons, it is your responsibility to see to it that the child develops the skill set necessary for future growth.

In case you belong to a state that requires yearly tests, this will help you to judge your child's ability vis-à-vis his peers. Even if it is not mandatory, you may want to test your child every year. These tests will reveal the variations in the child's learning pattern. It may show up unexpected areas of strength and hitherto unknown areas of weakness.



This enables you to structure your teaching to cover the areas that are weak, and build upon the areas that are strong.

In case your state requires a homeschool report card, keep a record of the yearly development and scores of your child. Include pertinent areas like punctuality, discipline etc in the report. You may also need to keep a record of the number of working days and attendance schedules.

While grading your child, make sure that you use as many external tests as possible. There are several websites that deal with the various age groups, and allow free downloading of question papers. This is an excellent and cost-effective method to assess your child. Home schooling, if done in the proper manner, will boost the child's confidence because he will be studying to satisfy his natural curiosity. The scores therefore will reflect his true intelligence.

## **Benefits Of Home Schooling**

Why let Tim and Lisa learn at home than send them to school? Well, first of all, you don't have to wake them up at 7 every morning and bundle them off to school with umpteen numbers of instructions, and wait with an anxious heart till they return. Home schooling gives you more control over the influences that affect your child. The growth and development of your child is removed from the realm of the unknown. You and you alone can decide what your child needs to do or learn. Tailoring the curriculum to suit the needs and interests of the child is one of the most obvious benefits of home schooling

Individual attention is another salient benefit of home schooling. For instance, if Lisa needs more time to learn Math, then she can reduce the time for her English lessons. There are no fixed hours of learning per subject. This means that a child has the advantage of assigning more number of hours to the subject that seems tough WITHOUT any additional pressure. The amount of time needed to learn each subject will depend on the abilities and interests of the child.

The schooling of the child becomes an extended family activity. Parents get involved in every step of the learning procedure. Field trips and experiments become family activities. Thus, the child receives more quality time with his parents. The entire family shares games, chores and projects. Family closeness becomes the focus here. The child is also free of any negative peer pressure while making choices and decisions.

Competition is limited when it comes to home schooling. The child does not need to prove his ability with regards to other children. His confidence remains intact. Since parents have a deep understanding of their child, they can plan the learning program to pique the child's interest. It is also possible to intersperse difficult tasks with fun activities. A tough hour with Algebra can be followed by a trip to the nearest museum. Learning becomes fun. Parents can also tailor the curriculum to suit the learning style of

the child. Some children learn through reading, while others need to write, and still others need to see objects in action.

Home schooling allows parents to take control over the moral and religious learning of the child. Parents have the flexibility to incorporate their beliefs and ideologies into the child's curriculum.

There is no confusion in the child's mind either because there is no variation between what is being taught and what is being practiced.

Lastly, more and more parents are getting disillusioned with the public school system. They believe that their children are being pushed too hard or too little. Other worrying issues pertaining to discipline and ethics also make the school system less welcome. Many repudiate the educational philosophy of grouping children solely on the basis of their age. Some parents themselves have unhappy memories of their own public school experience that motivates them to opt for home schooling when it comes to their own children.

Home schooling is the best way to teach a child if you have the time, the ability and the interest to follow through with his education. After all, nobody can understand or appreciate your child more than yourself.

## Home Schooling - The Darker Side

It's not all hunky-dory and smooth sailing on the home schooling front. Like all things in life, there is a downside that has to be seriously considered when you explore the home schooling option. Though one man's bane may be another man's boon, there are certain common reasons for concern.

The responsibility of teaching your child rests solely on you. You cannot blame anyone else if your child is seen wanting in the skills that his peers excel in. If your child cannot do the things that are expected from other children of his age group, it reflects badly on you as an educator as well as a parent.

A critical part of home schooling is the time that you have to spend with your children. You may have to give up your friends, shopping and other entertainment and dedicate all these to your child. This can become frustrating at times. You have to learn to take the aggravation with equanimity and wait for the rewards with patience and enthusiasm.

A parent who is dedicated to tutor his or her child single handedly does not realistically have much time left over for a career. This means that the family is robbed of an additional source of income. In turn, this may lead to stress over finances. You will have to train yourself to live on a strictly controlled budget. While this is a matter of habit, it does need some getting used to.

You cannot take a break when you feel like it. Feelings of guilt will assail you if you neglect studies just because you are feeling blue. You also fear that the child will take advantage of the situation. Even when you have given homework, you have to be around to give a helping hand. This means that anytime your child is around you, you are on duty! For some, this may mean working every waking hour. The child studying at home also needs to get out more. This comes from staying at home all the time. Interaction with adults and other children needs to be given special attention.

Children tutored at home cannot develop in the various directions that are open to children attending public schools. To achieve that kind of exposure, you either have to be a super-parent skilled in everything, or enroll your child to various activities. This may not only prove too costly, but also be counter-productive.

It is sometimes observed that home schooled children do not do as well in SAT tests as their school-going counterparts. Without a diploma or a GED, some students find it difficult to get into the military.

Lastly, if you envision enrolling your child to a public school, there may be a certain period of emotional as well as social adjustment. A child who is used to being at home for the whole day and enjoying so much of uncontained freedom may have to undergo some distressing emotional upheavals before he or she gets used to the rigors of a regular school life.

## **Playing An Active Role In Your Children's Home Schooling**

Home schooling is an option that many parents make when they feel that, for whatever reason, their child will not be getting the best education in a public or private school system. Home schooling allows for specific curriculum and teaching techniques to be applied that suit your child's particular needs - something that is unlikely to happen in a large classroom. One of the benefits - and also one of the difficulties - in home schooling is the extreme amount of flexibility it affords. In order to homeschool successfully, it is important that you understand this.

While there are many benefits to home schooling, it also requires discipline. In the same way that working from home can be difficult, home schooling can be difficult because it requires you make a distinction between home and school while still remaining at home. Like almost everybody, there are going to be times in your family life when you are extremely busy or dealing with serious distractions. It can be tempting at these moments to try and multitask: that is, to both educate your children and deal with other aspects of your life. There can be a tendency among home schooling parents to place an assignment in front of their children and then leave the room to engage in other activities.

If you do this you will severely limit the value of your child's education. When home schooling you should think about public and private school systems, and use them as a sort of benchmark. You should be trying to surpass, or at the very least match, the level of education your child would receive in one of these environments. Now, if you think about a public school classroom, you'll see that the teacher is always in the room. It is one of the most fundamental rules of teaching -- even if the students have been assigned work to complete on their own in class time, the teacher remains in the room in order to assist the students.

You should also adhere to this principle. Children learn by example, in subtle ways that are not always within our control. If you assign your children work and leave to go do

other things you are sending a message to them that the schooling is not of a highest priority for you. Even if they cannot articulate it, this negative message in terms of your priorities will affect the children's attitude towards their education.

When home schooling your children, the hours that you spend teaching should be hours in which your children's education are the number one priority. Errands or other household duties should be left for "after-school" hours. When "school is in," you should be to. Of course, there will be many instances where you will be trying to get your children to learn how to work independently, but at these times you should still be physically available for questions or your children's need for assistance.

By always being present during your children's education you make them understand that their education is a serious thing, not simply something to occupy them while you take care of more pressing activities.



## **Getting Together With Other Home Schooling Parents**

Home schooling can have many benefits for your child. It allows for specific teaching styles to be implemented that suit your child's particular needs, as well as creating a learning environment that your child works best in. Home schooling also has economic benefits as well, if you consider the costs of a private school education, and for this reason it seems to be becoming increasingly popular with each and every generation.

One of the drawbacks of home schooling, however, is the concern that your child is not surrounded by peers in the same way that he or she would be in a public school system. Also, as a home schooling parent, you are dealing with lots of pressure - the quality of your child's education rests entirely on you, after all - and are probably dealing with many questions of your own. One good way to address this is to make a point of getting together with other home schooling parents.

By meeting on a regular basis with other home schooling parents, you do a service to both you and your child. You will be able to exchange ideas and teaching techniques with other parents. Most importantly, though, your child will get a chance to interact with some of his or her peers. Children at a young age can be very impressionable and concerned with being different. All every child usually wants to do is fit in.

It's important when home schooling your child that you acknowledge the fact that not everybody does it. This fact can't be kept hidden from your child, and at some point he or she will realize that lots of other kids go to school. That's why meeting up with other home schooling parents can be valuable for your child, because they will see that they are not the only ones. The child's fear of not being "normal" will be eased by seeing and interacting with the other children.

There are many different ways you can get together with other home schooling parents. One of the best ones is to incorporate it into the children's education. Keep in regular touch with other parents, and if you find yourselves studying the same subjects at the

same time, suggest an appropriate field trip - in this way you can replicate the public and private school experience of combining your children's educational and social time. Another good idea is to suggest a group project to be conducted with another family. If another parent is also teaching a biology unit, for example, you could suggest a that the children work on planting a garden together on your property. When studying zoology, a trip to the zoo would be enjoyable and educational for both you and your children when conducted with another family.

By keeping in regular touch with other home schooling parents you will do a service for your child's education and social development. By exchanging ideas with other home schooling parents you can learn new teaching strategies, and at the same time your will be teaching your children that they are not alone, and not at all strange.

=====THE END=====

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