



Presents

Seven Steps to
SUCCESSFUL
HOMESCHOOLING



HOMESCHOOLING IS AN INVESTMENT in your children's futures. At Alpha Omega Publications, our mission is to see homeschool families realize their dreams and ensure that we provide students with an excellent Christian education. That's why we created this guide for first-time homeschoolers. We're delighted to walk you through getting started on your homeschooling adventure and hope the information and inspiration you find within these pages serves your homeschooling needs and our goal of seeing you succeed.

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Step 1: Make the Decision

Learn what homeschooling is, how it benefits your family, what qualifications you need to homeschool, and how homeschooling is a lifestyle.

If you're totally new to homeschooling and weighing the pros and cons of teaching your child at home, it's best to start at the very beginning.

What is homeschooling?

Simply put, homeschooling is when you (the parent) do the actual teaching in the home, deciding what subjects and which curriculum you'll use. You also directly determine how your child's progress will be evaluated, including grading, testing, and recordkeeping.

However, in today's homeschooling world, it's also possible to deviate somewhat from the traditional method by getting assistance from other outside educational sources like

- Homeschooling co-op classes
- Tutoring programs
- Dual enrollment options
- Charter schools
- Satellite schools
- [Distance learning online schools](#)
- Homeschool umbrella organizations

Redefining traditional homeschooling, these alternatives allow others to teach all or part of your child's classes but still leave you in charge as the primary person responsible for your child's education.



NOTE: Government-funded, virtual school programs offering free curriculum through the public school are not homeschooling. These K-12 programs often result in longer school days and impose severe limitations such as:

- Government-picked vs. your pick of curriculum for your child's individual needs
- Attendance logs and compliance with public school attendance laws
- Work sample requirements for school authorities
- Teacher oversight, leaving you, the parent, only as the "learning coach"
- Elimination of all Bible-based curriculum and resources
- Graduation standards and state testing mandates
- No allowance for family unit-studies since all subjects are grade specific

Why homeschool?

Who can understand and value your child more than you? As both parent and teacher, you'll discover that homeschooling is the best way to educate your child. It is flexible, fun, and allows you to:

- Adjust your educational program to fit your child's individual needs
- Grow closer as a family unit
- Develop your child's specific interests and God-given talents
- Spend time working on weak areas while building on your child's strengths
- Give your child more opportunities for hands-on learning
- Teach an academic skill or concept until your child learns it
- Build your child's confidence and self-esteem
- Tie subjects together to enhance your child's understanding of a single topic
- Take control of the moral and godly learning of your child
- Help your child love learning, rather than just making a grade

Still not sure if homeschooling is right for your family? If you don't feel qualified to teach because you're not a certified teacher, think about this:



The ability to homeschool doesn't require a degree or an impressive educational background.

Parents with a high school education can provide a superior education that even surpasses public schools. The ability to homeschool doesn't require a college degree or an impressive educational background.

In a 2009 HSLDA [study](#), statistics showed that “Homeschoolers scored 34-39 percentile points higher than the norm on standardized achievement tests.” Whether parents were certified as teachers had no impact on these high scores. In fact, students received slightly higher scores if neither of their parents had ever held a state-issued teaching certificate.

What is necessary to homeschool successfully?

To be a great homeschooling mom or dad, you'll need

- 1. God-inspired goals** - Picture your child when he's 18 years old. In addition to academics, what godly character qualities do you want to see reflected in his life? A heart for Christ? A love for others? Spiritual fruits reflecting a distinctly Christian education?
- 2. Commitment** - Making the decision to homeschool for grades K-12 can be overwhelming. Many parents find it easier to just take it one year at a time. However, no matter if you teach one year or twelve, it's important not to switch during the middle of the school year and homeschool for the entire year.
- 3. Organizational skills** - Homeschooling creates its structure. You'll find yourself less frazzled, your kids more relaxed, and your home more functional with an organized [homeschooling schedule](#) that includes a time for school, play, and clean up.
- 4. Good parenting** - Gentle but firm discipline is the secret to successful homeschooling. It's best to get your children's input, then set and enforce practical family guidelines to keep your homeschool running smoothly.
- 5. Practical financial planning** - Living on one income requires a workable [homeschool budget](#). You'll need a creative mindset to think of more economical ways to have fun and [cut costs on daily living expenses](#).
- 6. Personal sacrifice** - Are you ready to learn the art of servanthood? Homeschooling requires hard work and patience. You may need to set aside much of your personal time for the benefit of teaching, loving, and being together with your family.

- 7. Teachability** - Your children won't be the only students in your homeschool! You'll find yourself just as excited to discover new things right along with them. Best of all, you'll delight in the new insights and wisdom as you walk with Christ and learn to rely on Him each day.

Depending on your child's grade level, homeschooling involves spending more than just a few hours studying each day. In reality, homeschooling is a lifestyle that encompasses everything you do by incorporating everyday activities and academics into one exciting family learning experience.

Although everything you've read so far may seem unfamiliar and overwhelming, rest assured. Thousands of parents before you have learned how to homeschool with great success, and you can, too.

Digging Deeper

- Search the Bible for a scriptural basis for homeschooling and know why you are planning to homeschool (Genesis 18:19, Deuteronomy 6:7-9, Ephesians 6:1). Ask God the best way to educate your children and consider each child's needs, your spouse's needs, and the educational opportunities available in your community.
- Write a formal [homeschool mission statement](#) listing overall objectives and goals for your children's education.
- Read HSLDA's "[The Myth of Teacher Qualifications.](#)"

Step 2: Get Informed

Cover your bases! Discover the facts you need to know to homeschool legally in your state, the everyday ins and outs of homeschooling, and case studies that prove homeschool success.

Now that you've taken the first step and decided to homeschool, you may be asking yourself, "Can I homeschool legally? How does it actually work, and what success have other families had who homeschooled?"



"Knowledge empowers new homeschooling parents."

Sorting through friendly advice and tons of homeschooling information on the Internet can be mind boggling. If you're wondering what to do first, it's best to start with knowing your state's homeschooling laws.

Homeschooling Laws

Homeschooling is legal in all 50 states, but each has different requirements and regulations. To save time, effort, and keep yourself from any future legal battles, be aware of your state's [homeschooling laws](#), which may have certain restrictions like these:

- **Compulsory school age** - Your state requires a starting and ending age for your child to receive an education.
- **Required hours/days of instruction** - Some states have predetermined hours of instruction with elementary and secondary levels requiring different amounts.
- **Required subjects** - In addition to core curriculum subjects like math and English (which may or may not have preset hours of instruction), some states also require other courses like health, state history, and physical education.
- **Annual academic testing or evaluations** - Standardized yearly testing for certain grade levels may need to be administered by you or a local school official with the results submitted to governing authorities.

- **Annual statements of intent to homeschool** - Each year, within a certain time frame before you begin homeschooling, you may need to submit a “Notice of Intent to Homeschool” to your state and/or local educational authorities.
- **Teacher qualifications** - A high school diploma or GED equivalent may be required to homeschool in some states.
- **Attendance records and portfolios** - Recordkeeping in the form of portfolios, scope and sequences, and transcripts may be required. Portfolio requirements may be minimal or more detailed and usually include the curriculum used, completed samples of daily work and tests, attendance, a log of homeschool field trips, and outside activities relating to each subject.
- **Evidence of immunization** - Although you are teaching your child at home, some states also still require immunizations against certain childhood diseases.

“What about homeschooling on a daily basis?” you might ask. “How does it work?” Just as God uniquely created each individual, no two homeschooling families are exactly alike. Therefore, a one-size-fits-all instructional manual on how to homeschool simply doesn’t exist.

Depending on your [homeschool curriculum](#), the number of your children and their ages, your teaching style, and your children’s learning style (more on that later), you’ll find yourself designing a [daily schedule](#) that may or may not look like your homeschooling friends’ routine. What’s the best-kept secret? Remain flexible so you can adjust to life’s surprises and future homeschooling demands.

How well do homeschooled students turn out? Will my child be able to get a job? Will he be prepared academically to compete in college? Ease your concerns by checking out this informative homeschooling [report card](#).

Digging Deeper

- Ask to visit a homeschooling family in your area and observe their day in action. Find out their experiences to see how to tackle challenges. (*Remember – Every homeschool family is unique. Glean what would work for you and let the rest go.*)
- Visit online homeschooling forums and bookmark [homeschool blogs](#) to ask other homeschoolers about the benefits and sacrifices involved in homeschooling.
- Purchase popular [homeschooling books](#) from your local retail bookstore or borrow some from friends to get informed and read, read, read.

Step 3: Find Support

Gain strength in numbers! Get the information you need to build an effective support base with other homeschool families, homeschool co-ops, state homeschool organizations, homeschool forums, and social networking sites.

When you're homeschooling, how important is it not to be a "lone ranger"? Just ask any set of homeschooling parents, and they'll tell you the same thing. Only with a solid support base of other homeschooling friends will you be enabled and empowered to keep going when things get tough.



When it comes to homeschooling, "No man is an island, entire of itself."

What homeschooling challenges could you face?

Outside battles

- Attacks on your child's ability to socialize
- Criticism from family members, friends, or neighbors
- Family financial burdens
- Unforeseen circumstances

Battles within

- Lack of confidence in your teaching abilities
- Discipline issues with your children
- Unrealistic expectations and educational goals
- Disagreements with your spouse

Remember, when facing homeschooling challenges, it's important to first seek the Lord. However, like the body of Christ functions within the church, God also uses other Christian homeschooling families to give you much-needed encouragement.

Where can I find other homeschool families?

The [National Center for Education Statistics](#) estimates that there are approximately 1.8 million homeschoolers nationwide. Because homeschool families love to learn, the best place to usually meet them is **at your local library, history or science museum, educational bookstore, park, zoo, or community center.** (Just look for parents with school-aged children who are out during normal school hours.)

Depending on the size of your city, **local church members or pastors** may be familiar with the names of families in local homeschooling groups. If you can't locate any homeschool groups in your area, simply [start your own homeschool co-op!](#)

[State homeschool organizations](#) also host informative **annual conventions** and fairs where you can meet other homeschooling families, examine homeschool curriculum options offered by numerous vendors, and listen to inspirational speakers.

Of course, you can also search **the Internet** by typing “homeschool” and your city’s name into a search engine to find a list of homeschooling groups in your area.

Digging Deeper

- Get involved and join a [homeschool support group](#) to meet and talk with other homeschool parents.
- Order a copy of AOP’s [Daily Focus](#) to gain spiritual insights and fresh encouragement to keep homeschooling.
- Subscribe to [homeschool eNewsletters](#) or [magazines and publications](#) for the latest homeschooling information.
- Join AOP’s social networking homeschool groups on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Pinterest](#).

Step 4: Select a Method

Identify which homeschooling approach is best for your family as you explore popular homeschool options such as computer-based, traditional, unit study, Charlotte Mason, Montessori, classical, and more!

Simply stated, **there is no right or wrong way to homeschool.** As its popularity has grown over the past decades, homeschooling methods have adapted to fit the needs of individual families and developed into many different approaches.

For some families, homeschooling works best within a well-structured, goal-oriented routine. For others, spontaneity, flexibility, and experiential learning are key components to more successful homeschooling. Still others find a combination of methods to be their best approach. **Whichever method or philosophy you choose, it will better direct you in purchasing the right curriculum** for your homeschool family, matching your teaching preference and your child's unique learning style.

What are the most popular homeschooling methods?

Computer-based Homeschool Method



According to a 2009 meta study from the Department of Education, “Students who took all or part of their class online performed better, on average, than those taking the same course through traditional face-to-face instruction.”

Making use of the latest technology, this method of student-directed homeschooling is becoming more popular with today's generation of computer-savvy homeschool families. Whether learning with [online curriculum](#), installable [CD-ROMs](#), or through accredited web-based courses at [distance learning schools](#), electronic-based homeschooling allows more flexibility, freedom, and opportunities for a dynamic, fun-filled education.

The computer-based homeschool method is best for homeschool parents who

- Want to teach using a set scope and sequence
- Value modern technology that educates with multimedia content and games
- Prefer a child to work on assignments at his own pace
- Like handy teaching tools to customize curriculum, prepare lesson plans, and automatically grade school work
- Want less involvement in the day-to-day teaching process

Workbook-based/Traditional Homeschool Method



Commonly known as school-at-home or school-in-a-box, traditional homeschooling gives parents the security of an established routine and teaching method.

Basing its model on the traditional idea found in a public or private school, this homeschooling method incorporates the use of [workbooks](#) or [worktexts](#). A clear scope and sequence is usually followed to minimize any potential learning gaps, along with the use of quizzes and tests to evaluate what the child has learned.

The workbook-based/traditional homeschool method is best for homeschool parents who

- Want to simulate an educational experience as found in a traditional classroom
- Have predetermined ideas about what to teach, and it matches the curriculum they select
- Prefer the security of a complete curriculum that includes print-based materials
- Enjoy a more structured homeschool schedule with set study periods for each subject
- Desire documentation of completed lessons for recordkeeping and reporting

Unit Study Homeschool Method



Content is more easily learned and retained if taught through interdisciplinary units.

Sometimes called cross-learning, thematic, or integrated homeschooling, [unit studies](#) give parents the ability to combine multiple subject areas into one curriculum centered around a particular theme. The approach is to take a selected topic of interest and study it in-depth, covering every element as it relates to science, math,

literature, history, geography, language, and other disciplines. Children in the family participate in learning the topic by using materials and doing activities geared specifically for their grade level.

The unit study homeschool method is best for homeschool parents who

- Need a cost-effective approach for teaching multiple children in different grade levels
- Want an integrated learning method that provides a broader understanding on a topic
- Desire a more hands-on homeschooling experience to increase learning retention
- Prefer a natural way of learning with time to think, experiment, and discover a topic
- Want to keep their child engaged and eager to learn

The Charlotte Mason Method



“Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a life.” — Charlotte Mason

A homeschooler herself, Charlotte Mason was a British educator who lived in the late 1800s. She promoted a gentle, flexible learning approach and was zealous about teaching with “Living Books” (books written by one author with a passion for that particular subject). Charlotte’s method focused on core subjects, the development of good behavior and character habits, and the study of fine arts, nature, classic literature and music, and poetry. She also encouraged observation, interaction, and an appreciation for nature by the use of “Nature Diaries.”

The [Charlotte Mason method](#) is best for homeschool parents who

- Want a less rigid schedule
- Desire a learning environment that encourages exploration and appreciation of nature
- Prefer evaluating a child’s learning other than with formal, written tests
- Like reading lots of books and want to offer a well-rounded education
- Want to be directly involved with their child’s education

The Montessori Method



“Education is a natural process carried out by the human individual and is acquired not by listening to words, but by experiences in the environment.”

— Dr. Maria Montessori

Emerging from the discoveries of Dr. Maria Montessori during the early 1900s in Rome, Italy, the Montessori method is a natural, self-directed process that follows certain fundamental laws of nature. Preparing an environment that facilitated learning, Dr. Montessori observed that children have acute sensitive periods in which they have intense concentration, causing them to repeat an activity until they gain a measure of self-satisfaction. The Montessori method calls this repetition process “normalization.”

The [*Montessori method*](#) is best for homeschool parents who

- Prefer their child to learn in hands-on, concrete ways
- Want to let their child learn at his own pace to allow optimal growth to take place
- Desire a child to learn through his own errors vs. having to point out the mistake
- Can create a child-centered learning environment that promotes the sense of discovery
- Want less of a teaching role to allow a child to develop through self-motivation

The Classical Method



“To read the Latin and Greek authors in their original is a sublime luxury...I thank on my knees him who directed my early education for having in my possession this rich source of delight.”

— Thomas Jefferson

Homeschool parents who educate their children using this method believe that a child’s brain develops in three fundamental stages: grammar, logic, and rhetoric (a critical thinking learning pattern better known as the Trivium). Emphasizing how to learn rather than teaching everything a child needs to learn, the Trivium seeks to custom fit the curriculum subject matter to a child’s cognitive development. In grade school, it emphasizes concrete thinking and memorization of facts. Then, in middle school, it encourages analytical thinking, until in high school, it presents abstract thinking and articulation of subjects.

The [*classical method*](#) is best for homeschool parents who

- Like structure and want to evaluate their child's learning on academic standards
- Value education based on the written word, both reading and writing
- Desire to teach critical thinking and philosophy with the classics of Western literature
- Have an academically minded child who enjoys learning subjects like Latin and/or Greek languages
- Want direct involvement in teaching by discussing books, giving dictation, and encouraging academic goals

Additional Homeschool Methods

The above list of homeschooling philosophies and methods only begins to scratch the surface. Other options include literature-based, Robinson, and Waldorf homeschooling, as well as unschooling, notebooking, and any combination of methods. Each has its own set of pros and cons, but you can distinguish them from each other simply by the following five differences:

1. How do you look at education?
2. How involved do you want to be in teaching?
3. What type of structure do you desire?
4. What do you want your child to learn?
5. How do you plan to evaluate your child's performance?

In the end, the way you answer each of these questions is the key to discovering a homeschooling method that works best for your family.

Digging Deeper

- Research homeschooling's contemporary founding fathers, including Dr. Raymond Moore, John Holt, and others.
- Read *The Big Book of Home Learning* by Mary Pride or *How to Homeschool, A Practical Approach* by Gayle Graham.

Step 5: Choose Your Curriculum

Determine what subjects to teach, where to find homeschool curriculum, how to know what grade level is right for your child, and if your child's learning style is hands-on, auditory, or visual.

As a first-time homeschooler, you're probably asking yourself, "**How do I know which curriculum is best?**" Many parents mistakenly choose a curriculum simply based on its cost or the perceived grade level of their child. However, there are many other important considerations and questions to ask.

What is my teaching style?

Know your passions and evaluate your abilities. Depending on your skill set and time constraints, you can determine what teaching materials to use with your child. For instance, do you like the thought of creating your own ways to explore, or would you prefer taking another person's ideas and customizing them to work with your child? Are you an orderly person who needs structure, or would you enjoy impromptu teaching, using whatever the day brings? Would you like getting your hands dirty when teaching projects, or are you the type of person who wants a more organized schedule with time for preparing materials? Do you want to be actively involved in teaching each lesson, or do you want your child to be more self-directed when homeschooling?

What is my child's learning style?

As a parent, you have a preferred way of teaching, but your child also has a preferred way of learning. Not only does this learning style determine how he best processes information, but it also helps him with retention and the ability to perform better on academic tests. After observing your child, which of these learning styles best describes the way your child likes to learn?



Curriculum is only a resource, not a rule book. After you choose it, use it wisely.
Don't let it use you!

Kinesthetic

Does your child have a need to touch everything? If you have a tactile learner, he won't be content to learn with worksheets or listen to lectures. Rather, this child needs to manipulate his environment in order to learn by feeling textures, weight, and shapes. To help this child better absorb what is being taught, homeschool parents need to **take lessons off the page and bring them to life!**

Hands-on Learners

- Are good at sports
- Can't sit still for long
- Aren't great at spelling
- Don't have great handwriting
- Like science labs
- Study with loud music
- Like adventure books and movies
- Like role playing or pantomime
- Need breaks when studying
- Build models and love construction
- Are involved in martial arts or dance
- Are fidgety during lectures
- Struggle with reading for information

Curriculum should allow for

- Shorter study periods
- Lab classes
- Role playing
- Field trips and visits to museums
- Study with others
- Use of memory games
- Use of flash cards for memorization

Worst Test Type: Long tests, essays

Best Test Type: Short definitions, fill-in-the-blanks, and multiple choice.

Encouragement Method: Responds best to a pat on the back

Auditory

Listening is key for auditory learners. Whether you put facts to music, assign books on CDs, or just read lessons out loud, an auditory learner **needs to have his ears energized to retain information in the brain.**

Asking your child to verbally restate what you have just read to him along with lesson repetition are great techniques to help this type of learner.

Auditory Learners

- Like to read out loud to self
- Are not afraid to speak in class
- Like oral reports
- Are good at explaining
- Remember names
- Notice sound effects in movies
- Enjoy music
- Are good at grammar and foreign language
- Read slowly
- Follow spoken directions well
- Can't keep quiet for long periods
- Enjoy acting and being on stage
- Are good in study groups

Curriculum should allow for

- Word association for remembering facts and lines
- Music, rhymes, rhythm instruments, and echo games
- Watching videos
- Repeating facts with eyes closed
- Participation in group discussions
- Using audiotapes for language practice
- Taping notes after writing them

Worst test type: Timed reading passages with written answers

Best test type: Oral exams

Encouragement Method: Responds best to verbal praise

Visual

For a child who learns visually, **to see is to understand**. Preferring to process information using pictures and images, spatial learners easily remember where things are and need to have everything in its place. They **flourish best when demonstrated the skill to be learned (“show me”)** and find written directions, well-defined assignments, and workbooks most appealing.

Visual Learners

- Are good at spelling, but forget names
- Need quiet study time
- Have to think awhile before understanding a lecture
- Are observant of details and visually organized
- Have a large reading vocabulary at an early age
- Doodle on note paper when talking
- Are easily distracted by visual stimuli
- Are aware of spatial relationships
- Function best when they “see” what’s expected
- Like colors and fashion
- Dream in color
- Understand/like charts, diagrams, puzzles
- Are good with sign language

Curriculum should allow for

- Drawing maps of history events or scientific processes
- Making outlines of everything
- Diagramming sentences
- Taking notes, making lists
- Watching videos
- Color coding words, researching notes
- Outline reading
- Using flashcards
- Using highlighters, circling words, underlining

Worst test type: Listen and respond tests

Best Test Type: Diagramming, reading maps, essays, showing a process

Encouragement Method: Responds best to visible rewards like stickers, stars, etc.

What subjects should I teach?

When planning your homeschool year, you should first **consider any required subjects included in your state's homeschooling laws**. Some states are more stringent and require specific subjects like health, state history, or traffic safety for certain grade levels. Other states only list a general set of subjects that should be taught each year, such as math, science, history and geography, and English. The good news is that most state requirements are only for basic subject areas, so you get to decide how you want to teach it and which homeschool curriculum you want to use.

A sample of subjects for an elementary third grade student might look something like this:

- Bible - (Parables of Jesus)
- Math - (Advanced operations and fractions)
- Science - (Basic life science - plants and animals)
- History - (Regions of Earth)
- Phys. Ed. - (Tennis and swimming)
- Art - (Piano lessons and basic music theory)

If your state doesn't require particular subject areas, then you are free to **customize your child's education** with topics that develop his unique skills and abilities.



Note: Because most colleges require a certain number years of study in English, math, and science for admission, read [Countdown to College](#) for more **examples of subjects to include when homeschooling your child during his high school years**.

Where do I find homeschool curriculum?



Resist the temptation to buy everything at once!

After you've considered teaching and learning styles and the subjects you want to teach, it's time to look for curriculum that meets your homeschool family's needs. A handy way to touch and examine curriculum hands-on is to **attend a [homeschool convention in your area](#)**. With hundreds of vendors displaying their products, you can save the time and energy you'd spend researching online or browsing through catalogs. Plus, many homeschool conventions also host a used book fair, which adds up to substantial savings on curriculum costs.

Finding the right homeschool curriculum is also easier with [consumer report websites](#), informative books, such as Cathy Duffy's [102 Top Picks for Homeschool Curriculum](#), and helpful advice from veteran homeschool moms and dads.

When you're finally ready to make your purchase, **stop and ask yourself these questions:**

- Is this an impulse purchase?
- Have I compared and researched this product, asked other homeschool parents to rate it, and read reviews?
- Can this curriculum be used with more than one child?
- What is the curriculum's resale value?
- Have I prayed about it?

How do I know what grade level is right for my child?

Whether transitioning your child from a traditional school or starting his homeschooling journey in kindergarten, it's important to **first test your child's academic abilities**. Not only can you avoid the possibility of learning gaps (a problem that occurs because concepts are not uniformly presented at the same time within all curriculum), but you can also determine if your child is being challenged too little or too much. For instance, your 5th grade homeschooler may be at his grade level for science and history in a particular curriculum, but need a 3rd grade level for English and/or a 6th grade level for math.

To avoid return headaches and a frustrated homeschool student using curriculum that's too easy or too hard, **determine your child's placement level** in a homeschool curriculum with that curriculum's [diagnostic tests](#).

Digging Deeper

- Visit a homeschool co-op in your area and ask parents for feedback on the pros and cons of the curriculum they use.
- Get your children involved and research Christian homeschool curriculum catalogs and websites together.
- View homeschool curriculum training webinars like the ones available for [Monarch](#) and [Switched-On Schoolhouse](#).

Step 6: Schedule Your Homeschool Day

Find practical guidelines to plan and organize your homeschooling day with “Twelve Secrets to Scheduling Success.”

You have a vision for homeschooling. You’ve discovered how your child likes to learn. You’ve even found the perfect curriculum, but what about your daily homeschool schedule? How does that look? How can you fit in grocery shopping, cooking meals, and house cleaning while teaching your children academics?



“Where no plan is laid...chaos will soon reign.” — Victor Hugo

Having **a flexible but well-ordered homeschooling schedule brings a sense of accomplishment and peace.** To maintain your sanity, here are some practical guidelines to follow when [organizing your homeschool day](#).

You’ll soon discover that because God created each family unique, there is no perfect one-answer-fits-all homeschooling schedule. However, many experienced homeschool parents have learned these **helpful secrets to make scheduling a homeschooling day easier.**

Twelve Secrets to Scheduling Success

- 1. Strive to start school at the same time each day** and don’t set yourself up for failure with too many activities and unrealistic expectations.
- 2. Turn off your TV and phone** when you start homeschooling and don’t return calls until the lessons are done.
- 3. Save more intense, one-on-one instruction time with older children while little ones are napping** or ask relatives and friends to watch your toddler.
- 4. Schedule Bible, math, and language arts (reading, writing, and spelling) earlier** in the day when your children are still fresh. Save more time-consuming, hands-on projects (history, science, and art) until the afternoon.

5. **Coordinate individualized teaching** with one child while the other children work independently or read. For instance, when presenting a new math concept to your 3rd grader, have your 7th grader read his history lesson for the day on his own. Also, take advantage of [unit studies](#) which make scheduling easier when homeschooling multiple children in different grade levels.
6. **Evaluate your family and be flexible** to adjust your schedule as you see a pattern that works best. Realize that your children learn better with schedules and feel safer and more in control when they know what to expect each day.
7. **Decide what household chores need to be done each day and assign responsibilities** to each child. You can then schedule 30 - 45 minutes twice a day for tidying the house and/or doing tasks. Chore charts with reward stickers are a great way to encourage younger children to complete their work.
8. **Make a list of outside activities** (errands, medical/dental appointments, field trips, homeschool co-op groups, music lessons, library visits, etc.) that your family will participate in that week and include them on your calendar.
9. **Assign a time and/or day of the week for each individual subject**, including start and end times. (Be sure to include core subject areas like Bible, math, history and geography, language arts, and science.)
10. **Schedule time for daily meal preparation and clean up**, along with time for any other breaks.
11. **Don't compare your family** to other homeschooling families. Schedules are meant to help your family accomplish your goals, not the goals of someone else.
12. **Keep moving and don't lose your focus**. Even if interruptions and distractions cause your lesson plans to fall apart before 9 a.m., regroup and accomplish what you can for the remainder of the day.



“Let all things be done decently and in order.” — 1 Corinthians 14:40

Remember, **many states have homeschooling laws that require a certain number of hours or days of homeschooling** each year. Be sure that your schedule meets those requirements, recognizing that many activities and hobbies your children enjoy outside of “official” schooling hours can also be considered homeschooling, such as part-time jobs (work study), volunteer work (civics), and sports (physical education).

Digging Deeper

- See more examples of a [typical homeschooling day](#).
- Visit [YouTube](#) and watch several how-to videos for homeschool scheduling.
- Attend a homeschool co-op meeting and ask several members to share what works best in their daily homeschooling routine.

Step 7: Keep the Right Records

Put it in print! Learn how to document with report cards, monthly planners, transcripts, and homeschooling portfolios in order to prove your child's progress.

Does the thought of keeping track of worksheets, projects, tests, grades, lesson plans, report cards, and transcripts send chills up your spine? Do you wonder if educational records are worth the time and effort they require? You may not like the answer, but it is "yes." Recordkeeping in your homeschool is very important for the following reasons:

Keepsakes - Journaling your homeschooling activities allows you to preserve memories of special occasions and record favorite learning moments throughout the year.

Report cards - When it comes to high school [diplomas](#) for college entrance and scholarships or the unexpected need for your children to return to private and/or public school, [report cards](#) maintain a reference list of completed courses and accompanying grades to smooth the acceptance or transition experience. (Note: If you're transitioning to homeschooling from a traditional school, ask for your child's cumulative file from the school that was previously attended.)

Goal setting - Tracking your children's educational progress is easier with daily, weekly, and monthly [planners](#) that remind you of current and future goals. Plus, you'll have a better idea of where to focus your energy.

Legal records - Many states have [homeschooling laws](#) that require families to present school district officials with attendance, portfolios, grades, and/or other forms that document academic achievements and activities.



The time to start keeping detailed homeschool records is now!

Because **your recordkeeping is the only available proof of your child's education**, it's wise to keep detailed records from the very beginning. Don't forget to give credit for any extracurricular learning activities, including educational games, letter writing, field trips, art, discussions, educational TV programs, and DVDs, as well as everyday learning experiences like cooking, cleaning, and budgeting.

When logging lesson plans, many homeschoolers **use what's affordable and convenient, like inexpensive weekly or monthly planners.** (Note: A great time to log your weekly goals for each child and their subjects is Saturday morning when kids sleep in or Sunday evening before the start of the next week. Although charting a month's worth of lessons at one time seems more expedient, be prepared to erase and change your entries due to unforeseen events that arise and change your plans.)

Homeschool parents can also take advantage of today's technology and do their recordkeeping with user-friendly [computer software](#) or teach with homeschool computer-based curriculum (like [Monarch](#) and [Switched-On Schoolhouse](#)) that contains built-in calendars, automatic grading, and reporting features.

Another popular option for recordkeeping is maintaining an organized [portfolio](#) (a collection of items that showcases what your child has learned). Items to place in the portfolio might include

- A record of books read by your child
- Samples of your child's work in each subject area
- Report cards with quarterly/semester/yearly grades
- Attendance records (A wall calendar works well.)
- Health and immunization records
- Correspondence with school district officials
- Assessment tests or standardized testing
- Photo albums of field trips, artwork, projects, and family life
- Course of study (scope and sequence) for each subject taught and the curriculum resources being used to teach each subject
- Reports on extracurricular activities like field trips, volunteer work, and part-time jobs.



The records you keep today can have an impact on your children's future tomorrow!

Like your homeschooling schedule, you may need to re-evaluate and simplify your recordkeeping process so it doesn't rob too much time from your day. Keep in mind that recordkeeping works best if you stay consistent with the approach to learning that your family has chosen. Most of all, remember that homeschooling is a choice, and recordkeeping is a small, but very important part of that choice.

Digging Deeper

- Read [The Importance of Homeschool Record Keeping](#) by Alpha Omega Publications.

Congratulations!

You made it through AOP's Seven Steps to Start Homeschooling!

As many parents will tell you, homeschooling can feel overwhelming when you don't know the first steps to take. The process of making a commitment, finding a support group, selecting a homeschool curriculum, learning the law, developing a schedule and recordkeeping system, and understanding your children's learning styles can take several months.

However, with the advice of others, the support from friends, and the strength of God's sustaining love, **you can homeschool successfully**. Alpha Omega Publications hopes the insights listed here make your journey easier and prepare you for the many wonderful blessings and joys that come from leading your family in the greatest adventure of all – homeschooling!