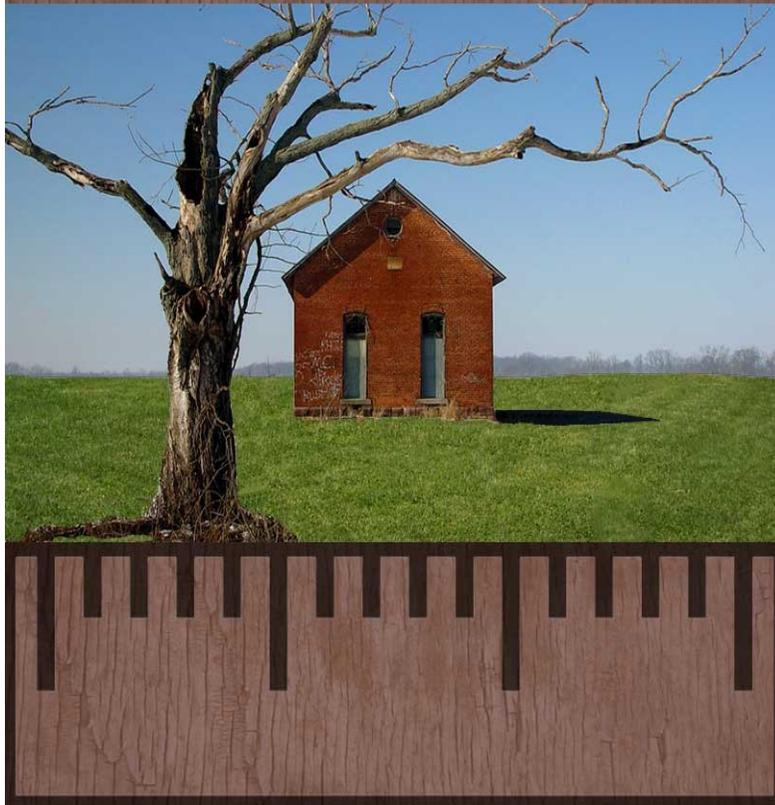


A Leap of Faith: Getting Started with Homeschooling



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A Leap of Faith: Getting Started with Homeschooling

Several Reasons to Consider Homeschooling

The connotation surrounding homeschooling, at first, was one of being different, unusual, or perhaps even anti-social. However, today's view of homeschooling is becoming one of possibility. Homeschooling seems to fit the needs of both parents and students alike, and avoids many of the stereotypical interactions that teens, most especially, face today.



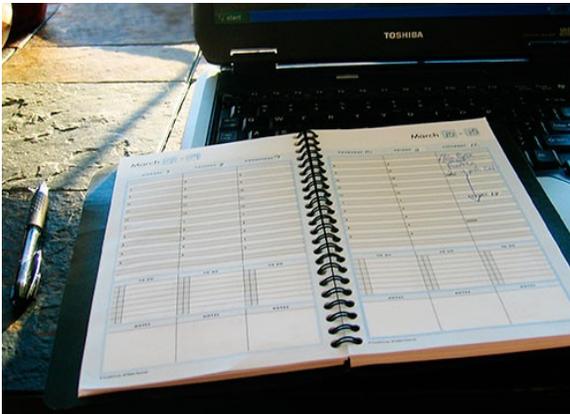
There are several reasons to consider homeschooling:

- Flexible scheduling
- Opportunity for obtaining gainful employment
- More time spent with family and siblings
- Less anxiety about social situations
- Learning at your own pace, even excelling at a faster pace if desired
- Time for travel and extracurricular activities outside the home
- It shows that you have the ability to be self-directed, organized, and responsible
- No concern for snow days or inclement weather
- No missing the bus drama
- No hassles about what to wear
- Vacation time is your time

Flexible Scheduling

When it comes to flexible scheduling, nothing surpasses the opportunity for flexibility like homeschooling. With homeschooling, you have the option of remaining disciplined and adhering to your own set schedule or, if circumstances come up, you can change and

rearrange that schedule in order to suit your family's needs.



You may choose to start your day every day at 8:00 a.m. like a traditional school schedule or you may choose to let your children sleep in a little later and extend further out into the day. It all depends on how your family dynamics work and what works best for you and your children.

Some families opt to get up early and get out of the house earlier at the end of the school day. This allows them to engage with other children their own age and join in extracurricular activities and even work.

Opportunity for Gainful Employment

Many families find that there is more room for growth in the area of gainful employment. For example, families that choose to homeschool early have the ability to have a teen obtain an after-school job a lot earlier than traditional school even lets out. This offers the opportunity for a homeschooled child to have the ability to attain employment that may otherwise not have been available.



Many parents also opt to homeschool later in the afternoon, which, again, offers the young teen the opportunity for a daytime position, whereas that option is not available while attending traditional high school.



More Time with Family and Siblings

If you ask some parents of homeschooled children, they will tell you that once they have homeschooling down to a "science," there is more time for family and siblings. Homeschooling earlier than the average student will offer the opportunity to get out and play earlier than usual.

Working on a flexible schedule allows you to go at a little faster pace in order to catch up should there be a vacation or family outing coming down the pike.

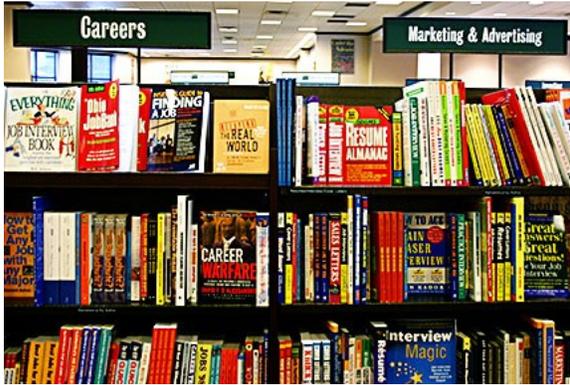
No Bully Worries

Children of all ages, not just teens, have to worry about bullying and the social peer pressures that come with attending traditional schooling. With homeschooling, there is no worry about bullying or peer pressure, at least during the school day.



Eliminating the social and peer pressures that all children are exposed to once they enter school is a win/win situation for both the parents and the children. Parents can rest easily knowing that their child is not exposed to all the negative social aspects and that their children are able to concentrate on their studies. Children can sit back, relax, and learn.

It is All about the Resume



Most parents that opt to homeschool do not even realize until later on how good homeschooling may look on a resume. If a child is homeschooled and excels at it, a potential college or employer may view this as a sign of strength. Having self-discipline, being organized, and being able to self-direct are all signs of success in the eyes of future college administrators looking over a college application.

Ultimate Freedom in Many Ways

There are numerous ways that homeschooling can offer ultimate freedom. For example, a family can vacation on the "off" season while other children are still in school. No long lines or waiting in the hot sun to see an attraction. Something like this is priceless for a family who enjoys traveling.

There are no worries for missed school buses or having a meltdown because a favorite pair of jeans is not wash-and-wear ready. Being caught up in name brands and labels is not much of a concern during the day, either. Driving your children to school in inclement weather is also a thing of the past when you choose to homeschool.



Potential Obstacles to Homeschooling



Just like anything else in life, homeschooling can have its downside, as well. For some parents and children alike homeschooling, at first, can seem a little isolating. Being at home day after day can become a bit tedious without the addition of changing classes, homeroom interaction, or even simply a gym class to switch things up a bit. Also, for parents, homeschooling is something you must be

dedicated and committed to at all times, otherwise your child may notice your lack of interest or enthusiasm. Therefore, there may be some pressure on the parents to be “on their game” at all times.

Also, parents need to have a strong sense of self-discipline. It would be so easy to want to run an errand or run the washing machine, that homeschooling may fall behind a little bit. It is a serious undertaking for parents and you need to be completely versed and prepared yourself before you try to sell the idea to your children.

However, another bonus is that some homeschooling is done entirely online with a more hands-off approach to homeschooling. Just one example of that comes from Provost Academy based from South Carolina, <http://sc.provostacademy.com/>.

While something like this may seem to be a “hands-off” approach for parents, there are still obligations and duties of the parent, student, and teacher in order to fulfill high school graduation requirements.

Another potential obstacle for some homeschooled students may be the lack of social interaction. Some children thrive better in an environment with like-minded peers. Not having the ability to interact with those from the band club or drama club may have a negative impact, leaving some children feeling as though they are out of the loop.

Communication between Parents and Children

While it may seem that homeschooling is a way out for parents to be engaged and active in their child’s performance, nothing could be further from the truth.

Parental Involvement

Some homeschooling entities provide informational guidelines for parents. For example:

- Tips on how to stay connected with educators
- How to monitor your child’s online progress
- How to stay motivated, lead by example, and keep your child motivated
- Using a parent portal to stay connected with your child’s progress

With online homeschooling, no parent is cut off from communication with their child’s instructors or from the progress that their child is making. Parents are able to maintain an easy involvement and stay readily informed at any given time. Parents readily are able to see anything pertinent to their child’s online homeschooling experience. For example:

- Academic progress



- Posted grades
- Communication with academic advisors and instructors
- Up and coming schedules and classes

Academic Involvement

You will find that with most online learning environments for homeschooling there is a sufficient and satisfactory amount of interaction with instructors and academic advisors. The beauty of online learning is that communication is just an email or click away in the parent portal.

More than likely, you will find a strong relationship with your child's academic advisor for the classes he or she is taking now and forward into the future, as well. Most academic advisors have a lifetime love of learning and want to see their students excel into the future.

An academic advisor is able to guide students to get where they need to go. Most online learning systems for homeschooling even offer a guidance staff that can and will direct students to opportunities that they may have otherwise missed. These academic advisors are similar to the ones found in traditional high school settings that prepare young high school students for their education after high school and beyond.

The Legal Side of Homeschooling



While you may be excited and everyone else is on-board for homeschooling, it is imperative to explore the legal side of homeschooling. Every state has its own laws, rules, and regulations, and you need to be well versed in all of them.

An excellent resource is the website, <http://www.hslda.org/laws/> to find out detailed information about what the requirements for the state you are currently in requires concerning homeschooling.

As a parent, you want to make sure that you have all your ducks in a row and that your child's education is protected for the future before you proceed forth with jumping right into homeschooling.

Check with your local school district for do's and don'ts of homeschooling, as well.

The Curriculum behind Homeschooling

For the most part, a typical curriculum will include academic materials from which the children are to learn from, but also may include extra materials such as:

- Additional support via online instruction in the form of games, videos, or podcasts
- Manuals, materials, and hands-on lesson plans
- Textbooks, notebooks

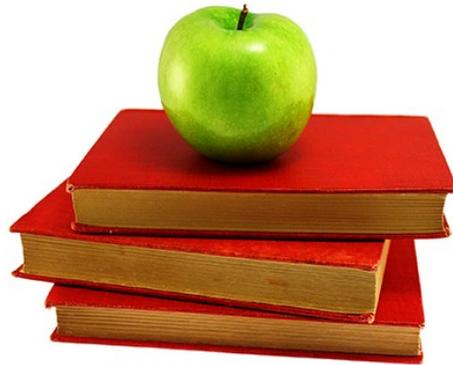
A typical homeschooling setup will include many of the following:

- English
- Mathematics
- The Sciences
- Social Studies
- Art, music, and languages, just to name a few extras

Check with your children's school districts to find out what their requirements are that need fulfilling in regard to advancement to the next grade and/or graduating from high school.

There are many different ways to plan your curriculum; you can go out on your own or follow one of many methods. For example:

- The Montessori Method – a method which employs children discovering rather than rote memorizing and instruction
- An online curriculum where the child is independent of the parent, but the parent has interaction within the parent portal
- Traditional style of teaching, utilizing mainly textbooks and lesson plans
- Or a combination of any of the above and more



One of the benefits of homeschooling and curriculum is that you can rearrange your teaching style to suit one or more of your children. One particular child may need a hands-on approach where another thrives better on his or her own. This is one of the benefits that are not so apparent when an individual considers homeschooling. It does not have to be across the board. You can tailor it to each individual child.

There are many avenues to pursue when seeking extra help in planning your curriculum. For example, you can peruse the library, the bookstores, and the internet just to name a few when seeking extra help. Also, support groups and blogs are excellent ways to feed off other creative homeschooling parents.

The Social Aspect of Homeschooling

Many individuals who have not had the homeschooling experience tend to view it in a way that is negative concerning the social aspect of homeschooling. However, hundreds of thousands of people cannot be wrong when it comes to the brighter side of socialization and homeschooling.

For the most part, homeschooling tends to minimize the negative impact of peer pressure and maximize the importance of use of time when it comes to adolescents and teens, as well. Homeschooling offers an end to a means. It is a way of educating your child while avoiding all the distractions about what to wear, what clique your child may belong to or, worse yet, how he or she may not fit in. Bullying is a catchphrase that is all too common in the school setting.

Children who are homeschooled may still belong to after-school activities and extracurricular activities, just the same as a child who attends traditional schooling. The only difference is your homeschooled child may get there earlier or later, depending on the family's schedule.



There are a multitude of after-school activities or even private extra-curricular activities that a homeschooled child may take part in, as well.

Homeschooling offers peace of mind to the student knowing that he or she will not have to deal with all the drama and emotions that part of being an adolescent or teen involves. Another aspect of

socialization is that a parent can rest assured that their student-child is safe at home while learning. Unfortunately, many students today are going to school with worry and fear about frightening incidents occurring in their lives while attending school.

The news, unfortunately, is full of stories where every day children went off to school and then something tragic happens. This can alleviate fear and worry for the students, but equally importantly in the parents, as well.

Staying Connected When Homeschooling

Many parents feel that they want or desire connection while their child receives an education. Things like field trips or being class moms are important, as parents want to show an interest in their children's activities when it comes to academics.

However, there are many ways for a parent to stay connected with other parents when homeschooling their children. A great way to stay connected is through social media networking. There are many sites that are specifically geared toward staying connected when homeschooling.

Sites such as Facebook and Twitter help to alleviate concerns for parents while allowing them to share an exchange of creative ways to cover those concerns. Sharing positive interaction, as well, is a great way to surround yourself with like-minded individuals who are going the homeschooling route.

While homeschooling may still have a view of not being mainstream, social media is a great way to shake that feeling off and connect with others who share the same experiences and views.

Posting a quick tweet can sometimes mean the difference between feeling as though you are falling behind and failing and lifting your spirits when other parents re-tweet and comment on your post; especially when they are sharing similar concerns or weaknesses.

Pinterest is another fabulous way to stay connected and even bring extra enjoyment to the homeschooling process. On Pinterest, you can find many valuable resources such as:

- Books
- Resources
- Additional Sites
- Creative Ideas
- Networking
- Crafts

Being engaged in social media is a wise choice indeed for homeschooling parents. It offers you an opportunity to exchange ideas, woes, creative ideas, and simply as an outlet for many issues that come up with the whole homeschooling venture.

Last but not least, for social media, another great idea is to connect with other parents via your own blog. Creating your own blog allows you the freedom and power to say what you want when you want. You can include a comments section to see how other parents feel about what you have blogged about while venting and sharing the ins, outs, negatives, and positives or your own personal experience as a homeschooling parent.

If you feel you do not have the time or the desire to create your own blog, then by all means, you should look into other parents' blogs. These blogs can offer some lighthearted humor, camaraderie, and just plain old fun to the business at hand, which is educating your own child.

Extra Tips for Parents Wanting to Homeschool

If you have made the choice to homeschool, found out the legalities of it, created a schedule, purchased supplies, and basically did all that you felt was necessary to homeschool your child, do not forget about yourself in the mix.

It is easy to become overzealous and want to be the best teacher you can be for your child and to make it an awesome experience for them, as well. However, you need to remember to take time out for yourself. There is such a thing as homeschooling burnout if you are not careful.



There are many ways to make this an easier and more enjoyable task, as well.

Take Time Outs

A time out is not only for a child who has lost his or her way and needs to think about their actions. A time out is a great way for both you and your child to take a break. If you feel it necessary to, schedule a short naptime in between for both yourself and your younger child.

Taking time out for a healthy snack or a brisk walk around the corner or a 30-minute adventure to the park are all great ways to break up the monotony and to provide a much-needed release for both you and your child.

Take it Outdoors

A superb bonus for homeschooling is that you may school your child outdoors in your very own garden. This brings some much-needed healthy sunshine and fresh air to you both while providing a relaxing backdrop for studies.

Let Yourself off the Hook

It is okay to go into homeschooling full of enthusiasm and zest; however, it is also perfectly all right to know and accept that there will be challenging days. Sometimes it is okay to let yourself off the hook and say that you are both having a rough day and tackle the problem with a fresh mind tomorrow.

Trying to persist because you are concerned about whether or not you are failing only puts added pressure on your child. Know when to take a step back and know when something is simply not working. It is okay to try different things if one is not working.

Eat, Drink, Sleep, and Be Well

Keep in mind that the beauty of homeschooling really is that you get to set your own schedule and your own pace. Take time out to eat healthy snacks and nutritious meals, not just for your children, but for yourself, as well. If naptime is necessary either for you or your child, take a 15 minute siesta break. Remember to stay hydrated all day long. Most traditional schools frown upon bottles of water or fresh-brewed iced tea alongside a desk while a child is learning.

Setting the Bar from the Outset

Before beginning to homeschool your child, decide who and what you are going to be to them while educating them. If you are going to wear the friend hat, then know what comes along with that; if you are going to assume the role of professional teacher, then be prepared to follow through and act accordingly. Talk to other parents about how to balance wearing the parent/teacher hat at the same time.

If you are going to have a loose-fitting schedule that is subject to change, let your children know that there is room for growth. However, on the other hand, if you choose to attempt to stick to and adhere to a set schedule, let them know in no uncertain terms what your expectations of them are for that schedule.

Setting up Meetings

It might be a good idea to set up a meeting time and place during a set time every week. In this manner, you have an outlet to discuss what you feel you need and your children will have the same opportunity.

Letting your children know that they have a voice and a say in the matter, especially when it comes to their own education, is imperative to the success of homeschooling. Feel free to discuss ideas, problems, solutions, and creatively work them out according to each individual. Remember, although it is your responsibility to educate your children, it is, after all, their responsibility to learn.

Making the Grade

This is a tough nut to crack when it comes to our children. How many times has your child come home only to say that it is the teacher and not them causing the inability to learn? Sometimes, it is true that a child/teacher fit is not a good one indeed.

While we all love and adore our children, handing out a grade that they did not earn is something that you have to keep in perspective. Not wanting to hurt a child's self-esteem is one of the key downfalls in grading your child's work. When an educator grades a paper, there is a detachment from the child and simply an interest in the material as to whether or not they have grasped it.

In wanting our children to succeed, it might be all too easy to think with our hearts instead of with our academic minds. The desire to give a little curve may come into play, and do not be surprised if it does.

Try to be objective when it comes to matters of grading; keep in mind that you harm your child more than you help when you try to let them slide when it comes to their academic grades.

In Conclusion: The Final Say



When it comes to homeschooling, one of the best benefits is that you have the final say in the matter at hand. If you plan properly, do your research, reach out to others who have gone before you, and keep the lines of communication open with your children, you should find the utmost success in your homeschooling endeavors.