

# **HOMESCHOOLING 101**

Beginner's Guide to Homeschooling

#### **Homeschooling 101**

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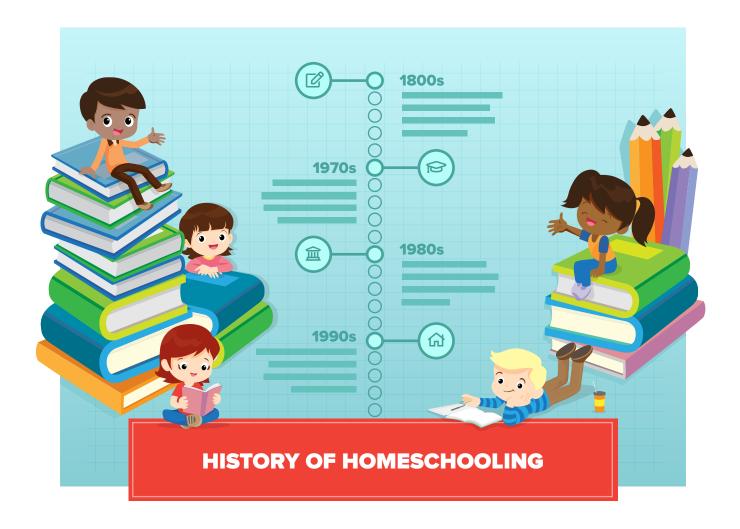


If you've downloaded this eBook, that means you're interested in learning more about homeschooling.

At Demme Learning, we trust that parents know their children best and make decisions that are appropriate for their education. Choosing a method for your child's education is a monumental decision. We understand that deciding whether or not to homeschool can be difficult. The goal of this eBook is to share over 30 years' worth of experience and resources with you as you consider this journey for your family.

Homeschooling is a highly personalized option that makes sense for a wide variety of families for a wide variety of reasons. We hope to provide you with helpful, unbiased information so you can evaluate if this option would work for your family.

Keep in mind that when you make a decision to homeschool, you are not committing to any specific amount of time—you're simply making a decision that is right for this point in your lives. You are not required to continue with any educational choice longer than it makes sense for your family. There are a myriad of options available. So although the topic of this eBook is homeschooling, we're not advocating one method of education over any other. While the majority of homeschoolers do not homeschool for their child's entire K–12 education, it can be an ideal choice at a particular time in your life.



Homeschooling as we think of it today has been around since the 1970s, but before our modern era of mandatory schooling, children learned at home for millennia. "Going to school" was reserved for the clergy or the wealthy, and the home learning experience was a very practical one, usually provided by a parent or caregiver. Children learned to work in the fields, make clothes, construct buildings, raise livestock, and perform other necessary tasks for everyday life. Reading, writing, and arithmetic were taught at a level needed to handle basic affairs. Literacy was primarily the province of the clergy or the ruling elite until the invention of the printing press made books more common and affordable.

Literacy was highly valued in the American colonies and more common than in Europe during the early years of the United States. Laws requiring school attendance were initially established in the U.S. in 1852. These laws made homeschooling illegal and forced the American public to rely entirely on public and private schools. Consequently, homeschooling was rarely practiced until the 1970s when the modern homeschooling movement was born.

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During this time, educational reformers were beginning to question the effectiveness of public schools and their techniques. One of the main leaders of the new homeschool movement was John Holt, who argued that schools had too much of a focus on an oppressive classroom environment. He encouraged parents to liberate their children from formal education. Many people connected around this movement through Holt's newsletter *Growing Without Schooling*. A fellow educational theorist, Raymond Moore, also became a voice of the movement and felt that receiving an early education at home provided children with a strong moral, psychological, and academic foundation.

As the movement grew, parents' concerns were eventually acknowledged at the legislative level, and homeschooling was legalized in every state. Unfortunately, some states still had strict regulations that made homeschooling difficult or impossible, like requiring parents to have teaching licenses. Early homeschoolers were incredible advocates who worked with local school boards, public officials, and legal counsel to change the way that homeschooling was perceived and implemented.

Currently, the regulation of homeschooling varies greatly from state to state, but the requirements are far more reasonable now overall than they used to be. By 1989, most states had accepted homeschoolers thanks to both religious and secular homeschoolers working together to form organizations and withstand legal battles during the 1980s. One of these impactful organizations that still exists today is the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA).

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Many families who are considering homeschooling should first look into the demographic data of homeschoolers. It is important for homeschoolers to have support and confidence in their journey so that they can have a successful and enjoyable experience. The number of families engaging in home education has grown significantly in North America in the last twenty years and continues to increase steadily. Here are eight current homeschool statistics:



Homeschooling rates are growing at a rate of **2–8%** each year.



There were about **3.1 million** home educated students in the United States in 2022.



An estimated **9 million** Americans have been homeschooled at some point in their education.



The average homeschooler educates at home for six to eight years.



The most common reason for choosing to homeschool is uneasiness with public and private school environments.



Homeschooled students score 15–30% higher on average than public school students on standardized academic achievement tests.



**83**% of families continue homeschooling past their first year. Of them, **89**% continue for three or more years.



Whether or not homeschooling parents are certified teachers does not impact their children's academic achievement.

• = 100,000 people

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# SOME OF THE MOST COMMON REASONS FOR HOMESCHOOLING INCLUDE:

Providing an individualized learning experience for each child





Using alternative approaches to learning

Achieving higher academic accomplishments than traditional school





Providing a safer educational environment

Teaching a particular set of values to your children





Enhancing family relationships between parents and siblings







Having greater flexibility for extracurricular activities

Customizing curriculum to meet your child's specific needs, interests, and goals





Being able to adapt instruction if your student is not on the same academic level as peers

# Homeschooling Laws

Worrying about the laws surrounding homeschooling is something that keeps many people from seriously considering it for their family. Homeschooling laws vary from state to state, but there are quite a few comprehensive resources that explain the laws and regulations.

It is important to research the homeschooling laws in your state via your state department of education or HSLDA. HSLDA does a wonderful job of compiling current legal information. Simply choose which state you live in and read the information about homeschool laws in your particular state. You will find that many of these guidelines are manageable and give you a better idea of what to expect should you choose to homeschool.

# **Homeschool Styles**

Whether you realize it or not, you have been homeschooling your child since they were born! You have helped them learn skills like walking and talking, and it is likely that you and your child already have a certain teaching/learning style that works best for the both of you.

One of the major benefits of homeschooling is that you can personalize your educational experience however you see fit! Below, you will find some common homeschooling approaches which you can choose from or mix-and-match to meet your family's needs.



#### **Traditional**

The traditional style of homeschooling imitates a typical school classroom. There is a reliance on textbooks and organization by grade level and subject. This method is sometimes referred to as "school at home," and it can be a good option for those who are homeschooling temporarily with plans for their children to return to a conventional school system in a year or two.



#### Classical

The classical method of homeschooling puts a strong emphasis on literature, history, grammar, and logic. The early grades are focused on teaching basic skills and concepts. Once a strong foundation is built, students are taught logic and reasoning in the middle grades before moving on to skillful expression during the high school years. This three-part process is sometimes referred to as the trivium.



#### **Charlotte Mason**

Charlotte Mason was a 19th-century British educator who is known for using "living books" instead of textbooks. "Living books," whether fiction or nonfiction, are written by an author who has a clear love for the subject of the book. This is in contrast to textbooks, which are often written by committees. After reading them, children are asked to narrate what they have learned rather than answer specific questions. There is an emphasis on history, literature, nature, and the arts through this method, and many companies now use the Charlotte Mason method in their programs.



### **Unit Studies**

Unlike traditional approaches that teach subjects separately, unit studies use a similar theme to combine several subject areas. History, literature, art, music, and other subjects can revolve around a similar topic or theme. Unit studies also typically include handson activities that can be used to teach students different ages at the same time, and help them see real-life connections between subjects.



## Unschooling

The core theory behind unschooling is the belief that children learn what is important when it is important to them. The parents' role is to surround their children with learning tools and help them through the learning process according to the student's timetable. John Holt, who we mentioned on page 6 of this eBook, helped start the unschooling movement. He believed that children have an innate desire to learn that can be stifled by conventional schooling methods.



# **Relaxed Homeschooling**

This style of homeschooling is an option for home educators who are not completely comfortable with an unschooling approach. Relaxed homeschooling requires more parental involvement than unschooling while still valuing unconventional ways of learning. It focuses on following the student's interests and taking advantage of teachable moments.



# **Online or Cyber Schools**

The options for conducting some or all of a student's schooling online have increased dramatically in recent years, and families are taking advantage of these resources. Students may take a single course online to supplement other schooling methods, or they may use a cyber school for their entire curriculum. Some online courses are sponsored by private schools or curriculum publishers, while others are publicly-funded charter schools that use a curriculum.



#### **Eclectic**

Most homeschooling parents follow a combination of methods to educate their children. They might use different methods for different subjects, different children, or different stages of the educational process. Many curriculum providers use ideas from various homeschooling styles to create their materials.

We encourage you to research the homeschooling styles that appeal most to you, and then you can find resources that support that style. There are many different ways to approach homeschooling, just as there are many ways to approach parenting in general. There are no right and wrong methods, only methods that are right for your family.



Now that we've covered the history and the current state of homeschooling, homeschooling laws, and the various homeschooling styles to choose from, it's time to dive into more of the day-to-day tips and strategies of being a homeschooler.



#### **Planning**

As you start planning, you want to keep your mission statement and goals at the forefront of your mind. There is a difference between creating a mission statement and outlining goals. While both are important, you should start with the mission statement.

A mission statement sets forth the overarching purpose or vision you have for homeschooling. It should be broad, long-term, and apply to everyone involved. A mission statement will generally include your key values. Goals, on the other hand, are the more specific, measurable, and finite objectives that must be met for your mission to be successful. A goal specifies what you're going to do in the short term.

Here is an example of each:

Mission Statement: To instill creativity, curiosity, and a love of learning through meaningful educational experiences both at home and in the world.

Related Goal: Do a hands-on activity or go on a field trip at least once per week.

Goals help you narrow your focus and are important for keeping you on the right track throughout your homeschooling journey. Ask yourself:

- Why do I want to homeschool?
- How will this fit into our lives?
- What do I want to accomplish by homeschooling?

These questions will help you set priorities for the upcoming days, months, and years.

While it may seem intuitive to set goals with your youngest child in mind first, we suggest that you begin your academic goal-setting with your oldest in mind. As many subjects have elements that repeat, your younger children will catch the content being taught to your oldest child. You also have the least amount of time left with your oldest child, so you should fit your goals for your younger children around those you craft for your eldest.

Once you have a clear mission statement and goals in place, you will want to settle on a homeschooling style that will help your students learn. Homeschooling styles will also help you determine subject areas and materials.

There are a lot of great options available when it comes to homeschooling materials. You can choose a prepackaged curriculum from a single publisher, curriculum from a few different publishers, cyber school curriculum, or even free resources from the internet and library. You can also consider other learning environments like co-ops, online classes, or college dual-enrollment.

While planning is a critical part of homeschooling, spontaneity is still encouraged! Many families love that homeschooling gives them the opportunity to do last-minute trips and adapt schedules as needed. Homeschooling offers a lifestyle that does not revolve around strict schedules, but rather one that provides flexibility to enjoy time with those around you.

☑ Check out these helpful tips for planning your homeschool year! >



# **Scheduling**

As you start to think more about how you would like homeschooling to work in your home, you will need to consider your family's schedule and how homeschooling will fit into that. Homeschooling lends itself to flexibility, but having a routine schedule is still very important to the success of your homeschool journey.

#### To start, ask yourself these six important questions and write down your answers:

- 1. What are the ages of my children?
- 2. What are my goals for them for this year?
- 3. What are my state's requirements?
- 4. Do I need a supervisory affiliation?
- 5. What is my budget for academics this year?
- 6. What extracurriculars do we want to do?

When you look over your list, select three of the most important academic goals and one extracurricular. Yes, only one! You do not want to become overwhelmed and spread yourself too thin as you embark on a homeschooling journey. It may seem like you will have a lot of free time for extras until you realize that driving children to and from activities takes up more time than you may have. The focus of homeschooling should be your children's academics and well-being. You can always add activities later if you feel like they are doable and beneficial.

# After you have your priorities laid out, pull out a calendar and answer the following questions:

- Will you be homeschooling all year long?
- When do you want to be done with your school year?
- What are your state requirements and how do they affect your schedule?

Once you answer those questions, you will be able to schedule your year with reasonable start and end dates. Of course, things will come up that may change your schedule slightly, but try to stick to it as much as possible so that you stay on track and do not become overwhelmed.

The weekly schedule is also an important thing to consider closely. Consider the following:

- Will you school five days a week or only four?
- How will you need to arrange the curriculum to meet a shorter school week?
- How many hours each day will you dedicate to schooling?

These weekly schedules give the whole family a sense of routine and structure that can be very helpful while homeschooling. One of the most important things to remember is that your children need YOU more than they need the activities, the events, or even the academics. Spending time with family is one of the greatest time investments and a gift that homeschooling provides.



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### Organizing

There are a wide variety of people who choose to homeschool their children. Some love to be organized in every aspect of their homeschooling journey, while others are attracted to homeschooling because of the flexibility it presents. Regardless of which end of the spectrum you lean towards, you should adopt some organization strategies to simplify your homeschooling experience.

For starters, having a daily framework can be a wonderful thing! Think through a typical week... What has to get done? Meals, bedtimes, basic housekeeping, and now... homeschooling. Creating a list will help you develop a general routine for your family that makes the weeks run a bit more smoothly. So, write it all down! From there, you can build out a general plan to tackle all of those to-dos. There are several useful planning tools to help with this, both digital and physical.

Another basic organization strategy is having a designated spot for your school materials. You need to be able to find all of your materials quickly and easily, which happens much more often when you have a designated "school zone."

We also suggest including housework routines into your daily and weekly schedules. Dividing chores amongst the family into reasonable tasks can be very helpful. Doing one big and one small chore each day is a good starting point to divvy up responsibilities. You will also want to have a regular meal routine in place to help keep the days moving efficiently. Pro tip: plan your academics around meal times to help establish a healthy routine and allow for brain breaks.

All of that said, don't be afraid to try new things and adjust your routine if it's not working for your family. The order of what you accomplish in a day, or even a week, can be very flexible as long as you are consistently working towards your goals.



As you consider whether homeschooling is the right choice for your family, we want to encourage you with some tips and insights from experienced homeschoolers and support personnel within our Demme Learning family!

This is a wonderful step into lifelong learning for your entire family: exploring together, working together, creating together. You'll also be making mistakes together, learning from them, and forgiving each other. You have the opportunity to study your children and learn from them while they're learning from you. Look for other homeschooling families to share with, and be sure and find yourself a support network. Then take one day at a time and enjoy your children!"

**Lisa Chimento** 

Placement Specialist/Customer Success Consultant

Homeschool parent of four children for 25 years

While I did not homeschool my children, I have been assisting homeschool parents with individualized plans for over 30 years. I have learned and continue to be inspired from my conversations with parents. The two most profound things I have learned from my conversations is the value of perseverance while learning to embrace the habit of overcoming perfectionism. Finding support systems which work with and for you will be of great value. I truly believe in the power of homeschool families."

Sue Wachter

Placement Specialist/Public Charter Support

Home educating is the hardest, most rewarding experience you will ever have. Remember that we are growing and learning right alongside our children. If we homeschool well, we foster the love of learning and create lifelong learners. Homeschooling is a marathon. While sometimes we have to sprint, remember it is a distance and endurance race. Comparison is the thief of joy. Protect your joy! Each child has a unique path. Our job is to walk alongside them and encourage them along the way."

**Amanda Capps** 

Customer Service Representative

Homeschool parent of eight children for 14 years and counting

Take the plunge. It will be worth it. You will learn right alongside your children, and modeling learning in all forms is the best way to homeschool. Enjoy the opportunities as they come and savor the time because it passes very quickly. You CAN do it!"

#### **Gretchen Roe**

Community Relations Coordinator

Homeschool parent of six children for 21 years

You get an extra 17,280 hours with your children because you kept them home. Being a homeschooler is not about what you gave up to educate your children. It is about what you and they gained from doing it. As homeschoolers, we are not trying to do school better. We are trying to do something better than school. Popcorn is popped in the same pot, with the same oil and the same heat and yet...the kernels do not pop at the same time. Don't compare your children to others, their turn to pop will come."

#### Kathleen Calabrese

Customer Service Representative

Homeschool parent of two children for 21 years

Embrace flexibility and be open-minded to let your child follow their interests. You might be amazed at where their interests lead!"

Kim Greene

Customer Service Coordinator

Homeschool parent for seven years

I choose to homeschool my children because of the flexibility and freedom it gives our family. I am able to teach my children at a pace, time, and manner that is most beneficial for them. My children are each different, with unique needs, skills, interests, and abilities. Homeschooling allows me to capitalize on those differences and integrate them into their educational experience."

Jeff Turner
Director of Marketing
Homeschool parent of three for nine years

In my 18+ years of working alongside homeschool families, I heard many stories and sensed many emotions through their stories. One emotion that I never felt or heard from a homeschool parent was regret. Each emotion stemmed from the love of their child and the hopes that they had for them. This doesn't mean the journey will be easy—nothing worth doing ever is. Recognize that nobody knows your child and loves your child more than you do. You are the best teacher for them!"

Michael Sas
DL Placement Specialist

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At Demme Learning, we love providing families with practical information and insights to improve their homeschooling experience. Below is a list of some additional homeschooling resources that we recommend checking out if you are just getting started on this journey! We also suggest researching some local homeschooling organizations in your state to find additional information.

### **Demme Learning Blogs**

Gain helpful tips and information on a wide variety of educational topics.

So You've Decided to Homeschool. Now What?

Homeschool Planning: 7 Steps to Develop a Simple Homeschool Plan

SMART Goal Setting for Students: 5 Steps to Success

Making the Minutes Count: 10 Time Management Strategies for Students

4 Tips on How to Prevent Homeschool Burnout

Homeschool Convention Guide

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# **Demme Learning Webinars**

Watch past webinar recordings for advice and encouragement from homeschool veterans.

Creating a Love of Learning

Advice for First-Time Homeschoolers

Homeschool Planning with Pam Barnhill

How to Homeschool Multiple Children

Goal Setting: An Essential Skill for Your Homeschool Journey

Habits: How Establishing Them Helps Your Homeschool Journey

Evaluating Your Course and Considering Changes to Your Homeschool Plan

# **Demme Learning Support Center**

Find answers to common questions regarding our products.

Math-U-See

Spelling You See

WriteShop

**Analytical Grammar** 

**Digital Tools** 



If you have further questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us here at Demme Learning. You can email us at customerservice@demmelearning.com or call 888-854-6284. Our customer service team is very knowledgeable and responsive, and they are eager to support you in any way that they can as you begin your homeschool journey.

If you are interested in purchasing one of our programs and need help finding the right starting point for your student, connect with one of our Placement Specialists at 888-854-6284.

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