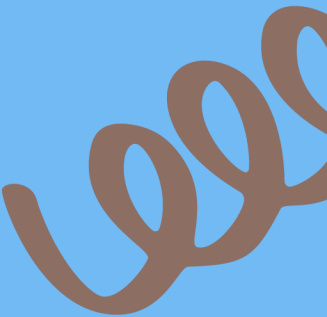
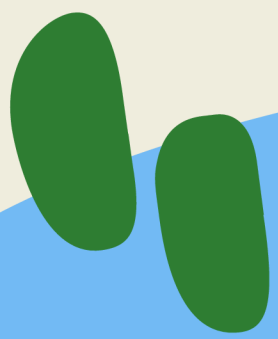




Homegrown Scholar Network's

Homeschool A-Z

GUIDE



Welcome to the A-Z of Homeschooling



Homeschooling is more than a decision; it's a journey. And like any journey, it's easier when you understand the path ahead.

Many families begin homeschooling with excitement, but also with uncertainty. Questions come quickly: Am I doing enough? Am I doing this right? What happens as my child gets older? Those questions don't disappear after the first year — they often become more important as children move into middle school and beyond.

This A-Z Homeschool Guide was created to help you understand the foundations that support a strong, sustainable homeschool at any stage, with a special focus on helping you create meaningful learning experiences that fit your family. Inside, each letter breaks down an essential piece of the homeschool experience — from mindset and routines to planning, records, assessment, and long-term vision.

Whether you're just starting or refining your approach as your child grows, this guide is designed to bring clarity, confidence, and direction. You don't have to have everything figured out today. You need a framework that helps you move forward, one step, one day, one letter at a time.

Ask Yourself Why: Homeschooling is a journey, and every journey needs a reason.

Before you get started, take time to ask yourself why you want to homeschool your child. Your “why” becomes your anchor. On the tough days (and there will be some), coming back to that reason will help you stay focused, encouraged, and confident in the path you’ve chosen.

Building Schedules and Routines: Schedules and routines are the roadmaps that help guide both your year and your day.

As a homeschooler, you decide what your calendar looks like, whether that’s year-round learning, following your local school district, or creating something in between.

Your school day doesn’t have to look like traditional school. You can start early, sleep in, homeschool mornings only, or spread it out over the day. What matters most is that your schedule works for your family. Consistent routines (not rigid rules) help keep things running smoothly, and remember: **anytime is a good time to learn.**





Curriculum A Tool, Not the Starting Point

One of the first questions new homeschool parents ask is, "What curriculum should I use?"

While curriculum can be helpful, I've learned that it's not the place to start.

Before choosing a curriculum, ask yourself:

- What do I want my child to know and be able to do?
- What kind of learning experience do I want to create?
- What are my child's strengths, interests, and needs?
- How much structure do I need as the teacher?

Once you have clarity around your goals, curriculum becomes what it was always meant to be: a tool to support your homeschool—not the thing that defines it.

The beauty of homeschooling is that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Some families thrive with a structured, all-in-one curriculum. Others prefer to mix and match resources, use library books, or design learning experiences around their children's interests. Most homeschoolers do a little of both.

Looking for a Place to Start?

Here are a few resources worth exploring:

Free:

- [Khan Academy](#) – 100% free, video-based lessons in math, science, grammar, and more.
- [CK-12](#) – Interactive digital textbooks with built-in practice and simulations.
- [Core Knowledge Foundation](#) (Free) – Downloadable curriculum sequences by grade focused on building knowledge across subjects.
- [Discovery K12](#) (DK12) – free, secular, online homeschool curriculum for Pre-K through 12th grade, offering 180 days of core academic lessons, classic literature, STEM projects, and optional electives.
- [Treasure Hunt Reading](#) – A fun tool for teaching kids how to read

Paid:

- [*Schoolio](#) – Structured, secular, and beginner-friendly. I've personally used it with my oldest child, who has ADHD.
- [Allinonecurriculum.com](#) (Paid) – Full, structured curriculum for all grade levels and core subjects.
- [Brilliant Homeschool](#) (Paid) – Engaging and creative. I loved it my first year but didn't continue due to price.
- [Build Your Library](#) (Paid) – Literature-based with well-structured lesson plans, especially strong in reading and history.
- [Torchlight](#) (Paid) – A book-rich curriculum that encourages curiosity and conversation.
- [Time4Learning](#) (Paid) – Online, interactive curriculum. We tried it for 3rd grade, but it didn't suit our needs.
- [FunCation Academy](#) (Paid) – Online homeschool program that supports grades K–12. Looks promising for high school-level structure and support.

Deschooling

Deschooling is a transitional period where both parents and children adjust to a new way of learning by letting go of the traditional school mindset.

This is your opportunity to redefine what education looks like for your family. Step outside the classroom and into the world. Deschooling doesn't mean not learning; it means learning on your terms.



Essential Supplies

There's no homeschooling without your essential supplies. Just like in traditional school, you'll still need basics like pencils, paper, crayons, notebooks, and scissors. But you'll also want tools like internet access, a reliable device (smartphone, laptop, tablet, or desktop), a printer, a 3-hole punch, and even a laminator. The good news? You probably already have most of these at home, so you're halfway there!



F



Free Resources

Homeschooling doesn't have to break the bank. There are plenty of free resources available to help you teach your child effectively, no expensive curriculum required.

Here are a few I personally enjoy:

- pbslearningmedia.org – Educational videos and activities
- teacherspayteachers.com – Free and paid printables
- k5learning.com – Math and reading practice
- k12reader.com – Great for spelling lists
- 123homeschool4me.com – Tons of free printable activities
- boddlelearning.com – Game-based learning for math and language arts (sign up as teacher)
- anton.app – Interactive, game-style exercises in various subjects for grades K–8

And don't forget your local library, it's one of the most valuable free resources available. From books and audiobooks to educational programs and even curriculum kits in some areas, the library is a homeschooler's best friend.

Keep this list handy — you'll come back to it often!

G



Goals and Growth

Homeschooling isn't just about covering material, it's about growth over time. Before each year (or even each month), set realistic goals for your child and yourself. These can be academic, personal, or even family-related.

At the same time, give yourself permission to adjust as you go. Growth won't always look like test scores, sometimes it's increased confidence, curiosity, or emotional maturity. Celebrate small wins and remember: progress matters more than perfection.

Homeschooling Laws

Homeschooling is legal in all 50 states and U.S. territories; however, each state has its own laws, and it's essential to be aware of and comply with them.

The best place to start is your state's Department of Education website. You can also check your state assembly or legislature's site to read the official law for yourself.

Knowing the laws helps protect your family from unnecessary interference and ensures your homeschool program stays in good standing.

Individualized Learning

Everyone learns differently, and homeschooling makes true individualized learning possible.

Children are often more engaged when their interests and experiences are included in the learning process. For example, my 5-year-old son loves cars, so I bring toy cars into his learning. Whether he's counting, tracing letters, or sorting colors, the lesson becomes more engaging because it connects to something he already enjoys.

Homeschooling is also a powerful option for neurodivergent children, those with learning differences, or gifted learners. Every child can move at their own pace, without feeling behind or being held back. No pressure to keep up. No boredom from waiting on others to catch up. Just learning that fits.





J



Juggling Life and Homeschool

When your child is enrolled in a traditional school, you have the support of teachers, staff, and a set schedule. However, when you homeschool, you take on full responsibility, often with little to no outside support. That can make juggling daily life and homeschooling a real challenge.

As we mentioned in letter B, having a schedule and routine that works for your family is key. Try weaving chores, basic hygiene tasks, and household responsibilities into your homeschool day. This makes life more manageable and helps your child develop responsibility and independence, all while learning.

Keeping Records

Keeping records helps you stay compliant with your state's laws and gives you something meaningful to look back on as you set goals and measure growth.

Types of records you may want to keep include:

- Attendance logs
- Lesson plans or notes on what was taught
- Work samples
- Grades or mastery checklists

Even if your state doesn't require detailed documentation, simple records can help you stay organized and celebrate how far your child has come.

K

Lesson plan

Learning Differences and Preferences

One of the greatest gifts of homeschooling is the flexibility to adapt learning to the child in front of you.

Rather than focusing on "learning styles," pay attention to what helps your child engage, understand, and persevere. Some children benefit from hands-on experiences, while others enjoy discussion, reading, or having choices in how they learn. Observe your child, try different approaches, and adjust as needed. Homeschooling gives you the freedom to create learning experiences that fit your unique learner.



Mindset Shift

One of the first thoughts many parents have when considering homeschooling is: "Am I qualified to do this?"

The short answer? Yes.

You've already taught your child so much, from walking and talking to everyday life skills. If you can read and comprehend, you can learn. And if you can learn, you can teach.

Even seasoned homeschoolers sometimes second-guess themselves. That's why shifting your mindset is so important. Your homeschool does not have to look like traditional school. You are in control, and as long as your child is learning and growing in the core subjects required by your state, you're doing a good job.

Give yourself permission to do things differently. That's the beauty of homeschooling.



N



Naysayers

When you first start homeschooling, there will be people who just don't understand. Your qualifications may be questioned. Your reasons may be challenged. And some people might simply not support your decision. That's why it's so important to start with your "why." Knowing your why helps you stay focused on your vision and tune out the noise from naysayers.

O



Organization

Organization is an important part of homeschooling, and to be 100% transparent, it's something I still struggle with sometimes. But having systems in place makes everything run smoother.

Start by organizing your physical resources. Invest in bookshelves, rolling carts, or bins to store curriculum and supplies. Keep important documents like your state laws, Declaration of Intent, or homeschool records, in a clearly labeled binder or folder that's easy to access if needed. Help your child organize their work, too. A tidy learning space and clear routines can make the homeschool experience more efficient and enjoyable for everyone.

Planning

Planning and organization go hand in hand, but organization isn't just about putting books in alphabetical order or color-coding subjects. Planning your year, month, or week gives you a roadmap to navigate your day-to-day life.

Some families like to plan ahead, while others use reverse planning — doing the work first and recording afterward. There's no right or wrong method — just be sure you're planning in a way that works for you. Not only does it help keep your homeschool on track, but it also supports accountability and legal compliance.

One common trap homeschool parents fall into is overplanning. You don't need to overload your child with too many subjects or activities. Quality matters more than quantity. Start with the end in mind. Ask yourself: What do I want my child to know and be able to do? Then choose the books, resources, and activities that support those goals.

Questions Will Come

Children are naturally curious, and when you're homeschooling, their questions are a good thing. Listening closely can reveal your child's interests and help guide your lessons in more meaningful ways. Some questions you'll be able to answer right away. Others might require a little research, and that's okay! Use those moments as an opportunity to learn with your child. Even teachers in traditional classrooms don't have all the answers. Homeschooling is part of a lifelong learning journey, so have fun exploring together.

You may also find yourself questioning yourself, wondering if you're doing enough or doing it "right." When that happens, return to your "why." You are more than capable.

P



Q



R



Resistance

Whether you're just starting or have been homeschooling for a while, you'll face resistance. Some days, your kids just won't want to do school, and that's normal.

I remember my first year homeschooling my oldest daughter resisted almost every single day. And nearly five years later, we still have those days. Don't stress too much. When resistance shows up, give yourself permission to pivot and be flexible.

Those days are still opportunities for learning. Lessons about discipline, self-control, or emotional regulation count. Try incorporating your child's interests or letting them take the lead. Play a math-based card game, watch a documentary, or just read a good book together and talk about it. Sometimes, you have to sneak the learning in.

And don't be afraid to take a break. You can always come back later, or even tomorrow.

S



Socialization

The question of socialization comes up way too often when homeschooling is mentioned — and honestly, it can get a little annoying.

News flash: school isn't the only place kids can make friends. If you live in a neighborhood with children, all your kid has to do is go outside. There are also parks, churches, extracurriculars, sports teams, library events, and family gatherings, not to mention homeschool groups and co-ops.

Co-ops (short for "cooperatives") are groups of families who pool their time and resources to offer classes, field trips, and social opportunities. And let's be real, public school socialization isn't always ideal. Most of the day is spent listening, not socializing, and kids don't always end up with the best influences. Homeschooling gives you a bit more say in where and how your child makes friends, and that's not a bad thing.

Testing and Assessment

You can't grow what you don't measure.

Testing and assessments play an important role in tracking your child's development and understanding. Many states require some form of standardized testing, whether annually or every few years. Don't let that intimidate you. These tests are simply tools to help you see where your child stands compared to their peers and whether they need extra review or are ready to move ahead.

In your day-to-day homeschool, you should also include informal assessments. These don't have to be big or stressful, think: verbal reviews, quizzes, writing samples, or hands-on projects. The goal is to make sure your child is actually retaining what they've learned.

Using What You Have

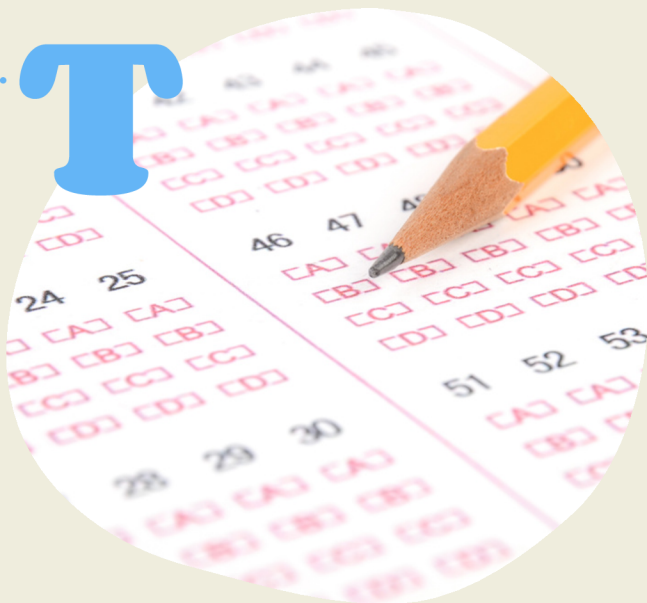
As you go through your homeschool journey, you may start to feel overwhelmed by shiny object syndrome. Once you start researching, you'll be flooded with ads, recommendations, and new resources. You'll download free printables, buy new curriculum, and forget half of it even exists.

Trust me, I do it every year.

Before rushing to buy something new, take time to assess what you already have. Use it. Try it out for at least a week or two. You don't need to try everything all at once.

Stick with what works, and give yourself permission to change it if and when it stops working, not just because something new looks good.

Sometimes the best next step isn't buying something new, it's creating a plan for using what you already have.





Vision for the Future

What's your end goal? Every parent has a reason for choosing to homeschool — the “why.” But what about the “what's next?” What do you want your child and yourself to gain from this journey?

Are you planning to homeschool through high school, or just for a few years? Are your kids considering college, trade school, entrepreneurship, or something else entirely? When your children reach middle school, start having open conversations about their future. Help them explore their interests and how those interests could turn into careers. Consider mentorships, apprenticeships, or project-based learning that builds real-world skills. Helping your child think and plan ahead is one of the most powerful gifts homeschooling can offer.

Working While Homeschooling

A lot of parents worry that working and homeschooling aren't compatible, especially with a full-time job. Homeschooling is often described as a “privilege,” but the truth is, it's possible to work and homeschool, even if it's challenging.

If you have support, it helps. A family member or trusted adult can step in to help with childcare while you work. Some families split shifts, one parent works days while the other works nights, and they team up to share the responsibility of educating their child.

Other parents work from home or run small businesses that allow for more flexibility in their schedules. These setups can make it easier to balance work and homeschool responsibilities throughout the day.

And remember — you can outsource.



X – eXpect the Unexpected

Okay, I know this one doesn't technically start with the letter X, but hear me out. Things are going to happen. Your perfectly planned homeschool day might suddenly feel like a mess. Your child could get an upset stomach (or you could), the power might go out, a family emergency might come up, or resistance hits hard. Life happens, and that's okay.

Don't beat yourself up. Think of it like a traditional school day with an unplanned assembly; it throws things off, but it's out of your control. Just handle what needs to be handled, then adjust. You can make it up on another day or even use the weekend if needed.

Homeschooling is a lifestyle, not a rigid system. Flexibility is your friend.

You Can Do This

If you haven't learned anything else from this guide, let it be this: there will be challenges on your homeschool journey, but don't let that frighten you.

The best things in life often come with challenges. Parenthood is hard, but you're doing it, and your kids are probably turning out just fine. Childbirth was hard, but you got them here safe and healthy.

Homeschooling is no different. If you know in your heart that this is something you want to do, then know this, too:

You can do this.
You've got this.

X



Y





Zero Comparison

Scrolling through social media, it's easy to fall into the trap of comparison. One mom has a strict schedule, while yours is more relaxed. Another has a beautiful homeschool room, and your kids are crammed around the kitchen table. One parent's 7-year-old is doing calculus... while yours is still working through first-grade math.

Okay, maybe that's an exaggeration, but you get the point.

The beauty of homeschooling is that every family's journey will look different. Your child will learn at their own pace, and learning can happen anywhere, at the table, on the couch, in the car, or outside.

As long as you're showing up, teaching, and working with your child, they are learning. Focus on your own path, trust the process, and enjoy the journey.

You Got This!

Thank you for reading Homeschool A-Z!

I hope this guide has given you clarity, encouragement, and practical steps to make your homeschool journey feel less overwhelming and a lot more doable.

Remember:

- There's no perfect homeschool, just the one that works for your family.
- Be flexible.
- Trust yourself.
- Enjoy learning alongside your children.

You can do this!

You don't need another curriculum. You need a plan.

If you're homeschooling a child in grades 4–8, let's create a meaningful Language Arts learning experience that fits your unique learner.

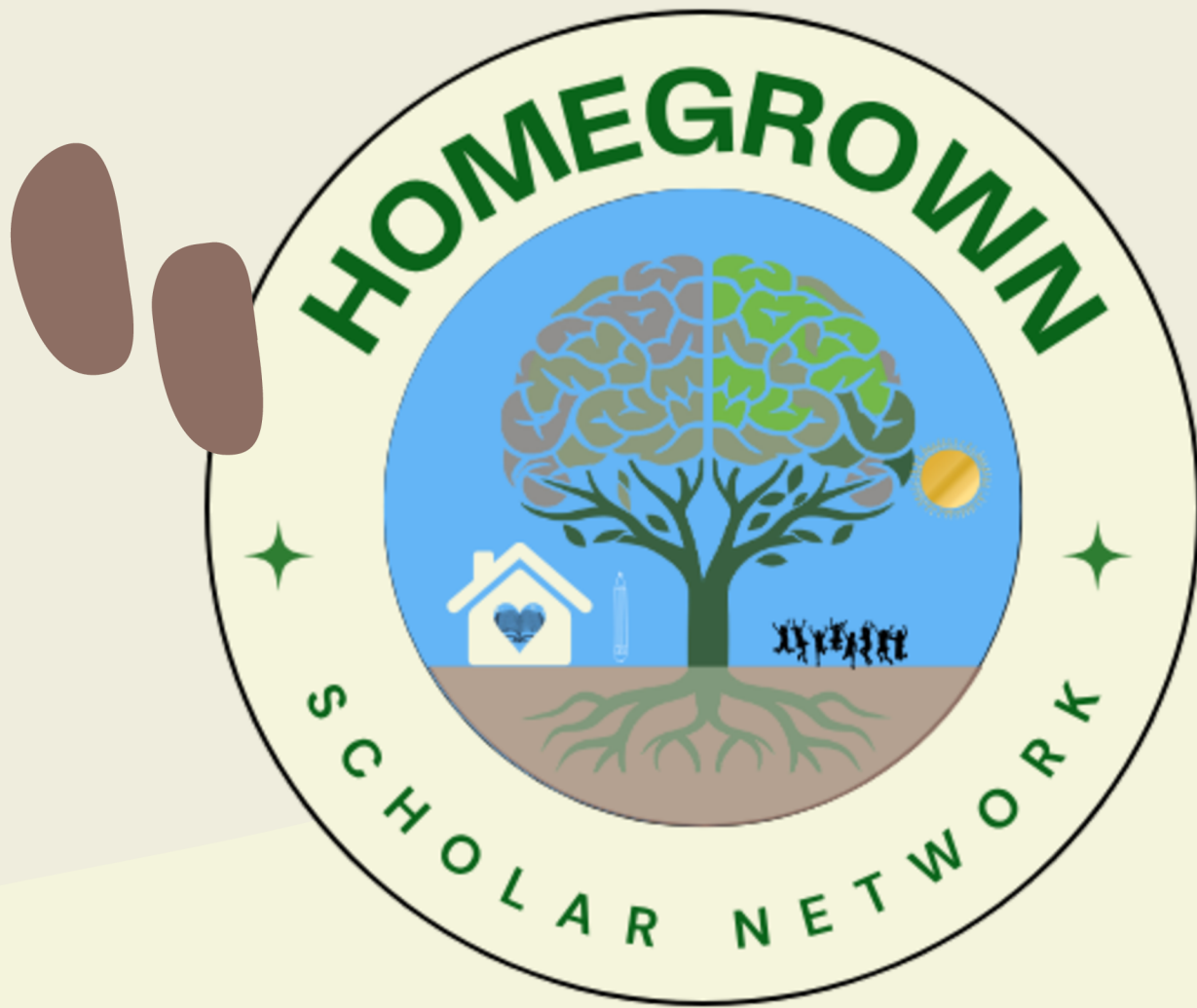
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About Homegrown Scholar Network

Homegrown Scholar Network helps homeschool families create meaningful learning experiences with confidence. Drawing from my experience homeschooling three children, my background in English, and graduate studies in instructional design, I help parents move beyond curriculum overwhelm and build plans that fit their unique learners.

I believe homeschooling doesn't have to look like traditional school, and families don't need another curriculum collecting dust on the shelf. They need clarity, flexibility, and the confidence to make educational decisions that fit their children and their goals.

Whether you're just beginning your homeschool journey or navigating the middle grades, my hope is that you'll find practical support, encouragement, and the reminder that you don't have to figure it all out alone.