

How to Start Homeschooling: A Step-by-Step Guide



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Introduction

Hey there mama (or Dad), welcome to the amazing world of homeschooling! I'm excited to help you dive into this fantastic journey where you get to be your child's teacher, guide, and adventure buddy all rolled into one.

Perhaps you're here because you've noticed that the public school system isn't necessarily the perfect fit for your child. You also know you want to do better for them, but you're not quite sure where to start. Don't worry, I've got you covered. With this guide, you'll be able to confidently say goodbye to traditional school schedules, homework stress, and those pesky behavior issues that come along with boredom and learning difficulties. I'll help you get to know your child and find a path that fits his or her learning pace. Homeschooling is all on your terms and my goal through this guide is to help you navigate this new journey with ease.

Now, I know you're probably anxious and ready to learn what curriculum is best, but for good reason, that's *not* the first place you should start. There's a bit of grown-up stuff to talk about, like legal things and how to decide on a curriculum.

We're going to cover it all so that you can make a well-informed decision to get started and feel confident that you're making the right choices. You can begin by implementing what feels right for your family at this point in time, and if things change, you can always switch it up. The beauty of homeschooling is that you can adjust everything as often as needed until you find the perfect fit.

So, grab a pen and a quiet spot, and let's get on with the details of this adventure! 🚀🌟

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Chapter 1: Getting Started

Why Homeschool? Your Journey Begins.

While more and more people are choosing to homeschool, it is still the path less-traveled; yet one that opens up a world of opportunities for your child. Before we dive into the nitty-gritty details, let's talk about why you might want to start and stick with it.

The Benefits of Homeschooling:

- **Customized Learning:** Think of it like this – just as one-size-fits-all clothing doesn't suit everyone, a curriculum that works for someone else might not be the best fit for your child. With homeschooling, you can choose what's just right for your learner.
- **Flexible Schedule:** Imagine this: if you're not a fan of early mornings, you can start school in the afternoon. And if you're a working parent, you can have school at night and let your child enjoy extracurricular activities during the day. It's all about making learning work for your family's schedule.
- **Stronger Bonds:** With homeschooling, you'll share more time and experiences with your child. You can go on more family trips, create lasting memories, and build unbreakable family bonds.
- **Learning Anywhere:** Homeschooling means the classroom is wherever you want it to be. Whether it's the kitchen table, a cozy nook, or even a park bench, learning can happen anywhere.
- **Life-Centric Education:** Instead of shaping your life around school, homeschooling lets you fit 'school' around your life. Family vacations, hobbies, sick days, and passions can all be part of the home-learning journey.

Now, let's talk about ***the legal stuff***. If your child has been in school, it's essential to begin by checking your state regulations for education as well as district regulations. Some states require a formal withdrawal letter from the parent to the school and another copy sent to the district and/or State Board of Education to avoid truancy citations. If your child hasn't started school yet but is of school age, you may need to let them know your intent of not ever enrolling them.

One valuable resource you can explore is www.HSLDA.org. This website offers excellent legal guidance and helps you understand your rights and responsibilities as a homeschooling parent. It houses all of the information for your particular state and can be considered your safety net in navigating the sometimes tricky legalities of homeschooling. You don't need to be a member of HSLDA, but if you are, you'll have personal, legal homeschool help and advice at your fingertips if and when you need it.

I don't want to scare you at all here. Let me reassure you that you absolutely ***do*** have a lot of freedom with homeschooling, but some states have educational requirements that must be met. If you use your freedom within those guidelines, and do it diligently, you'll have little to nothing to worry about. Remember, homeschooling is all about flexibility, customized learning, and stronger family bonds. If you took your child out of public school, it's because you thought you were able to do a better job than whatever they received in a public institution. As long as you live up to providing what you know your child will need to thrive, you will be more than fine.

Is your confidence already boosted? Great, then let's go to the next step of this journey together. 🌟📖

What are the laws around homeschooling in my state? Is it a no-notice state, low-regulation state, moderate-regulation state or does my state have high regulations? _____

How often must I submit a declaration of intent to homeschool or is this not applicable in my state? _____

What is the required number of school days I must homeschool and do I need to keep attendance records? _____

Are there any required subjects that I must teach and keep a record of progress?

[illegible][illegible]

Chapter 2: Choosing Your Homeschooling Path

Alright, let's explore some popular homeschooling approaches. These are just a few of the options available, and we've handpicked them because they're often a good starting point for families. But remember, there's a whole world of homeschooling approaches out there if none of these quite match your family's desires. Take a look at these popular approaches and jot down any notes you have in mind, then weigh your pros and cons until you discover the perfect fit for your new homeschooling journey. 🌟📚

Traditional Homeschooling: Many families choose the traditional homeschooling route because it's familiar, mirroring what they know from regular classroom experiences. However, it's essential to consider that if you removed your child from traditional school due to it not working for them, duplicating that same system at home might not be the best fit. If this route is fine, but they need a slower or faster pace, you can choose to keep what's working and enhance what wasn't. You can certainly blend this approach with others.

Christian-Based Homeschooling: For families seeking to integrate their faith into education, Christian-based homeschooling is a compelling option. It blends academic subjects with faith-based teachings, providing a spiritually enriching learning environment.

Montessori Homeschooling: Montessori homeschooling emphasizes hands-on learning and independent exploration. If your child thrives on self-directed discovery and enjoys a rich sensory experience, this approach can be an ideal match. You may also want to consider purchasing hands-on STEM/STEAM units, available at [Itsdrlea's website](#), to complement any curriculum with an enriched, hands-on learning experience.

World Schooling: If you're ready for a globetrotting adventure in education, world schooling might be your answer. With this approach, travel becomes your classroom, and your child's education is enriched by diverse cultures, languages, and real-world experiences. It's an unconventional yet highly immersive way to learn that can open up a world of possibilities for both you and your child.

Charlotte Mason: Often hailed as a classic in homeschooling, the Charlotte Mason approach centers learning around using real objects, nature studies, and literature-rich education. It's an excellent choice for those who cherish the wisdom of classic literature and outdoor learning. This approach not only nurtures your child's intellect but also fosters a love for learning and an appreciation for the world around us.

Online Learning Platforms: If you don't have much time to teach your child's homeschooling lessons, are not comfortable teaching certain subjects or grade levels, or simply want the peace of mind of knowing your child's needs are being met at a flexible learning pace, a virtual learning program might be the perfect fit for you. An online learning program typically encourages curiosity and independence, as well as allows your child to flourish at his or her own pace. An online learning program may also provide additional guided support as a school would, but with your child's needs 100% in mind, and many platforms are fully supported in the event you have questions about the curriculum itself or run into any technical issues. This approach may take some pressure off of you if you're stressed about keeping up with a well-rounded curriculum so it may be well worth it for you to look into.

Remember, your family's journey is unique. You're not limited to a single approach. Feel free to mix and match learning elements from different homeschooling methods to create an educational experience tailored to your child's needs and interests. 🌍📖

Exploring Homeschooling Programs

Choosing how to teach your kids at home is a bit like picking your favorite game to play together. There are lots of ways to do it, and it should be fun and exciting. In this chapter, I'll dive into different curriculum options to teach your child at home. Each way has its special benefits, but also drawbacks. So it's important to look into each option, which I broke down by 'type' to help you narrow down your homeschooling options.

Secular Home School Programs

- **[Time4Learning](#)**: An online learning platform offering flexibility and self-paced lessons, ideal for families seeking a structured yet customizable secular curriculum.
- **BookShark (Charlotte Mason Inspired)**: A literature-based curriculum that provides a well-rounded, secular education with a strong emphasis on reading and literary exploration, aligning closely with the Charlotte Mason educational philosophy.
- **PowerSchool Homeschool**: A homeschooling option that provides a structured curriculum and teacher support, making homeschooling more manageable for parents.
- **Discovery K-12**: A flexible homeschooling program that allows parents to use all or parts of the curriculum with full control over the instruction. Classic literature, writing essays, creating presentations, and conducting research are core elements of this program.
- **Moving Beyond the Page**: A homeschooling option with gifted learners in mind. This curriculum aligns with national curriculum standards so you can choose a 4 or 5-day learning plan and feel confident that your child will be on track with its unique literature-based, hands-on, and critical-thinking learning curriculum.

Faith-Based Homeschooling

- **ABeka Academy:** Known for its Christian curriculum, ABeka integrates faith-based teachings into subjects like math, science, and language arts.
- **Sonlight:** Uses Christian-themed literature to educate and encourage discussions of faith-related topics through engaging stories.
- **BJU Press Homeschool:** Combines a strong Christian foundation with comprehensive educational materials, making it easier to weave faith into your child's education.
- **My Father's World:** Blends a Christian worldview with a literature-based approach, focusing on unit studies and character development.
- **The Good and the Beautiful:** Offers a faith-based, literature-rich curriculum designed to nurture the heart and mind of your child with values and inspiring stories.

Montessori Homeschooling

- **Multisori:** Seamlessly blends Montessori principles with traditional homeschooling, providing a structured yet child-centered approach to education.
- **Child of the Redwoods:** A valuable resource for homeschooling parents, offering insights into incorporating Montessori principles into your homeschooling adventure.
- **Guidepost Montessori:** Offers resources and support for parents interested in Montessori homeschooling, harmoniously merging Montessori practices with home education.
- **Skiller Learning Montessori At Home:** This program combines Montessori-inspired materials and activities, bringing a hands-on approach to learning within the homeschooling environment.

World Schooling Homeschooling

- **Unschool Adventures:** Organizes educational trips and programs for homeschoolers, combining travel and learning, creating a world of knowledge.
- **Worldschool Academy:** Provides resources and support for families looking to incorporate world schooling into their homeschooling journey, making learning a global adventure.
- **Outschool:** Offers a wide range of online classes and experiences for children, allowing them to learn about various cultures and subjects from around the world, making geography come alive.
- **Homeschool Global:** A platform that supports families in traveling the world while homeschooling, providing resources and community connections, and creating a global classroom.

Waldorf Homeschooling (a whole-child, play, exploration, and natural-world program)

- **Waldorf Essentials:** a curriculum that focuses on child development and a holistic approach to education. It includes lessons and activities to nurture creativity and imagination.
- **Live Education:** Incorporates storytelling, art, and hands-on activities to engage students in a balanced and imaginative learning experience.
- **Oak Meadow:** This curriculum emphasizes experiential learning, nature studies, and creative arts education.
- **Christopherus Homeschool Resources:** Lesson plans designed to align with the principles of Waldorf education, including rhythm and artistic activities.

Which approach or blend of approaches do I want to further explore as a homeschool curriculum for my family?

What about this curriculum style makes me lean towards it more than the others?

Do I see any potential setbacks to this homeschool approach, or would I need to blend this with some other program' to make it work for me?

Any other important notes I feel I need to write down, or questions I still have?

Chapter 3: Homeschooling vs. Virtual Schooling

I'll now discuss the differences between homeschooling and virtual school programs; not to be confused with online learning platforms that offer learning resources for you to implement at *home*. After speaking with several parents who thought they would have more autonomy with homeschooling, and with more virtual school options popping up, it's important to understand the key distinctions between the two approaches of homeschooling and school at home.

Homeschooling is a form of education in which parents or caregivers, like you, are responsible for their children's education at home. You can use standard book and paper curriculum options or choose online learning platforms that offer a homeschooling curriculum that allows *you* to choose what your child learns, when your child learns, and how your child learns.

Virtual schools, on the other hand, are public or private schools that deliver instruction online. Students in virtual schools follow a set schedule and are required to participate in live classes and complete assignments. This may mean your child will have to sit for hours at a time on a computer, and can potentially lead to boredom and refusal to complete assignments. They are also held to public school standards and testing which may not be the best choice for your child's needs.

It's important to note that the right educational option is the one that works best for *your* family, regardless of what others are doing. We all have different paths, varying educational achievements, and diverse learners. It's important to not compare yourself to others and to only focus on what's right for your family's unique dynamic. You may decide at some point that you'd rather attempt the virtual school route instead of homeschooling. It's always **YOUR** choice.

Homeschooling: Your Path, Your Pace

Homeschooling is a dynamic educational choice where parents take the lead as the primary educators for their children. This approach offers a level of flexibility and customization that's truly unparalleled.

Flexibility in Learning

One of the key benefits of homeschooling is the freedom to set your learning schedule. This is ideal for children who are night owls or early birds, or who have extracurricular activities that take up a lot of time. You can also tailor the learning day to fit your family's needs, whether that means taking breaks for lunch breaks or running errands. For example, if your child has a soccer game in the afternoon, you can start your “school” day earlier in the morning or finish later in the evening. If your child is sick, you can take a day off from school or adjust the schedule to accommodate their needs. If you are a working mom, you may choose to homeschool around your work schedule and allow your child to engage in other activities while you work. It's truly a life of freedom and choice.

Customization: A Tailored Approach to Education

Imagine having the power to design your child's education, tailored to their unique needs and interests. You could choose the topics they learn, the pace at which they learn, and the teaching methods that work best for them. *This* is the power of homeschooling! Bonus if you partner with your children and allow them to have autonomy in what they want to learn and how they prefer to learn it.

As a homeschooling parent, you can tailor the curriculum to your child's unique interests and needs. This is especially beneficial for special needs children, who may require a more individualized approach to learning. For example, you could develop a curriculum that focuses on your child's strengths and provides extra support in areas where they struggle.

You can also choose to use a variety of teaching methods and resources to meet your child's individual needs. For example, you might choose to use a hands-on approach to learning for a kinesthetically intelligent child. Or, you might use a more visual approach for a child who is a visual learner. You can also use a blend of learning approaches since many individuals appreciate a variety of ways to retain information.

Real-World Learning: Beyond the Classroom

Homeschooling offers your child more opportunities for real-world learning than traditional schooling. This is because you can design learning experiences that are relevant to your child's interests and goals. For example, if your child is interested in science, you could take them on field trips to museums and science centers, or you could help them find a volunteer opportunity at a local animal shelter. If your child is interested in writing, you could encourage them to start a blog or write a children's book as part of their curriculum.

Meeting the Needs of Special Needs Children

Homeschooling can be a lifesaver for special needs children. This is because you can provide your child with the one-on-one attention and support they need to thrive. You can also design a curriculum that is specifically tailored to your child's needs and learning style. For example, you could create a curriculum that includes more breaks for a child with ADHD. Or, you could develop a curriculum that uses a variety of teaching methods and resources to reach a child with autism spectrum disorder. You can use various technological options with assistance for learners who have trouble speaking or writing.

Overall, homeschooling offers a high degree of customization, real-world learning, and support for special needs children. This makes it a viable educational option for many families. Hopefully, I've presented many ideas for you to feel more confident along this path.

Virtual Schooling: Education Online

On the flip side of homeschooling is choosing school but at home. Virtual or online schools provide a structured, web-based learning environment. While they offer certain conveniences, like the ability to learn from home and at one's own pace, it's essential to understand how they differ from traditional homeschooling.

Structured Curriculum: Virtual schools typically come with a predetermined curriculum, which might be a good fit for some students who thrive in a structured environment. However, this can limit the ability to fully customize the learning experience to the individual student's needs because the curriculum is set in stone by the district that leads the virtual learning platform.

Set Schedules: Online schools often have set class times and assignments, which can resemble a traditional school day. While this provides a sense of structure and predictability, it may not offer the same level of flexibility that homeschooling does.

Teacher-Led Instruction: In virtual schools, certified teachers usually deliver the lessons, providing a formal educational setting. This differs from homeschooling, where parents often take on the role of educators.

Special Needs Programs

Some virtual schools offer specialized programs for students with special needs. This can be a good option for families who are looking for a structured educational environment with certified teachers who are trained to meet the needs of special needs students. However, many virtual schools may not unless you follow the formal procedures for your child to receive an Individualized education plan (IEP), which may present challenges for your learner.

Here is a table that summarizes the key differences between homeschooling and virtual schooling:

Characteristic	Homeschooling	Virtual schooling
Who is the primary educator?	Parent/guardian	Certified teacher
What is the curriculum?	Parent/guardian chooses	School-provided
What is the schedule?	Parent/guardian determines	School-determined
What is the learning environment?	Home or other location chosen by the parent/guardian	Online
Is there state oversight?	Varies by state	Yes

Virtual schools can be a viable educational option for families who are looking for a structured learning environment with certified teachers. However, it is important to understand the key differences between virtual schools and homeschooling.

In conclusion, while virtual schools offer a structured online learning environment, they may lack the flexibility and customization that homeschooling provides. By taking charge of your child's education, you open the door to tailor-made learning experiences that cater to their unique strengths and interests. As you explore the diverse landscape of homeschooling, you'll find the freedom to create a truly personalized educational journey for your child.

In the decision-making process between virtual schools and homeschooling, it's crucial to align your choice with your family's unique needs and preferences. Assess whether your child and you flourish in a structured learning environment or lean towards the flexibility of homeschooling. Consider the significance of tailoring the learning experience to your child's specific needs and interests. Evaluate your budget for educational expenses to make an informed decision that best suits your family's educational journey.

By grasping these distinctions, you empower yourself to make an enlightened decision on the educational approach that resonates best with your family's objectives and caters to your child's distinctive learning style. Whether you opt for the adaptability and personalization of homeschooling or the organized setting of virtual schooling, keep in mind that both avenues offer a top-notch education tailored to your child's needs. The key is discovering the path that harmonizes perfectly with YOUR family.

Remember, you're not "less than" anyone else simply because you may not be able to fully homeschool your child.

Homeschooling is straightforward, yet it requires dedication and hard work. Whether you opt for homeschooling or virtual schooling, both can be viable alternatives for families seeking an option beyond traditional public or private schooling. The ideal choice for your family depends on your unique needs and personal preferences. 🏡

Does your child thrive in a structured learning environment or a more flexible one?

How important is it to you to be able to customize the learning experience to your child's individual needs and interests?

What are your thoughts about homeschooling or virtual schooling?

Any other important notes I feel I need to write down, or questions I still have?

Chapter 4: Creating a Learning Space

Okay, let's talk about where some of the magic happens – your children's learning space at home. Once you've figured out whether you want to do homeschooling or virtual school at home, you can then work to set the stage for some serious learning fun.

Designing Their Very Own Learning Zone

Imagine it: a cozy spot in your home where your kids can go to learn and grow, at their own pace and in their way. A place where they feel comfortable, supported, and excited to explore their interests. This is what a learning zone is all about.

Creating a learning zone doesn't have to be difficult or expensive. All you need is a little planning and creativity. Here are a few tips to get you started:

- **Find a Spot:** Look around your house for a cozy spot with good light and not too many distractions. It could be their bedroom, the kitchen table, or even a corner of the living room. Wherever it is, make it their special learning place.
- **Get Their Gear:** Help them gather all the stuff they need, like books, notebooks, and whatever cool gadgets and supplies they'll be learning with. Are they artsy? Make sure you have paint, crayons, glitter, etc. Love being hands-on? Games, cards, dice, etc., should be in your learning toolbox. Lack of focus? Slime and fidgets might do the trick. Design with them in mind.
- **Make It Theirs:** Encourage them to sprinkle a little bit of themselves in there. Add posters they like, grab some of their favorite books and even toys – anything that makes them comfortable, smile, and have fun. Their learning zone should be a space they look forward to going to.

Keeping Their Space Tidy

Now, let's talk about keeping things neat. You know how they tidy up their room? Well, their learning space needs some love too:

- **Cool Storage:** Get some colorful bins and nice shelves to help them keep all their supplies organized, and label them so they can find things super easily.
- **Clean-Up Routine:** Encourage them to spend a few minutes tidying up before they call it a day. Putting their books back, stashing their supplies, and getting things ready for the next day.
- **Their Special Spots:** If your kids have siblings who are also homeschooling, help each of them create a little space just for themselves within the learning zone. This could be a corner of the room, a desk, or even just a chair of their own that will help them feel comfortable and supported.

Taking Learning Outside

Guess what? Learning can happen outside too! Sometimes, it's cool to take their learning adventure outdoors. All you have to do is plan for their learning adventures. I saw a post recently and someone asked if everyone's homeschool lessons were planned or just on a whim. A few parents stated they planned their weeks and days, but more parents responded that they did things on a whim and that homeschooling was pure chaos MOST of the time. I don't have a response, but I do have a question ... if you sent your child to school and the teacher didn't seem to know what was going on from day to day, would you want your child in that classroom?

Use your response to this question as your guide to how you will plan and keep up with your homeschooling routine.

Just because you are homeschooling and you have freedom, you'll still need to discipline yourself for learning in general, but especially for planned activities that are happening outside of your home learning space. A few key tips for exploring outdoors are:

- **Nature Time:** Your backyard, a park, or even your balcony can be awesome places for learning. Nature is like a giant, open book with tons of cool stuff to explore.
- **Easy-to-Carry Gear:** Help them grab things like clipboards, small tables, and comfy cushions. These make learning outside super comfy.
- **Watch the Weather:** Keep an eye on the weather. Sunny? Wear sunscreen and find some shade. Rainy? Make sure their belongings won't get all wet.

And hey, speaking of setting up their learning space, I've got a video on my [**ItsDreaa Homeschooling Channel on YouTube**](#) all about "Setting Up Your Homeschool Learning Corner." Check it out for some extra tips and tricks! 🏡📚 If you're interested in unlocking even more homeschool joy and discovering outdoor activities, be sure to check out my e-book, "*Unlocking Homeschool Joy*," available at [**Fit For More Product Store**](#) It's filled with exciting ideas to make the great outdoors your learning playground!

So, there you have it – creating your kids' perfect learning space is like designing their dream hideout. Whether it's indoors or outdoors, making it all comfy and organized makes learning even more awesome. Time to get started on their very own learning zone adventure! 🏡

What are some creative ways to use the space you have available to create a learning zone for your child?

How can you create a learning zone that is flexible enough to accommodate different types of activities, such as arts and crafts, painting, and science experiments?

Any other important notes I feel I need to write down, or questions I still have?

Chapter 5: Motivating Your Child to Learn

One of the most important challenges of homeschooling is keeping your child motivated. When children are not motivated, they may exhibit challenging behaviors such as refusing to work, arguing, or becoming disruptive. Homeschooling offers the perfect opportunity to address these issues because you can tailor the learning environment to your child's individual needs and interests.

Discovering Their Motivation

Cracking the code to keep your child motivated is all about uncovering the passions that truly ignite their enthusiasm. Every child is a unique puzzle, and taking the time to understand what sparks their interest can make a world of difference. It's like having a treasure map to their motivation – once you find the key, you unlock a pathway to a more engaged and enthusiastic learner.

Here are some ways to discover your child's motivation:

- **Talk to them.** Ask your child open-ended questions about their interests, goals, and dreams. Listen carefully to their responses and try to understand what they're passionate about. Each year I have a student Interview because as children learn and grow, they outgrow things and pick up new interests.
- **Observe them.** Pay attention to the activities that your child enjoys and the things that they're good at. This can help you to identify their strengths and talents. Do your best to incorporate these into their daily lessons.
- **Provide opportunities to explore.** Expose your child to a variety of different activities and experiences. This will help them to discover new interests and passions.

Once you have a better understanding of your child's motivation, you can start to tailor the learning environment and curriculum to their individual needs.

For example, if your child is passionate about science, you can create a science-themed homeschool environment. You can also incorporate hands-on science experiments and STEM activities into your homeschool lessons.

Creating a Positive and Supportive Learning Environment

A positive and supportive learning environment is essential for motivating children to learn. Here are some tips for creating a positive and supportive learning environment at home:

- **Establish a routine.** Children thrive on routine. Create a daily or weekly routine that includes time for learning, playing, and relaxing.
- **Provide a dedicated learning space.** If possible, set up a dedicated learning space in your home where your child can study and work without distractions.
- **Be patient and supportive.** Learning can be challenging at times. Be patient with your child and offer them support when they need it.
- **Celebrate successes.** When your child achieves a goal, be sure to celebrate their success. This will help to reinforce their motivation and encourage them to keep learning.

Crafting a Personalized Learning Plan to Keep Them Engaged

Homeschooling is all about making it work for your child, and that means creating a personalized learning plan that's like a perfect fit, just like a custom-made outfit. I know that crafting a personalized learning plan can feel overwhelming at first, but here are a few tips that can help:

- **Start by getting to know your child.** What are their strengths and weaknesses? What are their interests and passions? What kind of learners are they? Once you have a good understanding of your child, you can start to think about what kind of learning plan would be best for them.
- **Talk to your child about their goals.** What do they want to learn? What skills do they want to develop? What do they want to achieve by the end of the year? Involving your child in the planning process will help them to feel ownership over their education and to be more motivated to learn.
- **Be flexible and adaptable.** Things don't always go according to plan, so be prepared to make changes as needed. If your child is struggling with a particular concept, don't be afraid to slow down and try a different approach, or a different curriculum. Likewise, if your child is excelling in a particular area, be sure to challenge them and provide them with opportunities to learn more. 📚

Addressing Challenging Behaviors

Even though you might do everything you can in the beginning to create a fun learning environment and tailor lessons to keep your child motivated, it is still common to experience challenges with your child's motivation and behavior.

Here are some tips for addressing challenging behaviors that may arise:

- **Stay calm and positive.** It is important to stay calm and positive, even when your child is exhibiting challenging behaviors. If you get angry or frustrated, it will only make the situation worse.
- **Identify the trigger.** Try to identify what is triggering your child's challenging behavior. Is it boredom? Do they miss friends? Once you know the trigger, you can start to develop strategies to avoid it or to help your child cope with it in a healthy way.
- **Set clear expectations.** Make sure your child knows what is expected of them in terms of behavior. Be consistent with your expectations and consequences. Hang up a "classroom" sign.
- **Provide positive reinforcement.** When your child behaves appropriately, be sure to praise them. This will help to reinforce their positive behavior. Use a treasure box or other incentives.
- **Seek professional help if needed.** If you are struggling to manage your child's challenging behaviors, seek professional help from a therapist, counselor, or teacher. If the problem persists, consider alternative educational options such as virtual learning, private coaching, or microschooling.

Here are a few examples of personalized learning plans:

- **For a child who is struggling in math:**
 - You could focus on building basic math skills, such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, using hands-on activities and real-world examples. You could also provide your child with extra help and support, either from you or from a tutor.
- **For a child who is gifted in science:**
 - You could challenge your child with more complex science concepts and experiments. You could encourage them to participate in science fairs and other extracurricular science activities (search virtual science fairs online - or join co-ops). You could also provide them with opportunities to work with other gifted students.
- **For a child who is passionate about art:**
 - You could incorporate art into all aspects of your child's education, such as using art projects to teach math and science concepts. You could provide your child with opportunities to take art classes or workshops (outschool is great for this). You could also encourage them to create art projects at home that reflect their interests.

No matter what your child's individual needs are, there is a way to personalize a learning plan that works for them. The most important thing is to be creative and to think outside the box. I believe in you and your child. You can do this! If at any point things feel overwhelming, know that you have options. You can consider virtual school, and you can always find helpful lesson plans to guide your instruction at **Fit For More Product Store**

What is your child's unique learning style so that you can tailor your teaching methods accordingly?

In what ways can you partner with your child to set and achieve learning goals? If they are too young, what ways can you gather from observing your child or from feedback from others who have worked with your child?

What resources do you have to create a curriculum that is both academically challenging and engaging for your child to prevent challenging behaviors?

Chapter 6: Create a Challenging and Engaging Learning Experience

Challenging Your Child Academically

Challenging your child academically is one of the best things you can do to help them reach their full potential. It helps them to develop critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, and creativity. It also helps them to develop a love of learning and a desire to explore the world around them. Here are a few tips for challenging your child academically:

- **Ask open-ended questions.** Instead of asking questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no, ask questions that require your child to think critically and to provide their insights. For example, during reading instead of asking "What is the main character's name?", ask "What are some of the ways that the author develops the main character in this story?"
- **Give challenging assignments and projects.** When assigning your child homework or projects, make sure that they are challenging enough to require them to put in effort, but not so challenging that they become discouraged. You can also give your child opportunities to work on independent projects that they are passionate about. STEM/STEAM projects and thematic units are great ways for them to be challenged and engaged.
- **Encourage them to participate in extracurricular activities that require them to think critically and solve problems.** This could include things like robotics, chess, or math clubs. **Outschool** is a great resource for finding extracurricular activities that require critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Examples of Challenging Your Child for Various Subjects

Now, let's dive into a few subjects just for you to visualize how you can create exciting opportunities within each subject area so that your child is learning and develops a love to continue learning as an individual.

Reading: For reading, the goal is to keep it open and imaginative. Many children don't like to read, but if you give them books they want to read and give them a purpose, they will naturally expand their desire to read more. Here are some ideas you can implement around any book and from any genre.

1. **Genre Exploration:** Encourage students to read from different genres to explore a variety of stories and styles. Comics and magazines they may like count too. Whatever inspires them.
2. **Critical Thinking Questions:** After reading, ask questions like, "Why do you think the characters made those choices?" or "How would you have solved the problem differently if you were in the story?" "What ending would you have provided if you were the author?" These questions encourage deep thinking about the story and further their imagination long after the book is over.
3. **Creative Story Alternatives:** Challenge them to come up with their alternative solutions to the story's problems. Ask, "What if the adventure had a different outcome?" or "How could the characters have solved their problem differently?" This sparks their imaginative thinking.
4. **Book Trailers:** Have kids create book trailers for their favorite books. They can use video editing software or even just their phone's camera to create a short video that highlights the book's plot, characters, and setting. They can also create small book clubs, even if it's virtual.

Language Arts: Even children who love reading don't always like writing. In fact, most people can express themselves verbally but have a difficult time expressing their sentiments in written form. You can help your child become an expressive writer by creating activities that guide them into self-expression in written form. You can use a theme or book and guide them like this:

1. **Story Mapping Adventures:** Turn storytelling into an adventure! After reading a story or creating one together, encourage your child to draw a map of the story's setting. They can mark important locations and even add a route that the characters took. This activity combines reading comprehension with creative map-making.
2. **Word Building with Art:** Make spelling and phonics fun by turning it into an art project. Provide letter stickers, colorful markers, or even magnetic letters. Ask your child to spell out words or practice phonics by creating vibrant word art on paper or a magnetic board. This hands-on approach adds an artistic twist to building language skills.
3. **Imaginative Writing Prompts:** Rather than routine writing exercises, provide imaginative prompts that spark creativity. For example, ask your child to write a story from the perspective of an ant exploring a garden, or let them create a diary entry for a fictional character. These prompts encourage unique and imaginative writing.
4. **Storytelling Through Art:** Combine writing and art by having your child create visual stories. Give them a blank comic strip template or a series of small canvases. They can draw scenes and write captions to narrate their story. It's a creative way to explore storytelling.

Mathematics: Math is a fundamental skill that is essential for success in many different fields, but from my personal experience as a math teacher, it can also be super challenging for some students. To help your learners stay engaged and motivated in math, it is important to challenge them in creative and engaging ways. Some fun and creative ways to challenge students in math include:

1. **Having students create and solve their math problems, inspired by their real-world interests.** For example, a student who is interested in cooking could solve math problems related to measuring ingredients, converting recipes, or calculating cooking times. A student who loves sports might solve math problems around measuring the distance of a goal kick, calculating the time it takes for a sprint, or estimating the angle for a perfect basketball shot.
2. **Having students participate in online math competitions or challenges.** There are many different math competitions and challenges available online, for students of all ages and skill levels. This is a great way for students to challenge themselves and compete with other students from around the world.
3. **Having students create a math blog or podcast to share their knowledge and help others learn.** This is a great way for students to deepen their understanding of math and to help others learn as well. Students can create blog posts or podcasts about math concepts, solve math problems together, or interview mathematicians and other experts in the field.
4. **Having students participate in online math clubs or communities.** There are many different online math clubs and communities available, for students of all ages and skill levels. This is a great way for students to connect with other students who are passionate about math, collaborate on projects, and learn from each other.

Social Studies/History: Social Studies/History is helpful to learn about the past and present, as well as how to be informed and engaged citizens. In many aspects, history can help students develop a deeper understanding of the world around them, learn how our world has evolved, and think about ways to create a better future. Fun ways to bring history lessons to life and challenge students are below:

1. Read historical picture books and stories to your child.

This is a great way to introduce your child to history in a fun and engaging way. You can find historical picture books and stories at your local library or bookstore. These are a great way to bring historical lessons to life and provide viewpoints from various authors about a particular topic in history.

2. Visit a local museum or historical site. Many museums and historical sites offer programs and activities that are specifically designed for children. These programs can be a great way for your child to learn about history in a hands-on way. If none are in your area, you can still be a historical explorer with virtual visits to many museums online.

3. Watch historical documentaries or movies (make sure they are age-appropriate). This is a great way for your child to learn about history in a more in-depth way. You can find historical documentaries and movies on streaming services, at your local library, or online and discuss them as it relate to topics you are exploring in your social studies lessons.

4. Have your child create a historical craft or project. This is a fun and creative way for your child to show their understanding of the lessons they are learning. For example, if you are learning about a world war, you can gather materials and they can create a re-enactment, a diorama, or or any craft that helps them express what they've learned in a hands-on way.

More Ideas to Keep Your Child Engaged

Setting goals and creating a vision are important aspects of creating an engaging learning journey and helping your child succeed academically, but also holistically. When children know what they want to achieve and have a plan for how to achieve it, they are more likely to be motivated and engaged in their learning. It is important to help them not only create and work towards their vision but to also provide them a level of autonomy in choosing what they want to learn and how they want to learn it. When this process becomes mutual, you will have less friction when it comes to them wanting to participate in their daily learning.

Revisit your child's interests and strengths. What are they passionate about? What are they good at? Once your child has a good understanding of their interests and strengths, they can start to set goals that are aligned with them.

Set goals that are challenging but achievable. Goals that are too easy will not be motivating, and goals that are too difficult will be discouraging. It is important to work with your child to set goals that are challenging but achievable.

Create a vision board. A vision board is a visual representation of your child's goals and dreams. It can help your child to stay focused and motivated on their goals. To create a vision board, have your child collect images and words that represent their goals and dreams. This could include pictures of sports or hobbies they want to do for the academic year, the grades they want to achieve, the learning they want to do, places they want to go, etc. Be creative and encourage your child to use their imagination.

Fostering an Intrinsic Love for Learning

Even though you present challenging or engaging activities to your child, it is important to allow them to discover a natural rhythm and love for learning on their own. Lessons and activities will plant the seeds, but you can also empower them to cultivate this love by inspiring them to explore and seek knowledge independently. One way to do this is by giving them choices and letting them take the lead in their learning journey.

Books, curriculum, and lesson plans will guide you in how you teach and what strategies you can use, but you can also allow your child to pick topics or subjects that genuinely interest them within those plans. Instead of coming up with all the questions to ask them, you can also encourage your learner to ask questions, look for their answers, and explore new ways of coming up with solutions to questions or problems presented in the learning.

When your child sees that learning can be exciting and rewarding, they'll become motivated learners who are eager to explore the world of knowledge more independently.

As you can see, challenging your child academically is not just an important aspect of homeschooling; it is a strategy for creating a lifelong learner. By using the tips above and tailoring them to your learner's needs, you can inspire them to nurture a love for learning that will not only help them succeed during your homeschooling experience but also flourish in life. 😊☀️

Additional Tips for Challenging Your Child Academically

- Provide your child with access to a variety of resources. This could include books, websites, online courses, and museums.
- Encourage your child to participate in extracurricular activities. This could include sports clubs, academic clubs, and volunteer opportunities.
- Expose your child to different cultures and perspectives. This could involve traveling, reading books about different cultures, virtual field trips, and watching documentaries.
- Be a role model for lifelong learning. Show your child that you are always learning and growing.

Remember, every child is different. What works for one child may not work for another. This is also why it's so important not to homeschool based on the curriculum someone else is using. It is important to connect with your child, understand the needs of your learner, be patient, and work with your child to find what challenges them in a positive way.

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Creating an engaging learning experience was a heavy topic and presented many ideas. What other thoughts come to mind about this chapter and how can you use this to help your child along in the homeschooling journey?

What support or resources might you need to be able to provide this type of learning experience for your child?

Chapter 7: Building a Supportive Community

Homeschooling is an amazing journey, but it can sometimes feel like we're navigating uncharted waters. As the homeschooling community grows, so does the wealth of experiences and resources available. In this chapter, we'll delve into the significance of creating connections within the homeschooling community, because, believe me, it can make all the difference.

Benefits of building a supportive community:

Building a supportive community can help homeschooling families to feel less isolated, share ideas and resources, and provide each other with emotional support. It can also help children to socialize and develop important life skills.

Connecting with other homeschooling families:

Homeschooling is a unique path, and it's not uncommon to face skepticism or misunderstandings from those who haven't experienced it firsthand. That's why connecting with other homeschooling families is like finding a warm, welcoming harbor in the middle of the journey. It's in a community where you can share your triumphs and challenges, swap stories, and feel understood in a way that only fellow homeschoolers can truly grasp.

When looking for a homeschooling community, it is important to find one that is a good fit for your family's needs and values. Consider factors such as the size of the community, the types of activities and events that are offered, and the overall atmosphere.

Exploring extracurricular activities:

One of the beautiful aspects of homeschooling is the flexibility it offers in scheduling. It's like having a blank canvas to create a well-rounded educational experience. Consider enrolling your child in activities like gymnastics, dance, karate, or art. These aren't just extracurriculars; they're gateways to new friendships and skill-building. Local sports teams, scouts, and community clubs can also be fantastic opportunities for your child to socialize and develop vital life skills.

There are many different types of after-school programs and extracurricular activities available to homeschoolers, such as art classes, science workshops, sports programs, religious classes, and music lessons. Many of these are run by third-party providers so you can call a neighboring school, church, gym, or daycare and ask about after-school programs for your child.

Online communities and social media:

We live in an era where digital connections can be just as meaningful as in-person ones. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have vibrant homeschooling communities. These online spaces are like virtual coffee shops, bustling with parents eager to share their insights, lend a friendly ear, and offer advice. By following homeschooling accounts, joining groups, and participating in discussions, you can find camaraderie and a wealth of knowledge just a click away.

YouTube channel, Instagram, and website:

I encourage you to explore my YouTube channel, Instagram, and website. They aren't just pages on the internet; they're a part of a vibrant, caring community. On these platforms, I share not only tips and advice but also personal experiences related to homeschooling. It's like inviting you into my own homeschooling world, filled with trials, triumphs, and the shared journey of learning. Joining our online community allows you to connect with fellow homeschoolers and access a treasure trove of homeschooling content.

Thoughts About Social Communities:

Homeschooling isn't just about the traditional school hours. There's a world of after-school programs and extracurricular activities waiting to be explored. Many organizations warmly welcome homeschoolers into their fold. Whether it's art classes, science workshops, or sports programs, these opportunities not only enhance your child's learning but also provide them with chances to make new friends who share their interests.

In the world of homeschooling, building a supportive community is like finding your second family. It's about creating connections that understand your journey, celebrate your victories, and offer a shoulder to lean on during the challenging moments. So, let's embrace this sense of community, both online and in your local area, as it enriches your child's educational journey and provides you with invaluable support along the way. Together, we'll make this homeschooling adventure even more extraordinary.

Joining a Homeschool Co-op: Strength in Numbers

Homeschooling doesn't have to be a solitary journey. Joining a homeschool co-op is a great way to connect with other homeschooling families, find support and resources, and provide your child with opportunities to socialize and learn from others. Homeschool co-ops offer a variety of benefits for both parents and children, and they can be an invaluable part of the homeschooling experience.

Virtual Learning Programs: The Digital Frontier

In today's digital age, education is at your fingertips. Virtual learning programs offer a wide array of courses and subjects that can beautifully complement your homeschooling curriculum. Whether it's exploring a new language, gaining interest in the world of coding, or unleashing their creativity through art, these programs provide flexibility and expertise to enrich your child's education.

So, as we step beyond our home, remember that the world is your classroom. Embrace these opportunities, connect with other homeschooling families, and continue this incredible journey of discovery! 🌍✨

What are some of the ways that I can connect with other homeschooling families in my local area?

What are some outside extracurricular activities that my child might enjoy?

What kind of support do I need as a homeschooling parent?

Chapter 8: Learning Beyond Home

Homeschooling is a journey that takes you beyond the four walls of your home. It's an opportunity to explore the world around you and learn in new and exciting ways. From libraries and museums to nature trails and community centers, there are endless possibilities for learning and exploration.

Library Resources: Your Gateway to Knowledge

Libraries hold a special place in my heart, and I often choose them for our homeschooling sessions. It's more than just the peaceful atmosphere; it's like having a treasure chest of knowledge right at your fingertips. Libraries are like magic portals that lead to countless books, resources, and a world of information. You and your child can explore here and discover new stories and adventures through books and movies, enjoy captivating storytelling sessions, and participate in many activities like Lego building, chess games, puzzles, mazes, and more.

Exploring Beyond Your Home

Nature can also be the ultimate teacher, and the great outdoors offers endless opportunities for learning. Your child doesn't need to go far; even a neighborhood park or your backyard can become a place of exploration. Consider visits to local places like police stations, fire stations, grocery stores, or senior homes as unique learning experiences. It's all about helping them connect with the world around us, observing their environment, and making valuable connections that add meaning to the world they live in.

Cultural Events, Concerts, Plays, and Festivals

Cultural events, concerts, plays, and festivals provide homeschoolers with a unique chance to dive into different cultures, arts, and traditions. For instance, attending a symphony concert can help your child learn about classical music and culture. Watching a play can introduce them to various literary works and historical periods. Exploring a festival can immerse them in different cultures and traditions from around the world.

World Learning from Soup Kitchens, Homeless Shelters, Animal Shelters, or Play Exploration Venues and Children's Museums

Volunteering at a soup kitchen, homeless shelter, animal shelter, or play exploration venue or children's museum offers homeschoolers a remarkable opportunity to learn about the world and make a positive impact on their community.

- **Volunteering at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter** can teach your child about the challenges faced by people experiencing homelessness and hunger. It's also a chance to nurture compassion and a sense of service.
- **Volunteering at an animal shelter** can help your child learn about animal care and welfare, fostering responsibility and empathy.
- **Learning at a play exploration venue or children's museum** is an educational experience where your child can explore early childhood education, development, and growth in the areas of creativity and imagination.

Other Ways to Learn Beyond the Home

Encourage your child to take classes or workshops in areas they're passionate about, whether it's art, music, cooking, or coding. Visit local businesses and organizations to learn how they work.

This could include touring a bakery, fire station, or newspaper office.

Travel to new places and experience different cultures. Even if you can't afford to travel far, you can still explore your local community and learn about different cultures during festivals and community events.

List of Ideas to Begin Your Exploration Beyond the Home

1. **Nature Walks:** Take leisurely walks in local parks or nature reserves, observing and identifying plants and wildlife.
2. **Geocaching:** Engage in a real-world treasure-hunting game using GPS devices or smartphone apps.
3. **Bird Watching:** Explore the world of ornithology by observing and identifying local bird species.
4. **Stargazing:** Spend evenings under the night sky, identifying constellations and learning about astronomy.
5. **Beachcombing:** Visit the beach to search for seashells, fossils, and other interesting items.
6. **Camping:** Plan camping trips to teach outdoor survival skills and foster a love for nature.
7. **Hiking:** Explore local hiking trails, teaching children about navigation, wildlife, and plants.
8. **Canoeing or Kayaking:** Try water-based activities to learn about aquatic ecosystems and teamwork.
9. **Rock Collecting:** Introduce kids to geology by collecting rocks and minerals during outdoor adventures.
10. **Local Farms:** Visit working farms to understand agriculture, animal husbandry, and sustainable practices.

What are your child's interests and passions? How can you leverage their interests and passions to find learning opportunities outside of the home?

How can you use learning beyond the home to help your child develop into a well-rounded and engaged citizen?

Are there any upcoming events or festivals in your area that would be educational and enriching for your child?

Are there any local businesses or organizations that would be willing to give your child a behind-the-scenes tour or demonstration? _____

Chapter 9: Homeschooling for College and Career Paths

As a parent on the homeschooling journey, concerns about preparing your child for high school, college, and future career paths may be on your mind. It's a natural worry, but guess what? You have more time and advantages than you might think to offer a well-rounded education that sets your child up for success in higher education and beyond the school gates.

Homeschooling opens doors to a range of benefits, including flexibility, personalization, and a strong focus on your family's values. However, it's essential to be diligent in ensuring your child learns according to curriculum standards, as this lays the groundwork for a solid educational foundation.

Neglecting this aspect can indeed present challenges when it comes to ensuring that homeschool learners are on par with their traditionally schooled peers, especially as they prepare for high school, college, and future careers. But, here's the good news - studies consistently show that homeschooled children tend to outperform their public-school counterparts on standardized academic achievement tests (ACT Research & Policy, 2018). What's even more uplifting is that this trend holds across diverse family backgrounds, various socioeconomic levels, and different homeschooling styles (HSLDA, 2022). This should be a sign of relief if you're prematurely wondering if you can homeschool your child so that they still have a great chance to thrive on what you can provide versus what a public school can provide.

In fact, the data goes a step further to reveal something truly remarkable. According to the Department of Education's study, homeschooled students not only score significantly higher than their traditionally schooled peers on standardized achievement tests, such as the ACT and SAT but they also achieve a higher overall college GPA (Department of Education, 2013). This gives a positive sign that the homeschooling movement is, in essence, paving the way for students to succeed academically in college and in life beyond school.

So, if you ever feared your ability to properly homeschool in a way that could genuinely prepare your child for the academic challenges of high school, college, and beyond, these findings should offer you reassurance and be a source of inspiration. Yes, it will take you being dedicated and pure diligence to make sure you offer your child a challenging and engaging curriculum, but all I see is a win-win when you combine your efforts with the benefits of homeschooling. You can and, I believe you WILL put your child on a path to amazing educational success.

My best advice is to keep nurturing your child's potential, give them autonomy in their learning, and allow their confidence to grow as they master concepts in a way they understand. Every day will not be the most amazing day, but each day, you'll be laying a strong foundation for your child's future, and for success in high school, college, and beyond.

Note: At the moment, 55% of companies have abandoned bachelor's degree requirements, aiming to foster a more diverse workforce. Today, experience often takes precedence over formal education. Companies lean toward candidates completing in-house tests and assignments, or investing in on-the-job training. This shift allows you to prioritize a holistic learning approach for your child. They'll have a broad spectrum of options when the time comes for them to decide their path.

High School Preparation

Some parents choose to put their children back in high school to prepare them for college, while others opt to continue to homeschool through the high school years. No matter which route you choose, this is a time when you truly want to be intentional about the resources, community, and learning paths you choose.

A strong high school education is essential for college and career success. Here are some tips for preparing your homeschooled child for high school:

- **Create a rigorous curriculum.** Make sure your child is taking challenging courses in all core subjects, including math, science, english, and history. You can use textbooks, online resources, or a combination of both to create a curriculum that meets your child's needs.
- **Encourage your child to get involved in extracurricular activities.** Extracurricular activities can help your child develop their skills and interests, and they can also be a valuable addition to college applications. Consider activities such as sports, clubs, volunteer work, or internships. There are many community teams and travel teams that will allow your child to join, even if homeschooled.
- **Help your child to develop a strong college and career plan.** Talk to your child about their interests and goals, and help them to develop a plan for achieving them. This may involve working with a college counselor or career advisor. You can also check your local library and community centers because they often have “teen days” for all to connect with college/career representatives.

If you are choosing to homeschool your child through high school, there are a few additional things you can do to prepare them for success:

- **Connect with other homeschooling families:** Join online or in-person communities where homeschooling families can support each other, share resources, and collaborate with them.
- **Enroll your child in dual enrollment classes:** Dual enrollment can provide your child with a head start on college and help them explore their academic interests. This also demonstrates to potential colleges that your child can handle higher-level classes, strengthening their college application and increasing their likelihood of admission.
- **Explore apprenticeship and internship opportunities:** Encourage your child to gain real-world experience by exploring apprenticeships and internships in fields of interest. These opportunities provide valuable insights and hands-on learning, enhancing their readiness for college and future careers.

By being intentional about the resources, community, and learning paths you choose, you can help your child succeed in high school and beyond. Some additional tips for homeschooling through high school are:

- **Be flexible.** Don't be afraid to change things up if something isn't working.
- **Don't try to do it all yourself.** There are many resources available to help homeschooling families. Don't be afraid to ask for help from other homeschoolers, teachers, or tutors.
- **Enjoy this time with your child.** Homeschooling can be a wonderful opportunity to bond with your child and to help them grow into a successful adult.

Testing and College Admissions

As a homeschooling parent, I understand the concerns about causing stress and anxiety in children due to testing. However, it's important to acknowledge the role standardized testing plays in preparing your student for high school and college. In our homeschooling journey, we opt for a more relaxed approach. We incorporate small quizzes and chapter/unit tests as part of our studies, emphasizing that it's a way to showcase knowledge and identify any areas for improvement. This approach allows learners to confidently focus on growth and provides time to address any challenges. If you create a similar approach, you will avoid cramming in the later years to prepare for high-stakes testing like the ACT/SAT.

Resources

When you are ready to start thinking about preparing for testing in the latter years, there will be many resources available to help you.

- **Books:** Some popular books include the Official SAT Study Guide and the Official ACT Prep Guide.
- **Online Courses:** Some popular online courses include Khan Academy and Princeton Review.
- **Private Tutoring:** If additional support is needed, consider hiring a private tutor who can help identify weaknesses and create improvement strategies.

Test-Optional Colleges

Not all colleges require standardized test scores. Some colleges offer test-optional admissions and alternative assessments, such as SAT Subject Tests and Advanced Placement (AP) exams. It is important to research the admissions requirements of each college to determine if standardized test scores are required.

As a homeschooling parent, you have a unique opportunity to empower your child to explore their passions and interests, setting them on a path toward a fulfilling career. While the concept of careers may seem distant when your child is in their early learning years, it's the foundation laid throughout their education that will prepare them for future success. So, it's never too early to begin nurturing their curiosity and guiding them toward a bright and promising future.

Exploring Career Paths

Here are some tips to help your child discover their interests and potential career paths:

1. **Passion Conversations:** Initiate open conversations with your child and uncover their strengths, talents, and favorite subjects. Use this information to help them decide on what they want to do later in life. This can change several times since their interests will change over time, but often, they find a passion and you can help them work towards that during your homeschooling curriculum.
2. **Career Exploration:** Once you have a better understanding of your child's passions and interests, you can start exploring potential career paths. As you give them options to explore whether it's taking a class or volunteering, and gaining real-world experiences, it will help them define their choices.
3. **Networking:** Networking with professionals in various fields can provide valuable insights. Encourage your child to attend career fairs, reach out to people in your network, or request informational interviews. You can even have these career professionals come to you. These interactions can inspire them to consider paths they might not have previously thought about.

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As we reach the final chapter of this book, I want you to remember something essential – you've decided you want to journey down one of the most amazing paths, one filled with endless possibilities and the chance to provide your child with a truly personalized education.

Starting with the first steps in Chapter 1, hopefully, your knowledge has come a long way. During this short time, hopefully, you've gained the confidence to find and join a supportive homeschooling community, gathered some ideas to get started, and are ready to begin building the foundation for a thriving homeschool experience for you and your child.

As we are near the final words of this book, if you don't remember anything else, I want you to hold on to one word: **confidence**. You've got the tools, the knowledge, and the heart required to make this homeschooling journey extraordinary. Don't ever doubt your abilities. In fact, view any misstep along the way as an opportunity for growth and learning. After all, if you don't make any mistakes, you won't know how to maneuver to make something better or help others who need your support.

Be kind to yourself. Homeschooling is all about exploration and experimentation, and about creating the best educational experience for your family. With the guidance and wisdom from this book, as well as other resources that are out there, trust your instincts and know that there's no such thing as a wrong turn. You can reset, recalibrate, and always fine-tune the path that's just right for you and your family.

With that said, take a deep breath, smile, and embrace this homeschooling adventure with the same enthusiasm and determination that you had when you first decided this was the decision you thought was best to make. All of this is just beginning, and it holds the promise of a brighter, more personalized, and truly exceptional education for your child.

As a final word, thank you for allowing me to be part of your homeschooling journey. I hope you found this helpful and that you revisit any section as often as you need.

Here's to an inspiring and successful future filled with learning, growth, and the warmth of a close-knit homeschooling community. You've got this! 🌟

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Chapter 10: Homeschool Mom Words of Wisdom

Talk to God! He knows how your child learns, and He'll keep you calm when you feel overwhelmed. You're not just a parent but a teacher now, and He'll give you the peace, strength, and self-control to make this journey a blast. Plus, it'll help you build that awesome connection with your child.

Don't let social media mess with your joy or make you feel like you're not measuring up. Everyone's homeschool journey is unique, so don't sweat it if yours doesn't look like someone else's. When you're checking out what others are doing, take the good stuff and leave the rest. You've got your lane, and with God, you're always on the right path.

Remember, you've got this! If God's given you this opportunity, then you're totally capable. He believes in you and that's all that matters. Nobody's born with all the answers; we're all learning as we go. If there's something you're not sure about, there are loads of resources out there to lend a hand. Homeschooling isn't like regular school; you get to do it your way, your style, and your pace. Make it fun and make it work for you and your child. The most important thing is the bond you share throughout it all. Education is important, but the heart and soul that you put into spending this time and building this amazing relationship with your child is what really counts. **Rhea Williamson @_dearmommy_ on Instagram**, Homeschool Mom, 3 years

Don't doubt your abilities to teach your child. You have been teaching them since day one. **Julie Jordan-Gonzalez**, Homeschool Mom, 4 years

Homeschool Mom Words of Wisdom

Teach the child you have, not the one you wish you had. Attempting to perfectly balance school, chores, and cooking is more like learning to juggle. Some days, you can handle school and chores, while on others, it might be school and cooking. Rarely will it all come together, and you can successfully do all three. One helpful tip that has become a regular is to eat leftovers on cleaning days! Remember, no one is doing this perfectly, so don't compare yourself to others. Prayer is your friend, and your children ultimately belong to God. Trust that everything else will fall into place in due time. **Margot Maxey**, Homeschool Mom, 25 years

If the curriculum you chose doesn't seem to be working for your child/family, don't be afraid to ditch it and try something else! **Judy Harris**, Homeschool Mom, 5 years

You've already mastered the essentials: teaching your child to walk, talk, use the washroom, and share kind words like "please" and "thank you." Now, everything you guide in homeschooling is merely an extension of these foundational skills. **Michelle Kunick-Cook**, Homeschool Mom, 12 years.

It still takes a village these days. We just call it a community now. Find your village, connect with them, communicate with them, and see everything you can provide along with your community as an opportunity to learn and grow. **Lori Coppinger**, Homeschool Mom, 4 years.

Homeschool Mom Words of Wisdom

When you choose to homeschool, know from within that so much thought and love went into this decision. I remember people questioning my children's social skills and how they would learn to "interact" with their peers. Well, the last thing on a parent's mind is socialization when choosing to homeschool. So many other things are more important such as your child's mental health, his or her God-given gifts, passions, skills, health, family values, learning style and so much more.

Choosing to homeschool does not mean replicating a "broken school system," or online instruction. It is meeting your child's needs and learning with them. I homeschooled because no one else could empower and help my children better than me. God equipped me with the ability to teach my children.

They know that education is not sitting at a desk for hours and being told when to eat, drink, or use the restroom. They understand listening to their internal clock. They know how to realize when they're tired, ready to learn, ready to eat, or ready to play. It's a combination of learning about things in this world and interacting with people daily.

My number one goal of homeschooling was not to teach my children to merely memorize facts but to allow them to seek truth and knowledge while utilizing their critical thinking skills. I'm teaching life-long learners who find joy in reading books, traveling, and spending time in nature.

One of my favorite quotes is by Angela Davis, "When children attend schools that place a greater value on discipline and security than on knowledge and Intellectual development, they are attending prep schools for prison." I assure you that no parent ever wants to see their child there. Prep them for the world.

Esha Marshall-Jenkins, Homeschool Mom, 4 years.

Homeschool Mom Words of Wisdom

Knowing I am blessed to be the one to teach them warms my heart. Use the many questions your children ask you to help you guide the curriculum for them. Research ways to turn their questions into lessons or projects. If they are having an off day, don't feel pressured to keep up with your lessons. Go for a walk or play a game instead. **Regina Rajski**, Homeschool Mom.

We are not raising our children to memorize answers and pass tests. That's not what makes a whole person. Homeschooling allows children to learn who they are, what they love, and to trust themselves to make decisions. It helps them build their self-esteem, take control of their lives and decisions, and foster a love for learning because it aligns more with their interests.

Homeschool students are less likely to succumb to peer pressure because they get to learn who they are and fall in love with their own talents, desires, and mindsets. With an intentional learning curriculum, the real-world experiences that homeschooling allows them to have create more well-rounded individuals than those who only attend school and learn book principles, but not how to apply their learning to other situations and life itself.

When you thoughtfully tailor the curriculum to your child's needs, you don't have to worry if you're homeschooling correctly. Your child will find their level of genius and learn to own it when you take thoughtful approaches to their learning. **Ellie Walker**, Homeschool Mom, 20 years.

BONUS: Creating Financial Freedom While Homeschooling

Okay, so I had to add this bonus chapter in because it's not talked about often, or really, at all. I'm in groups and co-ops with women who are either stay-at-home moms with the support of a spouse but feel guilty about not being able to help financially, or they are moms who are trying to make ends meet while homeschooling, yet feeling burned out at both ends.

Whether you are one of these categories or in a different situation where you are forced to think about ways to stretch your finances more often than not, you're going to want to dive fully into this chapter.

I'll start by taking you back to the not-so-glamorous early days of our homeschooling adventure. It was grueling for me. I had the tasks of creating my weekly lesson plans, hustling away in my business, creating social media content, trying to keep the family afloat, paying living expenses, working out at the gym, and maybe self-care time for me, all while attempting to teach my child a thing or two between all the client calls, packing, shipping, emails, and then, everyday life. Spoiler alert – it was pure chaos. It wasn't long before I felt burned out and was looking for a school break or better, the end of a school year!

It wasn't fair to me, and certainly not to my child. We got so tangled up in checking off basic learning criteria that our days became an uninspiring routine. My child, bless her heart, was bored out of her mind and daydreaming about traditional school because she felt like she was missing out on FUN. Her many, but subtle hints were clear – she longed for the real deal because homeschool wasn't cutting it for her. And in those moments, my heart sank. I felt like I was failing her and turning our homeschooling experience into the very thing I sought to escape when I initially decided to begin my homeschooling journey.

BONUS: Creating Financial Freedom While Homeschooling

I knew I had to figure out something. The easy solution from outsiders was to send her to school, then I could work without distraction, and possibly have more time to do other things when more time to myself during the day, but I knew that wasn't the answer. There had to be another way that could benefit everyone, including me.

I started researching ways to make my current business MORE PASSIVE, or ideas to start a new one. I tried various work-from-home jobs, but most didn't cut it. The reliable options were contract work and coaching my clients. My ecommerce store had its ups and downs, making it less than 100% reliable. I also realized that even though I had more streams of income, I didn't have more freedom of time and choices. I was still trading time for dollars in all these scenarios. Honestly, I was pulled in so many different directions that I felt even more frustrated because I had even less time. I urgently needed a real solution, and sending my child to public school wasn't an option. They wanted to hold her back due to her age, and the school lacked the resources to accommodate her learning ability and style. It was a hard pass.

After much prayer and additional research, I began to discover various online opportunities. One, in particular, caught my attention. It didn't require a significant financial investment; instead, it cost me time to acquire a high-income skill, complementing the set of skills I already possessed and used every single day. I loved that for me.

Why am I sharing all of this with you? Because I know too many mamas who start homeschooling and end up sending their littles back to school because it's difficult to juggle it all. Imagine having at least the burden of finances lifted off your mind so you can solely focus on all the daily aspects of life that you WANT to focus on.

BONUS: Creating Financial Freedom While Homeschooling

Picture being able to pay someone to cook and clean now and then, or even every day, so you can have more quality time to spend with your children during homeschooling. Envision being able to sit down during the week and enjoy family movie time or family game night because your finances allow you to cherish that time without worries.

Now, it may sound far-fetched, and at one particular time in my life, I thought so too. But long story short, in 2012, I wished for an online job from home, and I had it by 2015. In 2015, I wished for a way to replace my income from home without a boss, and by 2019, I had that too! Then in 2020, I wished for multiple streams of income, and by 2022 I had arrived with all that I asked for. Nothing is impossible, no matter how much you think it is. Passive or even semi-passive income IS possible for you, and here are a few ways I've found that you can start to make that happen.

- **Automated Online Store:** Launch an automated online store using platforms like Shopify. Pick a niche, such as unique printables or digital art prints. Utilize dropshipping to streamline operations and minimize hands-on tasks.
- **Retail Arbitrage:** Explore retail arbitrage by sourcing discounted or clearance items locally and reselling them online. Platforms like eBay or Amazon offer a broad audience for items ranging from fashion to gadgets.
- **POD Store (Print on Demand):** Set up a POD store offering a variety of custom-designed products. Explore options like t-shirts, mugs, digital art prints, printables, and more. Leverage platforms like Printful or Teespring to create and sell unique items without dealing with inventory. The possibilities are endless, allowing you to cater to a diverse audience and expand your product.

BONUS: Creating Financial Freedom While Homeschooling

- **Digital Products:** Dive into creating digital products like ebooks or online courses. Develop resources that cater to specific interests, such as digital art tutorials or guides. Platforms like Etsy or Teachable offer spaces to showcase and sell your creations.
- **Affiliate Marketing:** Opt for affiliate marketing, promoting products or services related to your chosen niche. Join affiliate programs on platforms like Amazon Associates or ClickBank. Share your recommendations through your blog or social media and earn commissions for every sale made through your unique affiliate link.

In my journey to financial freedom, affiliate marketing became the beacon of opportunity. Imagine seamlessly incorporating your passion into your daily routine, joyfully sharing products or services you genuinely adore, and earning a commission for every sale through your unique affiliate link.

Think about it: How often have you organically shared an amazing discovery from a store on Facebook or another social platform? Maybe it was a refreshing drink, a stylish outfit, or a must-have gadget. Consider the times when you've made a purchase based on a friend's social media recommendation, explored a restaurant they highlighted, or inquired about a featured appliance or gadget.

Can you see how you're already doing this effortlessly? With affiliate marketing, you're simply turning your authentic recommendations into a financial opportunity. Instead of merely suggesting and leaving your friends to find your recommendations on their own, you go the extra mile and share your affiliate link with them. When people make purchases through your link, you earn a commission. It's that simple!

BONUS: Creating Financial Freedom While Homeschooling

Now, let me walk you through the exact steps of how I got started. It all began with a simple Instagram post from another mom. Transparently, she explained how she overcame living paycheck to paycheck and pocketed thousands with affiliate marketing. It's funny how, when you start praying for something and actively seek it, clues start appearing.

I wasn't skeptical about affiliate marketing itself – it's a known avenue. My only uncertainty was in how she achieved those results. The minimal investment needed removed my fear of losing anything I couldn't afford to lose. For less than the price of a Starbucks coffee, I committed to a short [15-day training](#) with the potential to earn while homeschooling, spending quality time with my children, during sleep, and throughout my daily life.

Each day of the training only required 1-2 hours of my time, making it an ideal fit for my already packed schedule. I couldn't spare time for anything that would be so demanding that it would drain me.

By day 5 of the two-week challenge, I knew I had found what I needed. Long-term value from short-term sacrifices became evident quickly – Day 1 showed promise, but by Day 5, I was ready to go all in. The best part? This two-week challenge not only awakened something within me but also provided a newfound sense of freedom, catapulting ideas that will change my life and my family's lives forever. And guess what – that transformative challenge cost me only \$7. If you're ready for a similar journey, here's the link to the same [15-Day Challenge](#). It's an inexpensive way to learn some simple, high-income skills that has the ability to shift your mindset, change your current situation, and ultimately, change your entire life.

BONUS: Creating Financial Freedom While Homeschooling

Worst case scenario, if the \$7 challenge doesn't work for you, at least you took a step towards exploring new possibilities. Remember, it's about the journey, not just the destination. If this particular path doesn't resonate with you, I shared other options that may suit you better and are waiting for you to discover what those are for yourself.

It's perfectly okay if you choose another route, as long as you have the desire, drive, and commitment to change to embrace opportunities that help you financially as you also commit to teaching and raising your children with the values that are important to you.

The important thing to remember here is that each step forward is a step toward creating a life you absolutely love to live. A life with opportunities that not only relieve the stress of financial burdens but also open up more choices for your time and financial freedom so you can do what matters most for your family!

So, here's to your journey, the exciting transformations waiting for you ahead, and the joyous homeschooling moments with your children! And if this journey includes the 15-day challenge helping you create thousands of dollars from the comfort of your home or anywhere you have wi-fi, here's the link to join again ... for ONLY \$7! >> [Join the 15-Day Challenge](#) and potentially change your life, starting today.

SUPER BONUS: Work From Home Opportunities

While the \$7 challenge focuses on teaching high-income skills for creating passive income, and earning money daily even when you're not actively working, there are additional opportunities for you to explore if you're not ready for earning passive income.

I've handpicked resources that offer the flexibility to generate income on your terms, allowing you to work around your homeschooling schedule. Whether it's before the kids wake up or after the homeschooling day concludes, these roles provide a chance to make a positive change right away. Benefit from a flexible schedule, avoid commuting hassles and earn competitive pay rates. Ready to start your journey toward financial independence? Check out the links below and take that first step today!

[Working Solutions](#)

Independent contractor positions for top national brands. No need for full-time or part-time employment you can't do. Work for the same companies on your own time. Earn up to \$3000/mo

[Scribie](#)

Audio transcription services that you can choose to do on your own time. Up to \$200 per hour (up to \$20 per audio hour, which is 6 minutes in real-time).

[Call Center QA](#)

Completes telephone mystery shops along with a brief online feedback. Approximately 10 minutes per call. Up to \$30/hour.

[Study.Com](#)

Work alongside others in the education field with opportunities as a writer, editor, researcher, curriculum developer, and more. Up to \$30/hour.

Homeschool Lesson Plan Template

Subject:

Date:

Learning Objective:

Standards Alignment:

Lesson Plan:

Program Resource (Book or Website):

Activities:

Discussion:

Reteach Concepts:

Homework or additional tasks:

Notes:

Daily Homeschool Reflection

Date: _____

Name: _____

Subject/Area: _____

Highlights: What was the most exciting or enjoyable part of today's homeschooling?

Challenges: Were there any difficulties or challenges during the day?

Progress: What progress did your child make in their learning today?

Goals for Tomorrow: Are there any specific goals or areas to focus on for tomorrow?

Additional Comments: Any other thoughts or comments about today's homeschooling?

Homeschool Portfolio Checklist

Personal Information:

Student name

Date of birth

Grade Level

Academic Progress:

Transcripts or report cards

Unit or Standardized test scores

Achievements/Awards

Extracurricular Activities:

List of extracurricular activities, awards, and honors

Samples of work from extracurricular activities

Curriculum/Materials:

List of books, educational videos, or other supplements used during the academic year.

Student Work:

Lesson samples of major subjects that show progress, writing samples including handwriting, essays, or research, photo albums or documents of projects, outings, and assignments that cannot be represented on paper, and other relevant information.

Other:

Legal documents required for your state like medical records, letter of intent, attendance reports, daily/weekly/monthly activity logs, etc.

You can customize this checklist to fit your specific needs and goals, and according to your state's requirements (if any).

Homeschool Curriculum Resource List

Subject/Topic	Resource	Website or Book	Cost
Math	Example Math Workbook	www.mathworkbook.com	\$20
Math			
Science			
ELA (English Language Arts)			
Social Studies			
Technology			

Notes/Thoughts:

Homeschool Meet Up Planner Sheet

Meetup Date	Meetup Time	Meetup Location	With Whom	Agenda
11/3/23	11:00AM	Johnson's Farm	Reader Co-op	Apple picking, pumpkin farm, socialization

Notes/Thoughts:

Appendix: Additional Resources and Getting Started Checklist

A.1. Connect with Dr. Lea

- **YouTube Channel:** Visit [Dr. Lea's YouTube Channel](#) for video resources and inspiration.
- **Instagram:** Follow [Dr. Lea on Instagram](#) for daily updates and homeschooling tips.
- **Website:** Explore Dr. Lea's website at [Itsdrlea's website](#) for curriculum support and learning space ideas.

A.2. Getting Started Checklist

Legal Requirements

- [] Research and understand your state's homeschooling laws and regulations.

Choose an Approach

- [] Decide on the homeschooling method that aligns with your family's values and lifestyle.

Set Up Your Learning Space

- [] Create a comfortable and organized learning environment within your home, including indoor and outdoor options.

Plan Your Curriculum

- [] Develop a personalized curriculum tailored to your child's interests and abilities.

Gather Materials

- [] Collect necessary textbooks, supplies, and learning resources.

Connect with Support

- [] Join online or local homeschooling groups and communities for guidance and camaraderie.

Create a Schedule

- [] Establish a flexible daily or weekly schedule that suits your family's needs.

Monitor Progress

- [] Implement a system to track your child's progress and make adjustments as necessary.

Celebrate Achievements

- [] Set milestones and celebrate your child's accomplishments to keep motivation high.

Stay Informed

- [] Continuously explore new educational resources and stay updated on homeschooling trends through resources like Dr. Lea's social media and website.

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Connect With ItsDrLea for More Support & Guidance

As you wrap up this guide, my sincerest hope is that it transforms your homeschooling journey into a joyous adventure filled with discovery and growth. May each day be a stepping stone toward building beautiful memories and fostering a love for learning. Feel free to share your successes, and challenges, or simply connect with me on social media. I'm here to support you every step of the way. Cheers to your newfound confidence and happy homeschooling!

You've 100% got this!

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