

HOME SCHOOL PRIVATE LABEL



EXCLUSIVE REPORT

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Introduction

The term 'homeschooling' basically refers to the process in which one or more children of not more than 2 families are instructed by parents or legal guardians, or a member of either household. The laws that define homeschooling vary from State to State. The legal requirements for establishing a homeschool also vary with the State.

For most children, the actual process of learning begins much before school. Many children already know their alphabets, the names of animals, colors and other more complicated stuff before they reach school. This is mostly due to the hard work of a member of the family who has taken the time to teach the child. Homeschooling is just a natural progression from here. Instead of sending their children to a public school, parents make their own curriculum and teach their children in ways that best suit the child. This is homeschooling, in its most simplistic form.

Before you decide to go in for homeschooling, there are certain important matters for consideration. First off, meet with parents of other homeschoolers. Find out the pros and cons of homeschooling. Then ask yourself why you would want to adopt this method. This is a very important aspect, as the success of the program depends on the clarity and sincerity of your purpose.

Next, it is time to consider the expenses of homeschooling. It may cost anywhere between a few hundred dollars to a few thousand every year. More importantly, you are also effectively shutting out any job opportunity for one of the parents. It is only obvious that one parent will have to stay at home full time to manage the homeschool. A home-based business however is a great alternative.



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Are you qualified to take on homeschooling for your children? Teaching is a continuation of your own learning process. With the advent of the internet, information is aplenty. There are various books and resources for those interested in homeschooling. Go through the various methods of homeschooling and choose one that is most suited to you. It helps if you know what kind of learning style your child has. Also, find out what your child feels about homeschooling before you start.

Every state has its own laws regarding homeschooling. For instance, in North Carolina, you must first file a 'Notice of Intent' to start a home school. In this you have to mention if the school is a 'Private church' school or a 'qualified non-public school'. The persons providing the education are required to have at least a high school diploma. You have to maintain an annual record of the child's attendance and disease immunization. Every year, the child is required to undergo a standardized test. Each student attending the eleventh grade has to take a nationally standardized test. These are the requirements in North Carolina, but it is enough to give you a good idea of what homeschooling entails.

Homeschooling may seem like a lot of fun and freedom from the outside. However, things are seldom as simple as they seem. Homeschooling is a lot of added responsibility and hard work. But, if successful, it will forge a strong bond of love and respect between parent and child, while providing your child with the best form of education he needs.

Is Homeschooling legal?

Without a doubt, homeschooling is legal in all the 50 States of the U.s. But, that is just about where the similarity ends. Laws and regulations regarding homeschooling vary from state to state. Interpretations of these laws can vary from scholl district to school district. Additionally, these laws may change every year.

The National Home Education network is a wonderful resource when it comes to the legalities of homeschooling. It has a listing of the actual state laws for each state in the U.S. Reading the laws that pertain to your state is perhaps the best way to get accurate information about these laws. But, most people need to get the laws interpreted by a qualified attorney. You can get valuable information from the support group at your locality. Additionally, many state education departments have online resources that will help you in interpreting the state requirements for homeschooling.



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The internet is also a good source of information.

It is a good idea to check out your state laws regarding homeschooling before you start educating your child at home. This will prevent any nasty surprises on the way. If you have to move, you will need to be aware of any tests or exams that your child may need to take.

Benefits Of Homeschooling

Why let Tim and Lisa learn at home than send them to school? Well, first of all, you don't have to wake them up at 7 every morning and bundle them off to school with umpteen numbers of instructions, and wait with an anxious heart till they return. Homeschooling gives you more control over the influences that affect your child. The growth and development of your child is removed from the realm of the unknown. You, and you alone can decide what your child needs to do or learn. Tailoring the curriculum to suit the needs and interests of the child is one of the most obvious benefits of homeschooling

Individual attention is another salient benefit of homeschooling. For instance, if Lisa needs more time to learn Math, then she can reduce the time for her English lessons. There are no fixed hours of learning per subject. This means that a child has the advantage of assigning more number of hours to the subject that seems tough WITHOUT any additional pressure. The amount of time needed to learn each subject will depend on the abilities and interests of the child.

The schooling of the child becomes an extended family activity. Parents get involved in every step of the learning procedure. Field trips and experiments become family activities. Thus, the child receives more quality time with his parents. The entire family shares games, chores and projects. Family closeness becomes the focus here. The child is also free of any negative peer pressure while making choices and decisions.

Competition is limited when it comes to homeschooling. The child does not need to prove his ability with regards to other children. His confidence remains intact. Since parents have a deep understanding of their child, they can plan the learning program to pique the child's interest. It is also possible to intersperse difficult tasks with fun activities. A tough hour with Algebra can be followed by a trip to the nearest museum. Learning becomes fun. Parents can also tailor the curriculum to



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suit the learning style of the child. Some children learn through reading, while others need to write, and still others need to see objects in action.

Homeschooling allows parents to take control over the moral and religious learning of the child. Parents have the flexibility to incorporate their beliefs and ideologies into the child's curriculum. There is no confusion in the child's mind either because there is no variation between what is being taught and what is being practiced.

Lastly, more and more parents are getting disillusioned with the public school system. They believe that their children are being pushed too hard or too little. Other worrying issues pertaining to discipline and ethics also make the school system less welcome. Many repudiate the educational philosophy of grouping children solely on the basis of their age. Some parents themselves have unhappy memories of their own public school experience that motivates them to opt for homeschooling when it comes to their own children.

Homeschooling is the best way to teach a child if you have the time, the ability and the interest to follow through with his education. After all, nobody can understand or appreciate your child more than yourself.

Disadvantages of public schooling

When we consign our children to public schools, we feel satisfied that they are receiving 'quality education'. But, are we really getting our money's worth? More importantly, are the children gaining anything from this kind of a learning procedure?

Socialization is hailed as one of the greatest advantage of schools. This is the place where the child picks up the rudiments of social skills that help him survive. But in truth, a regular school-going child can interact only with his peers. He may bully younger children or fear older ones. He does not know how to behave with an adult. This is because in the school environment he interacts only with his peers. A homeschooling environment brings in a more natural social environment.

A regular school going child cannot read literature. He cannot keep silent or think in depth about any one thing. The artificial 'busy'ness imposed upon him by the school disallows quiet contemplation. Rowdy and destructive behavior, as seen among peers, is more noticeable in school-goers.



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There is little long-standing knowledge among regular school goers because most things are learnt for the exam. There is no correlation of facts with life. The child may know a lot, but understands very little. This is where the homeschoolers beat the regular school goers. Ultimately, homeschoolers emerge more adept at facing the outside world.

How to Homeschool Your Child

Now that you have decided that homeschooling is the way to educate your child, get ready for the ecstasy and the anxiety - the road ahead is a bit bumpy, but the rewards more than make up for it. Producing a well-adjusted and well-rounded personality is no mean achievement.

First of all, it is important to check out your state laws on home schooling. Some states need an affidavit filed with the State's education department. There are basically 3 categories for homeschooling laws. These are: private school laws, home education laws and equivalency laws. Find your state laws. You may also need to maintain a portfolio that records the child's educational progress. It is important to look into the legal requirements BEFORE you start homeschooling. Some States also stipulate a minimum educational qualification for the parent or teacher.

Next, look for a support group. If you live in a friendly or curious neighborhood, well-meaning friends will try to dissuade you. At the very least, they may put a lot of uneasy questions in your mind. A support group that consists of like-minded people will insulate you from the criticism, pressures and questions of regular school-goers. Many groups organize fun events like visits to the zoo, museum, tours to the ice cream shops etc. And if your children hit it off with other homeschoolers, they will be able to build lasting relationships that do not fade when their friends change schools. These groups provide an important avenue for socialization.

The next important thing to do is to select a curriculum. Depending upon the method of homeschooling, you may choose various tools that aid you in this process. The internet is also a rich resource for homeschooling. Do some research and look into the material that is available.

Set certain ground rules. Homeschooling requires a lot of



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self-discipline and hard work. Here is a comprehensive list of the things you will need:

- 1) Eagerness to learn
- 2) Hard work and effort
- 3) Discipline
- 4) Time and patience
- 5) Flexibility
- 6) Enthusiasm

Consider why you want to opt for homeschooling. Your motives and your reasons are important pillars on which the whole edifice of your child's lessons depends. Also, consult with your children. Ask them what they feel about homeschooling.

Select a curriculum or custom-make a curriculum that best suits your child. Record keeping is an important part of homeschooling. Look into the various methods of record keeping. Set up a schedule. Your child does not have to learn 6-7 hours a day. Allow him or her to dictate the time. Flexibility and fun are the cornerstones of homeschooling. Do not stuff too many skills into a single term or year. Prepare a skill list. Make the child learn the skills that he is ready for.

Gentle parenting is the secret to successful homeschooling. Children make great advances in learning and show more enthusiasm. They also turn out to be surprisingly well balanced and well informed when they are taught at home.

Homeschooling and the family

According to the National Center For Education Statistics, almost 1.1 million children underwent homeschooling in 2005 alone. That's a lot of children. Once upon a time, homeschooling used to be a radical statement - something like a declaration of independence. It was the conservative Christians who advocated homeschooling in the '80s and legalized it in every State. But the typical homeschooler of the day is not religiously motivated.

Recent surveys indicate that parents are actually quite fed up of the public school systems where much of the learning is superficial and compulsory. They are also concerned about negative school environment ranging from drugs and abuse to negative peer pressure. As a result, we have a surprising mix of people who form the homeschooling world of today. They cut across all religious and regional borders. Their main aim is providing meaningful and productive learning through a method that strengthens the bond



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between the various members of the family.

All these families have one thing in common - a long enduring commitment to the sanctity of childhood. The children in these families are accorded a primary position. Many believe, and rightly so, that homeschooling allows parents to bring up children in a more natural and nurturing environment. Public schools can make one nervous, diffident and downright mean. Children who get schooled at home are protected from these damaging negative influences till they reach an age where they can handle it.

Homeschooling draws the whole family into the almost religious task of schooling. Everyone is put to work. The parents together form a bond with the children. Any experience can be turned into an educational experience. Both the parents are aware of exactly what is going into their child's head. Parents also have greater control on the kind of religious and moral values that the child imbibes. Even watching a movie together can become a learning experience. Trips to the libraries and other places become educational as well as recreational.

A homeschooling family is primarily dependent on the income of one earning member. That means that often spending has to be curtailed and proper planning of expenditure is a must. This helps to bring the family members together and everybody gets involved in the process of saving money.

Having a parent at home to supervise, to nurture and care for the children brings with it a lot of love and caring. Even your husband chips in and there just is no room for boredom. Yes, problems do crop up, and there are a lot of misgivings in your mind. But when you know that your kids can always count on you, and your kids know it too, then homeschooling becomes a richly rewarding experience.

Maintaining Discipline in Homeschooling

When the child stays at home all day, and mommy is the teacher, there are certain issues of discipline at stake. It is easy for the child to misconstrue the freedom he has at home and feel that homeschooling is just a long summer holiday. This is a potential landmine and children need to be disciplined right at the start.

Homeschooling gives you and your child a truly immense amount of



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flexibility. You and your child decide where to learn, how much to learn and when to learn. But, these should be decisions made at the beginning stages. If your child is too little to take an active part in the decision, chart out a few hours of the day for the various activities, and stick to it. When there is no outside agency to supervise and no exams to answer, it is easy to get sidetracked. If your child is old enough, consult him and find out when he wants to learn. Apply your parental discretion and come up with a timetable.

Homework is also a part of homeschooling. What this means is that once lessons have been taught, the child should be asked to do some part of the course work by himself without your guidance. You will need to make sure that your child sits willingly and finishes his work.

Courtesy, manners and punctuality are some of the various facets of discipline that a child has to imbibe in the early years of his life. The school where he interacts with his peers, his seniors and juniors and his teachers mould these values quite automatically. At homeschool, the child should be taught the importance of speaking and behaving in a proper manner and appropriate corrections need to be meted out if behavior is unsatisfactory.

It is advisable to keep aside a particular room or a part of the room for your homeschool. The child should be expected to reach his desk at the appointed time, in proper attire with all the necessary material. It is easy to allow the school to become an extension of play if these ground rules are not laid out and followed. As the teacher, supervisor, principal and janitor rolled into one, you should also approach the study area with a cool professionalism.

Homeschooling is doomed to fail without patience. In spite of all the precautions and steps one takes, it is easy for a child to get familiar' at homeschool. At such times, it may be difficult to discipline the child and get him to listen to you attentively. When this happens, switch to something new. Allow the child to take a breather and enjoy a break yourself.

Homeschooling is not easy. It requires a lot of hard work and patience. The very informality of the whole procedure sometimes works against it by making it too easy. If you take steps to establish rules at the very beginning and adhere to these rules, your homeschooling experience will be a huge success.



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Homeschool - staying connected

The world has become a jungle of knowledge. Wherever you turn, you find a new fruit that just has to be passed on to your child. In the middle of all the knowledge flying to and fro, we sometimes forget to talk and relax with our children. A mom who doubles as a teacher needs to leave the teacher behind and simply become mom for a few hours everyday.

Listen to your child. Do not just hear the words, but notice the emotion too. Many children find it difficult to express exactly what they want. Talk to your child about general stuff and allow him to be 'just a kid'. When you talk to your child, as for his opinions. Few things please him more. It also adds kilos to his self-confidence.

Most parents interrupt when their children talk. We, as adults, detest it when someone cuts across our lines. Kids keep mum because they are forced to be silent when we shut them up. But this is unhealthy and unfair. Allow your child to finish and then express your views in a rational manner. The child should have the confidence to confide in you.

Gentle parenting is the key to successful homeschooling. Be a parent first, and then a teacher.

Homeschooling - the darker side

It's not all hunky-dory and smooth sailing on the homeschooling front. Like all things in life, there is a downside that has to be seriously considered when you explore the homeschooling option. Though one man's bane may be another man's boon, there are certain common reasons for concern.

The responsibility of teaching your child rests solely on you. You cannot blame anyone else if your child is seen wanting in the skills that his peers excel in. If your child cannot do the things that are expected from other children of his age group, it reflects badly on you as an educator as well as a parent.

A critical part of homeschooling is the time that you have to spend with your children. You may have to give up your friends, shopping and other entertainment and dedicate all these to your child. This can become frustrating at times. You have to learn to take the aggravation with equanimity and wait for the rewards with



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patience and enthusiasm.

A parent who is dedicated to tutor his or her child single handedly does not realistically have much time left over for a career. This means that the family is robbed of an additional source of income. In turn, this may lead to stress over finances. You will have to train yourself to live on a strictly controlled budget. While this is a matter of habit, it does need some getting used to.

You cannot take a break when you feel like it. Feelings of guilt will assail you if you neglect studies just because you are feeling blue. You also fear that the child will take advantage of the situation. Even when you have given homework, you have to be around to give a helping hand. This means that anytime your child is around you, you are on duty! For some, this may mean working every waking hour. The child studying at home also needs to get out more. This comes from staying at home all the time. Interaction with adults and other children needs to be given special attention.

Children tutored at home cannot develop in the various directions that are open to children attending public schools. To achieve that kind of exposure, you either have to be a super-parent skilled in everything, or enroll your child to various activities. This may not only prove too costly, but also be counter-productive.

It is sometimes observed that homeschooled children do not do as well in SAT tests as their school-going counterparts. Without a diploma or a GED, some students find it difficult to get into the military.

Lastly, if you envision enrolling your child to a public school, there may be a certain period of emotional as well as social adjustment. A child who is used to being at home for the whole day and enjoying so much of uncontained freedom may have to undergo some distressing emotional upheavals before he or she gets used to the rigors of a regular school life.

Homeschooling with a disability

If you feel that your child suffers from a disability that seriously hampers his ability to stick to a routine, then homeschooling is your best choice. The child will be constantly under your supervision. But he will be gaining a lot of quality



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education, in spite of his disability. This is rather surprising, considering how children with disabilities are stigmatized in public schools.

Goal setting is an important part of homeschooling a child with disability. Set the number of working hours per week for the child. A child with a disability may have his bad days. Structure the learning hours according to the needs and interests of the child. Use the computer. This way, he will have all the necessary information right at his fingertips while staying within the confines of his home.

Field trips and other educational activities are just as important. Get help from your support group. Visit places of interest and interact with other children in the group. Take your child out for some activities, so that he can socialize. Let him set his own pace with making friends. This will help in strengthening his self-esteem.

Above all, remember that homeschooling is just the same, even when your child suffers from a disability. You will just need to look for the right opportunities and the easiest alternatives to achieve the same goals.

Homeschooling and college

As children grow out of their little pants and are ready to begin their teens, many parents wonder if they should continue with the homeschooling program. They fear that colleges may not give equal opportunities to a child educated at home.

Many fears of this kind were put to rest when 2 homeschooled boys got admission into Harvard. Harvard does not require a high school diploma for gaining admission to their degree program. Many colleges are more interested in the knowledge and behavior of the homeschooled children rather than their high school diplomas. In fact, other things being similar many colleges prefer homeschoolers because of the diversity and richness they bring to their college life.

Admission requirements may vary. While some colleges require the child to appear for the SAT, others may need a general equivalency diploma. And some may not care for any tests at all. The criterion may vary depending on the college that you wish to apply to. But, college courses really do not require any high school background or special training.



It is common to come across parents who frantically try to shift out their homeschool children to high schools because they fear unavailability of college admissions. But college admissions are open to all educated individuals, regardless of whether they are educated at home or at a public school.

Homeschooling the teenager

As children start maturing into adults, parents feel insecure about homeschooling. Many parents then discontinue the homeschooling process and happily hand over the reign to outside authorities. But is this really necessary? Is the strictly compartmentalized education provided in schools a better option?

If social concerns are worrying you, look for interest-oriented associations, clubs and societies. These offer a lot of support for leaders, opportunity for shared experience, and foster a sense of belonging. Make up your own group or share this responsibility with someone else. Home education support groups provide fantastic opportunities to meet your child's needs. This is the best way to develop intelligent, self-motivated, healthy and able young people.

If the growing burden of some of the higher level Math or Science seems to be beyond you, enlist the help of someone who knows more. You can even barter your own services and thus save some money. With homeschooling becoming more and more popular, support groups will have innumerable resources that help you find the right teacher for your child.

The underlying principle that guides homeschooling is this: any child has the innate capacity to grow, develop and achieve its full potential. All it needs is the right environment and all the right answers. Be there to provide these and think twice before you turn over this responsibility to a third party.

Homeschooling hours

How many, how often and when? These are some oft-repeated questions when it comes to homeschooling hours. Flexibility is of course one of the key underlying principles behind homeschooling. This flexibility applies not only to the curriculum but also to the number of hours. It is only natural that parents, especially if they have just started out on homeschooling should feel that their children should be at their books all the time when regular school-goers are at school. This is not only fallacious but can



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also be damaging and counter-productive.

One of the most ignored but glaring drawbacks of the public schooling system is the sheer waste of time and energy that it causes. Many periods are simply wasted away and the child effectively derives only 1-3 hours of study everyday. Then, there are days when the studies become too intensive and other days when it's only games and no work at all. There is a lot of 'invisible wastage' involved here.

Early on in your homeschooling practice, work out a schedule. It is advisable to stick to the same hours everyday. A routine makes it easier to learn and gives structure to the learning experience. It also tells the students that parents are strict about their learning. A routine also allows your child to free his mind from other activities and concentrate on studies. He knows that a particular time is strictly set aside for learning.

The actual number of hours that you need depends on the curriculum you have chosen and the learning style that suits your child. If you are dealing with a subject that seems to be more complex, you may need to sit with the child for a longer period. Using various techniques, it may be necessary to demonstrate what you are trying to teach. For instance, a lesson in Algebra may take more time than a lesson in English.

Homeschooling does not refer to the practice of sitting in front of the books and learning the printed matter. Field trips, watching documentaries, visiting factories and libraries also make up an important slice of the homeschooling process. It makes sense to intersperse these activities so that learning becomes fun. You may want to finish off the few hours of textbook learning in the morning and dedicate the afternoons to these kinds of activities.

Given the fact that too many public school hours are wasted in meaningless activities ranging from talking to extra-curricular activities, do not allow public school hours to dictate the time you should spend teaching your child at home. Remember that at home, he is getting a high-quality one-to-one time that is highly productive.

About 1-3 hours of study is enough in the primary level. It is of course true that the more number of hours you put in, the more learning takes place. This is also the reason why homeschooling children are much smarter and more balanced than



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regular school going children.

Homeschool burnout

When a parent takes on the responsibility of educating his or her child, homeschool burnout is one of the more common issues they have to deal with. There are many reasons that lead to this burnout: an illness, a new baby, added responsibility, change in routine etc.

The symptoms of burnout vary from lack of patience to overeating and crying without any apparent reasons. Surprisingly, a burnout need not be such a bad thing. It is a wake-up call - an indicator that things are not going well and that you need to reschedule. Reversing or avoiding a burnout is possible if you get fair warning.

Firstly, lower your expectations. Do not be a perfectionist. Take the good days with the bad. Next, when something does not seem to work, look for alternative methods. Flexibility is a key factor. If tension starts mounting, take a break. When necessary, change the style of teaching. For instance, small children love to take on their spellings when they quiz an adult.

Avoid overkill. Do not pack too many activities for the sake of socializing your child. A worn out mom means a grouchy kid and that means no happiness. Get support from your spouse or a neighbor or a support group. Don't try to achieve everything by yourself. Homeschooling means 'happy schooling' - don't forget that.

Financing homeschooling

When people talk about teaching their children from home in the absence of any definite or structured curriculum, it is perhaps natural to think that homeschooling is cheap. But this is far from the truth. Although homeschooling does not stick to any particular text, this is perhaps more of a bane than a boon, when it comes to finance.

When you need to make sure that your children receives state-of-the-art education so that they can compete with regular school goers, expenses will naturally mount. The actual cost of educating a child at home is surprisingly high. Up-to-date textbooks, course materials, a library, computing equipment, lighting, specially designed furniture all cost money. In this



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case, the cost may be slightly lesser when it comes to homeschooling the second child. Add to this any additional tuition cost for tutors who come to teach subjects that cannot be handled by parents, like higher-level math or science. The total cost can be a bit mind boggling.

If you take another important factor into consideration, homeschooling costs may effective triple. The need for having one of the parents tied to the house and fully dedicated to providing education deprives the family of a second earning member. The average homeschooling teacher is usually a lady with a college degree. This means that she can easily bring home a pay of \$35,000 or more. It is also interesting to note that most families that have more than 2 children do not opt for homeschooling at all.

But, there are those who have been successful in carrying out homeschooling at low rates. This is dependent on the size of the family, the support group, the type of materials used and the availability of the material. When successive children can reuse the materials, cost goes down. Much of the course material can be got from vendors of homeschooling materials. A membership in a public library, theatre, concerts, ballets and other cultural events also help in cutting costs. Sometimes, it is even possible to barter expertise. For instance, the mother of an 8-year old gives dancing classes, and her daughter receives drawing classes for free. Support groups allow you to divide the cost of field trips, science projects and fairs.

Whatever the cost, advocates of homeschooling say that the benefits far outweigh these considerations. When you are able to decide what knowledge your child receives and when he or she should be taught and to what extent, it gives you a lot of freedom and a lot of power. Both the children as well as the parents benefit from this mutually enriching experience.

Homeschool teachers

The teacher is the key to the success of homeschooling. In most cases, the teacher is a parent or a close relative. In some cases, parents may divide the subjects between them. Rarely, if both parents are busy, they may hire a homeschool teacher. Whatever the case, children need time with their parents. Parents, as a rule, make very good teachers.

Teaching does not involve a clinical presentation of facts. Learning has to be integrated lovingly into daily life for it to



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interest the child. That is where parents come in. Grandparents also make great teachers, especially since they have an abundance of patience.

If you feel anxious about your skill or knowledge, relax. There are countless homeschooling resources that are aimed at helping you. Professional curriculum packages, support groups, online help desks, virtual schools and library resources are all available. When you start out, you may want to make use of the commercial curriculum packages. Readymade software also allows you to record and log important achievements.

Local support groups are an excellent source of help, ideas and material. This is where you get to meet experienced homeschoolers, who will be more than happy to offer their insight and advice. Once you settle into the homeschooling routine, you will find yourself tailoring the curriculum to suit your own needs.

Structure the School year

Now that you have begun your homeschooling schedule, there are various questions that trouble you. Should you study continuously, take a number of short breaks or a long vacation? What about public holidays? When should you take a break?

The answer to these questions and many more like these are actually quite simple: Do whatever suits you best. This is one of the appealing benefits of homeschooling. You do not have a set pattern to follow. You do not HAVE to take that autumn break, or close shop for a prolonged summer vacation. Flexibility is the key here. For some practiced unschoolers, even a definite curriculum is not necessary because lessons are a part of their day- to-day life. But this may not be the case with beginners. Beginners may need to chart out their activities to fall into a pattern.

Before you plan the structure of your classes, consider some of the most important issues. What method of homeschooling will you be following, what is your teaching style and your child's learning style, what are the work and play schedules, what are your vacation plans. Some families plan small 1-week vacations at different times of the year. Other families prefer to go away for a month or more. Consult with the members of your family, and chart out a holiday schedule that most suits you.

There are some positive benefits in following the traditional summer vacation schedule. Firstly, your children can benefit from



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the various summer activities, camps and classes. Your child's schedule will coincide with that of his school-going friends. A summer job may be possible. A longish summer break also means that both parents as well as children get a break from their daily lessons. This could also be a major drawback, as it is sometimes difficult to get back on track once the classes resume.

On the other hand, there are some advantages to taking numerous small breaks in the course of a year. Firstly, children do not get bored since they get time to explore other interests. You can cover more topics in the extra time that you save. You can also take family trips and vacations during the less popular periods of travel. This means lesser crowd and better prices. But beware if your child becomes restless when other children are enjoying their long summer vacations.

As far as homeschooling is concerned, you and your family are the people in charge. Taking care of the individual needs of the child is the primary focus of this system. So, tailor the school year to suit your child's needs. Periodic evaluation is a must. Set some realistic goals and see if you are able to achieve these goals. Most importantly, avoid burnout - both in yourself and your children.

Record keeping in Homeschooling

A topic that frequently comes up in meetings and forums that deal with homeschooling is record keeping. The importance of record keeping cannot be ignored. It is not only legally required in various States, but also provides important milestones in your child's learning experience. An interest-initiated homeschooling approach means that the topic of studies is far ranging and multifarious. Thus, it can be something of a challenge to write quarterly reports for the school district, when it is difficult to classify learning into neatly pigeonholed areas.

Record keeping is important not only for the sake of regulations. It is also an exciting way to record and document the learning process of the child. When most of the learning is done through play and there is no clear cut index of topics that have to be covered, it is necessary for the parent to keep some sort of a log which records the child's progress.

The records you keep can be as simple as a daily journal, or as elaborate as a software program. If you participate in a support group, you probably have set forms and requirements. But even so,



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keeping track of daily work makes reporting easy and efficient.

There are various record keeping methods used by various homeschools. Some of the more popular ones are:

Journal:

This can be maintained by the teacher or the student. This basically aims to keep a log of what was learned and what was done. Recording memorable events that happened in the course of the year is a great way to reminisce later on.

Daily planner:

Lay out the plans and the assignments for the week in a teacher's planning notebook. Check each item as it is covered. Maintain a separate area where any additional things can be recorded. This includes educational trips, visits and videos etc. Any extra topics that were covered are also recorded in this area. Make a summary every quarter.

Portfolios:

This consists of a collection of varied materials that show what the child has achieved and done during the course of study. Portfolio assessment is a very effective way to chart the child's progress. It gives structure to the otherwise loose and flexible form of schooling called homeschooling. A drawing portfolio will consist of some paintings or sketches that are considered the best in that quarter. A language portfolio may consist of essays, stories, reading-logs, spelling samples or letters. Progress in mathematics, fine arts, history, science and social studies can all be recorded this way. The biggest advantage is that portfolio assessment places control in the hands of the children. Having a tangible record of what they have established eggs them on to greater heights.

Other than the above-mentioned systems, there are also purchased record-keeping systems that lay out a good checklist. Some of these allow one to personalize the organizer. Irrespective of the methods used, record keeping in one form or the other is essential. Your child's future may well depend on the well-maintained record that you have meticulously kept over the years.

Grading in homeschooling



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Grading in homeschooling is done by the teacher-in-charge. In most of the cases, this means mom! In this situation, grading can get a bit tricky because it can be a little difficult to grade your own child. There is no benchmark against which you can evaluate your child's performance. In most cases, you also have no awareness of how well other children are doing. So, obviously the traditional method of grading is perhaps not the best method to follow.

When grading a child undergoing homeschooling, it is more important to assess whether the child has understood the subject that is being taught. Inherent in this is the fact that if the child has not understood something, you will go over it again. This will work in your child's favor in 2 ways. Firstly, the child knows that if he or she fails to catch on, the topic will be repeated till it is mastered. Secondly, the child also knows that once the topic has been mastered, he or she will get full credit for his hard work. Getting full reward for the hard work put in is a great motivational factor, especially for kids.

When assessing your child's abilities, do not allow emotions to overcrowd your rationale. Do not yield to the cries and tears of your child if he or she resists certain topics or subjects. If mastering these skills is necessary, then you as the teacher (and not as the parent alone) have to go over the topic over and over till it sinks in. When dealing with tougher concepts, the child may get restless and may even show frustration or belligerence. When the child is still young and unable to understand the importance of his lessons, it is your responsibility to see to it that the child develops the skill set necessary for future growth.

In case you belong to a state that requires yearly tests, this will help you to judge your child's ability vis-à-vis his peers. Even if it is not mandatory, you may want to test your child every year. These tests will reveal the variations in the child's learning pattern. It may show up unexpected areas of strength and hitherto unknown areas of weakness. This enables you to structure your teaching to cover the areas that are weak, and build upon the areas that are strong.

In case your state requires a homeschool report card, keep a record of the yearly development and scores of your child. Include pertinent areas like punctuality, discipline etc in the report. You may also need to keep a record of the number of working days and attendance schedules.

While grading your child, make sure that you use as many external



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tests as possible. There are several websites that deal with the various age groups, and allow free downloading of question papers. This is an excellent and cost-effective method to assess your child. Homeschooling, if done in the proper manner, will boost the child's confidence because he will be studying to satisfy his natural curiosity. The scores therefore will reflect his true intelligence.

Montessori Homeschooling

Developed from the work of Dr. Maria Montessori, this style of teaching aims at duplicating natural laws that a child faces in life. Thus the aim of the teacher is to control the environment and not the child. It was observed that children who are left free to interact with their environment developed an innate self-discipline, love for order and natural curiosity.

The Montessori method of teaching is especially suitable to the preschooler who wants to do everything by himself. Finding ways in which your child can participate in the cleaning, washing, cooking, gardening and other 'adult' activities sets the perfect backdrop for the learning experience. By providing such opportunities for independence, the child's self-esteem also gets a huge boost.

Artistic, cultural and scientific activities abound in the Montessori 3-6 class. There is no TV, junk food, or computer. Material is selected carefully. The child is never forced to work. Instead he is encouraged to do things that interest him, and the teacher picks up the teaching from cues given by the child. The Montessori method focuses on the child's inborn ability to learn from his surroundings. Thus the teacher aims to encourage the natural curiosity of the child. He is never forced to learn or explore. When the child understands why he needs to learn something, he will love the learning process.

Homeschool - Field trips

If you are going over a particular subject with the family and feel that a field trip would be beneficial, then that's what you should do - go for a trip. If you are attached to a support group, you can plan to include other children too.

Here are some guidelines that will help you plan:

- 1) Collect the rates
- 2) Allowed ages



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- 3) Special highlights
- 4) Size of the group
- 5) Timings
- 6) Eating facilities

Inform your support group of all these details well in advance so that the necessary circulars may be sent out. On the appointed day, arrange to meet with other parents and children in a particular place. Plan the mode of travel and reach the place at least 10 minutes in advance.

The field trip is not just fun. So, let your kids bring their writing material. Allow them time to stare and admire. Do not hurry them along. Collect data beforehand so that you can clear doubts. Get help from a guide, if necessary. And most importantly, have fun and enjoy the time you spend with your children.

Homeschooling Methods

For many people, homeschooling may call to mind the picture of two or three children sitting at a table and writing feverishly in their workbooks, while mom or dad stands nearby. This is not entirely true. There are different methods of homeschooling, and the method you choose will decide the curriculum and your style of teaching. Given below are some of the most influential and popular homeschooling methods.

The Charlotte Mason method:

Charlotte Mason is known as the founder of the homeschooling movement. A homeschooler herself, she was passionate in her zeal to lay out the foundations for an effective a complete homeschooling program that is fun and educational at the same time. This method focuses on all the core subjects with emphasis placed on classical literature, poetry, fine arts, classical music and craft. Mason used a variety of books from classical literature, which she called 'Living Books'. Since this method encourages a passionate awareness of literature, the child is read to daily from the 'Living Books'. After this, the child is asked to narrate what she has heard. This process begins at the age of six, and by ten the child is expected to write her narrations in her book. Mason also advocated the use of 'Nature Diaries'. After each short and interesting lesson, the child is asked to go to Nature and draw observations from Nature. Thus the child also gains a sense of respect for her environment. Mason believed that development of good character and behavior was essential to the complete development of the child's personality.

The Eclectic Homeschooling:

This is a mixture of various homeschooling techniques. Here, the innovative parents trust their own judgment and pick out the topics that make the best curriculum for their child. Such parents continuously look out for the best products that will meet the needs of their homeschoolers. Most Eclectic homeschooling curriculums are improvised. This means that the basic curriculum is ready-made. The parents then make changes in the curriculum to accommodate the individual needs and interests of their children. The child's gifts, temperament, learning style and interests dictate the curriculum. Eclectic programs include visits to the museum, libraries and factories.

Unschooling:

A Boston public educator name John Holt laid the beginnings of the unschooling method. He believed that children learned best when they are free to learn at their own pace and when they are guided by their own interests. His message was to 'unschool' the child. This method is a hands-on approach to learning, where the parent takes definite cues from the children. There is no definite curriculum, schedules or materials. This method is the most unstructured of the various homeschooling techniques.

The Montessori Method:

This method began in Italy, when it was observed that children have acute sensitive periods, during which they undergo periods of intense concentration. During such phases, a child will repeat an activity till he gains a measure of self-satisfaction. The Montessori method depends on a prepared environment to facilitate learning. All the materials used in this method are designed to satisfy the inner desire for spiritual development of the child. The materials used progress from simple to complex, and are rather expensive.

These are just a few of the methods of homeschooling. Whatever the method, the underlying factor is flexibility and a keen interest in the desires of the child. The secret is to use the child's desire for knowledge to further his education.

Homeschooling online

If Johnny is fascinated by the blinking cursor and struggles to master the movements of the mouse, you may want to look into some of the recent developments in homeschooling techniques. Gone are



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the days when parents had to buy material from vendors and then pass it on to their children with explanations. Today, you get the full course details, material and test papers online.

Children love to sit with the computer. In addition to making them feel like an adult, the computer also makes use of the visual and sound medium to make learning fun and easy. Streaming video and audio show various scientific processes in great detail. The colorful pictures and the various techniques used help to effectively bind the data to the child's memory.

Many online resources have a fun testing center that aims to measure the knowledge and skill level of your child. Complicated math and science problems are dealt with deftly and elegantly. A visit to an e-library can also be fun, especially when there is an audio clip that reads out the passage to you.

E-learning has just begun to revolutionize the world of studies. If harnessed properly, a child can assimilate an astonishing amount of information from that great resource sitting right there at your table - your P.C.

Unschooling your child

Unschooling is the most fluid style of homeschooling. There is no curriculum and no set boundaries. Many parents feel a bit apprehensive about such freedom. But, even unschooling has certain guidelines that make it a great method of homeschooling

Firstly, allow your child to express interests. Let her select the topic. If she wants to learn about flowers, tell her about the various flowers, their functions, parts of the flower, rare flowers etc. But don't go overboard. Allow her the freedom to stop when she has had enough. This process of learning may take a month or a day. It is up to the child to decide how much she wants to learn.

Expand your child's areas of interests using videos, books, magazines, puzzles and games. Go to a museum or take her to a library. Simultaneously, broaden your own interests. The more you know, the more the child gets to learn.

Notice all opportunities for learning. When in the kitchen, point out the vitamins in fruits and vegetables. What makes tomatoes red, and why are leafy vegetables good? If you don't know the answers, don't worry. Look it up. Lastly, don't worry if the going seems slow. This is just the way kids learn. Give them time and lots of encouragement.



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