

# Should I Homeschool?

If you are considering homeschooling your children, the first step you should take is to research the laws in your state. Homeschool laws vary greatly from state to state. Some have very strict requirements that involve detailed recordkeeping. Other states have very few requirements. There are many resources that can help you to find the information you need.

After you have carefully studied your state's requirements, ask yourself if you are willing and able to meet them. If so, then it is time to consider the effect that homeschool will have on your family. The following list of advantages and disadvantages should give you an idea of what to expect.

## Advantages of Homeschooling:

- You get to choose what you want your children to learn.
- You can custom fit the curriculum to your children's specific learning styles, levels, and interests.
- By working together, you and your children can build strong relationships and learn to work as a team.
- Children receive one-on-one instruction.
- As a family, you can create a schedule that fits your needs.
- Children usually spend less time on schoolwork, while accomplishing more.
- Families usually have more quality time together, rather than spending evenings doing homework.
- Children have more freedom to develop their natural talents and pursue their own interests.
- You have a better opportunity to pass on your own values and beliefs to your children.
- Important life topics can be addressed at your discretion, as you gauge your child's readiness.
- Children often become more comfortable communicating with you, so that they are more likely to come to you with difficult issues.
- Children tend to encounter fewer negative influences and less peer pressure.
- Children usually have social interaction with a wider age range of people, often making it easier for them to interact with adults and children of different ages.
- Being freed from the confines of a traditional classroom, your family can pursue a greater variety of educational opportunities through field trips, vacations, etc.
- Children have a greater opportunity to learn practical skills by participating in family businesses, finances, computer maintenance, care of a younger sibling, pet training, gardening, cooking, cleaning, automobile maintenance, etc.
- For children with severe allergies, allergens can be better controlled in the home.

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Disadvantages of Homeschooling:

- Being together all day, every day, can be overwhelming for some parents or children.
- You and your spouse must create a schedule that allows for one of you to always be home with the children. It is never recommended to leave children at home alone and expect them to complete schoolwork assignments on their own.
- Some curricula can be very expensive. It is important to look for options that fit your budget.
- It is likely that there will be friends or family who question or even oppose your decision to homeschool.
- It is common for homeschool parents to go through periods of feeling inadequate in their ability to teach their children.
- Teaching can be a frustrating endeavor at times, especially when you fall behind schedule or the child is “just not getting it.”
- Researching curricula and planning lessons can take a good deal of time.
- It may take months for you and your children to adapt to homeschooling and find a style that works for your family.
- Homeschooling often requires you to think outside the box and get out of your comfort zone. (Of course, there are some who consider this to be an advantage.)
- Homeschooling requires commitment, patience, perseverance, and lots of love!

As you consider homeschooling, discuss these general topics with your family and add your own specific pros and cons. Homeschooling is a choice that will greatly affect your family's lifestyle. It is crucial for both parents to be in agreement about this decision. Are you both willing to make necessary adjustments to schedules, budgets and household management? Are your children willing to do extra chores so that you have time to plan lessons? Is everyone in the family willing to take the bad with the good? What challenges do you expect to encounter? Can you make a plan to meet those challenges?

If possible, talk to other homeschoolers about their challenges and successes. Ask around your neighborhood, civic center, or church to locate other homeschool families. Look for homeschool groups in your area and find out what they have to offer. Ask about dues or other fees, rules and member expectations. Find out where activities are held and how far you will have to drive to participate. Some families choose to dedicate the first year to developing their own homeschool style without the constraints of group activities. Other families are ready to jump in and join up with a homeschool group. Focus on what will be best for your own family.

The decision to homeschool your children should not be taken lightly. If your child is having difficulties at school, avoid the temptation to make an emotional decision. Take the time to weigh your options and consider the consequences of making such a major lifestyle change.

Homeschooling should be a choice that brings excitement, anticipation and eagerness. After giving careful consideration to the matter, you will have the confidence that you and your family have made the right decision – whatever that decision may be.