5 Easy Steps

To Start Homeschooling!

Thank you so much for downloading this Eguide. I hope you find it helpful as you start out homeschooling!

Deciding to homeschool your child is an exciting time, but it can also quickly become overwhelming. I've put together 5 easy steps that will get your journey started off in the right direction! Let's get to it!

Disclaimer: Some links might be affiliate links that are included for your convenience.

How to get started homeschooling

So the first thing you might be wondering is how to get started homeschooling in the first place.

For many people, homeschooling is something easily dismissed or something that is intriguing in theory. Making the step from thinking about homeschooling to actually doing it can be terrifying to the point of paralysis! *What are the laws? What will my family think? What if my child wants to go to medical school?* The questions that pop up are big and endless at first. Approach homeschooling like any other big, overwhelming job – break it down into baby steps. Below, I've outlined the steps I recommend for people with children who have not yet been to school who are considering homeschooling.

1. Start a notebook.

(Homeschooling moms don't always wear long braids and denim jumpers, but they do seem to share a love of notebooks!) In the back of the notebook, start a list of pros/cons and leave room to add, move items and make footnotes. It will change as you explore homeschooling.

2. Read, talk to real homeschoolers and explore internet resources.

There is no one way to homeschool. While it's important to talk to local homeschoolers, keep in mind that what works for one family might be a disaster in another. Explore local homeschool groups. Most will welcome you for a visit to a park day or a co-op day – with or without your children. These groups will vary wildly – some insist on you signing a "statement of faith" to join while others eschew any type of religion. Most homeschoolers have to try one or two groups before finding a fit for their family. AND … there is no rule that says you have to belong to a group! I strongly recommend reading as much as you can about all sorts of homeschooling before beginning extensive internet searches. (I have included a list to get you started below.) Read about unschooling, virtual schools, unit-study type schooling, classical schooling and everything in between. Not only will this give you a handle on various terms thrown around on homescooling websites, it will help you figure out where you fit in. Remember that homeschooling is fluid. You might prefer a more relaxed homeschool situation while your kids are young and find yourself drifting to a more classical approach as they get older. It's your school, you write the rules. Now, armed with some basic information, you are ready to tackle the internet. Start with your state's homeschooling page. It will outline the basic requirements in your state. Next, visit the Homeschool Defense League (sounds like a super-hero organization, huh?). Whether or not you join the organization is up to you. Their website is a tremendous resource for new homeschoolers. Book mark it, you'll be back! My next recommendation is a stop at The Well Trained Mind. This site is an offshoot of a book by the same name. The focus is on classical education but the message boards are friendly and open to questions from anyone. Additionally, a quick archive search will give you information on almost anything

homeschool related you can think of! (Additional resources provided below.)

3. "Unschool" yourself.

While there are plenty of parents who were homeschooled and are now homeschooling their own children, if you're reading this article, it's unlikely you're one of them. Homeschooling is not about duplicating a traditional classroom. With young children, actual "school" work only takes an hour or two each day. (Remember, you are not trying to contain 25 kids AND teach.) If you attended a traditional school, it can sometimes feel as if you're not doing enough when you homeschool. Try to embrace the fact that just about everything you do with young kids is educational. Cooking, shopping, doctor's appointments and even trips to the beach include opportunities for discussion and teaching. You do not have to be sitting at a desk or a kitchen table to be learning!

4. Have realistic expectations.

If you are planning to homeschool your oldest child staring in kindergarten, consider the reality of your life. Do you have younger children as well? Is your partner wary or supportive of homeschooling? Do you move often? Are you an introvert or an extrovert? What about your children? The reality of homeschooling is that it's messy. You will not have a spotless house and beautiful meals on the table everyday. You will have days where you wake up and everyone is grumpy and uncooperative. You will also have days where a really fun art project carries way over into dinner time and you end up eating oatmeal for dinner – those are great days! Your children will horrify you in front of skeptical family as if on cue. Grandma will ask what is 2 + 2 and your child will simply stand there wordless or answer "12." Life happens. There will be times where school

gets pushed to the side while someone is sick or during a move. Remember these things would be disruptive no matter where your children are educated and also remember that despite our best efforts, kids keep learning.

5. Give it a try! Nothing's permanent.

Approach homeschooling on a year-by-year basis. As your kids grow and your life changes, you might find that traditional school is a better fit. Or, you might find that a few tweaks on last year's schedule will make homeschooling for another year just fine. (As far as medical school goes? Universities love homeschoolers and homeschoolers have a terrific graduation rate. Many homeschoolers go on to become M.D.'s and Ph.D.'s! Their parents stay home and relax.)

Can you afford to homeschool?

Can you afford homeshool? Homeschooling can be a daunting proposition. Contrary to popular belief, most homeschool families are not wealthy. Like every school option, homeschool is a choice. How important is it to you to have some control over what your child learns and how your child learns? Homeschool families generally put these two things high on their list of priorities – far above having a larger house, driving new cars or eating out often. If you are debating whether you can give up your income and live solely on your partner's income download this worksheet and do the math.

Going to one income (or one full-time and one part-time income) can be a scary proposition. If you are home full time, though, many of your expenses come down – transportation, convenience foods, dry cleaning, overtime child care, and, possibly, your taxes. There is also the intangible benefit of reduced stress for everyone. Having one parent home full-time makes routine things

like grocery shopping, doctor visits or having a sick child less disruptive and far easier to accomplish.

Like anything else, homeschooling can be as expensive as you want it to be! If you want an easy, all-in-one curriculum be prepared to pay for it. If you are willing to do some work, visit the library, use used materials and get creative, homeschooling can be amazingly affordable. With young children you can invest in some quality art supplies and paper, use your library card and internet resources and have an amazing year of homeschooling!

Looking at a basic K-2 homeschool schedule, here is the breakdown of costs (1-2 kids) to cover the basics for this age group:

- Art supplies – $50-100 Buy the best quality you can afford and teach your children to use them carefully. They will be less frustrated with their efforts with high-quality stuff.
- Reading – put your library card to work and pick up a used copy of Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons. Let's assume you're diligent about fines and call it $25 for the year. You can find tons of lists of books recommended for each age group online.
- Writing – at this age, they're learning. Invest in a dry erase board ($20 +$5 for markers), and lined paper ($3-5). Have your child copy your sentences from the dry erase board to paper or below yours on the dry erase board (or with sidewalk chalk in the driveway!). Repeat daily and they'll learn to write.
- "Rithmetic – for basic counting, do not underestimate the power of marbles, jacks, M&M's or raisins. Beyond that, there are tons of affordable math options out there – Singapore and Math U See are two – let's say $50. If you

can balance a check book, you can teach grammar school math with little help.
- Science – again, use your library and explore whatever is of interest to your child. You do not need anything formal at this age. For birthdays/holidays, ask grandparents for things like zoo memberships, national park memberships or a Brock Microscope (you'll get years and years of indoor and outdoor use from this!) in lieu of another Lego Set or Barbie Mansion.
- History – you can include history in your reading or do it as a unique subject. For young kids, quick stories with basic facts and maybe a fun project (build your own Nile Delta) are all you need. Introduce things like timelines – stretch a sheet of butcher paper along a wall and have kids glue on pictures of what you study in rough order – add things like family birthdays at the end of the timeline for perspective. Additionally, use a globe or wall map to pinpoint things you are studying or are interested in. If you buy a globe and a wall map or two, you've spent $70-ish?

That's $275 for K-2 and after you buy things like the globe and the dry erase board, your cost will actually go down for a couple of years!

Now, let's say your child attends public school for K-2:

- School Spirit T-shirt – worn every Friday $15
- Uniform shorts and plain t-shirts (some schools) – weeks' worth? $60
- Mandatory school supplies (that belong to the school, not your child once purchased) – $50
- Teacher gifts, school parties, extra supplies for teacher (toilet paper, copy paper, etc) – $50
- PTA dues if you opt in – $20-30
- PTA fundraisers – usually $20-$50 per family/per child

- School lunch (pizza day, days you don't pack lunch) 1/week @$2/lunch = $80
- School Book Fair
- School Pizza Nights/Skating Nights
- Before and/or after school care?
- Field trips?
- Day care during long breaks? You're spending at least $310 and you will do that every year as you are not investing in any one-time or reusable supplies. This is the cost for one child. (There is not room to get into property taxes here.)This is a starting point. Do research by talking to moms with older kids to find out what they are spending for public or private schools. Talk to homeschool moms and do the same.

If you really want to, you CAN afford to homeschool!

Different homeschooling methods

There are many homeschool methods or teaching strategies out there and there is no one right way to homeschool. Every family finds a style that works for them and it is not uncommon to meet a family who has changed how they homeschool as their children grow and change. And, while each style has its own definition, few people operate purely in one style.

For new homeschoolers, the possibilities can feel overwhelming at first. Read as much as you can about different teaching strategies that interest you, talk to people who are already homeschooling and go with your gut and what you know to be true about your family. Check out this amazing book on Homeschooling Methods for even more information.

Unschooling – Unschooling is exactly what it sounds like – there is nothing formal and there is no set plan. Unschoolers prefer to let their children take the lead and follow their interests. This is not a "cover" for setting your child up in front of a video game every day. Instead, unschoolers might follow their child's love of animals with trips to the zoo, hiking to study local wildlife, creating back yard maps of birds and animals close to home and lots of reading on the subject. When the child's focus changes, the focus of the "unschool" family changes.

Internet School – Many families are discovering ways to blend public school with homeschooling. Several states offer full internet-based curriculum free to residents and at a fee to non-residents. You can do an entire grade online or just one or two classes. Each class has its own real teacher who offers email and phone support as needed. The only time children who do full internet school set foot in a classroom is for yearly standardized testing.

There are also a wide range of online classes and opportunities for homeschoolers that are not tied to any public school system – some free and some are fee-based.

Internet school can be a great option if you are pulling an older student who is capable of working fairly independently out of school.

Charlotte Mason – The Charlotte Mason method emphasizes that kids learn through play and real life experiences. Emphasis is placed on play, field trips, and outdoor activities. Children demonstrate their knowledge through discussions and narrations rather than testing.

Waldorf – The Waldorf Method discourages the use of computers and televisions as it is believed they hurt a child's creativity. The

Waldorf Method embraces teaching a child's mind, body and spirit. Children in early grades focus on arts and crafts. As children get older, they are encouraged to think problems through and develop rational solutions. There is also an emphasis on children creating their own books rather than using standard textbooks.

School-At-Home – This method of homeschooling usually involves purchasing a full curriculum for each child. All the plans, reading and tests are included. Not only is this method expensive, it tends to burn the parent-teacher out quickly. Many parents modify school packages to make it less time and labor intensive.

Unit Studies – Families who use unit studies as a means of learning focus on one subject – historical, scientific, fiction – and build a study that last 1-6 weeks around that subject. All other subjects are taught in conjunction with the focus of the unit. If a unit study is based on Ancient Rome you might study vocabulary about Ancient Rome, read books, recreate early science and math experiments, study maps of Ancient Rome, build models of Roman sites and maybe recreate an archaeological dig in in the back yard.

Classical Homeschooling – Based on the model of schooling begun in the Middle Ages, Classical Homeschooling breaks learning down to three stages, called the Trivium. Early grammar school students focus on memorizing; learn history through stories and living books, mastering the basics of reading, writing and math. As children approach sixth grade they reach the Logic Stage. Subjects like Latin, Logic, and Philosophy are introduced. Children are also taught to write and think logically. By high school, all of the preparation comes together in the Rhetoric Stage. This stage focuses on communication – writing, thinking and communicating clearly and logically on any subject. The ultimate goal of Classical Homeschooling is to raise children who

know how to find information, digest it, verify it and communicate it.

Eclectic Homeschooling – Eclectic Homeschooling is the reality for most homeschooling families. As you travel on your homeschool journey, you find yourself picking and choosing parts of all the methods that work and do not work for your family. That mix is constantly changing.

In conclusion

There is no right or wrong way to homeschool. Take into account your lifestyle, your tolerance for mess and for planning ahead and also consider how your child learns best. Enjoy the flexibility afforded by homeschooling and try a little bit of everything.

How to plan your homeschool year

It' time to start thinking about the upcoming homeschool year. If you start now it can be a relaxed, enjoyable task. Getting an early start also allows you to maintain control of your budget by giving you time to search for bargain resources. Use these tips to keep your plans on track. Grab a notebook, an iced beverage and some colored pens and get started!

Have a Home for Your Homeschool Planner

Start off your school year by having a plan for your plan. You can download your homeschool planner online. Use the downloads to create a master 3-ring binder. It's portable; you can add a calendar, grocery lists, important phone numbers, notes for future ideas and a section for each child.

If you prefer working online, Homeschool Tracker is an established, proven way to plan lessons, track attendance and

grades. There are other software programs available for homeschoolers. Check out reviews before you buy any program to be certain it will fit your specific needs.

Plan to spend a few minutes each day updating your notebook. At least twice a month, look at your plan and make adjustments based on how real-life has affected your initial plan.

Start Your Homeschool Lists

Make a list for each of your students of the subjects you plan to cover. If you know what resources you want to use add those to either your list of “Things I Have” or “Things to Purchase.” If you do not know what resources you want to use, check out reviews at homeschool message boards. Rainbow Resource offers a gigantic catalog with reviews of thousands of projects on nearly every subject. Their website features reviews as well. Use these reviews as a guide.

Look at the list of things to purchase. Can you find the material used at local homeschool sales or online on sites like VegSource? Don’t forget to check your local library’s book store or sales. This is a great way to pick up books and audio books. If you have more than one child, it’s worth investing in items that can be used multiple times.

Finally, make a list of school and art supplies you will need to pick up. Take advantage of back-to-school sales and stock up on paper, pencils, notebooks, crayons, etc. It’s worth comparing online prices with local prices. Take advantage of online deals for free shipping – many homeschoolers find that the Amazon Prime membership pays for itself when buying books.

Pull It All Together

Put together a plan for the whole year. Note the local school schedule if your children have neighborhood friends. It's easy to get overly-ambitious when making plans. Keep in mind your child's age, personality, outside activities and other factors. Make the whole year plan very general, noting what you would like to accomplish each month.

Now make a detailed day-by-day plan for the first six weeks. With young children a four-day week of half days is usually ample time to cover schoolwork. Save one day for field trips, errands, etc. As kids get older, let them have some input on their schedules and anticipate longer days.

At the end of each week, make a note of what you accomplished and adjust for the coming weeks. Don't panic if you find yourself constantly revising the plan. Every homeschooler does it! And, finally, if you are trying something new and you and your child are miserable after a few weeks – call "Uncle!" and find something that is a better fit.

Relax! It's homeschool!

So many people want to do homeschool and then try to COPY the public school system. Sometimes they just try to replicate the education they had. Some people even go as far as getting real school desks!

Now I'm not going to sit here and say this is wrong. Quite frankly it might work for some people. But if you are trying to copy everything the public school system is doing, then you are missing the point.

Homeschooling is NOT about doing public school at home. Then what is homeschool about then?

It's about:

*Finding your child's unique learning style and using that to teach them
*Fostering a love of learning
*Teaching independent learning so they can continue learning on their own when they are adults
*Going at your child's own pace

I witnessed a woman complaining about her 4 year old not wanting to do handwriting lessons. Well the child is 4 years old so he might not want to learn to write yet or he simply might not be ready. Sure some preschool kids can write, but the beauty of being the teacher is that you can slow down and let them be kids. She was saying she would discipline him for not doing his work. Again, he is only 4!

I get it. I really do! We all want our children to excel and do well. Just don't forget that they are kids first. If you are making them do work to early when they are not ready to learn it, then you are fostering a hate for learning. This is especially true if you punish them for not doing it. Punishment and consequences can come when they are much older and are just purposely avoiding work.

Preschool and Kindergarten is for learning through play. Not for formal education. If you are also worried about your child's handwriting at such an early age and they clearly get frustrated and are not interested, then you still have options! Try things such as:

*Finger Painting
*Color Sheets
*Writing their names in sand (fill a shoe box top with sand and let

them practice!)
*Painting with Q-tips.

There are lots of ways to foster learning through play and this can be applied to any subject. Make it fun for them! RELAX and enjoy this time together.

THANK YOU!

If you take a few short moments to read through these 5 steps you will have the confidence you need to start your homeschooling journey on the right foot!

Also be sure to check out my post **how to deal with family members who do not agree with your choice to homeschool.** I hope this helps you to guide the conversation or just simply share the post with them. Good luck and as always feel free to send me a PM on Facebook if you have any questions. I am always here to help!