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Subject: Homeschooling FAQ

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Homeschool FAQs

Please note: These FAQs were first compiled in 1995, & updated in 1999, and they are still very much applicable for "today's" homeschooler in 2005 and beyond!

Is it legal?

What about socialization?

How do you manage to teach so many children all at once?

How do you have enough patience?

How do you make your kids do their school work?

How do you manage to teach algebra and higher maths and sciences?

How do you ever have time to do anything else with your kids there all day?

If you homeschool, how do you manage to do housework too?

Do you ever have any time just for you?

How do you afford all the different homeschool materials?

How do you homeschool with babies, toddlers, preschoolers wanting your attention, too?

How do you know WHAT to teach?

How can homeschoolers get into college?

How do you get by on just one income?

Is there anyway both parents can work and still homeschool?

How can I get my child to be faithful to do their assignments without me standing right over them?

Don't you ever just get too tired to homeschool?

How can I get my husband more involved since he's so busy already?

How do I know which curriculum is best for my family?

What do I do when it just seems like my child isn't "getting it" when I am trying to teach him?

How do you make sure you're covering "everything"?

Don't they get bored staying home all the time?

### 1. Is it legal?

One member answered ... Yes, it is legal in all 50 states, but the laws regulating it differ in each state. You should get a copy of your state's homeschooling law. Contact the Home School Legal Defense Association at HSLDA, P.O. Box 3000, Purcellville, VA 20134, Phone (540) 338-5600. Or contact your state homeschool association through Teaching Home's State Homeschool Organizations at <http://www.teachinghome.com/states/>

### 2. What about socialization?

Sherry answered ... My favorite is to turn the question around and ask: first, what do you mean by socialization? I get a lot of practice with this one, since this is one of the two most commonly asked questions in my neck of the woods (the other is: but are you qualified, because you're not certified). Asking them the question makes them examine their definitions and assumptions, and sometimes forces them back to the Bible, eventually. [For more thoughts on the Biblical definition of "socialization", see: ["Missing the Mark: Socialization vs. Fellowship and Ministry"](#) .]

### 3. How do you manage to teach so many children all at once?

Sherry replied ... I get asked this, because of the ages of my kids. People say but what do you do with the little ones during school? I say, I include them all. They'll be 3, 5 and 7 this year. Homeschooling is a modified tutoring method....it is different from regular group instruction in school. [For examples of how one family with six children homeschooled with multi-grades, see ["Multilevel Homeschooling"](#) .]

#### 4. How do you have enough patience?

Kathy Ridpath shared ... For me, \*I\* don't have enough patience to teach my own children, to stay home with them every day of the year, to keep my house running in a manner that promotes a healthy and loving atmosphere, etc. I receive my patience from God!!!! It is through His help, His patience with me, His touches upon our home and our homeschool that patience has entered our home. :)

I've

recently gone through quite a bout with stomach problems and after much prayer and sharing from others, I believe my stomach problems were caused by stress. The stress that comes from me trying to keep things running smoothly around here, the stress that comes from \*not\* depending and resting in the Lord, the stress that comes from \*not\* seeking the Holy Spirit's help and guidance in our home. This past month I have felt much better and I believe it is because I have started to depend on His work in our home, His loving presence which strengthens us and the peace we receive when He overflows us with hope!! :)

"And

the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." - Phil 4:7

#### 5. How do you make your kids do their school work?

Sherry answered ... Make them? LOL -- my kids love school and learning and books and stuff. I think that's one of the misunderstandings about homeschooling.....picture Mom with a whip and the circus lions behind her...to get junior to buckle down and do his math. Recently, a school child asked their parents to hs them (becoming more common here), and the parent said no, and then came to me to be talked into it. I didn't realize it at the time, and I'm not the type to talk them into anything besides child discipling, but the funniest line was: okay, \*how\* much time is this gonna take outa my day? When I described our day, and said that hers might be different, since she had older kids, she described her day.....from trying to get the kids up at 5:30 to do their hair to get to school on time, to getting them at 2:35, to getting them to sports, to getting them home, to making dinner and doing church functions. She said and then we have to do homework

and asked me when my kids do their homework. I told her our schoolwork \*is\* our homework right now....and she almost flipped. She said "please don't tell me that!" (like please don't tell me there's a more enjoyable method)

[For help in Biblical child training principles, see: "Training Children (And Parents!)" and "Homeschool Boot Camp:&nbsp;Dealing with Attitudes".]

6. How do you manage to teach algebra and higher maths and sciences?

Kim Schumm answered ... For algebra and the maths, make sure you buy the solution manual! Otherwise find someone competent to teach it. [For additional ideas, see "Homeschooling High Schoolers".]

7. How do you ever have time to do anything else with your kids there all day?

One member answered ... I know that with my children I have plenty of time to do other stuff (like that word? couldn't think of what else to call it) throughout the day. My children naturally want their own time to explore and play and rest and read. They do not always want and need me hanging over their every moment. I even have times when I am shooed away so I won't interfere. You know the moments, child building a house out of blocks, mother comments, "put that block over there", child turns to look at mother with exasperated look that says without words, "I want to do this all by myself, please!"

I have also found getting up at an early hour helps me to get a jumpstart on everyone else. I can't stand to get up and having lots of activity already going on. I feel as though I'm playing catch up for the rest of the day. So my early start lets me have my absolutely quiet time with the Lord & His word, get in a brisk morning walk, and possibly get some sort of chore out of the way, i.e., folding laundry, throwing dinner in the crockpot, reading the messages here. This takes commitment, but how can that be hard when we have already committed to the awesome task of teaching our own children?

Another

way I get time for myself is to take it! If I need to get some special shopping, time at the library all by myself, to rest peacefully without bangs & bumps in the background, etc., I take it!! How? I let my dh know when he gets home or I call him at work to prepare him for my departure when he returns. I either let him know that I'll be running out to the store or library or that I would appreciate it if he took the children fishing or swimming or some other fun activity so I could have some complete peace & quiet in the house.

I occasionally stay up late to get control of areas that need it. For example, my homeschool records needed to be straightened up last week, so on Friday night I worked on them. I try to limit these late "control" nights though because I need every bit of energy I can get out of the days!! :)

[See "Managing Our Time" for more helpful principles and tips. ]

8. If you homeschool, how do you manage to do housework, too?

Sherry confided ... My downfall, but we're working on it. There are always so many fun things to do. My oldest is very helpful. The youngest loves to fold clothes. We're making a family time out of hoeing through each room. I'm up for suggestions on this, too, because our house is project-oriented, so it's never immaculate all over at any one point. [See "Homeschool and Housework" for ideas on how to balance it all!]

9. Do you ever have any time just for you?

Nancy Schofeld replied ... I get this one all the time. I found people either think I'm a saint or a lunatic! I get up at 7:00 a.m and start school at 9:00. That gives me 2 hours for devotionals, shower, some light housework, some planning and sometimes I even throw dinner together in this time. School is out at 2:30, and the afternoon is then mine (or as much as any mom with children's is! That's 3 1/2 hours til dinner. My children go to bed (to read, not necessarily to sleep) at 8:00, and I stay up until 11:00 or later. That's another three hours! By curtailing a lot of our extra-curricular activities, we don't spend a lot of time driving and picking up children, so I have more than eight hours a day to call my own!

[For more help in finding time for Mom, see "Feeling Frazzled?&nbsp;Take Time to Recharge!" ]

10. How do you afford all the different homeschool materials?

Sherry suggested ... You can school for nothing if you ask around and inherit books. Some people spend \$1500 a year. But \$1500 for four kids, is a whole lot more affordable than \$2000 per year per kid for private school. It's not a money issue with us -- we'd been saving for Christian school since before the babies were born, but the savings have helped us immensely. I know of many people who are paying school tuition, but are on food pantry programs, do WIC, Visiting Nurses child checkups, etc. It makes me laugh when they talk about needing a separation between church and state. The state is already paying tuition for private schools, they just are paying through food and medical programs. It's not wrong, the people qualify because of their incomes, but it's really a weird setup.

Tamara Eaton writes: Homeschooling on a Shoestring? We've done it on a thread....

It's been our family's experience that GOD will provide for our homeschooling needs regardless of whether we have a "limited" budget or not. We have not always had the extra money to set aside funds for homeschooling curriculum needs, elaborate field trips or classes. There were many years I made a list of what I thought our needs were, prayed over them, and saw the Lord adapt or meet the needs in a variety of ways.

Most homeschooling families I know have spent WAY more on homeschooling curriculum than we ever have...but we have been very blessed by used book sales (our local libraries have used bookstores which have been a HUGE blessing), books and resources on sale, and through the years have built up a very nice home library so it's not always even necessary to buy homeschool curriculum each year. (Especially when we have materials left over from homeschooling the older children.)

I could look in homeschooling curriculum catalogs and find all sorts

of "goodies" but they are not \*necessary\* for our homeschooling to be successful! So...my advice to those whose budgets ARE limited is to be content and trust God and don't compare yourselves to others who have more to spend. God will BLESS your homeschooling and provide ALL your needs (even if you don't have all the latest homeschool "gadgets and \*all-new-must-have-curriculum\*").

Also don't get so caught up in buying materials for your children that you neglect to prepare yourselves as teachers ("Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" --Romans 2:21). Spend time in prayer, in God's Word, reading good books and articles that would encourage you in learning HOW to teach your children. )

And above all else: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

11. How do you homeschool with babies, toddlers, preschoolers wanting your attention, too?

One member replied ... I include them all. When they are tiny, I do school in short segments around nap schedules. My two year old last year had her own journal, her own coloring/letter book, her own crayons. She learned a lot! I see them as little people needing discipling as much as the older ones. And they learn as much playing at my ankles listening as they do at the table.

For many helpful suggestions on homeschooling with toddlers in the household, see: "Homeschooling with Toddlers!"

12. How do you know WHAT to teach?

Kathy Ridpath answered ... This is a question that \*I\* wondered about when I first started. I had friends offering to share the homework their children were getting at school because they were worried I would leave something out of my son's education. There are many homeschooling books which contain information about which subjects to teach and teaching approaches/methods.

I have

to say though that \*we\* know as parents what our children need to learn about. Even more importantly, our children know!! Yes, they really do! God leads us to homeschool and He doesn't abandon us to this world then. His guidance continues on throughout the life of our children.

I'll

share an example with you. Matt is naturally good at mathematics. He is naturally "challenged" in language arts though. If I was to stick with his age/grade level. I would not be challenging him in his math and I would have him struggling terribly in language arts. It would create a lot of unnecessary tension in our homeschool. I have allowed him to work through these subjects at his own rate, at his own potential. Allowing him to learn this way resulted in some very interesting results on his standardized test. He was mid-first grade level in language, beginning 3rd grade level in reading, and mid-4th grade level in math. As his parent, I could get worried about his language results, but I can't because I see the effort is there and with time he will improve in this area at his own rate.

Okay,

so everyone knows we have to teach the children the 3 R's, but how about all that other stuff. This is where your own family's interests will play a big part. For our family, we do a lot of unit studies and interest studies. We also enjoy history. We will definitely cover other subjects like the arts and foreign languages, but these will not be the "core" of our homeschool.

13. How can homeschoolers get into college?

Kim Schumm answered ... There are several options. They definitely should take the SAT/ACT or both. They can enroll as a special student and then use those grades to become a regular student. They can go the GED route. They can just apply to a college using a transcript and portfolio of their work. Many colleges will accept students based upon their transcript, ACT/SAT scores, and completion of the college application.

14. How do you get by on just one income?

From Tamara Eaton ... Some of the ways we manage to get by with one income...

Matt.6:33, our "life" verse. Without the Lord, I don't know HOW we'd do it.

We don't drive new vehicles. One of these days the kids will be grown and we can always invest in one of those "dream vehicles". (On the other hand, I hope that if the Lord tarries, our children will be frequently bringing our grandchildren to visit and we might decide to keep those big vans so we can cart them around.)

We don't buy expensive clothing...we plan our wardrobes, usually stick to classics, purchase things on sale, and never refuse used clothing or hand-me-downs unless they don't fit or we really don't need them. The Lord blesses us in so many unexpected ways...for example, in the past year when I lost weight, my mom's good friend gained weight. She always buys classic styles of excellent quality, really expensive brands, too. She gave me all her outgrown clothes! We pray for our needs to be supplied and then just rejoice in the Lord's faithfulness to us!

We rarely eat out, instead we make it fun to prepare together easy meals that are treats. We make homemade pizzas that are actually better tasting than takeout, and they are much more nutritious.

We buy groceries in bulk when possible, and stock up on meat when it is on sale. We don't run out to the grocery store just to pick up an item or two, but plan our trips...making do if we run out of something, if possible.

We also plan outings to conserve gas.

We buy a lot of items used...furniture, vcrs, etc.

We don't spend much on entertainment or travel...our kids are our entertainment! We enjoy games as a family, singing together, doing "old-fashioned" things like making homemade doughnuts together and popping popcorn. (OK, we use the microwave kind of popcorn...so we cheat a little there.<grin>)

When we entertain, we do it family-style!

We almost never take vacations. This we hope to change one of these days especially now that our little ones are bigger. Still, several times a year we take "mini-vacations" by either going somewhere not too far for us for day trips, or by staying home on a weekend and turning off the phone, and planning lots of fun foods, activities, etc. together as a family. No chores are done...we only pick up after ourselves, use paper plates for meals, etc. It has been a big hit and our kids ask us when we plan the next vacation! If we have extra money at that time, we might eat out a meal (brunch is a favorite!) and/or give the kids some cash and take them on a shopping trip somewhere kind of different.

When something is broken or not working, we try to repair it ourselves instead of calling in the "professionals".<g> This is great experience for all of us, including the kids who are learning basic household repairs. My teen son even repairs appliances, the riding lawn mower, furniture, etc.

We barter when we can! William and Micah have done this a lot with computers and equipment. Micah bartered his time putting together a computer (it took him 2 1/2 hours) for a laser printer that works perfectly. He also was able to "purchase" a riding lawn mower (his regular chore was mowing grass!) by working it off on a farm doing chores and repairing things.

These are just some of the ways we save money! I hope others will jump in with their ideas here. Our lifestyle is comfortable even though we do have our trials when it comes to finances...still we wouldn't trade our life with six happy kids for anything!

15. Is there anyway both parents can work and still homeschool?

Julia Allen writes,  
I homeschooled for a full year while both my husband and I worked full-time. It can be done if you have a reliable person to care for the kids during

the day (we live with my mother-in-law) and you are willing to be very flexible. Homeschooling can be done at any time of the day or night - I did some of my homeschooling after work in the evenings and some on the weekends. If your kids work well independently and you use a curriculum that lends itself to requiring minimal instruction from the teacher, you can have them accomplish much of the work while you&nbsp;are working as well. My boys did math, language arts, and penmanship while I worked. Together we studied social studies, science, etc. I was determined not to put them back in school, so we made the commitment to make it work. After one year, we had paid off all our debts, so now I can be home with them. -- Julia

From Brenda Rath ... My dh is a pilot for an air ambulance company, and at best, the aviation industry can be kind of fickle. It is in our best interest to keep my nursing license in good standing. So our Dad is more than just principal - he will be "substitute teacher" when I work. I only work 3 or 4 days a month, and only when my dh is "off the beeper". If the days that I work happen to be "school days", then Dad is on! We have been blessed with the flexibility of nursing. With the exception of being overseas, I have always been able to find work, as much or as little as I wanted, and still fit it in to my dh's unusual schedules.

16. How can I get my child to be faithful to do their assignments without me standing right over them?

Tamara Eaton replied ... While some children are more naturally self-motivated than others, all have some degree of inner motivation (although it may not be obvious at first). All children also need training to help them become more responsible and self-motivated learners. Here is a list of helpful principles and tips to establish good habits:&nbsp;"Let's Get Motivated!&nbsp;Encouraging Self-Motivated Learners"

17. Don't you ever just get too tired to homeschool?

From Sherry... Nope, I treat it as my most important job. I do allow flexibility -- start school early, double up days, so that we take

sick days, snow days, here and there, and can take off if a great idea comes from grammie (the science museum? sure!!) Some people school lightly year round, some do four weeks on, one week off; or eight weeks on, two weeks off; some take the whole month of December off.

From Kathy Ridpath ... YES!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I do get tired and I am learning to listen to this. I take a break then and there. I rest, pray, read, play, relax, and goof off. We need to do this to refresh our minds and our bodies. We need these times to get ourselves back on focus, back with commitment, back with faith!!!

For

example, back in early July (I think or was it late June? <g>) we started our Flight unit study. I was not feeling well, I was feeling very exhausted. Well, I had decided what I needed was to jump into a project such as Flight! WRONG!!!! After a test "flight" of Flight, I put it aside and rested my body, mind, and soul. I did some preparations for starting Flight when we would be ready physically, mentally, and emotionally. So we started it up again (this is our 3rd week) and this time was the right time.

We need

to be aware of our energy level, our enthusiasm level, and \*believe\* that if we have to put something off, the Lord will get us going when His time is right!! :)

[Also see: "Comfort and Hope for the Weary" and "Confessions of a Homeschool "Veteran" (Our need of Faith, Fortitude and Focus!)]

18. How can I get my husband more involved since he's so busy already?

From homeschool dad Steve Linebarger ... I have to admit that my wife does practically all the planning and such for homeschooling our children.

As a

husband, I have to say that I am very tired at the end of the day and don't look forward to having the extra responsibility of teaching. I have other chores to tend to.

In the

last seven years our children have been homeschooled I have taught two courses. The motivating factor was the fact that I enjoyed the subject matter and excelled to a small extent in these areas.

Our oldest daughter's handwriting was in desperate need of some improvement. Having recently practiced the art of calligraphy I found myself teaching her Gothic Black Letter calligraphy. Each day or two we would work on a different letter and every week or so I would have her write out the letters of the alphabet she had learned so far.

As our oldest daughter reached Pre-Algebra my wife found it a little difficult to explain to her when she had trouble. I enjoyed math in high school and college and saw this as an opportunity to teach as well as brush up on my math skills.

I guess the you should find your husbands strong points. Point them out to him and ask that he teach them to your child(ren).

[See also: "The Homeschooling Father's Role"]

19. How do I know which curriculum is best for my family?

You may want to read the article on the Favorite Tips webpage called Choosing Curriculum by Tamara Eaton.

Carole Lacefield suggested ... First of all, realize that there is no perfect curriculum. It's all just a tool, and you can probably use just about anything if you're able to mold it to your family. However, I'm constantly reading books, magazines and catalogs, looking for better ways to teach. It's a learning process for the teacher that is on-going. I like to experiment with resources that sound great, and if they really don't work, I'll just get something else. I can either use it with my next child who has a totally different learning style or sell it and only be out a little bit of money. As Mary Pride says, it's an investment in wisdom in any event. But to someone just starting out, I would say to read as much as you can get your hands on, then make a decision and stick with it for one year. You can switch to something else next year.

20. What do I do when it just seems like my child isn't "getting it" when I am trying to teach him?

Kathy Ridpath shared ... I was so excited yesterday when my son had a breakthrough on a math concept he has been struggling with. He was getting frustrated and wouldn't let me help. Finally I took away his book very gently. I sat him down and asked him simple questions about place values and eventually worked up to the technique they were trying to teach him (front-end estimation.) Then I backed off and let him take it on his own. He struggled a little then suddenly he started shouting out the answers!! :)

It was one of those moments when you feel God's work so powerfully in your homeschool. He helped me remain calm and gentle with my son, He helped my son be humble enough to let his mom help <vbg>, He gave me the right way to build a better foundation for this lesson, He pulled me back when I had completed my part, and He gave my son that drive to master this lesson. It was so neat! (I know it was only one small trick for doing math, but it was so neat! :)

21. How do you make sure you're covering "everything"?

From Carole Lacefield ... You won't!!!! It's better to instill a love for learning in your children and teach a few things well than to cram a multitude of facts into their heads and have them never want to look at a book again after they graduate! They'll learn more than enough doing the 3 R's and including quality books in their routine.

22. Don't they get bored staying home all the time?

Nancy Schofeld answered ... You mean in comparison to sitting at a desk in the same classroom doing pages and pages of worksheets, reading "sound bite" pieces of trivialized history, watered down literature, and science from a book rather than from God's laboratory?! <bg> Actually, who stays home?! We're at the library, in the swamp, in the woods, at the museum and wherever else our studies take us.

[And if Cabin Fever strikes, try these tips: "Cures

for Cabin Fever"]