

9 Easy Steps to Homeschooling

You've decided to homeschool. **Now what?!**

I was in your shoes once, so I think I have a pretty good idea of how you feel. Taking on the responsibility of educating your children isn't one to be made lightly, so I commend you for it. Once you've made the decision to homeschool, figuring out where to start can be overwhelming. In homeschool groups, I often see frantic posts from mothers, saying they've just decided to homeschool, but don't know where to start. That's why I've put together this workbook to guide you through the first steps and help you get your homeschool off the ground.

Even if you're taking your children out mid-semester, take a deep breath and relax. *There's no need to feel stressed* and pressured to get it all figured out today. Here's the thing...you'll never have it all figured out. Homeschooling is a lifestyle and a journey. Every day, every year, and every student, is going to be different, so being flexible and having a sense of humor is going to go a long way towards your success.

If you haven't already done so, please read the posts I've written in the "Homeschooling" category of my blog at <http://midlifeblogger.com>. I've made recommendations of posts that go along with some of these steps in parenthesis with "Read:," but I think all of them would encourage you. Please consider subscribing to receive future posts. My main goal in writing about homeschooling is to encourage homeschooling parents. I'm a big believer in homeschooling! As long as you are diligent in teaching your children, I can assure you that they will flourish in an atmosphere of unconditional love that can best be provided by a parent or grandparent. If you worry about preparing your children for college, read [Homeschoolers in College ~ From the Professors' Perspective](#).

Step 1: Join Home School Legal Defense Association

“HSLDA,” as they’re called, is a team of lawyers that specializes in the needs of homeschooling families. I hope that you never need their help, but even if you don’t, another family might. On their website you can read some of the cases they are working on. They also keep an eye out for any proposed legislation that might hinder our homeschooling freedoms.

There were homeschoolers who went before us that had to fight for the right to homeschool. They taught their children behind closed curtains and battled child protective services, and sometimes even family, who sought to take away their children. Laws have come a long way since then, but we mustn’t become complacent. If it is within your means, please seriously consider joining HSLDA. Membership offers perks such as discounts, reports, and access to insurance. Their website is at <https://hsllda.org> and contains a wealth of information. Take as much time as you want to look around.

Let me point out a few highlights:

- They have a list of support groups here: <https://www.hsllda.org/LandingPages/local-groups.asp>
- They have research on homeschoolers here: <https://www.hsllda.org/research/>. Not only will it encourage you, but if you have family and friends who are questioning your sanity, you can show them all of this great stuff!

While you are there, find the information for Step 2.

Step 2: Your State’s Homeschool Laws

Find your state’s laws regarding homeschooling and write a summary of it here. Does your state require written notice of intent to homeschool? _____
What other requirements, if any, do they have? <https://hsllda.org/laws/>

Step 3: Reasons for Homeschooling

On a separate sheet of paper, write down all of the reasons why you've chosen to homeschool. Start with the most important ones, but list every reason that you think of. Believe me, there will be days when you will need to reread this. Days when everything goes wrong. Days when people question your sanity and/or your children's well-being. And days when you're tired, confused, or burned out. *There will be days!* When they come, pull your list out and read it!

Tip: At this point I would recommend that you start a notebook or file for your homeschool. Keep this workbook in it for future reference. **Put it in a safe place.**

Recess: Support

I gave this to you as “recess” because it can be done any time. You can do it now to give yourself a mental break or wait until later. You may already have some homeschooling friends, and that would be great! I can't stress the importance of homeschooling friends for both you and your children. Support groups offer socialization and extra-curricular opportunities. As you have questions your new homeschool friends will be able to answer them. The easiest way to start finding them, is to search on Facebook by state, region and city. HSLDA also maintains support group lists on its website: <https://www.hslda.org/LandingPages/local-groups.asp>.

Once you find the first one or two, you can ask there to find others. I also have a Facebook group where I do my best to encourage homeschooling parents: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/470523193071414/> Read: <http://midlifeblogger.com/the-profit-of-park-days/>

Step 4: Goals

On a separate piece of paper, set goals for each of your children, and your family as a whole. Not only educational ones, but character and quality-of-life ones. These will come in handy when making decisions about allocating time and budget among curriculum and activities. It may also be

helpful in choosing your approach in Step 7. These aren't etched in stone. They can be revised as needed. Put an * by the top one or two most important ones.

Some Examples:

Educational: To homeschool all the way to high school graduation. For kids to meet admission requirements for a particular college, trade school, or military.

Character: To be honest, hard-working. To have strong faith and be active in church, or government.

Quality of Life: Strong family bonds. To travel. To have freedom to pursue unique interests.

Step 5: Define Success

This is important because “success” will vary among parents. You and your spouse should discuss goals and success together to make sure you are on the same page. One family might say that success is graduating from an ivy league university, or assuming the family business, while another might define it by character traits, religious beliefs, or quality of life. If you find yourself envying the success of other homeschool students, or worrying that you've done the best for your children, your Success Statement will help to remind you of your family vision. It may involve attaining the top most important goals from Step 4.

Personal note: I found that as my children neared graduation and I started seeing the different paths that their peers took, I would momentarily second-guess the choices I had made for our homeschool. It was reassuring to reflect on the vision we had for them and see that our decisions had been in line with it, and that we were on track.

Success Statement: Our definition of success is...

Step 6: Choose a School Name and Motto

Dignify your homeschool by giving it a name, a motto, and maybe even colors. You might want to include your children on this step. Once they've been determined, make some decorations for your school area with them. When your students graduate you can order a custom, high-quality diploma, and announcements with these details on them. Need ideas? Ask in a Facebook group what others have chosen for their name and motto. It's also a great ice-breaker!

School Name:

School Motto:

School Colors:

Recess: I want to take another break to talk to you about “Detox” and Obedience.

Detox

If you are withdrawing your children from school, give yourselves a “detox period.” *This is simply time to adjust to the changes that are going to take place.* There may be pent-up frustration and anxiety from the circumstances they were in, so taking this time will give you a chance to release it and not carry it into your new homeschool.

Most homeschool parents went through conventional schools so it's only natural for us to try to recreate that atmosphere at home. Resist that temptation, though, because none of you will be happy. (Read: <http://midlifeblogger.com/thinking-outside-the-desk/>)

While you're working through this workbook, *create a learning environment* for your children and let them follow their own interests. Schedule some field trips, park days, or even a family vacation. Talk to your children about what they're interested in and what suggestions they have for their homeschool. They may not get all of them, but they also might have some

good ideas. Children are learning all the time, whether you, or they, realize it. Look around your home and remove anything that isn't in accordance with your goals. Provide educational books, games, dvds, and toys, and then let your kids "play." (Shhh! Don't tell them they're learning!) (Read: <http://midlifeblogger.com/learning-how-to-learn/>)

Also, when you start homeschooling, your *family dynamics will start to change*. Allowing a detox period will give you time to start strengthening your family bonds and allow for the changes in your relationships. Your children have always seen you as mom (or dad), but now you are also their teacher, lunch lady, and bus driver. This takes some adjustment on everyone's part. By taking some time to do fun things, and not immediately jumping into curriculum, you give everyone a chance to prepare for the change, and break old habits and expectations.

Obedience

If you have problems with obedience, that is going to be the first objective of your school. *If your children won't obey you, you are not going to be able to teach them*. During your detox period, work on solving this foundational problem. I highly recommend books by Dr. James Dobson to help you learn how to accomplish this. I have links to his books, as well as others I recommend, on my website: <http://midlifeblogger.com/recommended-homeschool-books/>

Step 7: Approaches

Take some time to research "homeschooling approaches" on the internet and make notes of the ones that appeal most to you in this space or on a separate piece of paper. After you have taken some time to educate yourself about the options, choose the one that you think is the best fit for your family.

It may be helpful to read *Nurture by Nature*, by Paul D. Tieger & Barbara Barron-Tieger, to determine the learning styles of your children. There is a link to this book on the Recommended Homeschool Books page of my blog at <http://midlifeblogger.com/recommended-homeschool-books/>

Some of the most common approaches are:

Charlotte Mason

Unit Studies

The Waldorf Method

Montessori

Classical Homeschooling

Unschooling

Eclectic Homeschooling

DVDs and Internet programs

The approach we've chosen to use: _____

Step 8: Curriculum

Now that you know a little bit about the different approaches to homeschooling and have chosen the one you want to use, you are better prepared to start looking at curriculum. There is so much available, that figuring out what to use may be the hardest part of getting started. Just know that you aren't married to it and can make changes as you figure out what isn't working for you. Make the best choice you can now just to get started.

Note: If your child is Kindergarten age or younger, you really don't need to worry about buying curriculum yet. You probably shouldn't spend more than about 30 minutes on "school." Children learn through everything, so cook with them, do arts & crafts, have field trips and play dates, take nature walks, read books and sing songs. Look on Pinterest for all sorts of *free* printable worksheets and activities. I have a few books related to this

on my “Recommended” page as well. See the books by Dr. Raymond and Dorothy Moore, and Ruth Beechick.

Start by setting your budget. Besides curriculum, you may want to set aside some of your homeschool budget for extra-curricular activities such as sports or music lessons.

Tips

- There are a lot of **free** resources on the internet and in public libraries.
- Save money by purchasing second-hand. There are groups on Facebook for the purpose of buying and selling used curriculum.
- For readers, manipulative, and other supplies, you may even find things at thrift stores and garage sales.
- There are curriculum that plan everything out for you and are **all-inclusive** (instructor guide, books, materials) such as *Sonlight* and *My Father’s World*. They are going to cost more than if you piece it together yourself, but will offer more structure that may be appealing to a new homeschool parent.
- To find curriculum options for your chosen approach, try searching the internet or Pinterest. Type something like “charlotte mason homeschool curriculum,” for example. You can also try putting your approach in the search bar on Facebook to find support groups for it. By joining them, you will be able to ask for curriculum recommendations, and possibly buy some second-hand.

Our Budget

Curriculum:

Extra-Curricular:

Step 9: School's in Session

Once you've purchased your curriculum, you are ready to start. You may want to ease into it by starting a few of the subjects, and then adding in the others a short time later.

It will take you awhile to figure out a schedule that works for you, and that's okay. If you have joined support groups, then you will continue to learn through their discussions. As you gain experience, you will also gain confidence. When you have problems, that's what the support groups are for. Ask for help and suggestions. You are also welcome to contact me.

More Tips

I maintain a board on Pinterest called "Homeschool Resource Board." You might like to look it up and follow it. <http://pin.it/oZy1Gyx>. I have a few other homeschool boards you are welcome to follow, too.

- I highly recommend that you visit a homeschool convention, if at all possible. You can thumb through books and ask questions of the vendors. Here is a link to HSLDA's calendar of events: <https://www.hslda.org/about/calendar/>. Your state homeschool support group may also list some, or you can try searching for them on the internet, or ask in homeschool groups.
- Many math curriculums offer assessment tests that you can give your children to determine where to start with them.
- **Keep records.** Keep copies of schoolwork, artwork, etc, in folders. Keeps lists of curriculum used, and extra-curricular activities. You may need these for legal reasons, and they are also helpful for preparing transcripts and college admissions requirements. They are also nice to have for your own keepsakes. For a fun way to keep memories at the same time you're sharing with loved ones, read <http://midlifeblogger.com/save-your-memories/>
- I maintain a list of recommended homeschooling books on my website: <http://midlifeblogger.com/recommended-homeschool-books/>.

Will you do me a few favors?

Now that you have completed the basic steps to get your homeschool started, I would really appreciate hearing from you!

If this was exactly what you needed, it would encourage me to hear that. If you have suggestions for other information that I should have included, I would appreciate hearing that as well.

I am here to support and encourage you in any way I can, so feel free to contact me directly. You can email me at mcurren527@yahoo.com, or use the “Contact Me” form on my website, <http://midlifeblogger.com>.

I would really appreciate you taking the time to add a rating and review on my product’s page: <http://midlifeblogger.com/product/9-easy-steps-homeschooling/>

Please do not share the workbook with friends. If they are interested in it, you can share the above link with them. I put in many hours of hard work to put this guide together and I sincerely hope that it is a blessing to you!

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