

Preparing to
HOMESCHOOL
YOUNG CHILDREN
on the Field

Table of Contents

Introduction		3
Preparation.....		5
Homeschooling Philosophies and Methods.....		13
Choosing Curriculum		19
How to Teach		24
Homeschooling Overseas.....		26
Nuts & Bolts - Scheduling		31
Nuts & Bolts – Discipline & Motivation.....		35
Nuts & Bolts – Setting up A Homeschool Space		36
Nuts & Bolts – Homeschooling with Multiple Children.....		37
Nuts & Bolts – Record Keeping		39
Great Resources		40
Thanks		41



Introduction

Welcome to homeschooling!

Perhaps like many parents who are homeschooling on the field, you never really pictured yourself as a homeschooler before now. Maybe you don't have a degree in early childhood education. It could be that, truth be told, you always thought that homeschoolers were just a little "off." Or perhaps you have friends who homeschool and you are looking forward to it but with a bit of trepidation.

And now you're one of them.

You are unique in that you might be called a "reluctant homeschooler" and that you'll be homeschooling overseas. Here are some reasons that this is great:

- ◆ You're going to view all of the homeschooling information and curriculum with a critical eye. Don't equate "critical" with "negative." By "critical," I just mean that you'll examine all aspects of homeschooling carefully and won't be quick to jump on any bandwagons.
- ◆ You're going to be more flexible as your children grow up. Sure, right now, homeschooling may really be your only feasible choice for the education of your children. But in five or ten years, who knows? Your willingness to homeschool now tells me that you are passionate about following the call on your life AND the education of your children. That won't change, but perhaps the options available to you in ministry and in education will. You are very likely someone who can roll with it!
- ◆ Sure, homeschooling overseas will present some challenges when it comes to gathering resources and opportunities. However, your children are about to experience a rich cross-cultural childhood. What a great opportunity!

As you embark on this huge task, you might experience a few crises of confidence. If you're normal, you're asking yourself, 'Can I do this?' or 'Am I going to ruin the education of these kids?'

You can do this. You have been entrusted with these children. You probably have a great education yourself. You have followed your calling through late night prayers, difficult conversations with family and friends, reams of organizational paperwork, and months of fundraising.

You can do this.

There is certainly a lot of information available to you on the internet regarding homeschooling. I'll guide you through some of my trusted sources and try to help you view the big picture of homeschooling. Then I'll show you how to get started in choosing a curriculum and make some recommendations regarding planning before you leave for the field.

Let's get started.



Preparation

Many of you who are or will be homeschooling on the field are homeschooling because of a lack of viable alternatives. And you know what? That's OK. Maybe you don't have the anti-establishment gene of some of the homeschooling pioneers or the aversion to popular culture exhibited by many homeschoolers in your home country. That doesn't mean that you aren't welcomed at the table of homeschooling parents.

First, you'll need to develop a rough mission statement related to education. Talking through this with your spouse may actually help you work through issues you hadn't thought about yet. Something unique that you'll have to consider will be the expectations of your local team and sending agency.

As we begin to build your family's overseas plan for education, it is important to put the foundation into place: what do you as parents believe about education? For what is your child's education preparing him? How closely should her education align with the standards of your home country?

Establish now what priority the education of your child will receive in light of the bigger picture. If you haven't already, decide now what role Christian education should play in the future academics of your child. Take this opportunity to determine how specialized you believe your child's education should be in relation to how God made them. This isn't about finding the RIGHT answer, but about helping you think through the answers to these tough questions. Read the questions ahead and jot down your thoughts.

Take a look at this list and check off those items that you want to prioritize as you visualize the future education of your children.

Mom

Dad

- spiritual growth
- preparation for missions
- academic excellence
- vocational training
- service in the church
- musical/athletic endeavors
- community/civic involvement
- friendship evangelism
- hospitality
- leadership
- urban or social outreach
- communication skills

Parent Homework!



What is the role of the Bible in instruction?

Mom's thoughts:

Dad's thoughts:

Where will your child learn a Christian worldview?

Mom's thoughts:

Dad's thoughts:

Parent Homework!



How do issues such as motivation, attitudes, and life circumstances come into play in your child's education?

Mom's thoughts:

Dad's thoughts:

How important should the abilities, needs, and preferences of your child be in evaluating educational options?

Mom's thoughts:

Dad's thoughts:

Parent Homework!



How would you wish to see your child embrace the culture of your new home in terms of language acquisition, friendships with other children, and cultural experiences and knowledge?

Mom's thoughts:

Dad's thoughts:

If knowledge of and integration into the host culture is a priority, what are you willing to de-emphasize in order to see that this is an important part of your child's life?

Mom's thoughts:

Dad's thoughts:

Parent Homework!



After both of you have had an opportunity to answer the questions above, take a few minutes together to read both responses. Where there are differences, it would be best to reach consensus on these issues now instead of when your family is in the throes of a big decision or an educational crisis overseas. In some of these areas, a compromise can probably be reached easily; however, disagreement in other areas can be the source of major problems for your family. Take the time now to address these differences prayerfully and lovingly.

When you've come to agreement on these issues, it will be time to write your family's educational vision statement. It would be good to review the statements you've made above and highlight some key phrases to use in the statement. These will be helpful as you write out your vision for the education of your children. There are numerous methods and formats to use in writing vision statements. Yours could include phrases such as:

"Because our family values x, y, and z for our children...."

"We believe that x is the place where our children will develop a Christian worldview."

"Because our child(ren) struggle with x, it will be a priority for our children to receive an education that affords them the opportunity to ..."

Parent Homework!



In what ways are both spouses involved?

Many people assume that Mom will be responsible for homeschooling – the planning, implementation, and evaluation. But there are some reasons that this may not be the best plan for your family. Here's why:

Many organizations mandate that both spouses be involved in local ministry to some degree. Mom can't be expected to participate in ministry, even on a part-time basis, and also be responsible for every facet of homeschooling.

I don't want you to be daunted by homeschooling – you can do this. But it's not always smooth sailing. If a couple has decided together who is responsible for each aspect of homeschooling, it can alleviate resentment and conflict down the road.

Here are the tasks that need to be accomplished:

- ◆ Big picture planning: family mission statement, looking closely at each child as an individual, aligning homeschooling schedules with the family calendar (trips, home assignments, visits from family) and your daily schedule.
- ◆ Choosing curriculum: examining the available options, taking into account the learning styles and preferences of your children AND Mom and Dad
- ◆ Lesson planning: this may occur monthly, weekly, and/or daily, depending on your own organization style
- ◆ Implementation: teaching your children and daily evaluating how they're doing and whether or not they're ready to move on
- ◆ Big picture evaluation: evaluating how things are going big-picture-wise, schedule-wise, and curriculum-wise. Is everyone (including the parents) doing OK?

As you read through this list, I hope you can see what a lonely job this would be for one spouse to do

completely on her/his own. Homeschooling is a *family* decision, and both parents need to be involved to some degree. If Dad has significantly more ministry responsibilities, he may be a part of the big picture planning and the big picture evaluation while Mom is part of every aspect. If Dad has a flexible schedule, he may decide to do science once or twice a week with the kids and allow Mom some downtime or ministry time. There are countless ways that you as a couple may divide up the tasks related to homeschooling.

How have you and your spouse decided to divide or tackle together each of the five aspects of homeschooling listed above?

- Big picture planning:

- Choosing curriculum:

- Lesson planning:

- Implementation:

- Big picture evaluation:



Parent Homework!

Homeschooling Philosophies and Methods

There is SO MUCH information available to you online about homeschooling. I'd like to summarize what you'll need to know about the main philosophies and methods and then point you to some trusted sources.

Homeschooling Philosophies

Unschooling

The idea behind this method is that children can direct their own learning and will learn everything they need to know within the context of everyday life. Generally, no curriculum is used and no tests or grades are given.

Classical

This philosophy, fairly recently revived by Christian homeschoolers, views education from a classical Latin perspective. There is an emphasis on history, and memorization is stressed.

Charlotte Mason

This method reflects the philosophy of Charlotte Mason, a 19th century British educator. She emphasized "real" books and the study of nature in the education of children.

Traditional/Textbook

Generally, this philosophy aligns with what is taught in schools in terms of how each subject is approached. Traditional textbooks, methods, and schedules are used with this method.

Here are some good resources for you in you'd like to read more about any or all of these philosophies.

This is a great article that walks through the most common homeschooling philosophies.
<http://homeschooling.about.com/od/methods/tp/Homeschooling-Methods-Explained.htm>

Here are some good links for the Charlotte Mason, Classical Education, and Montessori philosophies.

Charlotte Mason

<http://simplycharlottemason.com/basics/what-is-the-charlotte-mason-method/>
<http://simplycharlottemason.com/basics/started/charlotte-mason-method/>

Classical Education

<http://homeschooling.about.com/od/LearningResources/fr/Review-The-Well-trained-Mind-By-Susan-Wise-Bauer-And-Jessie-Wise.htm>

This is a review of the book upon which much of modern classical Christian education is based. The article contains a great summary of the classical model, as well as the author's opinions on how things might be modified.

As you prepare to homeschool young children, you may also want to research **Montessori** methods.
http://www.montessoriforeveryone.com/Homeschooling-with-Montessori_ep_83-1.html

OK, you've read all this stuff. What are you supposed to do now?

I don't know about you, but when I read about all of these philosophies online, there are aspects of each that appeal to me. So how are you supposed to choose?

My advice? Don't. While you're starting out, don't box yourself in to one philosophy or another. It is useful to become aware of different homeschooling philosophies as you embark on homeschooling. **If you can give yourself the grace and time to do so, you will develop your own "philosophy of homeschooling" as you learn what works best for you and your family.**

With young children, you will have to play this a bit by ear. If you're going to start homeschooling with your five-year-old, chances are that you don't yet fully know his learning style. Of course, on most fields you won't have the opportunity to run to your local bookstore or click through an Amazon order to make adjustments very often. However, you will probably have the opportunity to modify as needed on a year-by-year basis (which, frankly, is probably better for the whole family than modifying on a month-by-month basis!).

Once you read about various homeschooling philosophies, you will see that they fall along a continuum in terms of control of the learning environment. (I'm not referring to true control in terms of discipline matters.)

The **Unschooling** method is the ultimate in the belief that a child should have full control over his or her learning environment. For example, an "Unschooler" believes that a child will learn to read because they need to read in order to do something they want to do.

At a different point along the continuum, the **Classical** method adheres to a pre-set order of when to introduce certain historical and scientific topics. In what they call the Grammar stage, or early education, they pack a child's head with knowledge and skills that will be applied as they progress through the Trivium.

Somewhere in between lay methods like **Charlotte Mason, Waldorf, and Montessori**. They are more child-directed than Traditional and Classical methods, but there is an overarching plan for the progression of a child's education, and varying emphases are placed on the quality and types of educational materials to be used.

After you read about the various homeschooling approaches, I would encourage you to reflect for a minute about where you are on this continuum in general terms. Do you gravitate toward a more rigorous and traditional approach? There's absolutely nothing wrong with that. You will probably want to start out

using a curriculum that reflects that, and then adapt from there in the future. You will probably want to purchase curriculum for your child's age that has a lot of structure and a pre-set progression set up for the year(s).

Do you gravitate more toward the Montessori or Waldorf methods? These are more difficult to start with simply because, in and of themselves, they offer less structure than some other methods. However, if you take the time to just Google "Montessori homeschooling," you'll find a plethora of suggestions and plans that other parents offer online.

This is a critical area in which both parents need to be involved. No kidding. If you're a woman who's just read all of this, stop now and start sending your husband emails with some of the links above. Here's why: if you and your spouse differ greatly in how you plan to approach homeschooling and don't talk about it now, you're setting yourselves up for conflict down the road.

Let's take a typical homeschooling set-up; Mom homeschools the kids every day, and Dad is in and out of the house depending upon his ministry obligations for the day. Mom read about Charlotte Mason and Maria Montessori and fell in love with their philosophies of education. She's purchased materials that reflect this philosophy, and plans on doing a good bit of homeschooling via everyday activities: cooking, cleaning, grocery lists, etc. Unbeknownst to her, Dad really believes in academic rigor. He expects to see flashcards, sight word drills, and a daily schedule, and never really considered that there might be another way to homeschool.

Alternatively, maybe Mom was attracted to the Classical method of education and has brought to the field all of the books and materials needed to begin the Grammar stage of the Trivium. If Dad expected to see more "organic" homeschooling going on, he might be aghast at activities that involve a lot of memorization and copy work and ask why Mom can't just "lighten up."

A few months into homeschooling, there is conflict simply because neither parent understood the

other's expectations. If you talk about things now, identifying where you agree and disagree, you have the opportunity for a much more peaceful homeschooling life as you are also adjusting to the field with your family.

Which homeschooling philosophies appeal to you? Why?

Mom's thoughts:

Dad's thoughts:

Parent Homework!



Which homeschooling philosophies do you think will appeal to your spouse? Why?

Mom's thoughts:

Dad's thoughts:

Which homeschooling philosophies do you think are the best match for your child's/children's learning styles and personalities? Why?

Mom's thoughts:

Dad's thoughts:

Parent Homework!



Choosing Curriculum

Many of you headed to the field and doing your homeschool research have preschoolers right now. The first thing that I would encourage you to do is **relax**. Even for the most structured households, the early years of education, while critically important, are not something that you need to tightly control.

Experiential learning and play are not just cop-outs for parents or teachers who don't like lesson planning. Leading researchers of education, brain development, psychology and myriad other fields tout the benefits of unstructured play time for young developing minds. I'm not saying that you don't need to homeschool your 6-year-old; however, recognize that "official" homeschooling is only a part of the whole education and development of your child.

If you pick a kindergarten curriculum that, a few months down the road, turns out not to be ideal for your little man, he will be OK. The worst case scenario isn't that you have already ruined his chances for college and a productive life. The worst case scenario is that he may not make quite the academic progress that he would have with another curriculum, but that you will make up for this by being creative and choosing a better-suited curriculum next year.

As we embark on what you are probably thinking is the BIG DECISION related to homeschooling, read this article.

http://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/schooling/effective_home_schooling/choosing_a_home_school_curriculum.aspx



Here are some things I'd like to underscore from this article:

1. Curriculum should align with your family's education mission statement. That exercise we had you do a few chapters ago wasn't just a vague suggestion. If you understand fully what you and your spouse believe to be important about education, all of the other decisions you need to make will be easier and will work better.
2. Click on, print out, and complete the Motivation Worksheet referenced in number two under "Understand your family." This will serve as an invaluable reference as you examine curriculum options.
3. If you're preparing to homeschool a preschooler or kindergartener, you may not yet be thinking of school in terms of a lot of "subjects" like social studies, science, etc. But if you're preparing to homeschool older children, the Curriculum Comparison Worksheet referenced in number four under "Understand your family" could be extremely helpful.

OK, seriously, I'm ready to look at curriculum. Where do I look?

Start here: <http://cathyduffyreviews.com/>. Cathy Duffy has been in the business of offering homeschool curriculum reviews for years, and her site offers a comprehensive look at the most-used curricula. Some of the most widely-used curriculum reviews will reference her book, *101 Top Picks for Homeschool Curriculum*, which would be a great resource to own or to check out from your local library before you leave.

As you read about different curricula, check out her "Instant Key," which tells you more about how that curriculum is best used, the level of preparation needed, and the educational philosophy reflected.

As you consider curriculum options, keep in mind that many who write curriculum are education experts

who do not necessarily have the same worldview as you. For example, some families on the field have felt that certain curricula over-emphasize subjects from a US perspective. You will probably be able to pick up on this from a company's website or Cathy Duffy's review, so don't worry that you won't know about this until it's too late if this is something about which you would be concerned.

Learning Styles

You've probably heard of learning styles, but you may not understand exactly to what the term refers. And, to be honest, there are many different definitions and classifications of learning styles. Let me tell you what we're usually talking about when we mention learning styles and preferences.

A **VISUAL** learner learns best by seeing something. This might be watching a demonstration, organizing the information on a grid, or even reading.

An **AUDITORY** learner learns best through listening. This learner may want to discuss what they're learning and may want to hear you read books aloud. If they simply see or read new information, they won't learn it as well as if they hear the information.

A **KINESTHETIC** learners likes to move as he or she learns. They like to interact with new information in as hands-on a method as possible. They don't want to just read or write; they want to DO. A young kinesthetic learner may enjoy writing letters in sand or using math manipulatives.

Like many other classification systems, most people don't fall into just one category entirely, but most of us do have a preference. However, for most of us, this preference doesn't emerge until after we've learned to read. Most young children are highly kinesthetic, wouldn't you agree?

Where does this fit in as you're planning your homeschool activities? First, it helps to know what kind of learner YOU are. Because you may find that you're a bit prejudiced toward your own learning style and not realize that your child has another preference altogether. If you're a visual learner, you may naturally

be drawn to visual curriculum. This is just fine until you realize that you have a highly auditory learner who needs to hear new information, not just see it!

Second, I would encourage you to investigate curriculum that allows for teaching using methods which are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. This will allow you to adapt activities to your child's strengths and preferred modes of learning. And let's be honest, this will only make homeschooling easier for everyone involved!

Some other links to check out:

<http://iew.com/>

The Institute for Excellence in Writing is a curriculum about which seasoned homeschoolers rave. They've just come out with a new curriculum for K-2 to teach your child to read that is worth checking out. Here's a review of the reading program and an opportunity to see what's inside:

<http://howtohomeschoolmychild.com/homeschooling/primary-reading-how-to-teach-to-read/>

<http://www.abcjesuslovesme.com/index.php>

This is a preschool curriculum, and all the plans can be found online for free except for the books. I have used this with my own children and found it easy to use and adapt as needed. If you'll be in an area with limited internet access, the lessons would be easy to print out or save. The books that are needed for this curriculum include many classics that you may already own or are worth owning.

Technology and Apps

Whether or not to integrate technology in your education of young children is really a personal choice. Some educators believe strongly that integrating technology is non-negotiable in modern times. Others feel that using technology at too young an age can replace creative, hands-on play that is critical for healthy development.

Read more about tablets and apps for education at all levels at <http://www.tckconsultant.org/exploring-tablets-and-apps-for-education/>.

Notes about Curriculum:

Parent Homework!



How to Teach

Some of you may be feeling a bit insecure about venturing into homeschooling. You may wonder if you are truly qualified, and believe that your teammate or neighbor or sister-in-law with an education degree would certainly be better suited for this task. You might be looking at the job ahead of homeschooling your children on the field and wonder how on earth you will figure this out.

You know who feels like that, too? A new teacher embarking on her first job. When her first job is an abstract notion, before she's seen the curriculum or her classroom, she is completely overwhelmed and certain that she's made a tragic mistake in her decision to become a teacher. She imagines that those who are truly suited for the profession approach every year with confidence and enthusiasm.

So what does she do? She worries a lot, and when the first day of preplanning arrives, she shows up. She may be nervous, she may feel a little terrified, but she shows up. And as the details start coming together – her daily schedule, the curriculum (books, teacher's guide, state objectives for the course), her classroom – she starts to breathe again. The notion of teaching was much scarier in the absence of a concrete vision.

The same might be true for you. Right now, you may be looking at leaving for the field in the next year and newly arrived to the decision to homeschool. You may not be able to even imagine yourself doing this. You can't picture yourself and your little monkeys sitting at a table all day surrounded by books and papers. You may be certain that a degree in education would have prepared you better for this.

I don't think that's true.

I have some advanced degrees in education, and have been involved in aspects of the education of children almost daily for over 20 years. Sure, I learned a lot about the big picture of education, particularly pertaining to the running of schools and education systems. I learned a lot of behind-the-scenes stuff about brain research and learning. Much of my education took place in the abstract, filed away for future application.

I believe that you, the parent of your child, are better equipped to teach than you may think. You already have intimate knowledge of your student(s). And I want to tell you that everything you think you would have learned with a degree in education would not be as great of use to you as you might think.



So how do you teach?

If you've followed my recommendation to complete a family education plan, you have a great start. You know **why** you're homeschooling, which provides a solid big picture for you as you start off. You've examined **curriculum**, thought about **your own learning style and your child's learning style**, and had extensive **conversations with your spouse** about how homeschooling will work.

It's time to get to work. Once you start seeing the concrete details come together, you'll gain confidence.

Homeschooling Overseas

Homeschooling overseas definitely presents a different challenge than homeschooling in your passport country. In a blog article published on the PACE website, Jennifer Moline identifies these challenges regarding choosing curriculum from overseas:

- ◆ Parents can't first borrow curriculum from their library to try it out.
- ◆ They can't go to conventions and evaluate the material or talk with the publishers.
- ◆ Their pool of friends from which they can get advice from and borrow books is extremely limited.
- ◆ They likely don't have homeschool support group to help guide them.
- ◆ They can't return products they don't like.
- ◆ They can't change their mind at the last minute and go get something else at the store or from the internet.
- ◆ They may have had to order the book without ever seeing it before.
- ◆ Even though they can Skype or email their homeschooling friends in their home country, it's extremely difficult for those friends to give advice taking into account overseas issues.
- ◆ Their internet connection may be extremely slow to do any kind of effective surfing for curriculum.

But don't let this list discourage you! If you're laying the groundwork from your passport country, you can work around many of these obstacles now.

An Important Secret: Your Best Source of Information Overseas

Here's what veteran homeschoolers tell us time and time again that they found the most valuable as they began homeschooling overseas. It's not expensive, but it will take time and energy for you to locate.

Here it is: **other homeschooling parents.**

At education conferences, in consulting sessions, and on surveys of families homeschooling on the field, they tell us that this is so important.

So as you prepare, try to find some other parents who are veteran homeschoolers on the field. If you don't know any, ask your education consultant if they could connect you with one of these veterans who might be willing to correspond with you from time to time.

This might also be one of the best reasons to make sure that you attend educational conferences on the field regularly. (Ask your consultant about SHARE Education Services, AERC, or Anchor Education to find out more.) At these conferences, you'll have the opportunity to formally and/or informally connect with families who are also homeschooling on the field.

Any opportunity that you have to ask questions, share information, or even just commiserate about the challenges of homeschooling – take it!

Culturally sensitive home schooling

Homeschooling in a different culture presents countless opportunities for your children! Cultural identity is a significant issue for TCKs. Their educational should reflect their multicultural life experience and part of their birthright is to be experts on the country in which they grew up.

It would be great for you to evaluate what their goals are for your children's cultural learning. Some worthy goals are:

- ◆ Acquire a second language (should be top priority)
- ◆ Engage in friendships with host culture children
- ◆ Become experts on the history and politics of the host country (older kids)
- ◆ Be able to participate in local church services and children's groups

A home school provides an ideal setting for integrating cultural learning. Here are a few ideas for doing this:

- ◆ Learn the system of currency and/or bartering in the local market.
- ◆ Hire a local tutor for language learning and provide topics to focus on, including teaching the national anthem of the host country and songs that are sung in the local church.
- ◆ Take field trips to cultural sites and events.
- ◆ Invite neighbor children in for play dates.
- ◆ Do research projects on the host country and culture, including its geography, history, and political system.

Books

Have a plan in place to provide a rich reading environment. Obviously, you probably won't be able to pop into your local library or bookstore to pick up books here and there for your children. Here are some ideas for what you can do now:

- ◆ Start collecting books for sale at local consignment shops and sales. Ask Grandmas and Aunties to do the same for you. You can often pick up books that would retail for 15 USD for only one or two dollars.
- ◆ Take advantage of sales at bookstores and online.
- ◆ Put out the word that you're collecting books to take for your children. Families in your church and community, as well as in your parent's, siblings', and friends' communities will want to help, especially those whose youngest children have outgrown their early readers.
- ◆ Determine how many books will you be able to take with you. If grandparents are coming for a visit in six months, would they be willing to bring an extra suitcase of books then?
- ◆ Investigate online book options if you'll have fairly reliable and high speed internet. An alternative could be to download children's books on a reader or tablet device. As an educator, I wouldn't recommend that books on a screen be your primary mode of reading to your child, but it can be a great backup or daily special treat.

Toys

If you're like me, your kids have way too many toys. We've had them passed along by friends with older children, grandparents, and others. Don't take everything! (But of course I'm not advocating that you take no toys, either!)

And don't forget to bring games, too! Your children may be a little young for these right now, but you'll want them as they get older. Games often teach children valuable skills as they calculate, strategize, and learn how to be gracious in winning and losing!

Read these articles about toys for inspiration:

<http://www.livingwellspendingless.com/2012/09/14/why-i-took-all-my-kids-toys-away-why-they-wont-get-them-back/>

<http://www.fredrogerscenter.org/blog/why-play-is-the-work-of-childhood/>

<http://www.naeyc.org/toys>

Technology

Consider to what extent technology will be part of your homeschooling routine. You may want to think about dedicating a computer or tablet to homeschooling tasks.

How early and how much to expose young children to technology is always an area of concern and decisions vary from family to family. To help you decide, here is a great article about young children and their use of technology: <http://www.fredrogerscenter.org/blog/how-to-use-digital-media-with-young-children/>

Nuts & Bolts - Scheduling

If you're like me, there is fear at the onset of any new journey. Can I really do this? Will I be messing up my kids if I don't do this the right way? How does everyone else do this?

Yes, you can do this. No, you won't mess up your kids as long as you stay in the game and let your education mission statement guide you. And as for how everyone else is doing it? Let's talk about that.

Some people homeschool as if they are running a school, and that's OK. I've seen people start their homeschooling day with the pledge and prayer and then have the day divided up into "periods" in which children were expected to move from subject to subject. And if this is what works best for your learning style and family life, then go for it.

But I would encourage you to embrace the advantages of homeschooling, which include flexibility and authenticity, especially for young children. The ultimate example of this is found in Unschooling, which is a homeschooling method that is completely child-directed and assumes that children will learn what they need to learn if they are allowed nearly complete freedom in which to explore their interests.

I find myself between these two extremes of running a homeschool like a school and unschooling, and I'll bet that you will too. If anything, we have a tendency to adhere to too much structure when we're unsure of what we're doing, so you might find it more comfortable to envision homeschooling using a traditional school year and school day schedule.

But consider this: Is there a rule that children need to be in school from late summer to late spring with only a few weeks off for holidays? No – that's a byproduct of our old agricultural system.

So do this: take out (or look online at) a calendar and look at the first year that you'll be homeschooling.

Pencil (or type) in the following:

- ◆ Trips and travel days
- ◆ Language school terms for mom and dad
- ◆ Holidays you'll celebrate from your home and host culture
- ◆ Visits from family or friends
- ◆ Team meetings and conferences

I'm a big advocate of setting up a routine for children, and for the most part your young children will need their days to be somewhat predictable. But if Grandma and Grandpa are coming for a visit for 10 days, no matter what time of year, that might be a natural homeschooling break for your family. If you'll be flying to your organizational conference, plan on also taking off a day or two when you return in order to let everyone rest and get caught up with laundry.

Create a schedule for the year that offers grace to your children **and to you**.

That being said, if you want to continue to homeschool during some of these events, that's OK too. It might be great to curl up on the hotel bed with your 6-year-old for an hour during a conference to read a few books or practice their skip counting. The focus should be on connecting with your child rather than on "We must get this finished! We're getting behind!"

It could probably go without saying that you shouldn't let the pendulum swing too far in the other direction, either. Some countries have so many local holidays that you'd never get far if you took all of them off! But I suspect that you'll be more worried about whether or not you have the freedom to take a few days off than struggling with taking too many days off.

Now let's shift our focus to your **daily schedule**. You went to school for six or seven hours a day, right? Well forget about that. For young children, you can probably accomplish all you need to if you can homeschool them for just a few hours a day. As much as is reasonable, you can incorporate what you're teaching them into your daily routines. Working on counting? Let them help you count as you cook. Working on reading? Certainly it's probably good to have a focused time to work on skills, but it's also good to just pick up a book and read together later in the day.

Most people tend to put their focused hours of homeschooling in the morning because that's when the kids and parents are at their best. But don't hesitate to mix it up as needed. Maybe Mom works on reading and math in the morning, and Dad does science experiments once a week in the evening. Maybe we don't tackle social studies on a daily basis, but study intensely about a country for a month before our visit there for team meetings. Maybe Mom has language school three mornings a week, so Dad works on math during those times and Mom works on reading and writing on her "off" mornings.

Remember that your child was built to learn. Your child is going to love spending this dedicated time with you.

Create a simple chart with a weekly schedule. Here are a few examples for use or inspiration:

1. <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/51591285/Inclusive-Homeschool-Schedule>
2. <http://www.thebusywoman.com/homeschooling/free-homeschool-schedule-template.html>

Scheduling "Electives"

When homeschooling, how are you supposed to approach PE (physical education), art, music, and other subjects that are considered non-academic. (We won't talk here about how music education increases math ability or how healthy and fit kids learn better!)

As you're embarking on homeschooling for the first time, and with young children, you probably don't need to be too anxious about this. I'm not saying that music, art, and exercise aren't important! However, I suspect that your life with a preschooler already contains a lot of music, art, and exercise, and that you won't need to stretch too far to include these skills in your overall homeschooling plan.

Most preschool curriculum that I've come across already contains craft and music suggestions. Why? Because most preschoolers are kinesthetic learners, which means that they learn best by DOing. So incorporating art and music into their learning is just natural. Holidays will be great times for incorporating more art and music naturally.

I wouldn't recommend that you formally incorporate PE into your curriculum; however, I would strongly recommend that you ensure that your child gets the opportunity for vigorous exercise at least an hour every day. Running, jumping, and playing outside all count! (If you get out of the way, your preschooler will take care of this all by himself.) Some add an occasional "skill" day so that kids can practice new skills deliberately, such as jump roping, balance beam, and throwing/catching balls.



Nuts & Bolts – Discipline & Motivation

Discipline and motivation are two family issues strongly related to homeschooling. Parents often wonder how they can continue to discipline a child as mom or dad while also serving as a homeschool teacher. Sometimes, we have questions about whether or not we ourselves are disciplined enough to maintain a home school. Or we wonder how we will ever motivate our child to complete their math practice when we struggle to motivate them to even make their bed in the morning.

It is beyond the scope of this little book to discuss parenting and discipline strategies. Your education consultant can probably recommend some wonderful books in this area. However, we can encourage you by telling you that thousands of parents are homeschooling their children today who have a wide variety of personality types and parenting styles. They have figured out how to apply their regular parenting and discipline style into the homeschooling life of their family. You can too!

Since we're focusing on homeschooling young children, read this excellent article by Debra Bell: <http://debrabell.com/2013/04/those-lazy-carefree-days-of-childhood/>. I hope that by now you are getting a sense of the best way to motivate a young child, which is to plan according to his natural interests and natural learning style.

One of the goals of most homeschooling (and education in general, actually) is to produce an independent, lifelong learner. This relates closely to issues of motivation. Debra Bell again offers some great ideas for this here: <http://debrabell.com/2011/07/raising-an-independent-learnertip-no-1/> and here: <http://debrabell.com/2011/07/the-independent-learner-tip-no-2/>.

Nuts & Bolts – Setting up A Homeschool Space

How you choose to physically set up your homeschool space is a matter of your own personal work style, the space in your home, and many other factors. Most seasoned homeschoolers agree that it is best to have a designated space to homeschool or to at least store all of your homeschool materials. Some homeschoolers dedicate a room, nook, or even garage to homeschooling. Others are comfortable at the kitchen table and have designated areas for all of the materials needed throughout the day.

Here are a few examples (albeit not examples of cross-cultural living) of some homeschool spaces.

<http://www.lifeingraceblog.com/2009/06/room-makeover-from-garage-to-schoolroom/>

<http://www.abowlfulloflemons.net/2013/01/organizing-your-home-for-homeschooling.html>

<http://thepioneerwoman.com/homeschooling/2012/03/5-tips-for-organizing-your-homeschool-room/>

<http://iheartorganizing.blogspot.com/2012/04/reader-raid-happy-homeschool.html>

<http://www.maloneymethod.com/resources/how-to-organize-your-home-school-classroom/>

<http://www.thecurriculumchoice.com/2013/08/homeschool-rooms-and-organizational-ideas-from-our-review-authors/>

Nuts & Bolts – Homeschooling with Multiple Children

Here are some good words of advice for those homeschooling young children:

“Effort spent on devising activities for a toddler is not wasted. Those of you with little ones have probably already found this out the hard way! Try spending time with the youngest child before school time. Filling their need for attention first might help them to give you some time to focus on others. Keep some toys that are only brought out at school time, along with coloring books, paper, and crayons. If you have more than one school age child, consider having them alternate between one on one time with you and playing with younger siblings. There is the possibility that older children may balk at spending so much time with the ‘baby’. If this is the case, try describing this as ‘preschool time’ with the older child as the ‘teacher’. Use your own good judgment about what activities are safe and age appropriate...Even if you’re still in the same room, having a productive activity can have a ‘quietening’ effect.”

From the Well-Trained Mind website, <http://www.welltrainedmind.com/ten-tips-from-homeschooling-moms-of-four-or-more/>



And some other words of advice:

“Keep in mind that you are “homeschooling” all of your kids and not just the ones who have reached school age! I have found that if I do not have at least one or two planned activities each day for the younger two boys, the day does not go very well! During the 9:45 time slot, I try

to plan preschool activities for Owen such as a [crayon rubbing center](#), a craft, play dough, or play with our [large rice tub](#). For more ideas, you can view my [entire preschool category](#). Owen also has some preschool workbooks. Check out my post about [getting started with preschool at home](#) for work book recommendations.

Interruptions are not the end of the world! I work to keep interruptions to a minimum, but let's face it – homeschooling happens in a *home*. The phone rings, appointments need to be set up, laundry needs to be moved from the washer to the dryer... Homeschooling is not neat rows of desks with quietly working children. But honestly, going to school does not guarantee focus either. There are plenty of interruptions in a classroom, and the great part about homeschooling is that the clock does not cut us off once we have finally settled down for learning! We have a lifestyle of learning, and it's okay if interruptions happen.”

From <http://frugalfun4boys.com/2013/08/07/planning-a-homeschool-routine-when-you-are-homeschooling-multiple-children/>:

Some homeschoolers believe that certain curriculum lend themselves to being taught to multiple ages better than others. Classical Conversations, My Father's World, Tapestry of Grace, Simply Charlotte Mason and Sonlight are all mentioned as good for multiple grades/ages.

<http://homeschooling.about.com/od/teaching/tp/Homeschooling-Multiple-Ages.htm>

<http://www.confessionsofahomeschooler.com/blog/2013/01/homeschooling-teaching-multiple-grade-levels.html>

<http://www.upsidedownhomeschooling.com/tips-for-homeschooling-multiple-ages-in-a-large-family/>

<http://hedua.com/blog/six-tips-for-homeschooling-multiple-ages/>

Nuts & Bolts – Record Keeping

Particularly if you're homeschooling younger kids (meaning, you're not maintaining an official high school transcript), it wouldn't hurt to Google "homeschool record keeping" or take a look at what's been pinned at Pinterest. There are some creative ideas out there, and it would be great if the records and plans you kept are formatted in a way that is **good for YOUR learning style**. That means you'll keep up with them more naturally.

To find out what records you're required to keep, check out the requirements of your home state, or the state to which you are most likely to return for home assignments: <http://www.hsllda.org/hs/default.asp>

Here are some examples of basic homeschool record keeping:

Homeschool Tracker

<http://www.homeschooltracker.com/default.aspx>

DonnaYoung.org

<http://donnayoung.org/forms/planners/administrative.htm>

Comprehensive List of Recordkeeping Resources from HSLDA:

<http://www.hsllda.org/earlyyears/Records.asp>



Great Resources

Great **Books** to have on hand:

1. *The Ultimate Guide to Homeschooling*, Debra Bell.
2. *101 Top Picks for Homeschool Curriculum* by Cathy Duffy

Good **Websites** for referencing general information:

1. <http://debrabell.com/blog/article-archives/> There's a ton of information online related to homeschooling here. This is a site with which it would be beneficial for you to spend some time. Debra Bell wrote *The Ultimate Guide to Homeschooling*, and this is her website. If you'll be homeschooling your little ones, don't get bogged down by all of the articles related to high school courses and standardized testing.

Here are a few great articles you should read:

<http://debrabell.com/2013/08/you-are-going-to-skip-something-and-other-realities-i-wish-id-known/>

<http://debrabell.com/2013/08/you-are-going-to-skip-something-part-2/>

2. Great general suggestions for anyone homeschooling are found here: <http://www.welltrainedmind.com/ten-tips-from-homeschooling-moms-of-four-or-more/>

Thanks

This ebook was developed by Melissa Shipman. Special thanks to the following people for their contribution to this project:

- ◆ Lilli Brenchley
- ◆ Debbie Clauser
- ◆ Nancy Elwood
- ◆ Ellen Hargrave
- ◆ Patti Meyerdirk
- ◆ Jennifer Moline
- ◆ Virginia Tanner

