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What Is Homeschooling and How Do I Know If It's Right FOR My Family?

By Anita York

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Do you know what these famous people have in common?

Alexander Graham Bell
George Patton
Albert Einstein
Benjamin Franklin
Winston Churchill
Agatha Christie
George Bernard Shaw
Will Rogers

If you guessed that they were all homeschoolers, you'd be correct. This is a very short list of famous and successful people who were educated at home. If you would like to expand this list, do a search on the Internet for ?famous homeschoolers.? There are many websites that list these people and some provide detailed biographies. There is even a book called, aptly, ?Famous Homeschoolers,? by Nancy and Malcolm Plant. (<http://www.fun-books.com/specials.htm>)

The point here is to get into the mindset that people can be educated and become successful adults without attending public school. And because I can almost ?hear? what you are thinking, no, it is not necessary to have a high school diploma to go to college.

So what is homeschooling? In the broadest sense, homeschooling is educating your children at home. You, as parent, become teacher. Parents homeschool for more reasons than you can imagine. Some want to avoid having their children exposed to violence and peer pressure. Some homeschool so that they can make sure their children's education adheres to their religious beliefs. Some live a different lifestyle?perhaps they travel a lot?and want their children's schooling to be flexible enough to fit around that life style. And some, like me, simply enjoy being with their children. They don't want the public

school to interrupt and weaken the parent/child bond that they have been working hard to create for the first five years of their child's life.

Just as there are many reasons to homeschool, there are many methods of homeschooling. All the way from ?un-schooling? (learning by doing, learning from life, not using textbook type materials) to ?school at home? (using textbooks at desks set up in a schoolroom at home) and everything in between. It's very easy to find hundreds of homeschool Websites by using a search engine, but just to get you started, try:

Jon's Homeschool Resource Page <http://www.midnightbeach.com/hs/>

When I decided to write this article, I thought hard about what I could offer that wasn't being displayed on thousands of Websites on the Internet. I realized that the only thing I have to offer anyone interested in homeschooling is my experience. So everything in the article below comes from my fifteen years of experience homeschooling my four youngest children. I hope it is of some use to you.

Deciding to homeschool your child may be one of the most important decisions you ever make as a parent, and it will take a lot of thought and soul searching. To the newcomer, it may seem impossible, overwhelming and very, very lonely. But like most huge obstacles, once it's broken down into smaller pieces, it becomes manageable. We'll take it one step at a time, in small enough chunks to get a hold of. So, if you're game, roll up your sleeves and let's get to work figuring out if homeschooling is for you and your child.

First things first. Organization is the key. Get a three-ring binder (homeschooling parent's LOVE three-ring binders) and put a label on the front. (If you've made the transition to digital record keeping, you can just start a folder on the computer. But it's not as much fun.) Label it something serious, like ? My Homeschooling Plans? or ?Homeschooling Thoughts.? Put some paper in the binder, find a really comfortable ink pen, and sit down somewhere quiet.

Ready? Good. Now, let's get started.

What are your reasons for considering homeschooling? Even if you haven't actually made the decision to homeschool, the fact that you are here reading this article says you are curious. Perhaps you honestly don't know the answer yet?and that's ok. The remainder of this article is going to try to help you start to find those answers.

Homeschooling is legal in all 50 states, but each state has it's own set of laws that must be followed. Compulsory (how I hate that word) education here in Washington State starts at the age of 8. Even though I had been homeschooling him from birth, to stay legal once my son reached 8-years old, I was required to become ?certified.? That meant I either had to have two years of college education, or take a ?certification class.? I met this requirement by taking an independent correspondence class, during which I was asked to put on paper my goals, philosophies and reasons for wanting to homeschool. I'd like to help you do the same right now.

Start a page--either the ?tree? kind or a file on the computer?and title it ?My Educational Beliefs.? List what personal beliefs you have about education?especially the education of your own children. Get as detailed as you can here--the value is in the thinking process behind the list. Take your time, I'm in no hurry.

As an example to get you started, I'm going to share with you what I wrote on my list nine years ago.

My Educational Beliefs

1. I believe my child's attitude about learning should be:
One of continual curiosity and seeking of knowledge.

2. I believe my child's learning should lead towards a lifestyle that is:
Rural, physically active, creative.

3. I believe these basic values should be part of my child's learning:

Respect for others

Loyalty to family and friends

Honesty

Generosity

4. I believe children learn best:

Through hands-on learning experience, reading, workbooks.

5. I believe a teacher should:

Provide side-by-side assistance and direction.

Interact with the child.

Provide the structure within which the child may explore, experiment, study and achieve.

Provide a good example of excitement in learning.

6. Other beliefs:

I believe my child should grow up to be self-reliant and occupationally secure in a field of high interest to them.

Now, that wasn't too bad, was it? Don't give up on this until you have at least something written down, but don't agonize over it either. You can come back to it later if need be. Next, start a paper or file titled ?Life Goals For My Child.?

I want you to write down what kind of person you envision your child being as an adult. What are your hopes and dreams for him/her? What educational gifts do you hope to be able to help them find that will serve them their entire lives?

I'll share mine from 9 years ago, just to get you started.

?Life Goals for My Child?

7. Be literate.

8. Be self-reliant.

9. Compete well in their chosen field of occupation.

10. Appreciate art, music, and literature.

11. Be creative.

12. Be inventive and resourceful.

13. Be healthy, mentally and physically.

14. Co-operate with others.
15. Maintain a strong sense of self-worth.
16. Maintain a life-long curiosity, seeking knowledge as a way of life.
17. Look to the future with a sense of excitement and adventure.

For the last exercise, start a third paper titled: Why We (I) Am Going To Homeschool Our (My) Child? (Yes, single parents can successfully homeschool their children.) You may not have all the answers for this one yet either, but just get something down. All of these ideas and beliefs can start getting mixed in with other people's opinions once we start educating ourselves in depth about homeschooling, and you'll be glad you have these lists tucked away.

Okay, here's my old list:

Why We Are Going To Homeschool Our Children

Our family consists of myself, my husband, a 21-year-old daughter, a 19-year-old daughter, an 8-year-old son, a 7-year-old daughter, a 4-½ year old daughter, and an unborn son due in 6 months. My two oldest daughters (from my first marriage) were in the public school system for the whole of their educational years. It is largely a dissatisfaction with the public schools and all it's attendant problems (academic, social, and moral) that has caused us to make the decision to homeschool our youngest children. We decided, even before our 8-year-old son (the oldest of the younger set) was born, that somehow we would find an alternative to the public schools.

We want to homeschool for some additional reasons. We want added closeness with our children. We want more independence, greater control over our family's moral and philosophical values, and better awareness of our children's interests.

We dislike the thought of any government agency--no matter how well meaning--directing the raising of our children.

We intend to homeschool because we do not want our children's academic, social, and moral education taken out of our hands.

We believe these areas of a child's education are a parent's responsibility, right, and pleasure.

I'd like you to spend some time going over these lists until you feel they accurately reflect your feelings about homeschooling your children. When I did these exercises, I had only a vague idea about why I wanted to homeschool and what kind of education I wanted to help my children acquire. These simple exercises helped me to ?solidify? my ideas and provided the basis for our future homeschooling methods. I hope they help you to do the same. Keep these lists in a safe place and add to them as you explore the possibility of homeschooling your child.

Anita York has homeschooled her four children for 15 years. She is a contracted Senior Editor, Editor, Copyeditor and Manuscript Screener for three publishers. Her book "You CAN Homeschool Your Child" is available at: <http://www.L7S.net/Item.php?ID=YC000>.

An Insight On When To Home School Your Children

By Deanna Mascle

Nowadays, many parents are enticed to homeschool their children. In fact, recent reports show that more than 1.2 million students in the United States are already obtaining their education through homeschool programs. This goes to show that more and more people are seeing the full benefits of homeschooling their children.

However, for those who are struggling on whether to homeschool their children or not are still on the brink of so many questions. One of the questions is about finding the right time to homeschool their children.

Many parents are wondering if there is a specific age or time to homeschool their children. They want to be sure that by the time they have decided to homeschool their children, they have made the right decision and that it will definitely be for their children's own good.

However, most experts contend that deciding on whether to homeschool your children or not is not actually a matter of the right time to opt for homeschooling but more on the comfort and personal choice of every parent.

Simply put, there are no appropriate times to start homeschooling. The key point here is that as long as you need to homeschool your children and as long as you feel that your family is already prepared for the matter, then you can start homeschooling your children.

What matters most is that when you have decided to homeschool your children, be sure that you have all the necessary requirements ready and that you are determined to pursue the process no matter what happens.

The problem with most people is that they thought that once their children have started their primary education in a public school, they can no longer opt to homeschool.

The good news is that you can still homeschool your children even if they were already introduced to the typical schooling method. Just be sure that you have prepared everything that is needed for the transition.

Therefore, the question on when to homeschool your children now lies on the reasons why you want to homeschool your children first.

For instance, if you think that you can no longer tolerate the environment that the typical schools have, then now is the right time to opt for homeschooling. In fact, 31% of the parents of homeschoolers have this reason.

Therefore, there are no specific periods to opt for homeschooling. Analyze your reasons and basis for homeschooling, and from there you will know that it's about time to choose a better alternative to the typical schooling — homeschooling.

Are you considering home schooling your family? Then check out the free "Parents Guide to Home

Schooling!" at <http://childrenlearnmore.info>

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