

Home Study Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Enrollment

1. When should I submit my home study enrollment notice?

You may submit a home study enrollment notice anytime after March 1 for the following school year. For example, you could submit an enrollment notice on March 2, 2009, for the school year 2009-2010.

In order for a school year to count towards the minimum course of study exemption status, it must be received in our office by Labor Day and not withdrawn during the school year in order to be considered a “school year”.

2. How long will it take for you to process my enrollment notice?

The home study office has 14 business days from the date your enrollment notice is received in our office to let you know, in writing, that it is complete or requires additional information. You then have 14 calendar days to reply to us with the information needed to complete the enrollment notice.

During the busy season (June through September), we may need the full fourteen days. This may turn out to be nearly three weeks because of weekends. The processing time may be shortened by the use of email and fax machines.

3. May I enroll my child after the school year has begun?

Compulsory attendance statutes require that a child between the ages of 6 and 16 must be enrolled in a public school, a private school, or a home study program. If you decide to change your child’s enrollment to home study during the school year, it is important that your child remain in school while your paperwork is being processed and is complete or 45 days have passed since the enrollment notice was submitted. We will not accept enrollment notices for the current year after May 15th because we will not have enough time to process it within the timeframe allowed by law.

4. I received an incomplete letter, what does this mean?

If you receive a letter saying your enrollment notice is incomplete, please do not assume that we do not “approve” of your program, that we think you are not doing a good job homeschooling, or that your enrollment notice was “rejected.” The home study statute requires us to send homeschoolers a notice stating what is missing. The letters are not meant to be threatening or cause panic. If something is missing, please send it in. If you have a difficult situation (for example, you have ordered curricula materials, but they have not arrived) or if you are uncertain about what is needed, please contact us. We also offer technical assistance to help families develop curriculum.

5. How is my public school notified that I am homeschooling?

Upon completion of a home study enrollment notice, our office sends a letter to the parents stating that the notice is complete. We also send a copy of this letter to the appropriate supervisory union, who then notifies the school your child would be attending.

Also, in the beginning of October, the Home Study Office mails each superintendent a list of children residing in their supervisory unions who have enrolled in a home study program. If you do not submit your enrollment notice by Labor Day, your child's name may not be included on this list. The superintendent or the principal may contact you to ask where your child is attending school.

If questioned, you might provide a copy of your letter which states that your home study enrollment notice is complete.

Curriculum

1. Why is it important to separate my children's materials?

Each child has a separate home study folder that includes the enrollment notice and end-of-the-year assessment for a particular school year.

When you are submitting curricula for two or more children, please have the minimum course of study for each child on separate sheets. If you are using the same curriculum for more than one child, please submit a copy for each child.

2. What is the difference between language arts and literature in the minimum course of study?

Language arts refer to “reading and writing,” which is part of the basic communication skills. Language arts would include such topics as phonics, penmanship, reading skills, reading comprehension, oral speaking, speaking/listening skills, vocabulary, spelling, grammar, usage, mechanics, written expression, compositions, editing, reference materials, reasoning, and/or media. It is important to mention age and ability appropriate types writing a child will be doing each year.

Literature includes skills/topics, names of authors to be read, book titles, and/or types of books to be read. Literature skills/topics include those that dissect and interpret the passage read. Some examples are plot development, characterizations, author's language, author's point of view, techniques of word usage, setting, and genres. The most common way to address literature in the minimum course of study is to provide titles from the table of contents from your child's reader or titles of books which your child will read.

3. Why must I notify the home study office of a change in my curriculum?

The letter that is sent to homeschoolers after their home study program is found to be complete states that, “Your eligibility for home study is based on the following conditions: That you follow the program of study as specified in your Enrollment Notice.”

We understand that curricula may be modified or expanded during a school year, but we expect that what is described in the curriculum will be addressed during the school year. End-of-the-year assessments are reviewed in light of the curriculum that was submitted for the year. Therefore, if you make substantial changes in your curriculum we recommend you submit a revision to your proposed curriculum.

A substantial change could be a change from the study of geometry to the study of algebra or the change from the study of United States history to world history. Addition or deletion of topics within a whole subject area (adding a study of spiders to the science area) would not be considered a substantial change.

Special Education

1. What must I do to enroll my special needs child in a home study program?

Information about your child's disability must be included with the home study enrollment notice. Additionally, the home study statute requires adaptations to the minimum course of study for students who have disabilities. If your child has a disability you must include, as part of your home study curriculum each year, a description of any special services or adaptations to be made to accommodate the disability.

2. What are adaptations?

Adaptations are methods you implement or material you use in order to accommodate any special needs your child has as a result of a disability. Adaptations enable your child to make progress which is commensurate with his/her age and ability while factoring in any disability. The goal of implementing adaptations is to enable a student to progress as closely to his/her age and ability as can be reasonably be expected.

3. Will my school still provide my child with special education services?

While homeschoolers are not entitled to special education services, the public school, at their discretion, may provide special education to homeschoolers through a services plan. If your child is taking a class at the public school and accommodations would be necessary for this class if the child was enrolled as a public school student, then the school would be required to provide a partial IEP for that class.

If your child has a disability and you would like him/her to be considered for a services plan and/or special education services, you should contact the school as soon as possible.

4. What do I do if my child is receiving services at school?

If your child will be using special education services at the school, please use Form C to document the type of services and provide the signature of the person providing the services. If your child is receiving special services at a place other than your public school, please use Form E.

5. May I request that my public school do a special education evaluation on my child if I suspect there is a disability?

If you think your child may have special needs, once your enrollment notice is complete for home study you can request that an evaluation be done by your local school at no charge to you. This does not require that you enroll your child in the public school. Contact your local school for more information about evaluations. You can also pursue an independent evaluation through an agency of your choice.

End-of-the-Year Assessments

1. When do I need to send in my child's annual assessment?

If you are reenrolling your child, the annual assessment must be received with or before the enrollment notice for the new year of home study. An assessment is necessary to show that age and ability appropriate progress was made during the year and to close out the home study folder for that year.

2. Do I need to submit an end-of-the-year assessment if I am not reenrolling my child in home study?

For any child enrolled in home study for two weeks or more, an end-of-the-year assessment must be completed in order to close out a student's home study record.

You may think it is unnecessary to send it in, but there are some scenarios to keep in mind. You may choose to homeschool again in the future with the same child or another child. However, if you failed to send in a progress report before, we can't be sure that you were providing your child with an adequate education. So, failing to send in that progress assessment may create unnecessary concerns about your abilities as a homeschooler.

If you don't send in a progress assessment for your student's last year of home study, we would not be able to provide you with a letter that states that you fulfilled the legal requirements for homeschooling in Vermont. Parents frequently ask for such letters when their student is applying to colleges.

3. How do I document physical education and comprehensive health?

Physical education and comprehensive health are most often documented with a parent report and portfolio. The parent report for these areas should contain a brief description of the skills and topics covered in these areas.

Accompanying the parent report should be a portfolio showing progress in the areas studied. For physical education this could take the form of photographs, drawings, competition schedules, a sports program with your child's name in it, award certificates, swimming certificates, a student's exercise log, a composition by the student about the experience, etc.

Comprehensive health may be documented in a similar manner. This may take the form of certificates from lessons or courses taken, graded health tests associated with your curriculum, program covers, drawings or photographs, etc.

If your health and science curricula overlap, please draw our attention to this so we will consider the portfolio samples for both areas.

You can also have a licensed Vermont teacher do an assessment for the areas of physical education and/or health. The teacher may use the form provided by the home study office or provide a letter which contains the same type of information.

Finally, the complete results of an achievement test may be used as an assessment for health if "Life Science" is listed in the test results.