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Guide to Homeschooling

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Table of Contents

Welcome	3
Who Homeschools and why?.....	3
Determining Learning Style	4
Additional learning sub categories.....	5
Tips for Teaching Auditory Learners.....	6
Tips for Teaching Visual Learners.....	6
Tips for Teaching Kinesthetic Learners	7
Homeschooling Curriculums	7
Subject and Core Curriculums/Distance Learning Programs.....	9
Providing Content to your plan.....	11
List Approach with required area, and topics/skills.....	11
Narrative Approach - with required area, and topics/skills.....	13
Unit Studies Approach - required area, and topics/skills	14
Theme Approach - required area, and topics/skills	15
Mathematics:	15
Citizenship, History, and Government:	16
Physical Education:	16
Comprehensive Health:	16
English, American and Other Literature:	16
The Natural Sciences:	16
When Problems Arrise	22
How to Find Resources	24
Conclusion	25

Welcome

Welcome to Home Study! The Agency of Education's Home Study Office is pleased to provide families with this updated document on homeschooling.

Homeschooling can be an exciting adventure for a family. It can also be a rather daunting experience as you try to enroll, choose materials, find resources, and set up your program. This document is intended to help you determine how to uncover your student's learning style, learn how to evaluate and provide the content your child will be learning during the school year, how to plan your schedule, how to avoid common challenges, and how to find resources. We hope to help families who are currently enrolled, who are considering enrolling, or who would just like some information about the process.

The more information you are able to gather and explore, the better able you will be, to purchase or design a curriculum that is appropriate for your student and your family.

If reading through this material leaves you with more questions, we encourage you to contact us at the Home Study Office at 802-622-1254, so we can discuss them with you. We are here to help! You may also find support in your local public library or by asking groups on social media.

Public libraries are terrific resources and are generally available to provide information about curricula, general questions, and various resources. They are generally aware of organized activities for students and may be able to offer parent/guardian support. Local and Statewide homeschooling organizations, even those not in your home state, can provide support to you as you begin, carry out, or finish your homeschooling year.

For a list of known local and statewide homeschooling groups, contact the Home Study Office.

Who Homeschools and why?

Families choose to homeschool their children for a variety of reasons: individualized learning, safety, belief systems, family togetherness, and academic excellence. Regardless of the reason, it is important to review the VT Home Study Regulations, to keep updated on any changes with homeschooling statutes.

Vermont requires all students between the age of 6 and 16 to be enrolled in a home study program, independent school or public school by the beginning of each school year. If students are not officially enrolled in one of these three programs, the students are considered truant, and the public school shall notify the local truancy officer.

Home Study Enrollments must be received or clearly postmarked by midnight on **August 1** to be considered complete. A MCOS must be submitted for each child who

does not have MCOS exemption as well as students who are 12 years old at the time the enrollment (even if the student is eligible for the exemption). The student must not have been withdrawn during the school year, for this to be considered a school year. See 16 V.S.A. §166b (k). For definitions of a complete year and MCOS exemption, please refer to our [FAQ](#) or [VT Home Study Guidelines](#) listed on our [website](#)

Submission of an enrollment packet does not mean that the student has been enrolled in a home study program. When students are officially enrolled in a home study program, families will receive a complete letter from the Home Study Office.

There are several ways to submit enrollment packets; please only choose one version (i.e. do not submit a paper copy and submit it via email):

1. Complete the forms [electronically online](#)
2. Complete the forms and email them to AOE.HomeStudy@vermont.gov. Please note that while the forms will be secure once they arrive at AOE, they are not secure during the email transfer.
3. Print off the forms, fill them out and mail, walk-in or fax them directly to:

Home Study/VT Agency of Education
219 North Main Street, Suite 402 Barre, VT 05641
Fax: 802-479-4320

Additional questions may be referred to the Home Study Team at 802-622-1254 or email AOE.HomeStudy@vermont.gov.

Determining Learning Style

One big step toward homeschooling successfully, is determining your student's learning style. Many people recognize that every person has different learning style and technique. A student's learning style, or learning modality, describes how they receive and process information. Figuring out your student's approach could allow you to optimize teaching AND learning at the same time. The three main types are:

Auditory processors, who learn by listening or talking. These students do well with lectures and read-aloud, and respond well to oral directions.

Visual processors, who learn by seeing or making images in their mind to remember information. These students also remember by taking notes, making lists, and highlighting key concepts. They typically like to draw, scribble, and use pictured details and colors to help recall information.

Physical or Kinesthetic or tactile processors, who learn by doing hands on work, or learning through exploring with their senses. They typically do well with puzzles, or manipulatives, and enjoy being active while learning.

Additional learning sub categories

Musical learners who prefer using sound and music, often humming or tapping while learning.

Verbal processors who use words, both in speech and writing.

Social learners who prefer groups or working with other people.

Logical processors, who prefer systematic, sequenced steps in learning. They learn through patterns, and utilizing a step-by-step process.

Solitary learners who enjoy researching on their own, and working alone. Typically, these students are private, introspective and independent. They find it easy to focus on a task, and enjoy journal writing.

Finally, *Combination* processors who learn using two or more of these styles, just to keep us on our toes!

A student's primary learning style is referred to as his or her "dominant modality". The next favored learning style is referred to as the "secondary modality". As adults we have our own preferences as to how we receive or communicate information, and we typically teach our children in a way that makes sense to us. That can be counter-productive. For example, if you tell a kinesthetic student to sit still and listen, or to tell a musical learner not to hum while writing, we take away the very tools the student needs to learn. Teaching to your student's learning style makes learning more efficient and enjoyable for everyone. It also limits conflict and your student learn to maximize their strengths.

The best way to determine your student's learning style is to watch their movements. Consider the following:

- Does your student express himself or herself through movement, talking, or body language?
- Do your student's primary interests involve pictures, sounds or movement?
- When encountering something new, does your student want to examine it, ask questions about it or touch it?
- In a group setting, does your student watch others, talk to others, touch others or encourage others to move?
- How does your student communicate? What forms of communication does your student best understand?
- How does your student solve problems? What brings about success or causes frustration?

It may take some time and experimentation to figure out your student's dominant learning style. The goal is to find ways to work with, not against, his or her natural strengths.

When teaching children with different learning styles, it is not always necessary to use expensive programs. Try using the suggestions below to tailor your curriculum to meet your child's needs.

Tips for Teaching Auditory Learners

- Read information and directions aloud.
- Give your student the opportunity to discuss the directions before beginning an assignment.
- Use oral drill for practice.
- Provide opportunities for group study.
- Make a song or poem out of information that needs to be memorized.
- Have your student record information and play it back in order to commit it to memory.
- Motivate reluctant readers through the use of rhyming books, poetry, and audiobooks.

Tips for Teaching Visual Learners

1. Teach your student to take notes so he has something to look at while listening.
2. Put information in the form of diagrams, charts, maps, graphs and drawings.
3. Use a highlighter for key points.
4. Teach your student to put information in the form of an outline.
5. Give written, as opposed to verbal, instruction.
6. Draw pictures to help explain new concepts and then explain the pictures.
7. Color code things.
8. Use flashcards and worksheets, as opposed to oral practice.
9. Motivate reluctant readers with books that have interesting pictures. When books have been made into a movie, view the movie before reading the book to give your student a visual to refer to.

Tips for Teaching Kinesthetic Learners

- Associate memorization of facts with bodily movement such as taking steps, jumping on a trampoline, swinging, etc.
- Take frequent breaks. Alternate short periods of seatwork with periods of activity.
- Let your student complete assignments while rocking or sitting on a bouncy ball.
- Let your student stack blocks, squeeze a ball, build clay models, or draw while listening.
- Record information to be memorized and let your student listen while swinging, jogging or engaging in physical activity.
- Use manipulatives to teach mathematical concepts.
- Use textured letters and alphabet magnets to teach spelling and reading.
- Have your student write in sand, shaving cream or pudding to practice spelling or letter formation. You can also write on your student's back with your finger or have your student use his finger to write in the air.
- Let your student write on a large chalkboard or dry erase board when studying. Have him or her erase information as it is learned.
- Let your student run his finger along the words, trace or highlight information while reading.
- Motivate reluctant readers with pop up, scratch and sniff, lift the flap, push/pull tabs and other books that invite activity. Older readers may prefer, books that feature adventure or sports.

Homeschooling Curriculums

The number one question most homeschoolers ask is, "What curriculum do you use?"

The curriculum is the lessons and content that is taught within a specific subject. It includes the goal and objectives of the lesson, or the desired outcome within that subject area. For example: Big History Project Curriculum teaches, Beginning of the Universe to Early Man. Each unit has daily lessons, and each have a learning goal, but the overall goal of the curriculum is to teach students about the beginning of the universe to early man.

Questions to ask yourself before seeking out homeschool programs and curriculums:

1. What are the needs and goals of the student and/or the family?
 - How many students will be using the curriculum?
 - Do we need a flexible schedule?
 - What is a typical day going to be?
 - What do I want the student/s to learn?

2. What type of curriculum do I want to use?
 - What subjects will you teach your child?
 - Do you want a program that is secular or faith based?
 - Are you willing to use different curriculum providers for different subjects or do you want to purchase from one supplier?
 - Will you keep records and grades?
 - Do you want a program with pre-planned lessons and a set schedule?
 - Do you want a program that promotes independent study or one that relies on parent interaction?
 - How much time do you have available to spend on formal lessons?
 - Do you need to combine children of different ages into one program?
 - Will your program need to address learning difficulties or cater to a specific learning style?
 - Does your preferred program include worksheets, tests, hands-on projects or activities?

You can create your own curriculum, purchase a complete program from a company, have your student work online, do a partial enrollment at your public school, or your local college.

More considerations:

1. I like this curriculum because
2. I don't like this curriculum because
3. It's weakness is
4. It's strengths are
5. Are there extra materials needed (equipment, paper, charts, etc.)?
6. Are there enough supplemental materials/activities to stimulate a child who has problems in, or who is gifted in this area?
7. What is the cost of the curriculum? What is the cost of extra materials, if needed?
8. Is the curriculum demanding or flexible?
9. Are the materials consumable (workbooks or hardcover)?
10. Is a teacher's book/guide available? If so, is the same as the student edition, but with answers?

11. Are the pictures and illustrations colorful or black-and-white? Are the graphs, illustrations, and examples helpful or confusing?

Before making your final selection, read product reviews about the curriculums/programs you are considering. You may also want to attend a home school curriculum fair so you can: view the products in person and talk to other homeschoolers. You can also look for used homeschool books and affordable homeschooling curriculums at discount book stores, thrift stores, and garage sales. Search the internet for free homeschooling materials, games and worksheets. There are so many options for curricula material. Finally, check with your local library to see what resources they may offer.

Vermont home study statute requires that a detailed outline, also known as a Minimum Course of Study (MCOS), to be submitted each year (unless the student qualifies for an exemption-see guidelines). This includes the various topics and skills that a student would be learning in the course of the year, based on age and ability. The state does factor in disability (if applicable).

You can organize your curriculum any way you would like, as long as we can find topics/skills for each of the required areas.

When providing the Home Study Office the MCOS make sure you complete the form and mail, email, fax, or upload it into our electronic system. Here are some ways in which you can fill out the MCOS.

- Provide a copy of the Scope and Sequence from your book or online program.
- Photocopy information about courses from other publications such as catalogs.
- Photocopy the table of contents from textbooks your child is using.
- Handwrite or type the content to be learned in each area on a piece of paper.

While the AOE **does not** endorse any one specific curriculum, below are curriculums the Home Study Office is familiar with:

Subject and Core Curriculums/Distance Learning Programs

A-Beka - faith based

Acellus

Alpha and Omega - faith based

Any Child Can Write

Around the World in 180 Days

Big History Project- Free website through Gates Foundation

Bob Jones - faith based

Calvert School - online secular

Charlotte Mason

Classical Conversations - faith based

Discoveryk12 - Free
Go Noodle
Handwriting Without Tears
Horizons- faith based
James Madison
K12 online
Kahn Academy - Free
Keystone
Learning A-Z
 Razz-Kids-Reading
 Reading A-Z
 ELL Edition A-Z
 Science A-Z
 Vocabulary A-Z
 Writing A-Z
Laurel Springs
Liberty University - faith based
LIFE school LDS - faith based
Linda Mood Bell & Linda Mood Bell Academy- English/Lang. Arts/Reading/Math
Minecraft Education
Oak Meadow
Orton Gillingham
Penn Foster
Prodigy - Math
Reading Eggs
Saxon Math
Seton - faith based
Singapore Math
Sonlight - faith based
Starfall - Reading and Spelling
Switched on Schoolhouse - faith based
Time 4 Learning
Universal Class - through VT public libraries - Free

Providing Content to your plan

(Includes the MCOS required areas for 12 and under)

The following examples of curricula are to assist you in creating your own curriculum for you child. The curriculum must be age appropriate for each child enrolling into homeschool.

List Approach with required area, and topics/skills

Please avoid using too many emphasis fonts, such as bold and italics. Highlighting too much text decreases the effectiveness of emphasizing specific instructions or information.

This approach is also considered to be the traditional method, or the school model approach. Families might start with this style because it is the most familiar, and it is structured to cover all areas. Each subject is based on a scope and sequence method, which answers what is going to be taught and when, allowing for specific lesson plans. Typically, online curriculums, workbooks, and textbooks follow this type of approach. For example:

Basic Communication Skills: Reading/Writing – topics/skills to include the following: (You must include types of writing the student will do)

- orally expressing him/herself clearly, concisely, and fluently
- develop language through vocabulary development, reading readiness and reading activities
- recognition of likenesses and differences
- thought and idea development
- phonics
- manuscript writing skills

Basic Communication Skills: Math – topics/skills to include the following:

- basic addition and subtraction (review)
- understanding Place Value involving two digit numbers
- ability to write and solve problems in which he/she must first decide if he/she is to add or subtract, then the ability to carry out the appropriate operation
- concrete experiences necessary to begin the process of understanding multiplication and division

Citizenship, History, And Government – topics/skills to include the following:

- Recognize and accept likenesses and differences in people around the world
- Develop a deeper appreciation for home, family, and community life
- Develop an awareness of responsibilities in home, family, and community life
- Develop an awareness and concern for others, how they can be helped, how they can help he/she
- Further awareness of environmental issues
- Geography of the United States of America

- Will continue to read aloud biographies of important and representative figures in American history
- Presidents from Vermont
- Please note that you cannot list the broader topics of US History on the MCOS. The specifics need to be broken down.

Physical Education- physical skills to improve balance, speed, strength, stamina, and coordination; topics/skills to include the following:

- Hiking
- Biking
- Yoga
- Skiing and Sledding
- Swimming

Health – topics/skills to include the following:

- Identify body parts and functions
- Muscle coordination activities (large muscle and small muscle)
- Understanding Adolescent Growth
- Practice habits of good health/eating
- Understand the importance of safety
- Practice basic safety precautions
- Dangers of Drugs and Alcohol

English, American, And Other Literature- topics/skills to include the following:

- Will listen to reading of literature including fiction, non-fiction, poetry, historical biographies
- Acting out stories
- Will keep journal
- Will dictate creative writing
- (You could provide a sampling of titles or authors the child will read)

Natural Sciences- topics/skills to include the following:

- Learn to observe carefully
- Ask questions
- Search for answers
- Record findings
- Become actively involved in experimenting
- Use of field guides
- Visit the Montshire Museum (you must provide content to be learned here, or brochure)

- Provide a list of specific topics to be taught within an area of Science (i.e. Black Holes, Dark Matter, planets in the broader topic of Astronomy). Please note that you cannot list the broader topics of Earth Science or Chemistry on the MCOS. The specifics need to be broken down.

Fine Arts- topics/skills to include the following:

- Arts and crafts projects
- Will attend a variety of performing arts events throughout the year (Provide names of events)
- Visit art museums (provide some content to be learned)
- Music: listening, singing, and use of rhythm instruments

Narrative Approach - with required area, and topics/skills

This approach covers the core subjects of reading, writing, and math with short, interest-filled lessons and incorporates interests with real-life experiences. For example:

1. Basic Communication Skills:

Reading/Writing: Our topics/skills include independent reading for pleasure and a purpose, vocabulary development, a review and reinforcement of writing purposes, filling out job applications, foreign words used in English, geographical dialects, writing parables, satires, allegories, and elegies.

Math: Topics/skills include one-half year of algebra II and one-half year of consumer math (the first half of these two subjects was done two years ago). Topics/skills will include systems of two, three, and non-linear equations, uniform motion, chemical mixture, and travel problems, area, volume, and unit problems, right triangles, trigonometry, polar and rectangular coordinates and vectors. Consumer math topics will include taxes and insurance, transportation and travel, sports, hobbies, and recreation, occupations, computers, and using statistics.

2. Citizenship, History, and Government: In Vermont And the United States: Our topics/skills include the highlights of U.S. history from 1776 to the present studied through novels and biographies, especially of women; basic documents of the U.S. government; advanced map and globe skills, the state constitution and the rights and responsibilities of being a resident of Vermont, and the poetry on old Vermont gravestones.
3. Physical Education: We will participate in folk dancing, soccer, volleyball, bicycling, jogging and hiking, swimming, skating, and cross-country skiing.
4. Comprehensive Health: Our health topics/skills include a continued study of nutrition, the effects of tobacco, drugs, and alcohol, the detrimental effects and the prevention of the AIDS epidemic, and disease prevention through a healthful lifestyle. New topics will include the U.S. food choices and supply through

history; the uses and bodily needs of the five nutrients, and the effects of over-use of antibiotics by man and animals.

5. English, American, and other Literature: Our topics/skills include American biographies and autobiographies, parables, satire, allegories, and elegies, including Vermont gravestone poetry. We will continue to foster an appreciation of great literature and encourage our children to choose reading materials wisely. (You could provide specific titles or authors to be read.)
6. The Natural Sciences: Our topics/skills include the sources of electrical power including solar, hydro, and nuclear, electrical terms and household usage, energy; soil composition and types, plant needs and the nutrients in the soil, soil testing, pH, acids and bases, and hydroponics; uses, needs of the human body, and sources and a review of atoms, elements, and the periodic table.
7. The Fine Arts: Our topics/skills include American artists, painting with watercolors, drawing caricatures, bell ringing, and folk dancing. Our child belongs to two traveling, performing early American dance groups, (Green Mountain Volunteers and Galopede) a teenage variety dance group (Teen Two-Step), and performs on a regular basis throughout Vermont, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Canada. Our child also belongs to a church bell ringing group.

Unit Studies Approach - required area, and topics/skills

This method allows using an interdisciplinary approach for the year, focusing on one topic, which will include many different subject areas. Unit studies can be used at any grade level and can take anywhere from days to weeks to complete. For example:

Native Americans:

The Education of Little Tree (reading)

Indians (literature)

Crafts (fine arts)

Research of history (social studies)

Fiction (reading)

Games and dances (physical education)

Artwork (fine arts)

Field Trips (fine arts)

Nature awareness (conservation, ecology) (science)

Map work (social studies - geography)

Music (arts)

Spacious Skies: (science)

Weather observation (science)

Scientific process (math)

Charts, graphs, instruments (math and history)

Weather myths (science)
Sky journal (reading)
Creative writing (writing)
Seasons – effects on people (health and science)
Clouds (science)
Different climatic regions (social studies)
Sky vocabulary (reading)
Solar System (science)
Sky music (fine arts)
Photography (fine arts)

Theme Approach - required area, and topics/skills

Like the unit studies method, the theme approach allows the student to choose a topic and explore it incorporating a variety of subjects into that single topic or theme.

The Game of Baseball

Basic Communication Skills:

Reading and Writing: Silent and oral reading to include: fiction, biographies, autobiographies, newspapers and research/informational/non-fiction publications. Special emphasis on comprehension, prediction and vocabulary of his/her reading material. Spelling and decoding skills emphasized, based on readings and written work.

Encourage careful diction and listening skills, use of dictionary, glossary, table of contents, index and basic library skills. Continue the study of basic grammar including the parts of speech, types of sentences, punctuation and editing. Continue writing skills and written expression through stories, poetry, letter writing and research reports. Practice penmanship and holding a pencil correctly.

Mathematics:

The primary objective for mathematics is for him/her to understand that mathematics is a language with real application. Problem solving, application of mastered skills, comparison, estimation and reasoning will be emphasized. Basic addition, subtraction and multiplication skills will be reviewed; manipulatives will be used to illustrate the concept of division and fractions. Division skills will be mastered with confidence. Student will develop a mathematical vocabulary....geometric shapes, angles, lines, reading and writing numbers to a million, Roman numerals, decimals, measuring and graphs. He/she will continue to use a calculator to correct his/her own work. Word problems, reasoning and problem solving steps will be stressed. BASEBALL MATH by Christopher Jennison will add some baseball applied math to the math curriculum.

Citizenship, History, and Government:

The history of baseball will be the focus of our historical study, with time lines of important historical baseball events overlaid with what important historical events were taking place in the United States. As part of the study, the student will watch “Baseball” a TV series on PBS that draws parallels between the story of baseball and the story of America. Three mini-research papers will be scheduled and written during the year. For community history, local baseball teams could be explored, or local players interviewed. Student will contact the town recreation department to inquire about the availability of becoming an umpire or coach for local little league teams. Student will continue the study of state/city ball park locations in the United States and the locations of countries world-wide, as we emphasize that the world is global village and that he/she should know the locations of countries.

Physical Education:

Areas of physical activity will include running, weight lifting and periodic batting practice in anticipation for spring and summer baseball team/leagues. Logs may be kept. Additional research on the best exercises to be at optimum physical fitness for a baseball player will also be done and additional exercises will be incorporated into the daily fitness program.

Comprehensive Health:

Health has the goal of how to live a healthy lifestyle. The student will keep a record of what he/she eats for a few days and evaluate it for nutritional balance. He/she will record it on a life-size outline of his/her body, which has been divided according to the food pyramid. The student will also research what the constitutes an appropriate diet for a professional baseball player and will adjust his/her diet for two consecutive weeks and complete a report on the pros and cons of both diets.

English, American and Other Literature:

English and American literature selections, poetry and drama. For example: Extra Innings Baseball Poems selected by Lee Bennett Hopkins, The Greatest Baseball Stories ever Told by Jeff Silverman, watch a production on PBS TV, listen or read folktales from international sources about the topic.

The Natural Sciences:

The student will be studying the science of baseball which will include physics. This will include how to hit a baseball at the optimal angle, the forces required for a pitcher to throw: gravity, drag and the Magnus Force. The student will learn about how Newton’s Second Law; specifically the laws of motion that apply to hitting a baseball.

The Fine Arts:

Student will research Giclée prints which are fine art prints made from a digital source using a specialized ink-jet printer capable of producing incredibly detailed prints. Many of these prints are of baseball stadiums and the artists who completed them will be researched. The student will choose a favorite print and work with water colors, acrylics or charcoal to replicate it

Planning your homeschool schedule

In many families, a homeschool schedule can mean the difference between peaceful, orderly days and days of total chaos. However, great routines aren't "one size fits all". The best homeschooling schedules are tailored to the needs of individual families.

1. Keep your personality in mind when designing your schedule. Do you like following the same routine from day to day? Do you get bored easily and often need a change of pace? Do you work better on a strict time schedule, or do time pressures cause you to feel stressed?

If you prefer flexibility and loose time requirements, you may prefer scheduling in the form of a checklist of what you need to accomplish each day. If you prefer having a consistent routine from day to day, you may want to write out a daily schedule in 30 minute or 1 hour increments of time.

2. Design your homeschool schedule around specific anchors in the day, such as wake-up time, mealtimes, nap time and bedtime. This type of scheduling can work even if you don't have a timed routine.

For instance, if you don't wake up at the same time each day, you can still follow wake-up time with breakfast and morning read-alouds. Developing a routine scheduled around anchors provides a consistent, overall flow to your day.

3. Consider your family's natural habits and preferences. Do you tend to wake up early or late? Are you more productive in the mornings, afternoons or evenings? Does your spouse/partner have odd work hours?

Don't limit yourself to a traditional schedule. Also, remember that different members of your family may have different needs.

4. Make a list of tasks you need to accomplish each day, then reduce your list by half. Homeschool families are notorious for overestimating their capabilities and demanding too much of themselves.

Over-scheduling often leads to frustration, burnout or abandoning the schedule. Don't force yourself to move at a hectic pace all day. Allow yourself some downtime to rest, and some leeway for unexpected interruptions.

5. Decide how detailed or general you want to make your schedule. Some families work better with a schedule that designates specific subjects, chores and activities, such as "science," "vacuum," or "playtime in the backyard."

Others work better by designating time for general blocks of activity, like "school," "chores," and "free time." Again, the best routine is one that meets your family's needs.

Avoiding common challenges and barriers

1. Avoid the top five errors when choosing a curriculum:

- Opting not to assess your student's needs and goals
- Using the same curriculum that your friend is using
- Listening to the experts
- Buying your curriculum without looking at it first
- Overbuying and overspending

2. Read your records/ logs/ lessons etc. and assess monthly

- Is your student making academic progress?
- What is working and what is not?

3. Combine activities to maximize your learning time

4. Keep materials close they can be easily used

5. Turn those unplanned events into a learning experience aka a FIELD TRIP!

Field

One of the best methods of learning about something is to take a field trip. First-hand knowledge from a skilled speaker, actually seeing how something is done, and becoming involved physically are all integral parts of a field trip. Before you get into the car on these types of adventures, there are certain objectives that should be followed to both greatly enhance the experience and fulfill the expectations of the teachers and children. It usually is best to plan your field trip as far in advance as possible. Some tours will not allow young children, some only have certain days for availability, or only allow a certain number of students to attend at a time. Always confirm your arrangements and/or the availability of the place you are going to visit.

Please keep in mind that in order for a field trip to be considered as a part of your Minimum Course of Study, you would need to provide some specific content to be learned from the field trip. Similarly, if you want to use the field trip in your assessment for the school year, you would need to provide student work samples which demonstrate content that the child learned from the field trip. For example: a picture, a drawing, a short summary, or a brochure.

Field Trip in the community

By calling and describing the purpose behind your request for a field trip, you let the business know your needs. Your own local community and those surrounding it provide a variety of resources within easy reach. The trick is knowing just where to look and to whom to talk to. Following are a few suggestions of some people and places not to be missed. You will most likely discover many more contacts, but this list will help you get off on the right track. If you are planning a trip with other homeschoolers, be sure to ask about available discount rates for groups.

- Airport
- Bakery or restaurant
- Fire Station and Police Station
- Fish Hatchery
- Newspaper
- Apple Orchard
- Quarries
- Radio Station
- Recycling Center
- Sewage Plant
- Sugaring Farm
- Television Station
- United State Post Office
- Farm (Dairy, Animal, Pumpkin etc.)
- Museums (Science, History etc.)
- State Parks
- Library

More Recommendations

1. Differentiate your curriculum.

Some families have more than one student completing a home study program. To make matters more challenging, students can often be different ages or at different developmental levels. There are times when you have one student, or more, but they struggle to complete tasks independently. By differentiating, the instructor is modifying or making accommodations within an assignment.

To address all needs, families can incorporate project based learning, where if there is more than one student, they can collaborate, which allows them to go at their own pace and level. Another way to differentiate would be to teach one topic several different ways to try to reach all learning levels or styles, and then

to scaffold the work depending on level, until they have a strong understanding or can independently complete the task. Graphic organizers are a great tool in mapping out ideas, and covering key concepts that students may struggle in coming up with on their own.

2. Try not over schedule OR under-schedule the students. It is easy to get bogged down with school and extra-curricular activities like sports, art classes, and music lessons. Trying to do it all can lead to burnout. Limit yourself to one or two activities at a time, while trying to complete school work.

With that said, kids do need variety and opportunity to try new things and be with other kids. Find activities that work for your family at nearby libraries, museums (some libraries offer park and museum passes), parks, and historical sites.

3. Don't fall into the trap of "unrealistic expectations". Make sure you plan accordingly, but make sure you allow room to add or remove assignments and activities. Your original plan might completely change after you start and assess what is working and what is not. It is ok to allow for some flexibility. The most important part is to create a plan that addresses your student's abilities, struggles, and passions, all while making academic progress.

Solving Frustrations:

By Linda Williams, Maine Homeschool Association

What do you do when your child just isn't "getting it"? When the whole family is getting frustrated? When the children are saying "I hate school!" or "Do I have to do this?"

Many homeschoolers have faced these troubles. They do not mean it's time to give up. There are answers to homeschooling problems. Following are a few causes of problems and solutions that I have that may be of help.

1. Trying to teach children before they are ready. Many homeschool curriculums available today are very pushy academically. Many, perhaps most, children are not ready to read in kindergarten. Many if not most children have to really struggle to learn long division if it's presented in third grade. The solution is to ignore the curriculum, ignore the comments of other mothers and wait one, two, or three years until your child is ready. Meanwhile work on the things your child is ready to handle and read *Better Late Than Early* by Raymond Moore. You may not only save yourself a lot of frustration, but also you may save your child's eyesight.

2. Using the wrong teacher method. Children learn in different ways. Some can read a page and learn what it says. Others do better if the material is read to them. Some children need to look at a picture; others need to act it out. Some children learn best if you put the facts to music. The solution to this problem is to discover your child's best method of learning and teach him/her that way or perhaps find someone else who might approach the subject differently. Read *In Their Own Way* by Thomas Armstrong for some excellent help.
3. Using the wrong curriculum. If you discover that your child is a kinesthetic learner (hands-on, can't-sit-still type), and you are using a curriculum that requires filling out workbook after workbook, you are headed for a battle. The solution is to look for a curriculum that fits your child's needs or design your own.
4. Emphasizing "school" rather than "home". A homeschool cannot be public school moved into the home without everyone getting tired of it before long. Children sitting at a table doing book work from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. is a very unnatural way to raise children. A homeschool must first be a home. The solution is to teach many skills and facts through daily living – cooking, cleaning, shopping, working in a home business, reading together as a family, following special hobbies and interests, helping other people, teaching younger siblings. The Colfax's book *Homeschooling For Excellence* is an eye-opener on how to make learning a part of family life.
5. Ignoring your child's talents and interests. It is amazing how much faster a child will learn material when he/she runs across it as he works on a hobby rather than what he/she sees in a textbook. One advantage of homeschooling is that it allows children much more time to do what they want to do. We as parents must make sure our children have this time and that we are not filling it up with our busy work.

When a child has been frustrated by one of the above problems for some length of time he will probably be acting either discouraged or rebellious depending on this temperament. What can a parent do?

Take a break. Take a trip if possible. Most importantly ask your child what he/she would like to do. Pay attention to his/her input and make him/her a part of the planning. If his/her frustration has turned to rebellion, you may have a problem that requires discipline to re-establish cooperation.

The problem with many homeschooling parents is that they try too hard. We have to learn to relax and have confidence that given resources, opportunities, and freedom to follow their interests, our children will enjoy learning.

Discuss with your children where you are going and why. Identify what you hope to get from the experience. While a spontaneous surprise is sometimes the best manner, a goal-directed outing will sometimes focus your children's attention on important areas.

Have your children help in planning the best route to and from the site, estimating time, types of roads, alternative route, etc., to help develop map skills.

Compose a list of questions that might be asked of the tour guide or other on-site personnel. Usually discussion prior to the trip will produce natural questions.

Spend time discussing what was seen and learned on the trip. Giving children an opportunity to verbalize their experience is, of course, an excellent technique in developing verbal ability, and it may also reveal areas where understanding is not complete, providing opportunities for you to make connections and to explain further.

Produce writing assignments, art projects, etc., as off-shoots of the trip. Usually the area of keenest interest for your children will become obvious, and that particular area might be a good area of concentration. We have seen several ideas for documentation. One family, of many children of a wide span of ages, created a form for the children to fill out when they arrived home after the trip. Each student wrote a brief description about one thing he/she learned from the visit. Some included drawings. You might have your children write thank you letters to those people who assisted them on their field trip. Another idea is to create a document with the computer. The student could insert photos of the visit, include comments about what was learned, and add various other items such a clip art to spruce the document up.

When Problems Arrise

By Steve Moitizo, Maine Homeschool Association

With your program....With your children...With school officials...

With your program:

1. This is a common problem; others have experienced this. Don't immediately blame yourself or your children. There may be some programmatic issues here, and a little help/insight might solve it painlessly.
2. Begin to call your support people, other homeschoolers, maybe even a teacher friend. Get some other trusted people involved. They may have solved this problem before and can save you time and trouble.
3. Do not draw wide-ranging conclusions about yourself or your child or your program. You are not a failure if you have struggles, or because there is a rough spot

in the system. Classroom teachers, other homeschoolers, and professionals confront these circumstances from time to time. There is a solution.

4. Do not abandon ship too quickly. Look at the issues, and see if there is a solution. The answer might be simple or it might be imaginative.
5. Stay close to your support. Sometimes when we have struggles, we avoid others because we feel we're "not worthy", or we're a failure and they'll surely see that. Actually, when it's hardest to be with the people you trust and who support you, it's most likely the time you need them the most.

With your children:

1. This is a common problem; others have experienced this. Maybe homeschooling started out fine, but now your child is not responding the same. Ask, "What's changed?" The circumstances? The room? The subjects? The seasons? Their bodies? Your situation? Finances? Holidays? Peers? Siblings?
2. Is it time for a field trip? This sometimes breaks the struggle-cycle, and refreshes things. Maybe it will take two days in a row, or an overnight at a friend's. Or maybe take yourself and children to a relative's house overnight, then do some school work the next day in their house. That can be refreshing.
3. Can a system of rewards be set up to stimulate a little interest? Not a bribe, because they're going to do the work anyway, but a reward for quality or for quantity. Little rewards for progress, larger rewards for larger goals accomplished.
4. Ask yourself if your child feels secure doing this. Do you have clear expectations, and have you told your child what you expect today? Are you consistent from day to day, or do you frustrate the child by changing the rules each day? This may be a new venture for you. Get your students input.

You'll need time to work out the best plan, and your child will need to make adjustments, too. It is common for classroom teachers to give light workloads during the first few weeks, (even a month) – of school to allow the children to make the adjustments to a new place, routine, new personalities, new books, new goals, new responsibilities.

With School Officials:

1. Be careful. Harsh words might be remembered for a long time, and if your problem requires some negotiations (even by a third person), that harsh exchange may have created another obstacle. Think about what you want to say, even writing it out, to ensure your points will be highlighted.
2. Homeschoolers have certain rights and privileges, and sometimes officials need to be educated about this. They want to win. You want to win. Best situation: you both win.
3. Get help from another homeschooler. With the extensive networking taking place among us, someone may have more experience in your problem area and can help. Maybe an experienced homeschooler could even become your advocate and work it out with the school officials. This has happened many times.

4. Do not panic. The problem you're having has probably been solved before. Someone, somewhere, knows what to do next. Ask for help!

How to Find Resources

Some homeschoolers find it helpful to be a part of a homeschooling community. There are several large homeschooling groups and even smaller ones throughout the state. A lot of these organizations came about organically. That is, a parent/guardian met another, who knew another, and they all decided to get together at the park or museum. Sound familiar?

The Home Study Office has created a Membership List, which posts activities, classes, field trips and general events happening in Vermont. Emails notifying families of these happenings go out several times a week.

Other ways to find out about events going on in your area:

[Kids VT magazine](#) or [website](#) offers a monthly calendar of events from around the state, shows coming to VT, and camps and workshops.

[Find and Go Seek](#) offers a monthly calendar of events, programs, museums and park specials, and classes geared towards homeschoolers.

Facebook: VT homeschool groups

[Vermont Outdoor Guide Association](#) offers general information, programs for kids, and resources for kids:

As we stated previously, local homeschooling education groups and libraries are another way to obtain information about resources, curriculums, general questions, and learn about organized activities for the student, all while offering parent/guardian support. Check out the calendar of events at your local library. Also, ask the Children's Librarian, if they know of other homeschool families they can put you in touch with.

Local and Statewide homeschooling organizations, even those not in your home state, can provide support to you as you begin, carry out, or finish your homeschooling year.

If you have any questions, feedback, or need assistance, please do not hesitate to call the Home Study Office at 802-622-1254 or send us an email at aoe.homestudy@vermont.gov. Again, we are here to help!

Conclusion

There is no doubt that homeschooling is a major endeavor, but there are some amazing outcomes: it allows your student's education to be adapted, it allows you to target their learning style, meet their unique needs, and create an individualized plan that encompasses their interests. In addition, you can incorporate and follow your families' personal educational philosophy.

Homeschooling provides a tremendous amount of flexibility. Whether you have a student who needs more time to master concepts, or one that needs less time, you have the flexibility to build that into your curriculum. Individualizing the curriculum can result in a higher rate of engagement and student ownership of their learning.

It takes time to build any relationship, and homeschooling is no different. Initially it might prove challenging to alternate between instructor and parent/guardian. Ultimately, homeschooling provides many more opportunities to spend time together. Not only does this help strengthen the family unit as a whole, but it also helps build individual relationships between a child, parents/guardian, siblings, and possibly other family members.

Do not forget learning can be fun. You might find, you are learning new things, along with your student. Seeing your enthusiasm about learning will only help to fuel your child's desire to be a lifelong learner.