

Archive of Questions from Our Newsletters

Answers are compiled from our members. Click links to jump to the group of answers for a particular question.

[Things I Wish I'd Known during My First Year of Homeschooling](#)

[How much time should I be spending homeschooling every day?](#)

[How do you integrate schooling with daily chores for both yourself and your children?](#)

[What websites have been most useful to you in your homeschooling?](#)

[How do you evaluate your child's progress?](#)

[What does your school year schedule look like?](#)

[Things I Wish I'd known During My First Year of Homeschooling](#)

~Every child is different, and every mother is different, so we should not have the same expectations for ourselves or others. God created each of us in a unique way so that we can help one another and learn from one another.

~Every child has both strengths and weaknesses, and we must be careful to avoid the temptation to focus more on the weaknesses than the strengths.

~A young child cannot learn when frustrated. If they begin to become frustrated with a lesson, it is time to take a break -- even if it's only after a few minutes! This is not the time for them to learn to be "tough" and keep going; that lesson is for later.

~If a child is not making the progress in behavior or learning that his parents feel he should be making: first, they should ask God to show them areas where their expectations are too high because of their own goals; second, if they still feel something's not right, they should seek out the answers to help their child, because more time may not bring much progress.

~Make time every day for reading aloud. If you can't do anything else that day, read aloud!

~Be extremely careful in your selection of books. Don't be afraid to toss or give away books, even if you paid good money for them or they were gifts. Books are a major influence on your child's worldview.

~It's okay to break up assignments into smaller pieces, especially for the younger kids. For (an extreme) example, giving 3 math problems on a page at 3 different times during the day can work just as well as giving 9 math problems on one page at the same time.

~Your first year of homeschooling is the hardest. I knew if I could get through the first year, then I would feel more confident.

~I would have liked to have known my first year that I would love being with my kids 24/7 as time went on.

~I don't have to conform to the public school calendar. I can have flexibility and actually now I homeschool year round.

~I wish that I had been more patient, and less worried about keeping ahead of everyone else as far as what my children were learning. I wish that I had been less stressed, and more joyous.

~I wish that I had prayed before starting a lesson, and after finishing it. And most of all I wish that I had enjoyed every minute! That I had made less excuses to others for why I was homeschooling - and convinced them instead that homeschooling is the BEST for your child!

~I wish I had known that it is okay to not do every single lesson in each book. I wish I would have relaxed a bit more and slowed down the pace so that it would have been more enjoyable. I wish I had done more child-directed learning activities and fewer workbooks at the early ages. I didn't realize many of the same concepts are reinforced year after year, so if they don't get it in one grade, chances are good that they will pick it up the next.

~I wish I had known how much I should just focus on homeschooling to the exclusion of other things, and to be content for that season in my life to be focused at home. There will be a day for teaching Sunday school and ministering outside of the home. I would go back and give myself a break...let go of the other things and do one thing, homeschool, with a better attitude and more energy! I would also beg my busy friends to get away and do girl things with me. I reached burnout many times because I just didn't have enough fun with friends, away from my daily work and away from "curriculum" discussions. We need support and fellowship with our companions too, and don't think your husband will be able to fill that need completely! He can't be-cause he's not a girl (and that's a good thing).

~It is not about the grades, the completion of the work, or even the progression through the grades, but more about the relationships that are developing. Some of the most profound moments in our school were when my husband would lay down with our daughter in her bed as she was getting ready to go to sleep, and they would stay awake another hour, discussing math problems. They would even talk about her day, his day, and other things throughout the math problems. They would laugh and giggle. Today, our daughter has been the most successful in the places where she learned laying in bed, alongside her father, just casually discussing math facts, history, economics, politics, etc.

~Relax, be natural, be a vessel, and allow God to do His work. Just love them and build a relationship with them. Feed them the Word of God, live the Word, and be the Word. God is faithful.

[~Back to the top](#)

How much time should I be spending in homeschooling every day?

~"In my experience, for K/1 - 1.5 to 2 hours per day. 2/3 - 2.5 to 3 hours per day. This includes the basic subjects - reading, writing, and arithmetic. This does not include any extra fun activities (nature walks, science experiments, art time).

~"It could be anywhere from an hour to 6 or more. Some points you need to consider are: the

ages, attention span and speed of the student(s), the curriculum and subjects being taught, and how many students are receiving the teacher's attention. For our family, when my oldest was in kindergarten, it took us less than two hours a day, "fun stuff" included. When my second child started kindergarten, I was also teaching second grade and my attention was now shared between the two, stretching out the school day a little more.

This year we're doing grades "1.5" (a mix of first/second grade) and 4th and it takes us on average 4.5 to 5 hours, which usually includes art or other extracurricular activity. My youngest is usually done an hour or so prior and will read or color while my 4th grader is finishing up.

All that said, each family and child will be different. I used to be concerned that our average school day was considerably shorter than a child's who is not homeschooling. I came to realize that my children are getting one on one teaching and are not competing with 30 other children for my attention, naturally making our day shorter."

~"This totally depends upon the age of your child! With kids in 3rd grade & younger, it may only take a couple of hours depending upon any breaks you take or hands-on activities you enjoy. 4th through 6th grade takes around 3 hours in my home if we stay "on task" and save our breaks for afterwards (my kids love to get out as early as possible!). My 7th grader is now doing around 4 hours a day, and my 10th grader is completing hers in about 5 hours or less. I spend most of my time with my two younger ones, and my goal in my house is to get them teaching themselves (where I do the paper corrections and give assignments) by the end of sixth grade.

So don't crack the whip too much when they are young. You are teaching them more than just the 3 R's; you are teaching them time management, good attitudes, cooperation, and responsibility (e.g., chores). After 5th grade they will buckle down more as you prepare them to be self-starters and self-thinkers. Make the most of your days when they are young and have fun with them too!"

[~Back to the top](#)

[How do you integrate schooling with daily chores for both yourself and your children?](#)

~My children learned their colors by sorting the laundry. Their manuscript letters were reinforced by writing out our shopping lists....every time you run out of an item...butter, oatmeal, bread, etc. cut the word off of the packaging and place it in a container. When you accumulate 5 items or more...have that as part of their handwriting lesson. Mom gets her shopping list and the wee ones get their lesson.

The best way to stay on top of the housework? I would teach one child Grammar while one child was reading independently, then take that child and teach them their Math lesson. While BOTH kids were busy with workbooks...I would wash the dishes, tidy up or begin dinner prep. The secret is to "ping pong" between subjects that require independence and teaching time. Look closely at

your day to figure out how to get all of the kids working simultaneously for a few minutes here and there. As my kids grew...each of them was responsible for meal planning and prep one day a week.

~I have children ages 2 to 10. We integrate daily chores as part of school and entitle it Home Economics. We have divided the chores according to rooms/jobs, daily/weekly/when you can get to it. Each child has been taught how to do the chore correctly. We draw chores each week. They are posted on our Weekly calendar and in their school planners. There are some jobs that we do as a family. For example the play room/school room is used by everyone the most. So, we all help to keep it tidy. We plan menus together for the week. Each child is responsible for planning a meal and helping fix it. Everyone usually ends up in the kitchen helping. It makes for a fun time.

My home is not as clean as I would like it. But, it is healthy and livable. I have come to the realization that at this time in my life, it is the best that I can do. There are other things that have a higher priority.

My hope is that during this home economics time my children are learning to be responsible, cooperative and independent. When they grow and leave this home they will be equipped to manage their own.

~We have horses on our mini-ranch, so my girls wake up in the morning and do chores, have breakfast, do school, do evening chores, then have dinner. It works for us 7 days a week.

~All 4 of my children (15, 14, 11, and 10) have chores. Our 8month old baby does not. They wash and fold their own laundry. They each have a bathroom to clean, a common room to straighten, dust and vacuum and their own bedrooms to clean. They also plan, prepare and cook one nightly meal. We also have rotated chores: trash, feeding animals, poop patrol and washing dishes.

I began early with them. I start at age 2. A 2 year old can take a paper towel and wipe out a bathroom sink. He/she can also assist with feeding animals and emptying the dishwasher. At age 3 she/he can match socks and sort clothes and make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. For me, the importance of chores is teaching life skills. Our house is a home full of people and pets. Each of us is an important member and we need to learn how to communicate, be responsible and care for our housemates. We live with each other not separately. We have the income to hire help and I did so for a short time after the birth of #3 and #4 but I made a conscientious decision not to hire someone to do something that my children are quite capable of learning. I teach formal lessons Monday thru Thursday, with Friday as a day for our chores, field trips and appointments. Laundry is sprinkled throughout the week. Each child has their own day. When loads were smaller they were combined, my 2 boys had a day and the 2 girls had a day. I include cooking into a Science lesson and chores as Home Education and grocery shopping as Mathematics. Teaching and having chores is not about being perfect at the task but about taking on responsibility and learning a skill that will last a life time. With that said, when you come to our home and your sock gets stuck to the hard wood floor, well that's my fault. Mopping is my chore this school year and I am little behind on keeping it clean. So keep your shoes on.

~I get a housekeeper twice a month to come in. I also give my boys (10 and 8) some daily chores such as make bed, dishes, take out trash every morning. They need to do these chores when they first wake up. If at all possible get a housekeeper!

~1. Be reasonable with your expectations. If you are homeschooling children between 5 and 12, you are in the busiest time of your life.

2. Teach your children exactly how to do a task. If you want them to clean a bathroom, show them how to do it, step by step. Give them 'rules' to follow, like go left to right in the room and top to bottom.

3. Make sure the helpers all have their own cleaning equipment. You cannot clean a house without basic supplies of your own like Windex, clothes, paper towels, and spray for walls, baseboards and light switch plates. Aprons are great for holding everything (see "thecleanteam.com" for example.

4. There is a good book entitled "What every child should know along the way" by Gail Martin that has age appropriate tasks for children to learn year by year.

5. Be reasonable with expectations. Start and finish with this thought! :)

~The children do their chores in the morning before school. I do as many as I can in the morning before school and then try to complete what I can in the afternoon or early evening. I have found that no matter how organized I am that my chores are never done! I never get "caught up" either. I firmly believe that home school moms are the busiest but most fulfilled people on the planet. I have learned that chores can and must sometimes wait.

You may have heard these lines from "Song for a Fifth Child" by Ruth Hulburt Hamilton:

The cleaning and scrubbing will wait till tomorrow,

For children grow up, as I've learned to my sorrow.

So quiet down, cobwebs; dust, go to sleep.

I'm rocking my baby and babies don't keep.

When I get discouraged this helps me to keep my perspective and priorities in order. I am not sorry that my children are growing up but I am determined to enjoy them while they are.

[~Back to the top](#)

What websites have been most useful to you in your homeschooling?

<http://www.charlottesmasonhelp.com> (For understanding Charlotte Mason's methods of teaching.)

www.classical-homeschooling.org/index.html (Classical Christian Homeschooling for suggested materials lists)

<http://www.crosswalk.com/homeschool/> (For the encouraging words we need so often in our day. Browse through articles or subscribe to receive various homeschooling e-newsletters such as: Homeschool Encouragement, Homeschool High School, and more.)

www.enchantedlearning.com (Free worksheets, supplemental information, small yearly fee.)

www.sdcl.org (San Diego County Library. Use "Renew & Request" to search the catalog and request materials online. Books usually arrive in a week (or less). Also, in the "Kids Corner" section is a free resource called "Tumblebooks." See tumblebooks entry below for more info.)

www.sheppardsoftware.com (Free worksheets, supplemental information.)

www.sheppardsoftware.com/web_games.htm (Geography practice. The games are fun and students can compete against themselves to see if they can beat a previous time or score. There are games with other topics on this site, but we haven't used them much if at all so I can't vouch for those.)

www.spellingcity.com (You can enter each week's spelling words and it will Teach me, Play 10 games with them, and Test me on the words entered into the batch for each week.)

www.starfall.com (Preschool-2nd grade. Focuses on teaching reading, starting off easy with letters and sounds and then moving through interactive readers. Very interactive and easy to navigate for a child. Also includes songs and calendar instruction.)

www.tapestryofgrace.com (Many helpful links to additional history, church history, literature and art resources.)

www.themathworksheetsite.com (Free worksheets, supplemental information.)

www.tumblebooks.com.dbpcosdcsgt.co.sandiego.ca.us/library/asp/home_tumblebooks.asp

(This has an engaging collection of online interactive, popular storybooks, readers and audio books for children. Normally there is a charge for this, but if you access it online through the library's website, it's free!)

www.vegsource.com/homeschool (used textbooks and materials)

[~Back to the top](#)

How do you evaluate your child's progress?

"I teach for mastery, so if my kids 'get it,' we move on, and if they don't, we continue until they do. I use some curriculum that has tests (Rod & Staff for English, MathUSee, Phonetic Zoo, Considering God's Creation for Science), so that is easy. For the rest (mainly history, Bible), I just make sure that I do a lot of discussion and verbally assess what they know. Also, because I am in this for the long haul, I know that I can fill in any gaps that arise and know that we will cover everything eventually. My husband is such an encouragement and continually reminds me that we don't HAVE to finish their schooling by age 18. We can take extra months, even years if needed. We are on our own time table and are blessed to be able to allow school to fit into our lives as we see it best."

"We set goals at the beginning of each school year. There is a spiritual, scholastic, physical, and personal choice goal that is written. We keep portfolios to assess our progress."

"When I first started homeschooling, I was definitely concerned about whether or not my children were "keeping pace" with others their age. Are they reading at grade level? Are these the same math concepts that the kids in public school are learning? I considered checking the state standards to make sure that my kids were on track, or possibly having them take the same achievement tests that the public school kids took.

But then the Lord, using homeschool conventions and the wisdom of the veteran homeschool parents there, convicted me that I am most definitely NOT training my child up for the state and slavery to man's goals, but for the Lord and His glory alone. So then why would I want to use state standards to evaluate my child's progress? Their standards are way too low, anyways, since they say nothing about my children's character or maturity

in Christ.

Rather, I should be starting with the Lord's standards as set in His word since I am training them up for Him, and using those to evaluate my children's progress. So now I ask myself, "Are my children increasing in their fear of the Lord, for that is the beginning of true wisdom?" "Have they learned to honor their father and mother?" "Is everything they are studying in school leading them to worship their Creator, the author of science, history, math?" It is too easy to think that if my children get 100% on a test, that they've "got it." But if they are not led to worship God because of their studies, not humbled by how much more they have to learn of God's great mysteries, then I have not done my job."

[~Back to the top](#)

What does your school year schedule look like?

"We school year round. Our school year is approximately 34 weeks or 170 lessons. We generally start our new school year during the summer. I typically try and have formal lessons five times per week starting around 9 am. However, we remain totally flexible. If we have a field trip, ministry opportunity, vacation, activity, appointment, guest in town, or dad has a day off, and we need to skip formal lessons, we do. It is a joy to be able to do that.

We have found that we all have "bad" days (teachers and students), so allowing our schedule to be flexible is key. We also have 36 weeks of read-alouds and we do these whenever and wherever. If we don't have formal lessons on a particular day, we try to at least have read-alouds. Education happens every day with or without formal lessons. I have learned to enjoy the time! I work from home and love the flexibility of homeschooling. The days of trying to mimic a traditional school calendar are gone for us, and with it, some of the stress!"

"We used to love to start school in early August for a few weeks. Then we would take off in early September for a family vacation. The weather was still warm and beautiful, and the crowds were small since regular school was in session. Once our oldest kids started college, we found ourselves, once again, at the mercy of the public educational calendar of the college. No more September trips. But at least the kids have most of January off, so that can be nice too. With two in college and two in high school, we follow a more traditional schedule now. World View classes at Co-op are set up this way, as well. So traditional is what works for this later season of homeschooling. Be willing to be flexible with the different seasons your school years will pass through."

"We complete 175 days of school. We chose to do this since I hold a CA teaching certificate and we then do not have to file anything with the state per CA Ed Code 48224."

"Our school schedule has changed over the years. When we first began homeschooling, we had two preschoolers in the house. It was a full-time job just taking care of everyone, so adding homeschooling (another full-time job) was a difficult adjustment. That is why I chose the year round schedule at that time - with 5 weeks on and 1 week off. Often we didn't do anything special on the weeks off - just no school. I think I enjoyed the frequent breaks more than my children! We would start school in July and finish in June.

As my children got older it was less necessary (for my sanity) to take such frequent breaks. When my high schoolers began taking classes either at Palomar or at Co-op which adhered to a traditional schedule, it made more sense for our family to go to a modified traditional plan. Now we begin in August if possible, which offset the days we go to Co-op. (I don't make my children do math or language, etc. on Co-op days.) For a while we took every Friday off, but now we take just Park Day Fridays off (except for a Spelling test). We also take three days off at Thanksgiving, three weeks at Christmas, one week at Easter, and try to finish by the first week in June."

"When we first started our homeschooling journey years ago, our public schools were on a year-round schedule. We decided to do the same but with a modified version covering 180 days. Taking the entire month of December off, an extra-long Easter break, an extra long family vacation, and leftover time to use as needed served our family well. The down time at the holidays became very meaningful as we could focus on Jesus instead of stressing about school AND holiday preparations. We thoroughly enjoyed how uncrowded and quiet many of our family vacations were because the other schools were in session. The flexibility of this schedule allowed us to say "Yes" to serving our extended family and others without cutting into school days. As my kids reached the upper grades and began to take classes outside the home, we had to adopt a traditional schedule out of necessity. Though a traditional schedule does have its benefits, I would go back to that year-round schedule in a heartbeat."

[~Back to the top](#)