

Deschooling

de school 'ing (dī'sk ōōl ing), n. the transition from conventional school to home education

Most of us were trained by the conventional school system, and as such we have an institutional mindset regarding education and schooling. As a family bringing children home, your children will very likely have been trained in a uniform and mechanical way of thinking about school and learning. It is hard to imagine that education can take place outside of a traditional school setting without desks, bells, certified teachers, a classroom of same-aged children, or four-color text books. In many cases, the love of learning and the natural curiosity of young children have been damaged. In some children, negative influences have allowed disobedience, disrespect and poor attitudes to take a foothold in their hearts. Some children are emotionally drained or hurt.

In addition, your family is learning to be in the house together 24/7. In the months ahead, you will “go through the fire.” Your ideas of what learning looks like will be stretched, the way you use your home will change, your patience will be tested, your resolve will be shaken, and your faith will be pressed into service. You are in the transition from conventional schooling to home educating; you are deschooling. And you might be wondering if it’s worth it.

Don’t quit while it is hard and before you have experienced the benefits of your new endeavor. For those who will stick it out, who will allow God the time to turn their hearts back toward home and family, the benefits are tenfold. Faithfully and patiently plant the seeds and remember the law of the harvest: you will reap—later and greater—than what you sow.

As with any major life change, expect to designate a considerable amount of time to this transition. The general rule of thumb is to anticipate one month of deschooling for every year in school (including preschool).

During this transition designate the time as a period of rest from formal academics.

While that thought may be uncomfortable, there is indeed plenty of work and learning to be done in living everyday life together.

The following four points are the primary work of the deschooling phase:

1. Determine your vision.

“Where there is no vision, the people go unrestrained,
but happy is he who keeps the law” (Proverbs 29:18).

Set before you God’s word as your standard and from it put together a vision and a mission for your family and your home school. This work will help you define your goals and be a useful guide when choosing a curriculum. It will inspire, strengthen and re-focus you on hard days.

Study the scriptures; what does the Bible say about family? Being a woman? A man? A husband? A wife? Mother? Father? Why did God create us? What is the responsibility of the father, mother, child, and the family? Construct a vision for what the end result should be in raising and training the children God has entrusted to you. Determine why you want to homeschool. What do you hope to achieve in doing so?

*Reading suggestions: The Old Testament; Deuteronomy 6; Proverbs 31; Ephesians 4-6; Titus; 1 and 2 Timothy; Colossians 3; [What He Must Be](#) by Voddie Baucham

2. Work on first-time obedience.

“Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right” (Ephesians 6:2).

You are going to need your child’s attention in the days and years to come. First-time obedience is a foreign concept in our culture. Do some reading, search the scriptures, and spend some time on getting it right. There may be days when all you do is discipline and you’ll be tempted to see this as an interruption to your plans or a wasted day, when in fact such days are well worth it. Your children should learn to obey “all the way, right away, and with a happy heart.”

As a culture we dislike our children and can’t wait to take them back to school at the end of the summer. We do not consider them a blessing and a gift from the Lord as the Bible says they are. Have you considered that because of the family’s lack of discipline and training they have become unruly, demanding and difficult to get along with? Take this opportunity to study the Bible, learn what God ordained for the family and what He commands us as parents, and then establish a consistent culture of loving authority, correction and training. You will be able to claim the promises of Proverbs: “Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; He will also delight your soul” (Proverbs 29:17). What a wonderful picture of parent, child and family life.

*Reading suggestions: Proverbs; [Shepherding a Child’s Heart](#) and [Instructing a Child’s Heart](#) by Tedd Tripp; [Don’t Make Me Count to Three: A Mom’s Look at Heart-Oriented Discipline](#) by Gigner Plowman; [The Myth of Adolescence: Raising Responsible Children in and Irresponsible Society](#) by David Black; [Hold on to Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers](#) by Gordon Neufeld.

3. Detox:

“Do not be conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good, acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

Purge yourself and your children of worldly, unbiblical ideas about education, authority, obedience, family, relationships, etc. Search the scriptures and ask yourself what the Bible says about learning and teaching and why God created man and family. “Stop talking about learning as though it’s separate from life” (Sandra Dodd). Set before you the vision of a family that truly lives out the joy of life-long learning. Look at being a student as a privilege to be sought after rather than a burden to be endured. Stretch your pre-conceived notions about education and what learning looks like. Read about the history of education and how compulsory education began in America, the homeschooling movement, methods, and theories.

*Reading suggestions: Deuteronomy 6; 1 and 2 Timothy; [Learning all the Time](#) and [Teach Your Own](#) by John Holt, [Weapons of Mass Instruction](#) and [Dumbing Us Down](#) by John Taylor Gatto, [For the Children’s Sake](#) by Susan Schaeffer MacAulay

4. Set the example.

“A student is not above his teacher,
but when he is fully trained he will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40).

What a sober warning for us as parents, disciplers, and teachers of our children. Take the initiative and make the changes in your own character that you hope to develop in your children. Hit the books and show your children by example what life-long learning looks like.

**Please note that reading suggestions come from a variety of worldviews and the reader is encouraged to weigh everything against the truth of the scriptures as they are reading. “But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:21, 22).*