

Homeschool: Getting Started

First Steps:

1. Research the requirements in your state. Do you need to do standardized testing? Are you required to register somewhere? Here is a good starting point: <http://www.hslda.org/laws/>
2. Learn about on the different homeschool methods (brief chart below). There are books about most of them, but you can also read some of the many homeschool blogs that will tell you why they love their particular style of homeschooling. Be sure to read many different perspectives so that you get a complete picture of the pros and cons of each, although most people don't stick to one strictly.
3. Look at the curriculum available. Many places will send you catalogs and you can see samples online. If you attend a homeschool convention you can also see them in person. Some maybe available at teacher's supply stores, but most are not.
4. Do some planning. What do you want your kids to learn this year? Here is how I planned P's first grade year <http://hupostasis.wordpress.com/2013/06/06/planning-first-grade-homeschool>: <http://hupostasis.wordpress.com/2013/06/06/planning-first-grade-homeschool> and here is our fifth grade plan for D <http://hupostasis.wordpress.com/2013/07/03/on-to-fifth-grade/>. You don't have to be as detailed as I am, but it is a good idea to figure out where you are going so that you can evaluate which are the correct tools to get you there. It helps you avoid the mid-year feeling of "Why did I waste so much time on that what that is not what we really needed?"
5. Jump in! Start with some things that are light and fun to get used to the idea of learning at home. I would strongly advise against spending a lot of money your first year because you will find that what you thought would be great may not work as well as you thought for your kids. If you really want to try something that is a little expensive, try getting it used.
6. BE FLEXIBLE! Changing your plan is not a sign of failure! Don't feel bad if you need to scrap something you thought would be great and go in another direction. Homeschool in real life is usually nothing like what you imagined in your head.

Approaches to Homeschool (Philosophy):

No one that I know actually sticks to just one of these in real life. Most of us take a little from several, but mainly base our ideas in one or two of these methods. Many of these overlap in one way or another.

Method	Description	More info:
Classical	Based on The Trivium - Little ones are in the "Grammar Stage" (learning basics to build on), the "Logic Stage" at about middle school (learning the way things fit together, more analytical), High School is " Rhetoric Stage" where students perfect their skills and learn to communicate their now more sophisticated knowledge well. Four year cycles of learning, most also learn Latin.	The Well Trained Mind (by Susan Wise Bauer)
Charlotte Mason	Heavy emphasis on the Humanities, especially literature. Uses narration and "copywork," many CM homeschoolers do a lot of unit studies.	Charlotte Mason's Original Homeschooling Series
Unschooling	Following the child's lead in what he/she wants to learn, not requiring anything in particular, but encouraging their own curiosity.	The Underground History of American Education (by John Taylor Gatto)
Eclectic	A mix of different methods	This describes most homeschoolers
Traditional	Based on what children usually do in public schools	a traditional school environment
Unit Study	Integrating all subjects into areas of study. A study of the rainforest might include a science study of what plants/animals live in the rainforest, literature based on someone's life in the rainforest, math problems adding up jungle animals and geography lessons locating rainforests on a map.	Usually a mix of unschooling ideas (follow what they love) and Charlotte Mason. It is also a way to teach children in different grades with the same content but different assignments for each child.
Delayed Academics	Young children simply explore their world (like unschooling), with no pressure to read, write and do academics until they show interest.	Better Late than Early (by Raymond and Dorothy Moore)
Literature-Based	All areas (except math usually) are explored through literature. Biographies and historical fiction are used for social studies and math.	Sonlight is probably the most well known curriculum that uses this method. Charlotte Mason is often literature-based.

Tips to Save You Time, Money and Frustration When Choosing Curriculum:

When it comes to homeschool curriculum, there are the all-in-one sets that have everything (or almost everything) you need for a year and then there are publishers that specialize in one or two subjects alone. I have found that most people start out using a big set of complete curriculum. That is a perfectly fine place to start if that is what you decide (especially if it is used), since there is no way you can match your child to the perfect curriculum until you work with them on a daily basis and find their specific strengths and weaknesses and until you get to know what is available.

- Take note of the things that are not going as well as you would like or specific areas where they may be struggling and ask around if anyone else has had a similar situation. That is where the discussion groups are very helpful. Another parent may know just the right thing for you.
- Most sites have at least some things for free. Some more than others. If you sign up for their "newsletters," many of them will send you free printables. Most will make you create an account with a password, even for things that are free, but I have not had an issue with spam from any of these. For sites that are for teachers, just enter "Homeschool" as the name of your school if they don't have an option already for homeschoolers. Some blogs have free downloadable resources, especially for younger children.
- Most subscription sites have free trials.
- Lots of workbooks (like Spectrum workbooks or Evan Moor Daily Practice workbooks have the option of purchasing a PDF download instead of the actual printed book. This helps if you have more than one child, because you can re-use it when the next child needs it by just printing them out again or if you want to review.
- Focus on the "**3 R's**" (**R**eading, **W**Riting and **R**ithmetic) If you have strong readers and writers that can do math, everything else will be okay! History, Science and all the rest are important, but the foundations are reading, writing and math. If they are not strong readers it is hard to acquire the information in other subjects (not impossible, but harder) and it is more difficult to show what they know if they are not strong writers.
- If you are thinking of homeschooling only for a few years, you may want to check out your state's standards or common core online for your child's grade so that they are learning the same things as their peers. If it will be more long term, it may not matter to you. You can also take a look at the "What Your ___ Grader Needs to Know" books.
(http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=Core+Knowledge+Series) They are available in most libraries.
- I have put together three charts to give you an overview of what is available:
 1. Major publishers of "all inclusive" sets
 2. Major publishers specializing in certain subject areas
 3. Supplements and lesser known sources

Of course there are many more not listed here, but these are the ones that I am most familiar with. We use materials from many different companies and fine-tuned a great mix that works well for us. The advantage of homeschool is that you can give your child what **they** need, not what a typical child needs at their age. It's not about being ahead or behind. *It's about providing just the right challenge exactly where they need it.*

Major Publishers of "All Inclusive" sets:

(These are mostly complete curriculum - several subjects in one set.)

Tip: Almost all of them will send you a free catalog and most will let you see samples online, so look at the catalogs, see what appeals to you and check out the best ones online.

A Beka	www.abeka.com	Christian, academically rigorous curriculum, all subjects
AOP (Alpha Omega Publications)	www.aophomeschooling.com	Christian, very popular They offer traditional (book based), online, and software
Bob Jones	www.bjupresshomeschool.com	Christian, now offer distance learning options as well as traditional
Five in a Row	www.fiveinarow.com	Literature based, mostly for early primary Also have "Before Five in a Row" for preschool and "Beyond Five in a Row" for later
k12 (independent route)	www.k12.com/courses#.UusKqbS5iHM	You can also use it "independently." You pay for the class (or classes) and they send you all the books and access to the site for a year. We used this for our first full year of homeschooling and occasionally for certain subjects along the way. Very thorough curriculum, high quality materials.
k12 (through public charter school or their own private school)	www.k12.com/enroll-or-buy/find-a-school-and-enroll#.UusKmrS5iHM	Secular, complete virtual school complete with a teacher to grade work and have class once a week at a brick and mortar school. These are often charter schools and are free to people who live in the districts that offer it. It can be rigid and time consuming because you have to do it "their way."
Rod and Staff	no official website, available at multiple sites	conservative Christian curriculum, style is old-fashioned, many people use just language arts from Rod and Staff
Sonlight	www.sonlight.com	Christian, literature based complete curriculum We use their book lists every year for novels, historical fiction and biographies.
Veritas Press	www.veritaspress.com	classical curriculum
Heart of Dakota	www.heartofdakota.com	Charlotte Mason philosophy mixed with a Unit Study focus.
My Father's World	www.mfwbooks.com	Christian, Literature-based, clear lesson plans. different content for different ages/grades
Tapestry of Grace	http://www.tapestryofgrace.com/explore/bigideas.php	some classical style elements, integrated unit studies, can combine ages/grades

Some of the Most Common Publishers for Individual Subject Areas:

Publisher	Website	Subject
American Chemical Society	www.middleschoolchemistry.com	free, secular middle school chemistry curriculum by the American Chemical Society
Apologia	www.apologia.com	science, very popular with Christian homeschoolers, young earth, no climate change
Explode the Code	eps.schoolspecialty.com/	reading/phonics
Family Time Fitness	www.familytimefitness.com	PE, includes the whole family, written materials and videos
Handwriting without Tears	www.hwtears.com/hwt	printing and cursive, very popular in schools
Institute for Excellence in Writing (IEW)	www.iew.com	Amazing writing curriculum Review is coming for this one!
Life of Fred	lifeoffredmath.com	narrative approach to math, many use it to supplement
Math Mammoth	www.mathmammoth.com	math curriculum
Math U See	www.mathusee.com	I have reviewed this here. We LOVE MUS!
McGuffey's Readers	free here: http://www.learn-to-read-prince-george.com/McGuffey-readers.html	old (think 1800's) school books, popular with Charlotte Mason homeschoolers
Primary Language Lessons	http://www.amazon.com/Primary-Language-Lessons-Emma-Serl/dp/0965273512	popular with Charlotte Mason homeschoolers
Real Science for Kids	www.gravitaspublications.com/products	Science, author is a Christian, but does not address evolution/creationism.
Real Science Odyssey	http://www.pandiapress.com/?page_id=50	Science lesson told in a story, labs, popular with Classical homeschoolers
Right Start Math	www.rightstartmath.com	math curriculum
Saxon	saxonhomeschool.hmhco.com	popular math curriculum
See Time Fly	www.ganderpublishing.com/Visualizing-and-Verbalizing/See-Time-Fly-History-Series.html	Review is coming for this one! This is a little-known but EXCELLENT set of history books, good middle school follow up to Story of the World for those that use the classical method.
Shurley English	https://www.shurley.com/	grammar
Singapore Math	www.singaporemath.com	very popular math program
Spectrum (Carson Dellosa) workbooks	http://www.carsondellosa.com/cd2/searchcatalog.aspx?k=brand:Spectrum	good for review or extra practice, not teaching concepts in detail
Teaching Textbooks	www.teachingtextbooks.com	math curriculum

Sources for Curriculum and Supplements (in alphabetical order)

Name	Find it at	Description
ABC Ya	abcya.com	educational games
All Kids Network	www.allkidsnetwork.com	lots of free worksheets and ideas
Amazon (of course)	www.amazon.com	new and used curriculum/supplements
Ambleside Online	www.amblesideonline.org	Totally free complete curriculum (yes, really), Charlotte Mason-style, Christian
BrainPop	brainpop.com (for 3rd grade & up) brainpopjr.com (for K-3rd)	We use this free through our school district, but I did have a subscription at one time. It is another expensive one, but it really has so many topics and the companion activities are good. Here is a list of the BrainPopJr topics (K-3rd) http://www.brainpop.com/educators/community/bp-jr-topic/?brainpop-subject=all sometimes on sale at Homeschool Buyers Co-op
Christian Book Distributors (CBD)	www.christianbook.com	Traditional Curriculum/Book Sellers (usually have some downloadable/pdf versions, but mainly hardcopy). Look for sales and free shipping specials.
Code	www.code.org	free code/programming lessons
Code Academy	www.codecademy.com/learn	free code/programming lessons
Code Monster	www.crunchzilla.com/code-monster	free code/programming lessons
Confessions of a Homeschooler	www.confessionsofahomeschooler.com	Blog by a homeschool mom who creates curriculum - very good and affordable for preschool and supplements
CurrClick	www.currclick.com	Downloadable curriculum and supplements and online classes
Deep Space Sparkle	www.deepspacesparkle.com	Really great art class ideas
Easy Peasy	allinonehomeschool.com	Totally free complete curriculum (yes, really), Christian
Ebay (of course)	www.ebay.com	new and used curriculum/supplements
Education.com	www.education.com	printable supplements (lots)
Educents	www.educents.com	Hardcopy and downloadable curriculum and supplements
Enchanted Learning	www.enchantedlearning.com	some free, LOTs of printables with subscription

Evan Moor Teacher File Box	www.evan-moor.com/t/teacher-file-box	subscription-based, access to their workbooks, must be printed from their site, cannot download pdfs, sometimes on sale at Homeschool Buyers Co-op
Exodus Books	www.exodusbooks.com	Traditional Curriculum/Book Sellers (usually have some downloadable/pdf versions, but mainly hardcopy) New and used available
Free Homeschool Deals	www.freehomeschooldeals.com	Alerts you to free and very cheap resources (great site!)
Freely Educate	http://www.freelyeducate.com/	Blog with GREAT free resources (sometimes they repeat)
Homeschool Buyers Co-op	www.homeschoolbuyerscoop.org	Group discounts on curriculum/supplements (deals are rotated throughout the year) Free homeschool ID too
Homeschool Classifieds	www.homeschoolclassifieds.com	Used curriculum (anything and everything)
Homeschool Freebie of the Day	www.homeschoolfreebie.wholeomechildhood.com	They will send you an email once a week with a free downloadable resource for each day of the coming week. I usually don't download them, but every once in a while there is something good. Christian, very conservative
Howard Hughes Medical Institute	www.hhmi.org/educational-materials	FREE educational materials. They don't even charge you for shipping! High quality dvds and other materials (all from a secular perspective). Middle school and up.
Internet 4 Classrooms	www.internet4classrooms.com	Online activities to supplement your learning
Khan Academy	www.khanacademy.com	Free online learning. Main emphasis is math, but also science lessons also. Free trial. Basically, these are leveled readers. This is by far the most expensive resource we use, but we can use it for all three kids for Reading, Social Studies and Spanish. We also added the vocabulary one, which creates a vocabulary lesson for many of the books. We use probably well over 100 books a year from this site, so it is worth it for me. My review is coming.
Learning A to Z	learninga-z.com	
Muzzy	Muzzy Languages	Free through our library. Online language learning.

PBS	pbslearningmedia.org	A ton of classroom ideas for PBS documentaries, some ready-made lesson plans that can be adapted for homeschool. Sign up to get access.
Rainbow Resource	www.rainbowresource.com	Traditional Curriculum/Book Sellers (usually have some downloadable/pdf versions, but mainly hardcopy) (new and used) They also have a free GIGANTIC catalog they will send you if you request it.
Saylor Foundation	saylor.org	Free online classes (K-12 classes launched in 2013)
Scholastic	http://printables.scholastic.com/printables/home	subscription based large variety of subjects/grades
Spectrum (Carson Dellosa) workbooks	http://www.carsondellosa.com/cd2/searchcatalog.aspx?k=brand:Spectrum	good for review or extra practice, not teaching concepts in detail
Starfall	www.starfall.com	Lots of free early learning activities (Preschool-1st grade)
Super Teacher Worksheets	www.superteacherworksheets.com	subscription-based, printable worksheets/supplements (lots)
Teachers Pay Teachers	www.teacherspayteachers.com	printables created by teachers Newsletter sends you 10 free each week
Time 4 Learning	www.time4learning.com	Free two week trial. We have used parts of this site for different subjects. In my opinion, it's better for the younger years (Pre-K, K, 1st) but the kids usually love it. You can cancel at any time. Sometimes I have used it over the summer as a review.
TumbleBooks	www.tumblebooks.com	Online books (mostly little kids) Read to them or read on their own. Pairs fiction with non-fiction. We use this free thorough the school district and the library also has a free subscription.
Vocabulary Spelling City	www.spellingcity.com	Subscription-based spelling and vocabulary activities. Some activities are free.
Well Trained Mind	forums.welltrainedmind.com/classifieds/	Used curriculum - mostly classical education
Youth Digital	www.youthdigital.com/	computer classes/video game design (expensive but very good) sometimes on sale at Homeschool Buyers Co-op

Connecting to Other Homeschool Families

Discussion Groups (ONLINE)

Name	find at	description
Well Trained Mind	www.welltrainedmind.com forums.welltrainedmind.com	Info/Forum for "Classical Method" of Homeschooling (really good for curriculum suggestions)
Facebook Groups	Search for what you are looking for: Special Needs Homeschool, Christian Homeschool, [your area] Homeschool, etc.	
Yahoo Groups	groups.yahoo.com Some local groups here for outings Most major curriculum publishers have some kind of discussion groups that are VERY helpful and/or facebook groups	Search for: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• IEWFamilies (if you want info on IEW curriculum)• mus-users (for Math-U-See)• MUSSwap (for used Math-U-See materials)• TheHomeSchoolMomUsedCurriculum• workboxes (for people that use the workbox system, but they have lots of ideas that anyone can use)• many others!

Meetup Groups - meetup.com (IN PERSON):

- field trip groups
- Co-ops (Most co-op sign-ups usually begin in about March/April)
- parent groups
- There are a million other homeschool meetup groups including Christian, secular and special interest groups. It is easy to search for one in your area or start one yourself!.

Colleges Offering Free Classes for Your High School Student (or for you!)

These are not for college credit, but can still be a good option if you are not necessarily looking for the credit, but want to find an appropriate class for your older student. Look for "open" courses, sometimes called "OpenCourseWare."

Institution:	Link:
Berkeley	http://ocw.berkeley.edu/
Carnegie Mellon	http://oli.cmu.edu/
Duke	http://web.law.duke.edu/cspd/lectures/
Johns Hopkins School of Public Health	http://ocw.jhsph.edu/
MIT	http://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm
Notre Dame	http://ocw.nd.edu/
Stanford (Engineering)	http://see.stanford.edu/
Tufts University	http://ocw.tufts.edu/
UC Irvine	http://ocw.uci.edu/
University of Massachusetts, Boston	http://ocw.umb.edu/
University of WI - Eau Claire	http://open.uwec.edu/
Utah State	http://ocw.usu.edu/front-page
Yale	http://oyc.yale.edu/
Various available on iTunes U*	http://www.apple.com/education/ipad/itunes-u/

*There are many colleges and universities that have lectures and some downloadable print content available on iTunes U. I have listened to many of these lectures myself because, yes, I am just weird like that.

Other (paid) options to consider:

Many high school students take college classes online or at their local community college (known as dual enrollment), but I am not aware of any that are free. Dual enrollment can help your student get a jump start on college credits and can help them "prove" their ability as they apply for colleges after high school.