

Home Education

Dear Friend,

In these unprecedented times I wish to encourage you - as you are also a home educator now! I have compiled some information and reflections from my own experience as a home educator.

This document is to help and encourage you in your home education process during these most extraordinary times. This is not an exhaustive document, simply a collective of information put together in support of what you may already have access to from your child's school. It brings various resources and snippets of information together to help you set a program to keep your family focused and resilient, not just in learning but in keeping positive and moving forward.

Each family is unique and different. What I do with my children may not work for another family. Do not compare your children to other families. Each child is on their own individual walk.

See this limitation as an opportunity to build your bonds with your child. As I always say to my girls – be thankful for what you have, rather than worry about what you do not have. Once you take note of the things you are grateful for, you begin to lose sight of the things that you lack.

Lastly but probably most importantly, 'turn on' a double measure of patience and love for your child. They are really going to need your support, guidance, strength and example during these challenging times. Address their anxieties, constantly praise and encourage them, as well as keep them informed appropriate to their age. You will certainly see and harvest the fruits in your relationship with your children.

I hope for only the best for you and your family and pray God's blessing and peace for you all.

Best regards,
Rob Allingham

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1. Reflections on My experience and approach

- Routine: Have a routine that fits with your family life. Maybe you want to continue your existing routines and start home schooling at 9am. Our approach is to start at 8am and finish at about 12:30, freeing up the afternoon for work or other activities. This is made up of a combination of set lessons, breaks and other activities (indoors and out).
- Breaks: We have breaks in between and they are not 'timetabled' as such – it's a vital key to good concentration, general behaviour and attitude to learning. Also, it's a great tool to motivate them for example finishing a piece of work that require focus and speed.
- Motivate: Praise twice as much as you criticize. You know your child best, and you will certainly learn much more about them in the coming months, so be creative in your motivation strategies. Praise and rewards work very well. A great motivator is showing faith in their ability and judgement, it boosts their confidence and gives them an 'organic' dose of motivation. As for rewards, you may have to resort to more creative ways. Remember it's not always about extra time on the internet, or a treat like an ice cream – a great way is give them your undivided time for 30mins. They get to have you to play, read, chat or have fun with them anyway they want. This at first may seem not to work, but once engendered in them with the combination of praise will develop exceptional bonds, they want to do things for you and themselves. Self-motivation is one of the most important keys of success in life, so teach and show them how.
- Experience and knowledge: You may feel daunted by the task, especially if you are not a teacher or educator. However, do remember you have innate skills, knowledge and experience. This is a unique but an exceptional special time you have been given. An opportunity to share who you are and what you are good at and contribute to society. If this all they learn from you in the next months, they will see you in a very different light. Do the best in the areas you feel comfortable or good at, then use the excellent and many resources available to help you in your weaker areas of knowledge and understanding. I can assure you; you are going to learn a lot of new interesting things as well.
- Curriculum: Having to follow their existing school curriculum will probably feel like the only option for many as they want to maintain their current academic levels with the least disruption. We have taken a different route. We mix a structured learning based on curriculum requirements in combination with the child's interest (i.e. partly child lead on their interest or desire to learn a topic). We interweave all this with developing life skills. They may not one day thank you for algebra or grammar lessons, but they definitely will for the life skills you imparted. We all learn best when we have a real interest in something – identify and harness that in your children and develop that.
- Give them little projects to work on by themselves, this installs self-study, work ethic and getting use to meeting a set deadline.
- Use every opportunity to learn – from cooking, tinkering in the garage, sitting in while you do your work, even the daily walk outside (when you can). Even washing hands, you can talk about and explore the chemical composition of soap and how that works to break down the dirt. There is going to be many opportunities, just start having a 'learning mindset'.
- Get them to teach: Through self-study on a topic they come and give a lesson to all in the household. Set a topic and structure to how and what format they need to present. Equip them with resources, such as access to the internet, PC and printing – although you may need to first do lessons on using PowerPoint – and you will also be learning then!
- Allow them to make mistakes! (Have a good dose of laughter and patience ready)

- Build external social relationship – currently this will be restricted to phone, video and other ‘chat’ options. Do not be too harsh on their daily quotas, certainly monitor it, but ensure they have resources and access to do so. Encourage them but above all make sure they are ‘digitally’ safe.
- Read: If in doubt – read! With them, too them and create a fun and relaxed environment where they can feel comfortable to read to you and others. Encourage self-reading, this will be the greatest educational gift you can ever give. Fun activities for reading aloud to others without making it obvious could be enacting little plays where all have a part to read and play (even get them to write the play)
- Reasoning: All the knowledge in the world is of little value without reasoning. Age appropriately challenge them in their thinking, ask them questions to make them think or defend their thinking. Get them to present a case on whatever the topic and defend that – deliberately give them something that is opposing in their views to allow them to formulate creative and constructive thinking to enable them to reason on a topic.
- Negotiate – there is going to be many opportunities during isolation to develop this very important life skill, which will stand them in very good stead in life. Although beware, you might be outfoxed in future for extra Xbox time!
- It’s not always going to be fun (although aim to make it as pleasant as possible). There is going to be challenging days, prepare yourselves for it. Tackle those days or moments with a ‘treat’ activity if needed – going outdoors, a film together or some other activity or learning to break the difficult moments.
- Importantly this is about maintaining and further developing you child’s interest and love for leaning – do not force it upon them. You do not want resentment in your relationship long term.

2. Resources

I have combined some resources I use with excellent resources supplied and compiled by Amanda Taylor-Bashford, Education Consultant and previous teacher for 10 years.

For those that want to know or align your tuition with the National Curriculum, more information can be found here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum>

Online resources (Not all free):

- BrainPop - <https://www.brainpop.com/>
- Curiosity Stream - <https://curiositystream.com/>
- Tynker - <https://www.tynker.com/>
- Outschool - <https://outschool.com/#abk88x7c2u>
- Udemy - <https://www.udemy.com/>
- iReady - <https://www.curriculumassociates.com/products/i-ready>
- Beast Academy (Math) - <https://beastacademy.com/>
- Khan Academy - <https://www.khanacademy.org/>
- Creative Bug - <https://www.creativebug.com/>
- Discovery Education - <https://www.discoveryeducation.co.uk/>

YouTube Channels:

- Crash Course Kids - <https://www.youtube.com/user/crashcoursekids>
- Science Channel - <https://www.youtube.com/user/ScienceChannel>
- SciShow Kids - <https://www.youtube.com/user/scishowkids>
- National Geographic Kids - https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXVCgDuD_QCkI7gTKU7-tpg
- Free School - <https://www.youtube.com/user/watchfreeschool>
- Geography Focus - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8HYERScBt-e0kV0fpe0asg>
- TheBrainScoop - <https://www.youtube.com/user/thebrainscoop>
- SciShow - <https://www.youtube.com/user/scishow>
- Kids Learning Tube - https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7EFWpvc1wYuUwrtZ_Bli9A
- Geek Gurl Diaries - <https://www.youtube.com/user/GeekGurlDiaries>
- Mike Likes Science - <https://www.youtube.com/user/comaniddy>
- Science Max - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbprhISv-0ReKPPyh7-Dtw>
- SoulPancake - <https://www.youtube.com/user/soulpancake>

US vs. UK Grades

Many of the online home school resources are from the US. They are a bit more advanced in their homeschool resources and programs, and a lot of it is very appropriate to the UK. Here is a chart to help orientate yourself regarding the levels to teach at.

ROUGH GUIDE to US School Grades Compared to English (UK) School Years			
Age	UK Year (England Only)	Key Stage (England Only)	U.S. Level
3 to 4 years	----	Early Years	Pre-Kindergarten (Preschool)
4 to 5 years	Reception	Early Years	Pre-Kindergarten (Preschool)
5 to 6 years	Year 1 - Infants School (aka Primary School)	Key Stage 1	Kindergarten (Elementary School)
6 to 7 years	Year 2	Key Stage 1	1st Grade (Elementary School)
7 to 8 years	Year 3 - Junior School (aka Primary School)	Key Stage 2	2nd Grade
8 to 9 years	Year 4	Key Stage 2	3rd Grade
9 to 10 years	Year 5	Key Stage 2	4th Grade
10 to 11 years	Year 6	Key Stage 2	5th Grade
11 to 12 years	Year 7 - Secondary School	Key Stage 3	6th Grade - Middle School
12 to 13 years	Year 8	Key Stage 3	7th Grade
13 to 14 years	Year 9	KS3 (or KS4 for 3 year GCSE programmes)	8th Grade
14 to 15 years	Year 10	Key Stage 4	9th Grade (Freshman) - High School
15 to 16 years	Year 11	Key Stage 4	10th Grade (Sophomore)
16 to 17 years	Year 12 (6th Form) sometimes referred to as 'lower 6th'	Key Stage 5	11th Grade (Junior Year)
17 to 18 years	Year 13 (6th Form) often used as a route to University, sometimes referred to as 'Upper 6th'	Key Stage 5	12th Grade (Senior Year)

List of thinking games by grade:

- <https://allinonehomeschool.com/thinking/>
- <https://www.starfall.com/h/>
- <https://www.abcya.com/>
- <https://www.funbrain.com/>
- <https://www.splashlearn.com/>
- <https://www.storylineonline.net/>
- <https://pbskids.org/>
- <https://www.highlightskids.com/>
- <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/>
- <https://www.coolmath4kids.com/>
- <http://www.mathgametime.com/>
- <https://www.uniteforliteracy.com/>
- <http://www.literactive.com/Home/index.asp>
- <http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/>
- <https://www.switchzoo.com/>
- <https://www.seussville.com/>
- <https://www.turtlediary.com/>
- <https://www.e-learningforkids.org/>

FREE online education resources

A non-exhaustive list that might help those affected by school closures due to coronavirus, compiled by home educators.

Scholastic has created a free learn-from-home site with 20+ days of learning and activities. <https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome.html>

Virtual Tours - Pretend to travel the world. Go on a virtual tour of these 12 famous museums. <https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours>

All in One Homeschool - This is the awesome free curriculum that we use. Everything from preschool activities to 12th grade is here! <https://allinonehomeschool.com/>

Khan Academy

<https://www.khanacademy.org> - Especially good for maths and computing for all ages but other subjects at Secondary level. Note this uses the U.S. grade system but it's mostly common material.

BBC Learning

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/coursesearch/> - This site is old and no longer updated and yet there's so much still available, from language learning to BBC Bitesize for revision. No TV licence required except for content on BBC iPlayer.

Futurelearn

<https://www.futurelearn.com> - Free to access 100s of courses, only pay to upgrade if you need a certificate in your name (own account from age 14+ but younger learners can use a

parent account).

Seneca

<https://www.senecalearning.com> - For those revising at GCSE or A level. Tons of free revision content. Paid access to higher level material.

Openlearn

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/> - Free taster courses aimed at those considering Open University but everyone can access it. Adult level, but some e.g. nature and environment courses could well be of interest to young people.

Blockly

<https://blockly.games> - Learn computer programming skills - fun and free.

Scratch

<https://scratch.mit.edu/explore/projects/games/> - Creative computer programming

Ted Ed

<https://ed.ted.com> - All sorts of engaging educational videos

National Geographic Kids - <https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/>

Activities and quizzes for younger kids

Duolingo

<https://www.duolingo.com> - Learn languages for free. Web or app.

Mystery Science

<https://mysteryscience.com> - Free science lessons

The Kids Should See This

<https://thekidshouldseethis.com> - Wide range of cool educational videos

Crash Course

<https://thecrashcourse.com> - You Tube videos on many subjects

Crash Course Kids

<https://m.youtube.com/user/crashcoursekids> - As above for a younger audience

Crest Awards

<https://www.crestawards.org> - Science awards you can complete from home.

iDEA Awards

<https://idea.org.uk> - Digital enterprise award scheme you can complete online.

Paw Print Badges

<https://www.pawprintbadges.co.uk> - Free challenge packs and other downloads. Many activities can be completed indoors. Badges cost but are optional.

Tinkercad

<https://www.tinkercad.com> - All kinds of making.

Prodigy Maths

<https://www.prodigygame.com> - Is in U.S. grades, but good for UK Primary age.

Cbeebies Radio

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/radio> - Listening activities for the younger ones.

Nature Detectives

<https://naturedetectives.woodlandtrust.org.uk/naturedetectives/> -A lot of these can be done in a garden, or if you can get to a remote forest location!

British Council

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find> - Resources for English language learning

Oxford Owl for Home

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/> - Lots of free resources for Primary age

Big History Project

<https://www.bighistoryproject.com/home> - Aimed at Secondary age. Multi disciplinary activities.

Geography Games

<https://world-geography-games.com/world.html> - Geography gaming!

Blue Peter Badges

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/joinin/about-blue-peter-badges> - If you have a stamp and a nearby post box.

The Artful Parent

<https://www.facebook.com/artfulparent/> - Good, free art activities

Red Ted Art

<https://www.redtedart.com> - Easy arts and crafts for little ones

The Imagination Tree

<https://theimaginationtree.com> - Creative art and craft activities for the very youngest.

Toy Theater

<https://toytheater.com/> - Educational online games

DK Find Out

https://www.dkfindout.com/uk/?fbclid=IwAR2wJdpSJSeITf4do6aPhff8A3tAktmpaxqZbkgu_dD49I71ep8-sjXmrac - Activities and quizzes

Twinkl

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk> - This is more for printouts, and usually at a fee, but they are offering a month of free access to parents in the event of school closures.

3. Articles

I received these three very useful articles and its helpful in this temporary journey of home education.

5 Ways to Have a Great Start to Your Homeschool Year

By Wendy Young

By now you should have chosen your books or curriculum and perhaps set up the desks and work areas, your routines and schedules are in place and you are eager to go into a new HOMEschool year... Here are our 5 top tips to help you have an even better year ahead.

1 – Don't compare

Homeschooling is a very personal choice. So is how you will structure your day, curriculum choice and philosophy. There is not only one way to homeschool and end up with happy productive children and the way you get to your goal may not be the same way as Suzy Q down the road gets to hers.

Comparison to other homeschoolers to make yourself feel better or to see how far short you are of someone else's yardstick is harmful to your children and your own confidence.

It's best to just enjoy the variety that homeschoolers are and accept that there will be some who accelerate their children's education and others who take the more scenic route.

Immerse yourself fully in your children, your home and your philosophy of HOMEschooling.

2 – Ask for advice

There will be times when you need advice on concerns you may have with your children's progress or a difficulty that you are facing as a homeschool mom. Find a mentor who has homeschooled for a while so that you can get the direction and encouragement you need to carry on, or to sort out an issue.

Be aware though, that Facebook, while there are many veteran homeschool moms on the groups, may not be the best place. But if you do ask there, you will get a variety of opinions and some may be from the opposite sides of the spectrum and can cause more confusion. You may of course also get some valuable advice.

3 – Know there will be rough days

Sometimes we forget we are dealing with real little human beings and that they will have their good days and their bad ones. Even big human beings have those days. Getting chores and work done can sometimes be like pulling teeth and you may even have kids with rotten attitudes on many.

You too may find the whole homeschooling thing overwhelming some days and want to give up.

This is completely normal. If anyone is telling you that homeschooling is all roses, they are not being honest. There are many hard days, but over the span of the years spent homeschooling, you will find that there are more good than bad, more successes than failures and more joy than gloom.

4 – Don't overdo the extra murals

One sure way to have grumpy tired kids and an overwhelmed stressed mom is to do too much outside of the home. This is particularly true in the young years when they need lots of free time just to play and be in their own space.

Parents are very quick to rush Annie to ballet classes at 5 because she twirled in the lounge or Johnny to horse riding because he expressed an interest just once. Let your children be...In time they can pick up activities that fit in with the whole family's needs. Rather provide them with a stimulating, yet peaceful, home environment with lots of time for free creativity, which is age appropriate.

5 – Don't forget your spouse

As homeschool moms we can tend to hyper focus on homeschooling and let it become our identity, everything we talk about, think about and allow it to be the thing that drives us. A certain portion of this is normal, particularly in the beginning stages...but do remember that before you were a homeschool mom, you were your husband's wife.

Make sure to set aside time to focus on this relationship as the most important in the home. Your children gain their stability from your marriage being healthy. Make sure that when you are alone with your spouse you don't spend the whole time talking about homeschooling and your children. Of course, there is time for this as it is important, but simply put it aside when you are alone together sometimes/often.

Find a common interest to take part in so that you can continue to build up your marriage in a very busy season of life, which are the homeschooling years.

Caveat: I am aware that some receiving this newsletter may be single parents. I would then change #5 to say: Make sure you take time for yourself. Perhaps a morning out once in a while to connect with family and friends or a personal hobby or time at gym...just something to recharge your batteries each week. Your children will thank you

[Are You Working Yourself Out of a Job?](#)

By Shirley Erwee

The goal of parenting is to work yourself out of the job.

How's that going?

Could your kids continue homeschooling if you weren't there 24x7?

Could your children continue homeschooling if unforeseen events caused you not to be at home? If you had to take care of an elderly parent for 6 weeks after an operation, if a financial crisis hit and you had to take a job out of the home, if you started a business from home, or if tragedy struck and one of their parents died?

I once set up an appointment for a homeschooling mom to phone me before 10h00 and her response was: "Why is that a good time? Is it because your kids are doing their own work now?"

Actually, yes! The youngest is 9. As soon as a child can read independently, he can do most of his formal lessons on his own. My role now is merely to check and give help when he asks for it.

The same applies to the other two, aged 12 and 14. The 17-year old is working entirely independently. She's taken ownership of her education.

Yes, we have days when sin kicks in and children don't complete all their work, but there are consequences. Not necessarily punishment, but the same consequences that apply to anyone who procrastinates – the work doesn't get done by itself. Eventually it catches up with you and you either spend a public holiday, or a weekend or the school holidays playing catch up.

Depending on the degree of the misdemeanour, there might be an added punishment too, but usually the natural consequence of their neglect is sufficient.

Ultimately, our children all need to learn to take responsibility for their own lives and discover the consequences of laziness, dishonesty, procrastination or whichever other vice they choose to manifest.

Don't feel that you have failed if they aren't there yet, or when they fall short. We learn some of the most valuable lessons from our failings and short-comings and our children will test the system to see if they can take short-cuts or get away with avoiding the tasks they enjoy least.

They need to learn these lessons now, while the consequences are not as serious as they will be in adulthood.

Life isn't always fun. Sometimes we just have to do work that is not entirely enjoyable, but we feel a relief when it's done well. You don't want to burden them all the time, but 20-30 minutes of a subject that is necessary, is not too much to ask in a day.

If every subject is a boring grind and your children are resisting that, then perhaps its time to reconsider the products that you are using.

So, how do you train your children to work independently?

What do you do? What systems do you put in place?

1. Have a conversation with your children.

a) Remind them why they are doing this. Remind them of their goals and yours.

b). Ask them which subjects they think are necessary to learn the skills they need to become independent adults.

c). Then list the subject/s that you feel are necessary and explain why.

d). Then ask them which other subjects or skills they'd like to learn that would be interesting or fun for them and add those to your mix.

Show them that they have a say in their education. Unlike school, our children get to make some choices and learn about things that delight them – even non-traditional school subjects, like hacking, animation, electronics or photography.

2. Give them a realistic plan that they can easily achieve

Set up a system that helps each child to know what to do each day without you having to direct and tell them all the time.

In our home, we use a weekly schedule, which I fill out in advance each term or sometimes just for a few weeks at a time. Each child knows which pages or lessons to do in each subject.

We often have a scheduled catch-up day with fewer than normal lessons or a catch-up week mid-term to give them some breathing space. As you know, life gets in the way of the best-made plans and so we have some flexibility in our schedule to accommodate that. We often have birthdays off and allow days for outings and trips too.

For grades 1-7, 2-3 hours a day is more than enough for formal lessons. For high school that may vary to 3-4 hours or more depending on the choice of curriculum you have chosen.

When life interrupts, adjust the plan.

Expect to not accomplish everything that you hoped to do and don't be disappointed when that happens. Other unplanned lessons that you don't find in textbooks will inevitably crowd themselves into your days. Look out for those and appreciate them too.

The schedule and any curriculum is a tool, not a task-master.

Keep the end goal in mind, to send out young adults who are self-disciplined and competent to take care of themselves. To send out young people who can "parent" themselves.

The Hidden Blessing of Homeschooling

By Shirley Erwee

So many parents second-guess their decision to homeschool their children. They worry about giving their children a good academic education, about depriving them of the experience that going to school gives every other child. They are worried about doing enough and they dread dealing with the attitudes and conflict that could potentially arise between siblings or between a parent and child.

Fear prevents many well-meaning parents from actually taking the plunge to even start. They miss out on the priceless "hidden blessing" that learning together brings to every homeschooling family:

One of the first lessons we have to learn as homeschooling parents, is to trust ourselves - to trust our 'gut-instinct' - that intuitive knowledge of what is best for our children. No expert, no professional, no teacher knows each of your children and their uniqueness as intimately as you do - and this is why you are the best person to be overseeing their education.

But education is not only about learning to read and write and solve algebraic equations. The goal of education is not only to score well on the final exam. Equipping our children to succeed in life requires much more than good test scores.

The secret of home education is that it is so much more than mere academic achievement. It's demands the development of good character traits in both US and our children.

Relationships are always a challenge. Situations at home force us to face both our own weaknesses and shortcomings and those of our family members. Through the challenges, we develop the qualities that we need in order to grow and succeed in building healthy relationships and good communication skills.

Children who squabble and argue have to learn to show respect for each other, they have to grow in self-confidence so that they aren't jealous and don't feel threatened by their siblings in a 'competition' for parental approval, they have to be trained to become responsible and to make good choices. They have to learn to put the needs of others, above their own...and the list goes on. Parents have the opportunity to build this into their children's lives and equip them for success in the adult world.

"Children should be involved in the adult's life rather than daily life rotating around the children. Research has shown that children who have grown up to be productive well-adjusted adults are those who have been drawn into the parent's world; their daily activities, work, and interests; rather than having parents who centered their world on the child. " ~ Diane Hopkins, *The Baby is the Lesson* - an article worth reading.

As a parent, you will make mistakes, you will get frustrated and lose your composure, but you will have the opportunity to model to your children what we do when we hurt others or make mistakes - you will have opportunities to model showing them respect, showing humility, asking for forgiveness, admitting failings - and all of you are going to be challenged and grow in character. As you get 'squeezed' by the pressures of your relationships, so you will have the opportunity to develop the character traits that you lack – like patience, self-control, compassion and many others.

These are the priceless qualities that home education can develop in your family, far better than any teachers and classmates and better than any lessons found in the pages of textbooks. This is the hidden blessing of homeschooling.

So don't be afraid of the challenges. Be prepared to grow through them.

Trust yourself. You can do this. You love your children and that makes you highly motivated to find solutions to any struggles that you face and that is what will make you successful.

END

- "The capacity to learn is a gift; The ability to learn is a skill; The willingness to learn is a choice."
- "Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow."
- "The expert in anything was once a beginner."
- "Learning is the only thing the mind never exhausts, never fears, and never regrets."

