

THE ULTIMATE



Homeschool Curriculum

GUIDED PLANNER



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WELCOME

Welcome to The Ultimate Homeschool Curriculum Guided Planner.

If you don't already know me, my name is Melissa. I'm a 17-year homeschool veteran and homeschooling coach, and I am on a mission to make homeschooling more accessible and hassle-free.

Choosing to homeschool your children can be equal parts exciting and intimidating. There are so many things to do and consider that it can feel very overwhelming.

One of the most common questions I receive as a homeschooling coach is, "What curriculum should I use?" This can be a huge area of stress for new homeschoolers, but it doesn't have to be. Once you break it down into steps, choosing a curriculum can actually be fun!

So, if you find yourself wondering...

How do I figure out what to teach?
Where do I find resources and curriculum?
How do I choose between all the options?
How will I know what will work for my kids?

You aren't alone.

This guide will break the process of selecting your curriculum into bite-sized steps written specifically for the brand-new homeschooler. By equipping you with knowledge, resources, and confidence, this guide might even do what seems to be impossible right now: make homeschool curriculum shopping an enjoyable experience!

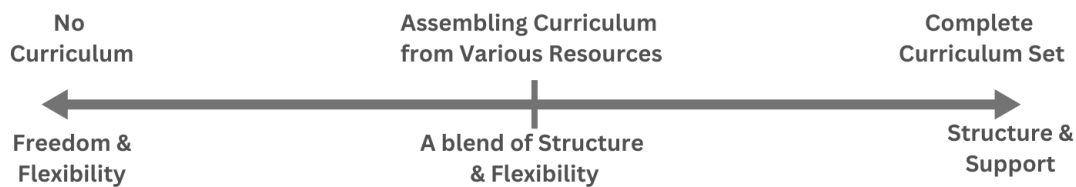
Within these pages, you'll uncover a series of steps, assessments, and considerations designed to help you grasp your child's learning style, establish realistic goals, delve into various educational philosophies and curricula, and ultimately, choose a curriculum and get started.

So, take a breath, remind yourself that you can do this, and let's jump right in!

CHOOSING YOUR CURRICULUM

Choosing the right curriculum for your family is an important step in setting up an effective homeschool, and there are many options and methods available.

You may have seen homeschool families that don't use any curriculum at all, families who create their own curriculum, families who buy a curriculum set with everything they need for the year, and everything in between. I think of it a bit like a spectrum of support and structure.



Knowing what will work best for your family will take a little experimentation, but it doesn't have to be complete trial and error. There are five considerations that will help you narrow down your choices and raise your chances of choosing resources that will be effective for your family:

- Your state's homeschooling requirements
- Your time and resources
- Your goals and priorities for the year
- Your child's learning styles and preferences
- Your philosophical perspective

Although choosing resources that are effective for you and your student will make homeschooling easier, it is only a part of what makes homeschooling successful. Many new homeschooling parents incorrectly assume that there is a 'right' curriculum out there that is far superior to others, but the simple fact is, the right curriculum for one family will be completely inappropriate for another.

That is why it is important to consider the needs of your family rather than just basing your choice off of recommendations alone.

We will begin by gaining an overall understanding of homeschool curriculum options. Then, we will go through each of the above considerations, get some tips from homeschool veterans, and finally get to the fun part: researching and planning our curriculum.

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Curriculum Overview



CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

What is 'curriculum?'

Homeschool curriculum refers to the educational materials, resources, and plans that parents use to teach their children at home. It encompasses a wide range of subjects, including math, science, language arts, history, and more. Let's look at the different types of curricula available and discuss some pros and cons of each.

Printables	These are resources you purchase online and print at home. They come in a variety of formats and subjects
Full Curriculum Sets	A grade-level, complete curriculum set that covers all main subjects from one provider and includes everything you need for the year
Online Programs	These can be everything from complete programs that handle everything for you, to supplementary materials
Single Subject Curriculum Sets	These are complete sets for an individual subject and include everything you need for that subject, for the year
Unit Studies	These are time-specific overviews of a topic or theme that incorporate multiple subject areas into the study plan
Project-Based Learning Kits	These kits encourage learning by doing, where students engage in projects that require applying multiple skills and knowledge areas
Workbooks	These are booklets that provide practice problems and activities, focusing on reinforcement and practice

PROS AND CONS

PRINTABLES: There are printable resources online that cover just about every subject you might ever want to teach. There are websites that offer full curriculum sets that you either purchase or access for free and then print them out to use at home. There are also websites that offer printable resources by subject that offer lesson plans, worksheets, and workbooks. There are even websites that will let you make your own customized worksheets. Sometimes they can be hard to find, but I love them because they are cheap, fun, easy, and so customizable.

FULL CURRICULUM SETS: The simplest way to ensure that you are covering all of your bases is to buy a grade-level, open-and-go curriculum set. These can be purchased online and downloaded, but usually, they are shipped to you in a box that contains everything you will need for the year including books, workbooks, teachers' manuals, and supplies for activities. These tend to be easy to find with a Google search. They're convenient, but there are some downsides. First, they tend to be very expensive. Second, they aren't very customizable. And third, you might find that they don't meet your child's needs, but you've invested so much money into it that you persist even if it's not a good fit. If you decide to use one of these full sets, be sure to check and see if they offer any free samples that you and your children can work with to make sure it's a good fit.

ONLINE PROGRAMS: There are many different structures to online programs.

Complete Programs: An easy method is a complete online program. There are programs that offer the full educational experience complete with live classes, teachers, laptops, grading, and diplomas when completed. These can be a lifesaver for busy homeschool parents, but they tend to be structured like the public education system, so it's basically public school at home. If you are trying to move away from that system, these may not be a good fit for you.

Customizable Complete Curriculum Programs: These are online programs that offer a complete curriculum of video and text resources. They do not have live classes or teacher oversight and can be completed at any time during the day. They often have a grade-level curriculum set up that you can customize, or they have features allowing parents to go in and completely create a curriculum from their menu of courses.

Single Subject Online Courses: Another option is the single subject online program. These are programs that take care of everything for one subject either through live classes with a teacher, but more often video lessons with quizzes and tests handled all online.

PROS AND CONS

SINGLE SUBJECT CURRICULUM SETS: Single-subject curriculum sets are great if you don't want to purchase a complete curriculum set but have a subject or two where you need a structured approach. These are sets that you either download or have shipped to you that include everything you need such as lesson plans, books, workbooks, and teachers' manuals for one individual subject for that grade year. It is very common for children to be at different levels in different subjects. These resources allow parents to customize their curriculum to their child's needs while still having the structure and support that comes with a done-for-you curriculum set. It is not uncommon for veteran homeschoolers to have one provider for language arts and a completely different provider for math, and yet another for history. This is one of the most confusing things about asking a veteran homeschooler what curriculum they like. They might give you a whole list broken up by subject and grade!

UNIT STUDIES: Unit studies can be really fun and affordable, but a little difficult to explain. Basically, a unit study takes a theme, say barnyard animals, and incorporates many subjects in that theme. So, you might have some math sheets that use barnyard animals for counting, then your science for that week is studying the life cycle of a chicken, then you might learn what jobs a farmer does on his farm for social studies. You might read farm books and write a report on them for language arts. You get the idea. You can design your own around your child's interests or you can find unit study packages already designed for you. I like unit studies because they are customizable and are designed to be short periods of time, so your child is less likely to lose interest.

PROJECT BASED KITS: Project-Based Learning Kits are comprehensive packages that provide all the materials and instructions needed for students to engage in a project that applies concepts from various subjects. These projects are designed to solve a problem or answer a question, often with a real-world application. For example, a PBL kit might include a project to design a sustainable garden, requiring knowledge of biology, mathematics, art, and environmental science. Project-based learning has been shown to be one of the most effective teaching strategies if the projects are meaningful to the student, but they do require a lot of effort on the parent's part and kits can be expensive. For an even better experience, skip the kit and let your child plan and assemble everything they need for their project.

WORKBOOKS: You can find workbooks for just about every subject, but they generally don't stand on their own as teaching aids. If I'm teaching a subject that I'm very comfortable with, I may use workbooks rather than curriculum sets because I know I can do the deeper teaching required, but they are usually used for practice rather than the full subject curriculum.

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What To Teach



LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

One of the most important determinants of what subjects you teach your child is state requirements. Each state has its own laws that homeschoolers must follow, and the amount of oversight and requirements varies significantly by state, ranging from virtually no oversight to high regulation. It is very important that homeschoolers learn what their state laws are, as a state might require certain subjects to be taught, or specific curriculum to be used.

Think of these requirements as the bare minimum, you can certainly do more, but you must teach what your state requires.

Where to find your state's homeschooling requirements:

U.S. Homeschooling

Your State's Department of Education Website (this will come up on a Google search) will have the most accurate and up to date information. Sometimes these websites can be difficult to navigate and understand, so I also like to consult the Homeschool Legal Defense Association. Their website is much easier to navigate and understand, but there have been occasional reports of incorrect information. I like to open up both and compare for accuracy.

<https://hsllda.org/legal>

Canadian Homeschooling

Homeschool Legal Defense Association- Canada

<https://hsllda.ca/>

The following pages will help you organize the information you find about your state's homeschooling requirements.

Note: Homeschooling requirements can be a little overwhelming and difficult to decipher. I do go into more detail about how to interpret and meet these requirements in my Homeschool Record Keeping Made Simple Mini Course located in The Hassle Free Homeschool Resource Vault.

Disclaimer: Read through the materials on HSLDA.org, and if you have any questions, consult a legal professional. As always, this is not legal advice.

REQUIREMENTS AT A GLANCE

Put a check by each subject that is required by your state, if any, and write in any subjects that were missed. If your state doesn't have required subjects, check the boxes of the subjects you would like to cover in your homeschool this year. I like to focus on the basics; reading, writing, arithmetic, and add on more subjects as time allows.

Check out the following pages for a handy survey you can fill out with your child to help you discover topics of study aligned with their interests.

English/Language Arts

Spelling

Reading

Writing

Language

Literature

Speech

Composition

Arithmetic

General mathematics

Algebra

Geometry

Civics

History

Geography

Economics

Health and physiology

Physical education

Music

Art

Science

Safety education

Write any other curriculum requirements below.

INTERESTS INVENTORY

What are your favorite subjects to study?

- Science
- Math
- History
- Art
- Music
- Physical Education
- Languages
- Other (Please specify): _____

What are your favorite activities? (Select all that apply)

- Reading
- Playing sports/games
- Drawing or painting
- Building or constructing (e.g., LEGO, model kits)
- Watching movies or TV shows
- Cooking or baking
- Exploring nature
- Playing musical instruments
- Dancing
- Other (Please specify): _____
- Other (Please specify): _____

If you could pick any new skill to learn, what would it be?

- Playing a new instrument
- Speaking a new language
- Painting or drawing
- Programming or coding
- Sports or physical activities
- Cooking or baking new dishes
- Magic tricks
- Sewing or knitting
- Other (Please specify): _____
- Other (Please specify): _____
- Other (Please specify): _____

INTERESTS INVENTORY

When you have free time, what do you like to do the most?

Are there any subjects or activities you dislike or find less enjoyable? Why?

What has been your favorite project or activity in the past year and why?

STATE STANDARDS

Now that you have a list of subjects you'll be covering this year, you might be wondering what specific skills should be taught at each grade level.

It's important to understand that 'grade level' isn't a concept that most homeschoolers adhere to. As mentioned before, it's not uncommon for a homeschooled child to be working at different grade levels in different subjects, but I do understand that for new homeschooling families, having some guidelines and benchmarks can be helpful.

One of the ways you can get a feel for the skills and concepts that are being taught to children in public school is by reviewing your state's content standards, also called academic standards, for your child's grade level. You can find these via Google search, but they can be quite technical and a bit overwhelming.

To help make these standards more palatable, I like to use the free version of ChatGPT.

You can copy and paste your state standards directly into the chat and then ask it to rephrase them at a 5th grade reading level.

You can also just edit the following prompt to include your child's grade and state and then paste it in.

Please look only at official education department websites and tell me what the academic standards are for 8th grade math for the state of Idaho. Please write them out for me at a 6th grade reading level in bullet points and please give me examples of each learning standard.

Keep in mind that AI is not perfect and can have errors, so if you see something that doesn't make sense, compare it to the state standards on the official department of education website. You don't have to teach all of these skills, or you can teach more. Remember that it is more important to meet your child where they are at, than to "keep up" with public school.

Once you have a list of skills and concepts you want to cover for the year, you can compare it to the scope and sequence of the curricula you are researching to make sure that it will be covering the concepts you want for the year.

Later in the process, you will choose curriculum providers, and at that time you can have your child take their placement test before you purchase to ensure that you are using the correct level.

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Time & Resources



TIME & RESOURCES

Before you choose a curriculum, you need to have a clear idea of the time and resources (money, energy, mental space) that you will have available to devote to homeschooling.

So often new homeschoolers come into this without a frame of reference for the amount of time that homeschooling will take, so they choose a curriculum and let *it* dictate the time they spend homeschooling.

This is a mistake.

The time it takes to work through the material every day varies widely across curriculum sets and providers. It doesn't do you any good to buy a time-intensive curriculum set if you have to budget your time and energy very carefully.

There is also the very real danger that once you start looking through all of the curriculum options available, it is very easy to get overly excited and before you know it, you're teaching Latin, Mandarin, and advanced coding to a kindergartner.

Now I know what you're thinking: "if it's the most comprehensive curriculum available, then it's the best, and I should just make time for it. My child deserves the very best education."

That, my friend, is a recipe for burnout.

Yes, your child deserves a quality education, but more is not always better. Oftentimes, those time-intensive curriculums include busy work and a lot of repetition which will make you feel like your child is learning SO MUCH, but it usually backfires as they squash the love of learning and turns it into a chore. Some repetition is needed for learning, but too much is detrimental, it's a delicate balance. The stress you will feel from trying to cram a time intensive curriculum into your carefully budgeted schedule will be felt by both you and your child, making the whole education process more difficult.

To avoid all of this, I recommend that you decide how much time you have available, and then choose a simple curriculum that covers the essentials and fits within your availability.

You can always add activities and resources if you end up with extra time and energy left over during the day.

TIME & RESOURCES

I know that when you are starting out, it's hard to plan without a frame of reference, so I'm including the average amount of time homeschoolers spend on educational activities every day.

Kindergarten and first grade: 20 min to 1 hour per day

Elementary years (grades 2-5): about 1 to 2 hours a day.

Middle school (grades 6-8): 2 to 4 hours a day.

High school (grades 9-12): 3 to 5 hours a day.

This can be confusing for some people as the public-school day is so much longer, and some states have daily and hourly requirements, but that discussion is a bit beyond the scope of this guide. I do go into it in detail in my Building a Homeschool Schedule Mini Course that you can find in The Hassle Free Homeschooling Resource Vault.

Here are some questions to ask yourself before you begin researching curriculum options:

How much time do I have each day to devote to homeschooling altogether (planning, set up and clean up, instruction, and recordkeeping if applicable)? _____

If you are pressed for time, you may want to look for resources that don't include complicated hands-on, messy activities that require a lot of work to plan, setup, and clean up. Or look for resources that include those activities as optional, but the core curriculum is less intense.

Do I want my child to be working predominantly independently or am I expecting to do a lot of teaching? How much time do I have each day for direct instruction?

This will be influenced heavily by your child's age, reading capabilities, and personality. You might need to do some experimenting to get a feel for these factors, but for now, write down your best guess based on what you know of your child.

Does my state have a daily or weekly hour requirement? If so, what is it?

TIME & RESOURCES

Despite rumors to the contrary, homeschooling doesn't have to be expensive, but there are costs associated with it that you should consider and plan for. Below is a list of common homeschooling expenses:

Curriculum: This tends to be an expected expense that people focus on the most and are generally prepared for, but it can actually be one of the smallest expenses if you utilize free homeschool curriculums and resources.

Extra-Curricular Activities: Again, this is an expense that most homeschooling families expect and are prepared for. You absolutely don't have to enroll your child in these, but if you do, they are fairly easy to budget for.

Food: Much like having your children home over the summer, homeschooling can raise your food budget. I've seen this go both ways. Some families do more cooking at home in bulk (an excellent educational activity) and actually lower their grocery bill compared to when they were packing their child's lunch, while others report that it raised their grocery bill considerably.

Activities: Many homeschooling families like to take field trips and participate in community activities for educational purposes and to get out of the house and keep busy. These can add up and should be considered ahead of time in the homeschooling budget.

Art Supplies: If you have crafty kids, remember to set aside some funds for art and craft supplies as well as supplies for projects you intend to complete over the year.

Free Homeschooling Resources

There are so many free and low-cost resources out there, including complete homeschool curriculum sets, but they aren't always easy to find since they won't come up on your Google search. That is why I created *The Free Homeschool Resource Trello Board* with over 100 FREE homeschooling resources. This is a free download that you can access on my website www.melissartercoaching.com

I also recommend that you utilize your local library. They have so much more than books available to homeschoolers.

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Goals & Priorities



GOALS & PRIORITIES

Before you go out and buy a curriculum, it is helpful to set some goals for your homeschool.

These don't have to be strict academic goals with benchmarks and timelines, but you do need to have an idea of the homeschool environment you hope to create and the concepts, subjects, skills, and character traits you would like to prioritize.

Again, it is very common for new homeschoolers to let the curriculum set the goals for them, but I have found that some simple goal setting ahead of time will help you choose a curriculum that will align with your vision and move your homeschool in the direction you want to go.

I've found that the best way to do this is by asking yourself some questions.

What are the main skills, aptitudes, and abilities I want my children to take away from their overall homeschool experience? *Think long term, big picture.*

Academically:

Emotionally/ Socially:

Physically/ Personally:

What are the 5 most important things I want to accomplish this year?

SECULAR VS. RELIGIOUS

Before I wrap up this section, I would be remiss if I didn't discuss religious vs secular homeschooling curriculum and materials. There are many amazing homeschool curriculum options for both secular and religious homeschoolers.

Keep in mind that a curriculum can vary as to how much religion is infused into the curriculum. Some providers can be considered religious, but certain parts of their curriculum make no mention of religious ideas, while others infuse it into every aspect of their curriculum.

I tend to lean toward secular materials but have loved some traditionally religious resources. I'll give you an example. I love Apologia science, but they are not secular. Sometimes you can remove pages that you feel are unnecessary (for me it's Bible verse copy work) and use the rest, other families have just skipped pages, chapters, or assigned reading they didn't agree with. Other families may prefer religious instruction to be included in their homeschool, but really love a secular curriculum. They have just either purchased a companion study and added it to their school day or just created their own.

It really is just a personal preference you should consider before researching curriculum. If you have strong opinions one way or another, that will narrow down your choices, but if you don't mind altering your curriculum you should have an idea of how much altering you are comfortable doing.

Before choosing a curriculum, you might want to decide if you are looking for resources with a religious perspective or purely secular materials.

Questions to consider

Do I want a strictly religious or secular curriculum?

Am I willing to alter a curriculum to fit my preferences? And if so, how much alteration am I comfortable with?

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Learning Styles & Preferences



LEARNING STYLES

According to learning style theory, each individual has a dominant learning style that should be accommodated in order to optimize their learning. By understanding which learning style your student leans toward, you can choose resources that will make more sense for your child, work with their natural learning preferences, minimize frustration, and maximize learning. There are many Learning Style Theory models, but we'll stick with the VARK model as it is less complicated than the others.

According to the VARK model, there are four primary learning styles:

- Visual
- Auditory
- Reading/writing
- Kinesthetic

Each learning style has its own strengths and weaknesses, and there is no right or wrong way to learn. The following pages include a quick assessment to help you identify which style your child leans toward.

Do all children have one clear learning style?

The idea that all children only have one learning style has been challenged, and rightfully so. It has been shown that most people prefer different styles at different times depending on the task at hand. For example, if I'm learning world history, I do very well with written text, but if I need to change a tire, I'll learn to do it easier if I'm shown how to do it with hands-on practice. In this way, it is pretty clear that people effectively use multiple learning styles, but many people will have a strong leaning toward one or two styles in most settings.

A basic understanding of learning styles can be beneficial for setting up learning environments, choosing curriculum, and designing lesson plans, but it is important to remember that every student is unique, and most people learn through a combination of approaches. As home educators, we should be mindful of our child's preferences but also be prepared to explain concepts using a variety of methods and activities to engage a range of abilities.

LEARNING STYLES

Visual learners are those who learn best by seeing information. They are often able to remember details more easily when they can see a graphic depiction, such as an arrow, drawing, or chart. Visual learners may benefit from using flashcards or watching videos in addition to reading texts. Visual learning is especially effective for tasks that are spatial in nature, such as mapping out a route or understanding how something works. It can also be helpful for memorizing facts and figures. If your child is a visual learner, try using more visuals when you are teaching or working on a project. Look for curriculum and resources that include engaging visuals and color. You may be surprised at how much easier it is for them to remember things when they are presented in a way that they can see.

Auditory learners, sometimes referred to as “aural” learners, prefer listening to information that is presented to them vocally. These learners work well in group settings where vocal collaboration is present and may enjoy reading aloud to themselves. When learning new information, auditory learners often benefit from verbal repetition and may struggle with learning materials that are predominantly written. To accommodate an auditory learning style, educators should incorporate more verbal discussions into their lesson plans. Additionally, auditory learners may benefit from recording lessons or conversations so that they can listen to them at a later time.

The kinesthetic learning style is characterized by a preference for taking a physically active role in learning. These learners often prefer hands-on activities and like to engage all of their senses during coursework. As a result, they tend to do well in scientific studies that involve hands-on lab work. In addition, kinesthetic learners are often good at problem-solving and enjoy working with tangible materials. However, they may struggle in learning environments that are predominantly lecture-based. This is because they may have difficulty sitting still for long periods of time and may become easily distracted. For kinesthetic learners, it is important to find learning opportunities that allow them to be active and engaged. When possible, they should participate in hands-on activities and take breaks often to move around. These learners are frequently characterized negatively in the formal education system, but when kinesthetic learners are able to take an active role in their learning, they often thrive and are able to achieve great success.

LEARNING STYLES

Reading and writing learners are those who prefer to focus on the written word. They tend to be strong note-takers, perform best when they can reference written text, and are often content to work quietly on their own, researching and reading books to gain the knowledge they need. This learning style is often associated with academic success, as these learners typically excel in school environments that place a heavy emphasis on reading and writing. However, reading and writing learners can also struggle when they are placed in learning environments that rely heavily on oral communication or direct experience. They may take longer to answer questions verbally but are often very articulate and can communicate complex ideas clearly and efficiently when given the chance to write them down. If you're working with a reading/writing learner, try to give them time to process their thoughts on paper before asking for a spoken response. You may be surprised at just how much they have to say.

A note about talking to children about learning styles

When we discuss learning style and preferences with our children, we need to be mindful of the language we use. One of the biggest criticisms of learning style theory is the risk that children will come away with the idea that they can only learn one way under one strict set of circumstances. I think you can see the danger in this. Just because a child leans toward one learning style does not mean they cannot learn any other way or that their preferred style won't change over time. Learning style theory is valuable to you, the 'teacher' in this setting only as far as it gives you guidance to help you choose resources and activities that your child will be more likely to find enjoyable and effective. It is not a science, and it is not a guarantee that every activity that is compatible with a specific style will resonate with your child. So, look at it as helpful information, not a hard and fast rule.

Identifying your child's learning style

The following pages include assessments to help you identify your child's learning preferences. There is a parent assessment for you to fill out based on your observations, and a child assessment that they can fill out. If your child is too young to fill out the assessment themselves, then you can 'interview' them (kids absolutely love this) and fill it out with them.

LEARNING STYLES

When engaging in self-directed play and learning does my child:	Often	Rarely
A- Prefer to listen to information and stories rather than reading them		
D- Prefer to read stories or information		
A- Talk at length about things that interest them		
D- Like to write things down and take notes		
C- Prefer to build things themselves		
B- Decorate and organize their environment		
C- Always have something in their hands		
A- Prefer to listen to music while playing or learning		
B- Prefer to watch videos rather than reading		
D- Read for fun		
C- Prefer to move around while learning		
B- Prefer to look at graphs and tables rather than reading text to understand		
A- When they read, they whisper or mouth the words		
D- Makes lists		
C- Uses hands and even whole body when they talk		
B- Prefers their space to be tidy and clutter free		

EVALUATION

Tally up your responses to the questions on the previous page. The more often your child shows a preference, the more likely they are to lean toward that learning style.

Style	Often	Rarely
A= Auditory		
B= Visual		
C= Kinesthetic		
D= Reading/Writing		

From these questions, you should be getting a picture of your child's preferences. Don't be concerned if you aren't able to establish a clear learning preference at this point.

Some people don't have a strong preference and learn from a variety of styles and techniques, and sometimes learning styles become more apparent as you begin homeschooling.

My older daughter leans strongly towards Auditory and Kinesthetic. My younger daughter didn't show any specific preference.

The child questionnaire on the following pages might help you narrow it down further.

CHILD QUESTIONNAIRE

Put a check next to each statement that you agree with. There are no right or wrong answers.

	Visual Learning Style
	1. I remember best by writing things down or drawing pictures
	2. I ask for directions to be repeated
	3. I like to read about something rather than hear about it
	4. I am good at spelling
	5. I like to learn with posters, videos, and pictures
	6. I am good at reading maps and graphs
	7. When someone is talking, I create pictures in my mind of what they are saying
	8. I like it when my teacher uses lots of pictures when teaching
	9. After school, I like to read books
	10. I can remember something I picture it in my head

_____ Total Number of Checks

	Reading/Writing Learning Style
	1. I understand instructions better when I read them
	2. I learn much easier when I read something in a book instead of hearing it
	3. I like to take notes by hand rather than typing them
	4. It's easy to remember people's names
	5. When I need to spell a word, I have to write it down
	6. I make lists to remember what I need to do
	7. When someone is talking, I create pictures in my mind of what they are saying
	8. I like to fill out worksheets
	9. After school, I like to read books
	10. I can picture words in my head

_____ Total Number of Checks

	Auditory Learning Style
	1. I remember best if I hear something
	2. It is easier for me to listen to a story than to read it
	3. I understand better when I read out loud
	4. I follow spoken directions well
	5. I like to sing or hum myself
	6. I like to talk to friends and family
	7. Music helps me learn things better
	8. I can easily remember what people say
	9. It helps when the teacher explains posters or pictures to me
	10. I can remember more about something new if I can talk about it

_____ Total Number of Checks

	Tactile/Kinesthetic Learning Style
	1. I remember best if I can make something that tells about what I am learning
	2. I would rather play sports than read
	3. I like playing cards or board games to learn new things
	4. I like to write letters or write in a journal
	5. I like it when teachers let me practice something with an activity
	6. I like putting together puzzles
	7. If I have to solve a problem, it helps me to move while I think
	8. It is hard for me to sit for a long time
	9. I enjoy dancing or moving to music
	10. I like to act things out to show what I have learned

_____ Total Number of Checks

Evaluation

Count the number of check marks for each box. The more check marks, the more you lean toward that particular learning style.

LEARNING STYLES CHEAT SHEET

Style	Strategies
<p>Auditory</p> <p>Like to recite information out loud Have a passion for words, writing, tongue twisters, rhymes Like to listen to information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading Aloud• Audio Books• Discussion• Asking questions• Work with a partner to explain concepts out loud
<p>Visual</p> <p>Do well when they use symbols, boxes, charts, and colors in their notes Learn better by looking at pictures, diagrams, and graphs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Graphic Organizers• Visual Presentations• Pictures• Films• Maps• Models• Graphs
<p>Kinesthetic</p> <p>Use body and sense of touch to learn Learn by doing, touching, moving, building Find it difficult to sit still</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Games• Skits• Models• Building Blocks• Math Manipulatives• Art Materials• Apply concepts to everyday life
<p>Reading/Writing</p> <p>Take detailed notes They like to read in their spare time Make lists Understand directions better if written down Prefer to write notes rather than type</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Variety of Note-Taking Materials• Reread Information• Rewrite Notes• Provide Supplementary Information

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Philosophical Perspective



PHILISOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

Choosing a homeschooling philosophy can help you effectively select curriculum and resources for your child's education. This philosophy acts as a guiding framework, aligning the educational materials and teaching approaches with your family's values and your child's learning style. For instance, if you adopt the Montessori method, you will seek out resources that encourage self-directed learning and hands-on activities, ensuring that the curriculum supports independent exploration. Conversely, a classical education approach would steer you towards more structured and rigorous academic materials that emphasize linguistic and logical skills through the study of traditional literature and systematic thinking. By clarifying your educational philosophy early on, you narrow down your choices to those most compatible with your goals. Below is a list of the most common homeschooling philosophies.

Pros of Choosing a Philosophical Framework:

- **Direction and Structure:** Having a clear philosophy provides a roadmap. It offers guidelines on curriculum, teaching methods, and goals, which can be particularly helpful for those new to homeschooling.
- **Alignment with Values:** Many philosophical frameworks resonate with certain core values or beliefs. By selecting one that aligns with your family's values, the learning experience can be more cohesive and meaningful.
- **Community and Resources:** Adopting a known philosophy often means access to a community of like-minded educators. This can be a treasure trove of resources, advice, and support.
- **Consistency:** A defined approach can bring consistency in learning, which some students may thrive under.

Cons of Choosing a Philosophical Framework:

- **Potential Rigidity:** Strictly adhering to one philosophy might mean missing out on methods or resources that could be beneficial but don't "fit" within that paradigm.
- **Evolving Needs:** As children grow, their learning styles and needs may change. A single philosophy might not serve them best at every stage.
- **Overwhelm:** Some parents might feel pressured to "do it right" according to the tenets of the chosen philosophy, leading to unnecessary stress.
- **Potential Misalignment:** If chosen hastily, a philosophy might not align well with a child's or family's true needs, leading to frustration.

Plenty of homeschooling families don't adhere to one specific philosophy of education. I would consider myself an eclectic homeschooler. The following section will provide you with some helpful information, but don't feel pressured to decide on a philosophy today. If you find a philosophical framework that resonates with you can learn more about it in *The Homeschool Philosophy Guidebook* in *The Hassle Free Homeschooling Resource Vault*.

PHILISOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

Montessori Method	This approach promotes self-directed learning through sensory-rich activities and environments that encourage children to explore and learn at their own pace. It emphasizes independence, self-discipline, and hands-on learning with minimal direct instruction from teachers.
Classical Education	Classical education is structured around the "trivium" – grammar, logic, and rhetoric stages – focusing on developing critical thinking and reasoning skills through the study of classic literature and philosophical texts. It is rigorous and traditional, aiming to cultivate knowledgeable and articulate individuals.
Unschooling	Unschooling is a child-led learning philosophy that eschews traditional curriculum and schedules in favor of allowing children to pursue their interests and learn through everyday experiences. It is based on trust in the child's natural curiosity and their ability to direct their own learning.
Charlotte Mason Method	This method emphasizes education that encompasses the whole child, with a strong focus on nature, literature, and the arts. Lessons are short and engaging, encouraging children to develop a love for learning and a rich imagination.
Waldorf Education	Waldorf education focuses on holistic development, integrating academics, arts, and practical skills in a rhythmic manner that respects the developmental phases of the child. Creativity and imagination are highly valued, with a strong emphasis on developing the child's moral and artistic senses.
Eclectic Homeschooling	Eclectic homeschooling involves mixing and matching elements from various homeschooling methods to tailor education that best fits the child's needs and family's goals. Parents have the flexibility to adapt the curriculum and learning style as the child grows and their interests and needs change.

Did one perspective stand out to you? If so what was it? What did you like about it?

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Tips From the Pros



TIPS FROM THE PROS

In this section, veteran homeschoolers share their favorite advice for choosing homeschool resources.

Spread your costs out: Don't blow your whole budget at the beginning of the year. This seems like common sense, but so many new homeschoolers feel the pressure to get their whole year planned out and purchased all at once. Unless you are buying a full-year, boxed curriculum set, you can plan and purchase one month or one semester at a time. This will allow you more flexibility to change gears if something isn't working.

Try before you buy: Before you purchase materials, I highly recommend you utilize free samples, check your local library, and borrow from friends. Many curriculum suppliers will offer some sort of sample for free. Sometimes this looks like a couple of downloadable pages, a placement test, or a free trial for electronic resources. Just remember to leave yourself a note to cancel any subscriptions after the trial period so you don't get charged for something you don't want.

Avoid the grade level trap: The simple fact is, there is no such thing as grade level once you leave the public school system. Many curriculum providers organize their materials by grade level, but there are no standardized measures across providers. Sticking to a perceived grade rather than focusing on skill level can lead to a lot of confusion when choosing materials. When purchasing a resource, consider using the free placement test (if one is provided) or review the materials carefully to select the best level for your student's needs. That may leave you with a mix of 'grade levels' printed on your materials, but that is completely normal in the homeschool space. You may also find that your child has higher skills in certain subject areas and may need lower skill levels in others. Again, this is completely normal.

TIPS FROM THE PROS

Get the kids involved: Let your children look over materials before you buy them. Including your children in the planning process will give them a feeling of ownership and responsibility for their education and will save you a lot of time and money. A good way to do this is to put together a list of three different options for whatever you happen to be buying, and then have your children tell you which option appeals to them the most. Ask them what they like about it and what they don't. I'm always surprised by what my children notice that completely escaped me.

With slightly older children, you can even give them a subject and the main concepts that need to be covered, and then let them go choose three options for YOU to choose from. This is always a hit at my house! A word of caution: make sure that you can live with all of the options you offer your children. It doesn't help you at all if your kids choose an option that you absolutely hate or can't afford.

Keep your own needs and preferences in mind: Don't forget to consider your own needs and preferences when selecting resources. Be conservative in your estimates of how much time and energy you have so you can be sure you don't burn yourself out. If you can't spend a lot of time directly teaching your child one-on-one, look for resources your child can use independently. If you hate doing projects, don't plan a project every day or even every week, if you hate the mess that comes with art, plan around your needs. We often get so focused on our child's needs and preferences that we forget to consider our limits. Your child doesn't always need that really cool educational project, but they do need a parent who can model self-awareness and good boundaries around self-care.

As you can see, there's a lot to consider when choosing a curriculum, but with a solid plan and some research, it doesn't have to be intimidating.

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Researching Curriculum



THE PROCESS

Now we get to the fun part, researching and planning our curriculum!

The process

When researching curriculum, there is a process that if followed makes it fun and enjoyable rather than high pressure and stressful.

First: Get your mind right!

There is no such thing as the perfect curriculum. You will like some things about your curriculum and wish some things were different. This is normal. I've never met a homeschool parent that loved every single thing about their choice.

A curriculum that fits your family's needs helps your homeschool run smoothly and efficiently, but it isn't the only thing that matters. There are many factors that will contribute to an enjoyable homeschool experience. You can have an imperfect curriculum and still have a great homeschool, so take some of the pressure off yourself.

Every curriculum will leave small gaps in your child's education. I know, that's painful to think about, but it's true. Yes, we want a comprehensive curriculum, but no curriculum will cover everything perfectly. You will notice gaps as you go along, but as you notice them, you will fill them. This is completely normal and happens to all of us.

You can change your mind later. If you choose a curriculum and it doesn't work out, it's no big deal. You can change and adjust as needed.

Second: Take your time

There is nothing worse than trying to plan your homeschool in a rush. It really does lead to stress buying and buyer's remorse. Even if you have been thrust into homeschooling unexpectedly, there is nothing wrong with taking a break (your child won't fall behind because you take a few weeks to orient yourself) and taking the time to learn, research, and look over your options.

Third: Survey your options

Look over lots of different options. The more you immerse yourself in a topic, the less overwhelming it feels. Look over different websites that have homeschool resources, with the mindset of learning and familiarizing yourself with the options, not to make a choice. If something catches your eye, bookmark it to come back to later.

RESEARCH

After spending a week or two familiarizing yourself with curriculum providers and all of the different options available, you'll likely have found a few options that stuck out to you. Now it's time to research in earnest.

Let's go over exactly what you are looking for.

Scope and sequence

Every resource should have a *scope and sequence* if you're looking at a curriculum set or *table of contents* if you're looking at workbooks. This is usually readily available at the beginning of the book or online for curriculum sets.

This is where you find out if the curriculum you are considering covers the concepts and skills you identified earlier. It's as simple as looking over your list of concepts and skills and comparing it to the scope and sequence.

Keep in mind that skills and concepts can be described using slightly different language.

Here's how the same math concept might appear in the table of contents of two different curriculums:

Curriculum A:

1. Unit 1: Introduction to Numbers
2. Unit 2: Addition and Subtraction Basics
3. Unit 3: Understanding Multiplication
 - 3.1 Multiplication as Repeated Addition
 - 3.2 Multiplying by 0 and 1
 - 3.3 Multiplication Facts (2s, 5s, 10s)
4. Unit 4: Division Concepts
5. Unit 5: Advanced Multiplication and Division

Curriculum B:

1. Chapter 1: Numbers and Counting
2. Chapter 2: Basic Operations: Addition and Subtraction
3. Chapter 3: Introduction to Multiplication
 - 3.1 Multiplication as Groups of Objects
 - 3.2 Properties of Multiplication (Commutative, Associative)
 - 3.3 Multiplication Tables (2s, 3s, 4s)
4. Chapter 4: Division: Equal Sharing and Grouping
5. Chapter 5: Mastering Multiplication and Division

RESEARCH

In this example, both curriculums are teaching multiplication in their third unit or chapter, but they use different terminologies and approaches to explain the concept. Curriculum A focuses on "Multiplication as Repeated Addition," while Curriculum B explains "Multiplication as Groups of Objects." This is the same concept, just described differently.

Tip: If you are having a hard time figuring out if a concept presented in the scope and sequence is the same concept identified on your list, you can just copy them both, paste them into ChatGPT (or another AI), and ask.

Once you have made sure the resource you are looking at covers all the concepts you're looking for, you can move on to other considerations.

Note: You can mix and match resources to get all of your desired concepts covered. If I really like a curriculum but it's missing a few things, I just use supplementary materials to fill in gaps.

Your time and resources

Sometimes curriculum providers will give you an idea of how much time their lessons will take each day, sometimes they don't. If you can't find an indication of the time required, you might reach out to the supplier to ask, but if you review the sample lesson, which most suppliers provide, it should give you a general idea.

Tip: If you really love a resource but it seems a little too time-consuming, you can make small alterations to reduce the time needed to complete it. If there are a lot of math problems in a chapter, you can have your child do only odd or even numbered problems. If there is a lot of copywork, you can reduce it. If there are extra hands-on projects, you can do fewer or none at all.

And remember, if you are homeschooling on a budget, there are plenty of free resources available.

Your goals and priorities for the year

Hopefully, you have set some goals and priorities for your overall homeschool experience and for the year. When you are exploring resources, I want you to look back at those goals and priorities often. When you find a resource that catches your eye, ask yourself, "How will this help me bring my vision for my homeschool to life?" Toward the end of this workbook, you will find curriculum research pages that give you space to evaluate whether the resource will fit your child's learning style and your goals. You don't have to fill them out, but please do be mindful of the big picture when looking over your options.

RESEARCH

Your child's learning styles and preferences

You are unlikely to find a curriculum that explicitly tells you that it is a good fit for a specific learning style, but there are clues.

If you go back to the learning style section of this workbook, you'll find a cheat sheet that gives you an idea of what activities each learning style prefers. Now keep in mind, just because a child prefers graphs and tables doesn't mean they can't learn from text, or just because a child learns best with hands on activities doesn't mean they won't benefit from a video or discussion. These are just helpful guidelines that will provide some clarity when choosing resources, they aren't set in stone.

When doing your research, keep your child's preferences in mind, make the best selection available, and don't overthink it. There is a fine line between carefully considering your options and being frozen with indecision. You've probably heard the term 'good enough parenting.' Well, I believe in 'good enough' curriculum. If your curriculum meets most of you and your child's needs, then it is going to be fine. As you gain experience and practice, choosing resources becomes easier and the fit will become better and better over time.

Your philosophical perspective

As we discussed earlier, choosing a philosophical perspective does narrow down curriculum choices significantly which can be a blessing or a curse depending on the number of quality resources available.

The good news is that if a curriculum adheres strongly to one philosophical perspective, it is generally explicitly stated and used in their marketing, so it is easy to spot. The bad news is that just because a curriculum claims it aligns with a specific method or philosophy that doesn't automatically mean it follows the philosophy well. There is no governing body controlling that.

With that in mind, make sure you do some deep research to ensure you know enough to ensure you are choosing the kind of resource you think you are, and the provider isn't just paying lip service to a specific philosophy in their marketing campaign.

RESEARCH

Recommendations & Reviews

I do not recommend choosing a homeschool curriculum based **only** on recommendations or reviews, and here's why:

The curriculum that works well for one child or family may not work well for your child. This came up so often for me as a young homeschooling mom. Let's face it, I had no idea what I was doing. I had no experience, no frame of reference, and I was flying by the seat of my pants. Maybe you can relate?

I wanted so badly to do everything right and was so worried about screwing up that I just pumped any experienced homeschool mom for information, especially about homeschool curriculum. Now, there is nothing wrong with getting recommendations, but I didn't even try to match what they were saying to what I knew about my son.

If so-and-so said this was the best curriculum they had ever tried, then that was the curriculum I was going to get.

Needless to say, that was a terrible strategy. My son and I battled for years, and I don't mind telling you that it was not the homeschool experience I'd always dreamed of.

Recommendations and reviews can be very valuable, if you just know how to approach them:

Recommendations: If someone tells you they love a curriculum or resource, ask them what they love about it and then filter the specifics through what you know about their child and your child. My son's best friend was very studious, loved to read for hours, and solve complex puzzles. My son liked to work with his hands and thrived during any applied real-life learning. They were best friends but needed completely different resources and methods to learn.

Reviews: If you are reading reviews, be mindful of the source. Providers can include any reviews they want on their website, so they may be cherry-picking the best ones. Look for unbiased review platforms (see list on next page). Also, look for specifics. What exactly did people like or dislike about the resource? Specifics will allow you to compare elements to what you already know of your child.

CURRICULUM REVIEWS

I cannot absolutely guarantee that these are completely unbiased reviews, but they will definitely be better sources than a provider selling their own product.

I like to join homeschooling groups on Facebook if I'm looking for reviews. Then I can ask specific questions, e.g., *"I'm looking into (blank) curriculum, has anybody here used it? If so, were the project directions easy to understand?"* This method allows me to be very specific in the feedback I'm requesting so I don't get inundated with a lot of confusing fluff information.

Specific questions get specific feedback.

- Cathy Duffy Reviews: <https://cathyduffyreviews.com>
- Homeschool.com: <https://www.homeschool.com/curriculum-reviews/>
- The Homeschool Mom: <https://www.thehomeschoolmom.com/homeschool-curriculum-reviews/>
- Curriculum Choice: <https://www.thecurriculumchoice.com>
- Topsy Techie: <https://topsytechie.wordpress.com>
- Secular Homeschool: <https://www.secularhomeschool.com>
- Homeschool World (Practical Homeschooling Magazine): <https://www.homeschool.com>
- Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com>
- Homeschool Reviews: <http://www.homeschoolreviews.com>
- Learning Reviews: <https://www.learningreviews.com>

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Curriculum Providers



CURRICULUM PROVIDERS

Disclaimers:

The following pages include lists of curriculum providers divided by secular and non-secular resources.

This list is correct to the best of my knowledge, but I do not guarantee that I have categorized them all correctly. It is up to you to do your research and decide if a resource is right for you.

I do not endorse any of these providers or resources as I have not tried them all.

These are not affiliate links, meaning I am not paid to promote any of these providers or resources.

This is not a comprehensive list of homeschool curriculum providers, but it is a really great place to start.

Check out my [FREE Homeschool Resource Trello Board](#) for over 100 free homeschooling resources and providers.



CURRICULUM PROVIDERS

Non-Secular Homeschool Curriculum Providers

Abeka

Website: <https://www.abeka.com>

BJU Press

Website:

<https://www.bjupresshomeschool.com>

Sonlight

Website: <https://www.sonlight.com>

My Father's World

Website: <https://www.mfwbooks.com>

Christian Light Education

Website: <https://www.clp.org>

Memoria Press

Website: <https://www.memoriapress.com>

Alpha Omega Publications

Website: <https://www.aop.com>

Seton Home Study School

Website: <https://www.setonhome.org>

Catholic Heritage Curricula

Website: <https://www.chcweb.com>

The Good and the Beautiful

Website:

<https://www.goodandbeautiful.com>

Heart of Dakota

Website: <https://www.heartofdakota.com>

Master Books

Website: <https://www.masterbooks.com>

Veritas Press

Website: <https://veritaspress.com>

Rod & Staff

Website:

<https://www.milestonebooks.com>

A Beka Academy

Website: <https://www.abekaacademy.org>

Bridgeway Academy

Website: [Bridgeway Academy](https://www.bridgewayacademy.com)

Demme Learning

(Math Your See)

Website: <https://demmelearning.com/>

Gather 'Round

Website:

<https://gatherroundhomeschool.com/>

CURRICULUM PROVIDERS

Secular Homeschool Curriculum Providers

Khan Academy

Website: <https://www.khanacademy.org>

Time4Learning

Website: <https://www.time4learning.com>

Oak Meadow

Website: <https://www.oakmeadow.com>

Calvert Education

Website:

<https://www.calverteducation.com>

Laurel Springs School

Website: <https://laurelsprings.com>

K12 (Stride)

Website: <https://www.k12.com>

Power Homeschool

Website:

<https://www.powerhomeschool.org>

Discovery K12

Website: <https://discoveryk12.com>

Secular Homeschool

Website:

<https://www.secularhomeschool.com>

Moving Beyond the Page

Website:

<https://www.movingbeyondthepage.com>

Moving Beyond the Page

Website:

<https://www.movingbeyondthepage.com>

Pandia Press

Website: <https://www.pandiapress.com>

Global Village School

Website:

<https://www.globalvillageschool.org>

Build Your Library

Website: <https://buildyourlibrary.com>

Real Science Odyssey

Website:

<https://www.pandiapress.com/real-science-odyssey/>

Torchlight Curriculum

Website:

<https://www.torchlightcurriculum.com>

Science Fusion

Website:

<https://www.hmhco.com/shop/education-curriculum/science/elementary-science/sciencefusion>

Wildwood Curriculum

Website: <https://wildwoodcurriculum.org>

ALEKS

Website: <https://www.aleks.com/>

CURRICULUM PROVIDERS

Other Homeschool Curriculum Providers

Penn Foster

Website: <https://www.pennfoster.edu>

Miacademy

Website: <https://www.miacademy.co>

Acellus Academy

Website:
<https://www.acellusacademy.com>

Oak Meadow

Website: <https://www.oakmeadow.com>

CTC Math

Website: <https://www.ctcmath.com>

Authentic Ambitions (studies for unschoolers)

Website: <https://courses.authentic-ambitions.com/collections>

Curriculum Catalogs

Homeschool.com

Website: <https://www.homeschool.com/>

Rainbow Resource Center

Website:
<https://www.rainbowresource.com/>

Love to Learn

Website: <https://www.lovetolearn.net/>

Worksheet Websites

K5 Learning

Website: <https://www.k5learning.com/>

Education.com

Website: <https://www.education.com/>

Free Homeschool Curriculum



For a list of over 100 FREE homeschooling resources, including full curriculum, organized by subject and grade, visit <https://melissaartercoaching.com/the-free-homeschool-resource-trello-board/>

ENGLISH/ LANGUAGE ARTS

Child's Name: _____

Resource	How does this resource match my child's learning style?	How does this resource fit in with my goals and priorities?

MATHEMATICS

Child's Name: _____

Resource	How does this resource match my child's learning style?	How does this resource fit in with my goals and priorities?

SCIENCE

Child's Name: _____

Resource	How does this resource match my child's learning style?	How does this resource fit in with my goals and priorities?

SOCIAL STUDIES/ HISTORY

Child's Name: _____

Resource	How does this resource match my child's learning style?	How does this resource fit in with my goals and priorities?

SUBJECT: _____

Child's Name _____

Resource	How does this resource match my child's learning style?	How does this resource fit in with my goals and priorities?

WHAT COMES NEXT

As you can see, there are many things to consider when planning your homeschool, but with the right resources and support, it doesn't have to be intimidating.

A few reminders

Remember that homeschooling is a process, and no one gets it perfect right out of the box. Don't be surprised if there is a big adjustment period. Give yourself the gift of time; Time to adjust, to learn, and to experiment with what does and doesn't work.

Remember, homeschooling is more like a marathon, not a sprint, and finding a sustainable pace will ultimately lead to a more rewarding and successful educational journey. Burnout is real, and no one is handing out awards for the most worksheets done in a day or the most elaborate science project. You don't have to do it all, and you certainly don't have to do it all at once.

Looking for more resources like this one?

If you are looking for more help and support, check out *The Hassle Free Homeschooling Resource Vault* with over 40 resources to help you manage your homeschool, family, and mindset, all designed with the new homeschooler in mind.



<https://melissaartercoaching.com/register/resource-vault/>



MEET THE AUTHOR

Hello and welcome, my name is Melissa. I'm a 17-year homeschool veteran, homeschool alumna, and a mindset/productivity coach. My homeschooling program helps families break free from the limits of the formal education system and learn the practical skills and mindset they need to have a truly effective and rewarding homeschool experience.