

We Skoolhouse

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# Progressive Approach: Homeschooling





## **Homeschooling Overview**

What is Homeschooling? Homeschooling is a form of education where parents take primary responsibility for their child's learning, delivering lessons in a home or non-traditional environment instead of sending them to a public or private school. It is a customizable approach that allows families to design education around their values, children's interests, and learning styles.

This education model is built on the principles of personalized learning, flexibility, and freedom from traditional constraints, allowing parents to adjust the curriculum pace, focus on experiential learning, or integrate specialized educational philosophies like Montessori, Charlotte Mason, or Classical Education. It serves students across all grade levels, from preschool to high school, and is particularly popular for families seeking more control over their child's education.

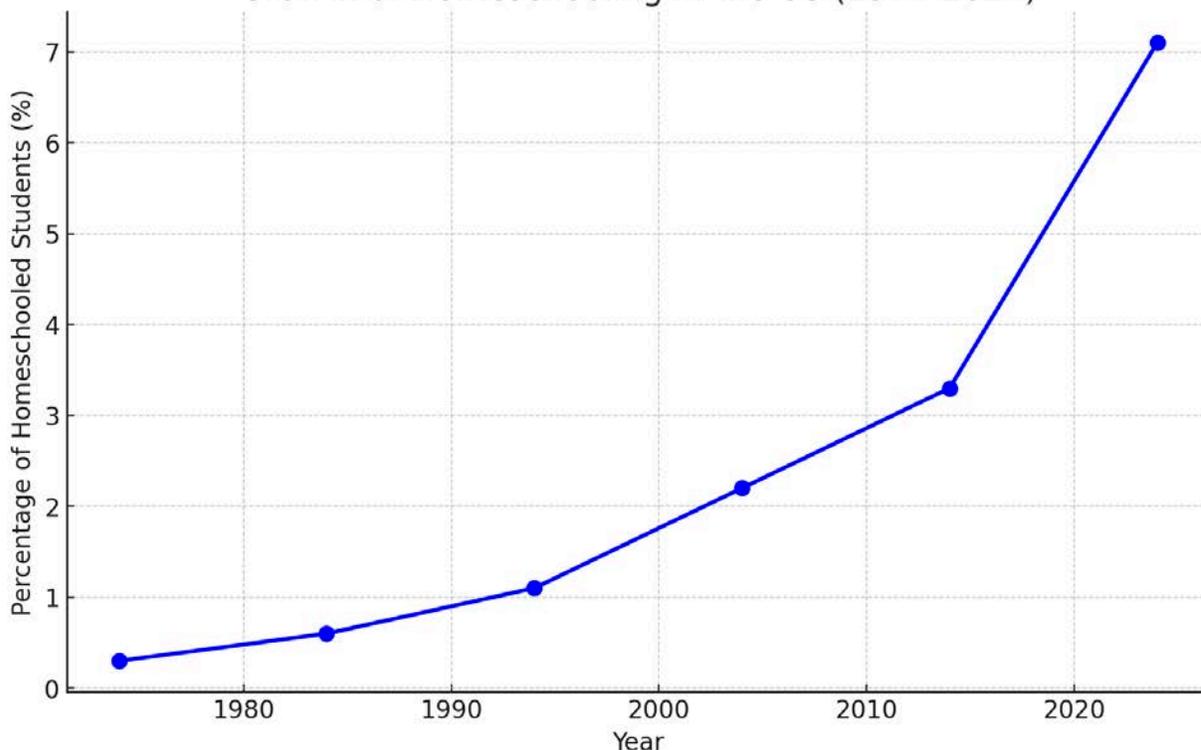
The rise in homeschooling has been steady over the last five decades, but it's accelerated dramatically in recent years, particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. In the 1970s, only a few thousand children in the U.S. were homeschooled, often for religious or alternative educational reasons. Today, over 3.7 million children in the U.S. are being homeschooled, with the numbers growing by as much as 40% during the pandemic.

### Several factors contribute to this growth:

- **Pandemic Effects:** The shift to remote learning during COVID-19 made many families more comfortable with the idea of educating at home, leading to a rise in full-time homeschooling.
- **Dissatisfaction with Traditional Schools:** Many families are unhappy with the current school system's academic or social climate, whether due to standardized testing, lack of individualized attention, or safety concerns.
- **Diverse Educational Philosophies:** Families are increasingly drawn to progressive educational philosophies (Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and unschooling) that focus on child-led learning, as well as religious-based education.
- **Flexibility:** Homeschooling allows families to design schedules and curricula that work best for them, leading to greater interest from families seeking flexibility in their child's education.

This growth has been most prominent in countries like the U.S., Canada, the U.K., Australia, and parts of Europe. Homeschooling is no longer a fringe movement but an increasingly mainstream choice for families from all walks of life.

Growth of Homeschooling in the US (1974-2024)



\*This graph demonstrates the growing trend of homeschooling from 1974 to 2024. The upward trajectory reflects the increasing number of families opting for homeschooling over the years. This trend illustrates a significant shift in educational choices, as more families explore alternatives to traditional schooling environments.



## Key Philosophical Elements of Homeschooling

- **Child-Centered Learning:** Homeschooling allows children to learn at their own pace, diving deep into topics of interest without being confined by rigid curriculum standards.
- **Customized Curriculum:** Parents choose or design curricula based on their child's specific needs, values, and learning style, providing the freedom to explore areas of passion and build strengths while addressing gaps.
- **Flexible Schedule:** Unlike traditional schooling with fixed hours, homeschooling enables families to create a learning schedule that best fits their lifestyle and the child's optimal learning times.
- **Holistic Learning Approach:** Many homeschooling families embrace experiential, hands-on learning, allowing children to develop practical skills and deeper understanding by doing rather than rote memorization.



# Debunking the Myth: Homeschoolers and Socialization

One of the most prevalent misconceptions about homeschooling is that homeschooled children lack adequate socialization. Critics often argue that without the traditional school environment, children miss out on essential social interactions, potentially leading to difficulties in forming relationships and integrating into society. However, this perspective overlooks the diverse and rich social experiences that homeschooling can provide. Here are several key points to consider that debunk this myth:



## 1. Diverse Social Interactions

Homeschooling allows children to interact with a wide range of individuals beyond their peers in a classroom setting. Unlike traditional schools, where social interactions are often limited to same-age peers, homeschooled children frequently engage with people of different ages, backgrounds, and interests. This exposure helps develop empathy, communication skills, and adaptability as they learn to interact with a broader spectrum of society.

## 2. Customized Socialization Opportunities

Parents who choose to homeschool often actively seek out social opportunities for their children. Homeschooling families typically engage in community activities such as co-ops, sports teams, art classes, and local clubs. These organized activities provide ample opportunities for children to make friends, collaborate, and work in teams. Many homeschooling networks also host regular gatherings, field trips, and events, ensuring that children have numerous chances to socialize with others.

### **3. Quality over Quantity in Social Interactions**

The quality of social interactions is often more important than the quantity. Homeschoolers are often able to develop deeper relationships with their peers and adults in their lives. They have the time to cultivate friendships based on shared interests, values, and activities, which can lead to more meaningful social connections. This environment fosters better communication skills and emotional intelligence, as children learn to navigate diverse social situations with confidence.

### **4. Encouragement of Independence and Responsibility**

Homeschooling often promotes independence and self-directed learning, which can enhance a child's social skills. Homeschooled children often take responsibility for their learning and are encouraged to pursue their interests, which can lead to encounters with like-minded peers. Whether it's joining clubs that focus on specific hobbies, volunteering, or participating in community events, homeschooled children learn to initiate social interactions and build relationships in ways that align with their individual personalities and interests.



### **5. Research Supports Homeschoolers' Socialization Skills**

Numerous studies have indicated that homeschooled children are socially well-adjusted and capable. Research published in the *Journal of School Choice* found that homeschooled students often outperform their traditionally schooled peers in social skills and are generally well-prepared for adult social interactions. Furthermore, a 2016 study from the National Home Education Research Institute concluded that homeschooled children typically demonstrate a strong sense of community, responsibility, and respect for others.

### **6. Real-World Learning Experiences**

Homeschoolers often engage in real-world learning experiences that naturally promote socialization. By participating in community service, internships, and other hands-on activities, children learn to interact with a variety of people in diverse environments. This kind of experiential learning not only enhances their education but also provides numerous opportunities to practice social skills in real-world situations.



## Studies Supporting Homeschooling Benefits

Research shows that homeschooled children often excel in several areas compared to their peers in traditional schools:

- **Academic Achievement:** Studies from the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI) have found that homeschooled students, on average, score 15-30 percentile points above public school students on standardized academic tests.
- **Social and Emotional Development:** Contrary to the stereotype of homeschooled children lacking socialization, research suggests that homeschooled students often demonstrate superior social skills, emotional maturity, and family attachment. A study in *The Journal of College Admission* also shows that homeschoolers perform well in higher education settings.
- **College and Career Readiness:** Homeschool graduates are increasingly sought after by colleges and universities. Institutions like Harvard and Stanford have noted that homeschooled applicants often demonstrate self-discipline, curiosity, and a passion for learning, traits that contribute to their success in post-secondary education.

# Practical Steps to Homeschool Legally

While the philosophical benefits of homeschooling are appealing, families must also adhere to state-specific regulations to ensure their child's education is legally recognized.

- **Understand Your State's Homeschool Laws:** Each U.S. state has its own regulations, ranging from minimal requirements to more structured oversight. Some states like Texas or Alaska have fewer restrictions, while others like New York or Pennsylvania require detailed records and assessments. Parents should consult their state's Department of Education website to understand the specific legalities.
- **Submit a Notice of Intent:** In many states, parents must submit a letter of intent or an equivalent form notifying the local school district of their intent to homeschool. This is often a simple process but is essential to legally withdraw children from public or private school.
- **Develop a Curriculum Plan:** Some states require homeschoolers to follow state-approved curriculum guidelines, while others offer flexibility. Parents can either purchase curricula or create their own, ensuring they meet subject-area requirements like math, reading, and science.
- **Keep Detailed Records:** States like New York and North Carolina may require parents to maintain a portfolio of the child's work, records of attendance, or an outline of the curriculum used. These records are critical during evaluations or reviews conducted by the state to verify the child's progress.
- **Complete Required Assessments:** Depending on the state, homeschooled children may need to take standardized tests or undergo annual evaluations by a certified teacher to ensure they are meeting educational standards. Tests like the California Achievement Test (CAT) or Iowa Tests are commonly used.
- **Join a Homeschool Support Network:** Many families connect with local homeschool co-ops or national organizations like the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) for guidance, resources, and support. These networks also offer socialization opportunities and group learning experiences.



# You Don't Need a Classroom or a Special Designated Space to Learn...

Learning doesn't have to be confined to a formal classroom; children thrive through meaningful, hands-on interactions with the world around them. Everyday activities, such as cooking, gardening, or shopping, serve as rich learning opportunities that enhance skills in math, science, and social interactions. For example, cooking involves measuring ingredients, which practices math, while gardening teaches biology and ecology. These experiences foster a love for learning by allowing children to engage actively with their interests, develop cognitive and social skills, and understand the relevance of what they are learning in real life. By embracing this approach, we empower children to explore, discover, and grow in an environment that celebrates their natural curiosity and nurtures their development as capable individuals.



**Math**



**Practical Life**



**Art**



**Science**



**Literacy**



**History**

# How Much Time Daily on Academics?

Children do not require several hours a day of formal academic instruction; in fact, many concepts can be naturally embedded into their everyday experiences. In early childhood, child-led play and time spent outdoors are crucial for their development, as these experiences provide rich opportunities for learning and exploration. Through play, children engage in problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity, all of which lay the groundwork for future academic success. Additionally, interactions with peers and caregivers during these playtimes foster essential social-emotional skills, helping children build healthy relationships and navigate their feelings. This holistic approach to learning emphasizes that education is not solely about structured lessons; instead, it flourishes through meaningful engagement with the world around them.

Age Group	Academic Time (per day)	Examples of Academic Activities	Free Play/Outdoor Time (per day)
<b>3-5 years (Preschool)</b>	30-60 minutes	Counting objects, storytime, simple puzzles, sensory play (e.g., water, sand), sorting shapes, nature walks (introduce science concepts)	3-4 hours of free play (indoor/outdoor) including unstructured play, gross motor activities, imaginative play
<b>6-7 years (Kindergarten/1st Grade)</b>	1-1.5 hours	Letter recognition, early reading, simple math (addition/subtraction with manipulatives), drawing or art projects, introduction to nature studies	2.5-3.5 hours of outdoor play, including physical activities, nature exploration, imaginative role-play
<b>8-9 years (2nd-3rd Grade)</b>	1.5-2 hours	Reading simple chapter books, basic arithmetic (addition, subtraction, multiplication), science experiments, journaling, educational games	2-3 hours of outdoor play, including sports, exploration in nature, free play with peers
<b>10-12 years (4th-6th Grade)</b>	2-3 hours	Reading comprehension, multiplication and division, writing short stories, science projects, history projects, learning through field trips	1.5-2.5 hours of outdoor play, group play activities, sports, creative projects (like building or art)

# 25 Activities and Experiences for Preschoolers

- **Water Play:** Engage in activities like pouring and measuring to explore concepts of volume and measurement while developing sensory skills.
- **Finger Painting:** Use different colors to promote creativity, color recognition, and fine motor development.
- **Nature Walks:** Observe and discuss plants, animals, and changes in the environment, fostering observation skills and vocabulary building.
- **Building Blocks:** Encourage building and creating with blocks to develop spatial awareness, problem-solving, and basic engineering concepts.
- **Storytime with Puppets:** Read stories using puppets to enhance language development, imagination, and storytelling skills.
- **Gardening Together:** Plant seeds and care for plants to teach life cycles, responsibility, and connection to nature.
- **Cooking Simple Recipes:** Involve children in measuring ingredients and following instructions to develop math skills and sequencing abilities.
- **Sorting Objects by Color or Size:** Create sorting activities at home to develop classification skills, pattern recognition, and logical thinking.
- **Playing Dress-Up:** Encourage imaginative play with costumes, fostering social skills and an understanding of different roles.
- **Musical Instruments Exploration:** Explore various musical instruments to enhance rhythm, auditory discrimination, and motor skills.
- **Obstacle Course Creation:** Design an obstacle course at home to promote gross motor development, coordination, and physical fitness.
- **Sensory Bins (e.g., rice, beans):** Set up sensory bins with different materials for exploration, fine motor development, and imaginative play.

- **Simple Science Experiments (e.g., baking soda and vinegar):** Conduct easy experiments to spark curiosity and introduce basic scientific concepts.
- **Nature Scavenger Hunt:** Create a scavenger hunt list of natural items to enhance observation skills and encourage outdoor exploration.
- **Playing with Clay or Playdough:** Use clay or playdough to foster creativity, fine motor development, and tactile exploration.
- **Storytelling with Pictures:** Use picture cards or drawings to encourage language development and sequencing skills in storytelling.
- **Animal Movement Games:** Create games where children mimic animals to develop gross motor skills and imaginative play.
- **Building with LEGO or Duplo:** Encourage building projects with LEGO to enhance fine motor skills, creativity, and spatial awareness.
- **Simple Board Games:** Use age-appropriate board games to teach turn-taking, counting, and social interaction skills.
- **Play-Based Math Activities (e.g., counting objects):** Incorporate counting and number recognition into everyday play with household items.
- **Exploring Textures (e.g., fabric, sandpaper):** Gather different textures for sensory exploration, enhancing language development and cognitive skills.
- **Bubble Play:** Use bubbles for fun while developing hand-eye coordination, sensory exploration, and scientific inquiry.
- **Community Helper Role-Play:** Role-play different community helper scenarios to foster understanding of community roles and social skills.
- **Singing and Movement:** Incorporate songs and movement into daily routines to develop language skills, rhythm, and physical coordination.
- **Animal Classification Games:** Use toys or pictures to teach children about animal classification and biology, enhancing critical thinking skills.

# 25 Activities and Experiences for School-Aged Children

- **Cooking Complex Recipes:** Involve children in cooking to teach math skills (fractions), nutrition awareness, and following directions.
- **Science Projects (e.g., building a volcano):** Conduct hands-on science projects to encourage scientific inquiry and critical thinking.
- **Creative Writing Prompts:** Provide prompts for writing stories to foster imagination, language skills, and narrative understanding.
- **Board Games and Strategy Games:** Use games to teach problem-solving, critical thinking, and social skills while having fun.
- **Gardening Projects:** Engage in gardening to teach ecosystems, responsibility, and patience in caring for plants.
- **Building Structures with Recyclables:** Encourage creativity and environmental awareness by constructing projects from recycled materials.
- **Group Discussions on Current Events:** Discuss age-appropriate current events to promote critical thinking and social awareness.
- **Outdoor Adventure Activities (hiking, biking):** Explore local trails or parks to develop physical fitness and an appreciation for nature.
- **Volunteering in the Community:** Organize or volunteer with communal activities to teach empathy, responsibility, and social awareness.
- **Creating Art Projects (e.g., mural painting):** Collaborate on large art projects to encourage creativity, teamwork, and self-expression.
- **Science Experiments (e.g., growing crystals):** Conduct engaging science experiments to promote scientific inquiry and observation skills.
- **Reading and Book Clubs:** Create a family or community book club to enhance literacy skills, comprehension, and social interaction.

- **Coding Games and Robotics:** Introduce coding through games or kits to foster problem-solving, logical thinking, and technological literacy.
- **Field Trips to Museums or Historical Sites:** Plan educational trips to enhance knowledge of history and culture through firsthand experiences.
- **Participating in Plays or Performances:** Encourage participation in local theater groups to build creativity and public speaking skills.
- **Learning a Musical Instrument:** Provide opportunities for music lessons to develop discipline, fine motor skills, and auditory skills.
- **Peer Mentoring or Tutoring:** Set up peer mentoring arrangements to enhance social skills, empathy, and academic reinforcement.
- **Exploring Local Nature Trails:** Organize regular trips to nature trails to encourage environmental awareness and observational skills.
- **Creating a Personal Budget for a Project:** Teach financial literacy by involving children in budgeting for projects or activities.
- **Conducting Surveys and Analyzing Data:** Teach data analysis by having children conduct surveys on topics of interest and analyze the results.
- **Engaging in Online Learning Platforms:** Utilize online resources for self-directed learning to foster independence and resourcefulness.
- **Writing Letters to Local Leaders:** Encourage civic engagement by having children write letters advocating for community issues.
- **Participating in Science Fairs:** Encourage participation in local science fairs to develop research skills and public speaking.
- **Making and Selling Crafts:** Teach entrepreneurship by creating crafts to sell at local markets or online, fostering creativity and financial literacy.
- **Debate Club Participation:** Organize family debate sessions on various topics to enhance critical thinking and communication skills.



# Five Tips for Homeschooling Families

**1. Trust Your Decision:** Remember that homeschooling is a personal choice that may not align with everyone's beliefs. It's essential to trust your decision, even if you face pushback from family and friends. Your family's needs and your child's learning style are what matter most.

**2. Embrace Flexibility:** Don't feel like homeschooling has to mirror a traditional school setting. If aspects of the conventional education system don't resonate with you, embrace a different approach that suits your family. Learning can happen in various forms and environments, so allow your curriculum to reflect that.

**3. Collaborate with Your Child:** Bring your child on board as a co-pilot in the homeschooling journey. Pay attention to their cues and feedback; if they're not engaged, don't force them to stick to a lesson. Learning is most effective when it's driven by interest, so allow them the freedom to move, explore, and delve into subjects that spark their curiosity.

**4. Manage Multiple Ages Effectively:** When homeschooling multiple children of different ages, consider a mixed-age approach where everyone learns together on certain topics while allowing for individual exploration based on their age and interests. This can foster collaboration and peer learning. For instance, older children can help teach younger siblings, reinforcing their own understanding while enhancing the younger child's learning experience.

**5. Prioritize Routine and Balance:** Establishing a daily routine can create a sense of stability and structure, helping children understand when it's time for academic activities, play, and relaxation. However, be flexible within that routine to allow for spontaneous learning opportunities. Balancing academic time with free play and outdoor exploration is crucial for a well-rounded homeschooling experience, as it nurtures both intellectual growth and emotional well-being.



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