



Byrkit Home School Tips

by Kathy Byrkit

Emergency Management

The provided text, "**Byrkit Home School Tips**," outlines a **pragmatic approach to homeschooling**, particularly when managing **multiple children with diverse needs**, including neurodivergence and health issues. The author emphasizes the importance of an "**emergency schedule**" to prioritize immediate needs like breathing, bleeding, hygiene, and sustenance before academic tasks. It also highlights the significance of **addressing underlying issues** like medication side effects and electrolyte imbalances that can impact a child's well-being and learning. Furthermore, the tips touch upon **practical aspects of homeschooling documentation** such as attendance and curriculum requirements, while also acknowledging the value of **unscheduled learning experiences**.

This source, titled "**Byrkit Home School Tips**," outlines a practical and prioritized approach to managing a large homeschooling family, especially one with children who have neurodivergent conditions and health challenges. The core of the advice centers around establishing an "emergency schedule" to address immediate needs, starting with basic life support and hygiene, then moving to nourishment and essential household tasks. Beyond immediate crises, the text touches upon the importance of flexibility in curriculum and recognizing learning opportunities outside formal lessons, while also addressing logistical requirements like attendance documentation, emphasizing a balanced and sustainable approach to homeschooling that acknowledges the complexities of family



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I needed to work back from where I needed to be. As for an appointment, I need to be here right now. What will it take? Then, break it into doable chunks. I needed to keep my children's capabilities in mind. That was hard with neurodivergent kids with health issues that my reviewers didn't always seem to get. With nine kids and an older family member to help, an emergency schedule was key. My kids learned the phrase, We are on the emergency schedule. At one point, it was written on my school clipboard for reference.

1. *"Is everyone breathing?"*

2. *"Is anyone catastrophically bleeding?"*

Life-threatening trumps all. I had kids with asthma and kids that went all the way to Johns Hopkins to multiple specialists with no diagnosis or answers after ten years, and more than one kid in that category.

My daughter was put on medication that made her feel like dying would be better. The doctor didn't listen when I said, "This isn't working right." He increased the medication, then broke his leg and was unavailable with no one covering for him for over a month. We changed doctors.

A sibling of hers later had a DNA test to check medication compatibility, and that medicine is on the "don't ever give" list. We also had a farm with livestock. Medical trumped all. The kid who stopped singing because she couldn't remember the words probably wasn't remembering much else either. She said after her hematologist gave her six iron infusions to fix really low iron levels.



3. *Basic hygiene.*

Do any diapers need to be changed?

Did someone or an animal throw up?

Did someone fall or wade through muck (a combination of dirt, water, and poop?)

Are there any minor injuries needing care for cuts, scrapes, or bruises? (Fever or medications also fall here as a priority.)

4. *Fourth, water and food.*

Does anyone need to eat or drink? This may involve cooking or ordering. On an emergency schedule. Try not to have to leave the house uncleaned or take a long time. It should be no more than ten to thirty minutes.

This is an emergency schedule.

Pay attention to electrolytes. On a hot day working at camp, my oldest came home complaining that he felt terrible. He had drunk several Nalgene bottles of water. I said, "Drake, go to the kitchen and get a handful of chips, a stalk or two of celery, or something with salt."

Drake: "Salt is bad for you. (He is over this one.)."

Me: "Go to the kitchen and do it. This was not the time for a discussion or argument."

When he returned a few minutes later, I asked, "How do you feel?"

I got a sheepish "Better." He had depleted his electrolytes. Even his thinking and choices were affected.



It won't get better until it is fixed. The same is true for blood sugar. If your blood sugar level is low, you need some form of sugar. Fat and protein are not ideal at that point. If you have actual medical issues, talk to your doctor and do your research. I am not one.

Your issues may be different from mine. But hydration and nutrition affect everyone.

Next, we look at necessary household tasks.

Does the laundry need to be moved forward?

Is anyone or everyone out of anything?

Are there emergencies that require cleaning?

Is there anything that hasn't been covered yet?

This can trip the "We're on an emergency schedule" trigger if it means we can't function.

Are the kitchen, bathrooms, and laundry room functional? Less often, living rooms, bedrooms, and offices, but you can't find one or more school books; that is a problem. They are becoming a hazard to life, and limbs must also be avoided.

Some require a certain amount of material to be covered. In Maryland, it seemed to be seventy percent of the curriculum for a particular class. In others, it's a certain number of entries for the year. An entry is defined as an expected work period or class, usually forty to sixty minutes. If you work for four hours on a project, that is more than one entry!

Alabama requires documenting attendance. If you remember from school, your name was called, and you said, "Here" or "Present," then your teacher marked on the chart whether you were there or not.

If you have to report that, it would help if you had an attendance chart for each child. Kid one may be sick, but Kid two did school.

Field trips count. Schools have field days and special events that don't fit in any particular class but still count as a school day. Don't put stress on your family that even schools don't. Make time and priorities to do regular school. Fifteen minutes four times per week will teach better with longer remembering that two hours once every two weeks. But your kids will learn things you can't document.

Discussing something they heard on the news or from someone they know may not fit your forms but may teach important, even school-related lessons. The observation made of a news report or an animal touched and fed will be more memorable. "No, snakes aren't slimy, but worms are." I've touched them—I know!



A Study Guide For Byrkit Home School Tips by Kathy Byrkit

Quiz

What is the primary purpose of the "emergency schedule" according to Kathy Byrkit, and what triggers its implementation?

List the first three priorities on the author's emergency schedule in the order they are presented.

Why does Kathy Byrkit emphasize the importance of electrolytes in addition to water, and what example does she provide?

According to the author, when should addressing necessary household tasks become a priority in the context of homeschooling?

What is Byrkit's perspective on documenting non-traditional learning experiences, such as discussions or observations?

Explain Kathy Byrkit's experience with her daughter's medication and what lesson she learned from that situation.

What advice does the author give regarding consistency in homeschooling versus longer, less frequent sessions?

How does Byrkit suggest keeping track of attendance for homeschooling, drawing a parallel to traditional schooling?

Why does the author include caring for minor injuries and addressing hygiene needs within the emergency schedule?

What does Kathy Byrkit mean by "working back from where I needed to be" at the beginning of the text?



Quiz Answer Key

The primary purpose of the emergency schedule is to address immediate and critical needs within the household and homeschooling environment when typical routines are disrupted. It is triggered when basic functioning is threatened or when essential needs haven't been met.

The first three priorities on the emergency schedule are: 1. Is everyone breathing? 2. Is anyone catastrophically bleeding? 3. Basic hygiene (diaper changes, vomit, muck, minor injuries, fever/medications).

The author emphasizes electrolytes because drinking a lot of water without them can lead to depletion, affecting physical well-being and even cognitive function. She shares the example of her son Drake feeling unwell after drinking much water, which improved after consuming salty food.

Addressing necessary household tasks becomes a priority when their neglect threatens the basic functionality of the household, preventing homeschooling from occurring. This includes ensuring the kitchen, bathrooms, and laundry room are usable and essential items are available.

The author believes that valuable learning can occur outside of formal curriculum and documentation, such as through news discussions or hands-on experiences. While formal documentation may be required, these real-world learning moments are still important and memorable.

The author's daughter experienced severe negative side effects from medication, and the initial doctor dismissed her concerns. This experience taught her the importance of advocating for her children's health, seeking second opinions, and the value of understanding individual medical compatibility.

The author advises that short, frequent learning sessions (fifteen minutes four times per week) are more effective for retention than longer, less frequent sessions (two hours once every two weeks). Consistency promotes better learning and memory.

The author suggests using an attendance chart for each child, similar to how traditional schools take attendance by calling names and marking presence. This helps track which children participated in school on any given day, especially if some are sick.

The author includes caring for minor injuries and addressing hygiene needs in the emergency schedule because these are basic health and comfort issues that can prevent effective functioning and learning if ignored. They are deemed more important than routine schoolwork during a disruption.

By "working back from where I needed to be," the author means she started by identifying her ultimate homeschooling goals and the necessary outcomes and then broke down the steps required to achieve them in the present moment.

Essay Format Questions

Discuss the challenges of homeschooling neurodivergent children with health issues, as highlighted in the text, and analyze how the "emergency schedule" attempts to address these unique needs.

Analyze the author's prioritization within the "emergency schedule." What does this order reveal about her values and approach to managing a large homeschooling family facing various challenges?

Evaluate Kathy Byrkit's perspective on the balance between structured curriculum requirements and the value of incidental learning experiences in a homeschool setting. To what extent should each be prioritized and documented?

Drawing from Byrkit's experiences with her daughter's medication and her son's electrolyte imbalance, discuss the importance of parental advocacy and attention to individual physical and mental well-being in homeschooling.

Compare and contrast the author's "emergency schedule" approach to homeschooling with more traditional, rigid homeschooling structures. What are the potential benefits and drawbacks of each?



Glossary of Key Terms

Neurodivergent: Differing in cognitive or neurological function from what is considered typical or neurotypical. In the context of the text, it refers to children whose brains function and process information differently.

Emergency Schedule: A flexible and prioritized plan implemented during times of disruption or when immediate needs must be addressed before routine homeschooling activities. It focuses on essential well-being and household functionality.

Catastrophically Bleeding: Severe, life-threatening blood loss requiring immediate attention.

Basic Hygiene: Fundamental practices related to cleanliness and health, such as changing diapers, cleaning up vomit, and addressing minor injuries.

Electrolytes: Minerals in the body that have an electric charge. They are essential for many bodily functions, including hydration, nerve and muscle function, and maintaining proper fluid balance.

Muck: A thick, slimy mud or mire, often containing dirt, water, and waste matter.

Functional (in the context of household tasks): Being in a state where essential tasks can be performed adequately. For example, a functional kitchen allows for food preparation and cleaning.

Curriculum: The planned educational content and learning experiences for a specific subject or course of study.

Entry (in the context of Maryland homeschooling requirements): An expected work period or class, typically lasting forty to sixty minutes, used as a measure of educational activity.

Incidental Learning: Learning that occurs unintentionally through everyday experiences, conversations, and observations, rather than through planned lessons.

