

Homeschooling Hacks

Lessons Learned Along the Way



15 LESSONS LEARNED IN 15+ YEARS

If I could sit down with my younger self, I would give her this advice and share these lessons learned.

Before you start your new schooling adventure, pour a cup of coffee, get comfortable, and pray about the advice on these pages. Then take some time off to debrief, reset, and recalibrate. Don't do any official school work. Spend time doing something fun with your child. Sleep in. Read aloud. Go on a fieldtrip. Do some art. Enjoy nature. Play a few board games.

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MISSION STATEMENT

Write a Homeschool Mission Statement.

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DEDICATION DAY

Set aside one day before school starts to pray over the year.

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SIMPLIFY

Simple is Better and Less is More!

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SOFT START

Ease into your new schooling.

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MARGINS

Plan a Four-Day Week.

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PLANS

Begin with goals and plan your year, your week, and your daily schedule.





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HARDEST SUBJECT

Don't start your school day with the hardest subject.

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SLEEP

Get 8 hours of sleep.

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GO OUTSIDE

Get your daily dose of Vitamin D daily.



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COURSE OF STUDY

Develop a plan for each child.

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READ ALOUD

As a family, read aloud everyday!

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MORNING TIME

Learn as many subjects as you possibly can as a family.

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AIM HIGH

Teach to the eldest and the little ones will come along for the ride.

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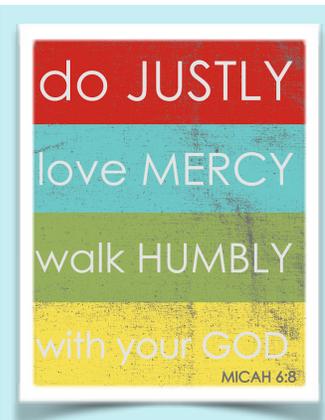
ROTATE

Rotate subjects and topics taught.

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GET CONNECTED

Find a homeschool group to join.



FAMILY DEVOTIONS

Always start with Bible reading, a simple family devotion, prayer time and / or worship! *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matthew 6:33). Even the worst homeschooling day is a good day if all you do that day is read together from THE good book (Bible) and read from A good book (literature book).

MISSION STATEMENT

Plan your homeschooling journey with the end in mind.

Why are you homeschooling? What do you want your children to do, say, feel, and/or know when they finish their homeschooling journey? Keep it brief. Be specific. You can list several things or just one main goal. Type it. Post it. Share it with your family. Refer to it often especially on those hard days. It will remind you why you are homeschooling and will encourage you to focus on what truly matters to you and your family.

DEDICATION DAY

Set one day aside before you start to pray over your new year or your fresh start.

Make plans for your family to go on an outing so you have the whole house to yourself. Spread your plans, calendar, curriculum, and supplies on the floor and get down on your knees. Dedicate the year to the Lord. Pray for each child in particular. Ask God to fill your



home with his grace, peace and love. Seek His will for you, your family and your homeschooling.

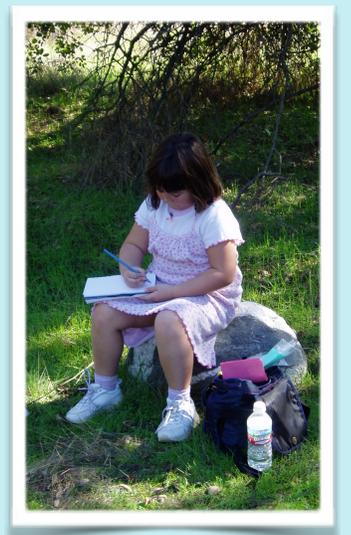
KEEP IT SIMPLE

Homeschooling is not rocket science.

You do NOT need a teaching credential, a college degree or special talents to teach your own at home. You do not need to know Chemistry, Spanish or even 6th grade math. No one loves your child as much as you, therefore, no one will work harder than you to make sure he succeeds. Start simple. You really don't need all of the bells and whistles of fancy curriculum. (See handout "Simplify")

SOFT START

Ease into your new schooling. Start on a Wednesday so you only have two or three days your first week back. Do something fun on the first day of school. Make it a tradition. Do just a few subjects the first week. The second week, add in one or two more subjects. Continue adding until your full schedule is in full motion. No matter how fun or different your new schooling will be, it's still school and not everyone likes school work! There will be mess ups. There will be attitudes. Old habits are hard to break. Don't expect the first week (or even your first year) of your new schooling to be perfect. The goal is progress over perfection. God did not call you to be perfect; He called you to be faithful.



MARGINS

You won't feel perpetually behind if you plan margins in your schedule.

Consider using a 4-day week schedule instead of the traditional 5-day week. This will allow you to go on a fieldtrip, participate in a co-op once a week, visit grandma when she is in town, go to the doctor when you are sick, play "catch up," or even take a much needed ditch day. Plan to take a "sabbath break" every six or seven weeks. God planned for a sabbath day each week and sabbath years. Use our Creator's model and plan to take a week off every 6 or 7 weeks. Give yourself "wiggle room" in the day. Plan to do school an hour less than what you want or think you need. This way if or when a lesson takes longer than you thought or a project is more involved than you planned, you are not rushing to finish by lunch or by ballet class.

PLANS

Write a few goals for your family to reach by the end of the year.

Get your calendar and buy a cute little notebook. Write a few goals for your family and for each child to achieve by the end of the school year. Don't make all of the goals academic. Include a spiritual goal and a personal goal. Open your calendar and notebook and start creating a "schedule" for your school time. If you are spending 4 or more hours on school work a day, you are planning too much in one day. High schoolers may spend more time depending on the courses



they are studying. However, homeschoolers can get more work done in half the time as traditional students. Both you and your child should have plenty of time after "school" work to delve into passions, interests, hobbies (or to catch up on emails and chores.) A good goal is do school from breakfast to lunch leaving the afternoon for extra curriculars, reading, play, etc.

COURSE OF STUDY

Make an outline of what each child will learn this year.

This plan is fluid. It is your ultimate goal but it is flexible due to any roadblocks that come along. Be general. If you are too specific than you set yourself up for failure. Fill in one course of study for each child. Record what curriculum or materials you will use for each subject, when each topic will be covered and how many times a week. (See "Course of Study" sample).

READ ALOUD

No matter how old or young your child is, read aloud together every day!

Read aloud time should be a priority. Aim to read aloud EVERYDAY! Besides the obvious advantages of reading aloud to your child, in the homeschooling environment, reading aloud as a family will also help you streamline your schedule. Depending on the books you choose, you are also doing vocabulary, grammar, history, science, art, music, etc at the same time. No need to drill the kids after you read. Enjoy the book but do take advantage of the discussions the book's character or themes can generate. No reading comprehension worksheets needed when you share your thoughts, insights and opinions of a book after your read it. When your student is old enough to read independently, encourage him/her to read on their own but continue to read aloud to your family, even your teen!

MORNING TIME

The biggest blessing of homeschooling is the ability to learn together!

No matter how old or young your students are take advantage of this blessing by doing "morning time" together. It can take many forms but the basic idea is you start the day off together learning a few subjects or topics and doing a few lessons or projects as a family. It doesn't have to be long but it the amount of time you spend doing morning time will depend on how many things you include in your "morning time." For more info on this great



idea, visit Homeschool Solutions with Pam Barnhill (<https://pambarnhill.com>).

AIM HIGH

Teach to the level of your eldest and the little ones will absorb information like a sponge.

For example, if you are learning science together as a family, pick a topic, book or text at the academic level of your eldest child. She will be get what she needs, your younger ones will be challenged, and your little ones will absorb information like a sponge. The younger ones may not fully understand all of it, but they will learn! Keep this in mind for history, art, music appreciation, and even read alouds. Always teach to the eldest. The younger ones will come along for the ride. Plan a few activities specifically for the younger ones and ask your older daughter to help. Pick a few picture books for the younger ones and ask your eldest to read to them. This is reinforcing the concept or topic for both the "teacher" (eldest) and the "student" (younger siblings).

ROTATING SCHEDULE

You do not need to cover science, history, art and music every day.

You want to make sure the basics are done every day (Bible, reading, writing, and math). If your child is learning an instrument, make sure practice time is also included in the daily schedule. Then rotate all of the other subjects. Make a list of the other subjects you plan to learn about this year. For example, you want to learn about Ancient History, Impressionism artists, marine life, the orchestra and nature studies. On Day One after the basics are completed, do an ancient history lesson and learn about an Impressionist artist. On Day Two, do the basics then do a lesson on a marine animal and learn the instruments in the horn section. On Day Three, do the basics and then do a nature study activity and a lesson about ancient history. Notice the rotation has started over with Ancient history. By rotating your subjects, you know each subject will be covered. Keep in mind, traditional schools do not do science, history, art, and music everyday and they never finish their text books. It is acceptable to do the humanities a couple of times a week. Word of caution: Don't plan to do science on Mondays, History on Tuesday, etc. Sometimes things come up on every Monday for a while and then you miss science studies for two months! Just go down your list and rotate the subjects you cover each day.

GET CONNECTED

Don't do this alone!

Find a homeschool support group to join. Do life with them. Attend park days with them. Go on fieldtrips with them. Join a co-op and learn together. Schedule play dates with them. Not only is it great for your child but you need it too! God did not intend for his workers to work alone. He sent them out in pairs and groups.

DON'T START THE DAY WITH THE HARDEST SUBJECT.

Start with your child's favorite, the easiest to tackle or with family read aloud.

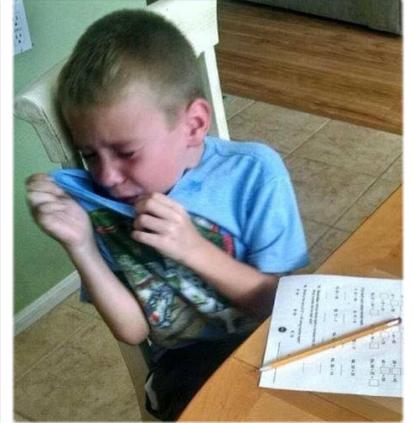
If math is your child's greatest challenge, do not start the day with it! Yes, she may be fresh first thing in the morning but if it is a bad math day, then you just sabotaged your entire day! Bad attitudes, feelings of failure, and hurtful words linger throughout the day. Start with a subject she likes or excels in, THEN tackle math. You might want to save her most challenging subject for last but if you wait till much later in the day, she might be too spent to concentrate. Do a few morning lessons, take a break, then tackle that challenging subject after your morning break.

GET ENOUGH SLEEP

Homeschoolers should not be sleep-deprived (unless there is a baby in the family)! Research shows adults and teens perform better, think clearer and have more positive self images after a good night sleep. Homeschoolers have the flexibility to sleep a little later and to enjoy a few more hours of shut eye. Homeschoolers don't have the hustle and bustle of the early morning rush to leave the house. Take advantage of this homeschooling perk! Get eight hours of sleep and let your teenager sleep even a little longer if possible.

Joy Zappers

AVOID THESE 3 THINGS



#1 TOO MANY ACTIVITIES!

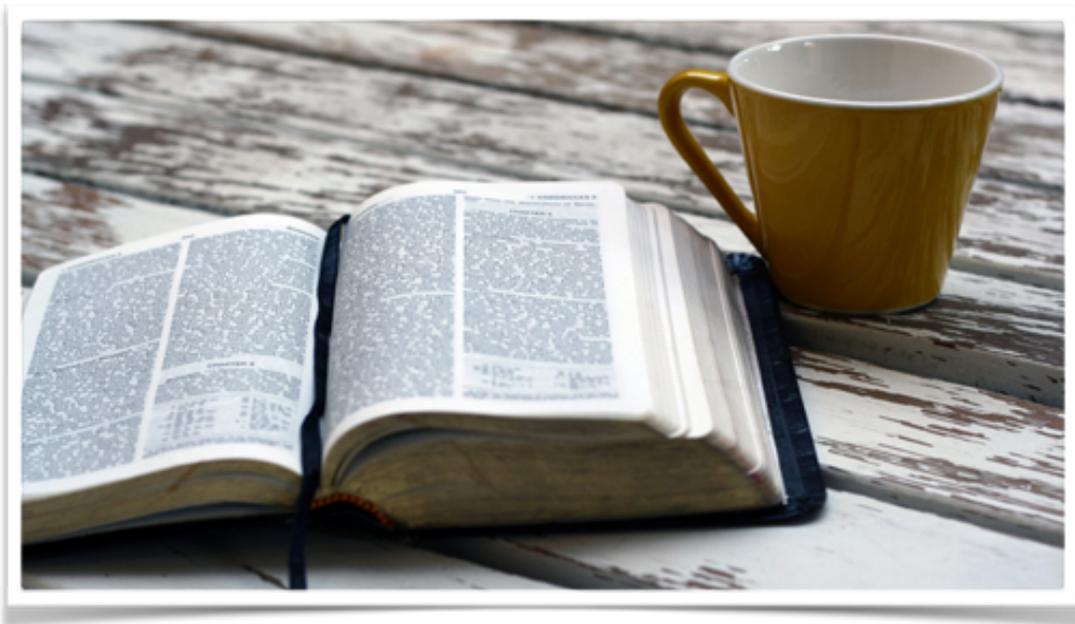
Limit the number of outside classes you take, the number of church ministries you lead, and the number of fieldtrips you attend. Of course, you do not want to be a recluse homeschooler. You want to get out in the world! Homeschoolers do not have a problem with socializing! The problem is most homeschoolers are so busy socializing in the real world that they aren't home enough to HOMESchool. The biggest Joy Zapper is being over scheduled. It is the number one reason for burn out! Learn to say "NO" and to not feel guilty when you say it. There are TONS of awesome opportunities in the homeschool world. The challenge is not finding them but choosing wisely!

#2 TOO MUCH SCREEN TIME!

Limit Your Screen Time (and your kids)! The internet can be a homeschoolers best friend and her worst enemy. Use the internet to find fun projects, new resources, interesting podcasts, etc. but don't get caught in the web! Before you know it, you have hundreds of things you want to do, try and buy! Make a plan and stick with it. Pinterest is full of great ideas but you can't do them all! Facebook is full of engaging conversations but you can't engage in all of them. Instagram is full of perfect homeschooling friends but you are only seeing their best. Unplug and disconnect for a few hours each day.

#3 NOT ENOUGH SUNSHINE!

Homeschoolers have the flexibility to do school anywhere and at anytime. Make sure you incorporate outdoor activities every day (or at least every week) into your schedule. Read outside. Do science and history outside. Draw and paint outside. Play outside! Garden, bird watch, walk, just do something outside every day! Don't sequester your family and yourself in the house (or in the car) all day long! Planning weekly hikes, nature studies, outdoor fieldtrips, and park days will be the much-needed break your family is craving.



FINAL WORD

In the end, it really is all about Jesus! The most important *subject* to learn about is God's love, the most important *information* to teach is God's Gospel, and the most important *textbook* is God's Word.

Like the author of Hebrews commands and the old hymn encourages, just keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. *"Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth"* (Colossians 3:1-2). He has called you to homeschool so He will guide you. On the good days, praise Him for His blessings and provisions. On the bad days, praise Him for His mercies and grace. When you begin to run out of steam, you are feeling like a failure or you are losing hope, remember the author of your faith (and the faith of your children) and the Creator of this universe, is also the ultimate teacher of your children. *"All your children will be taught by the LORD, and great will be their peace"* (Isaiah 54:13). Before you start your homeschooling, during the journey, and each and every morning, give it ALL to the Lord. His Word promises you peace. His plans may not look like your plans. His timing may not be your desired timing. But His plans and thoughts are higher, better and eternal. *"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him"* (1 Corinthians 2:9). Walk in the confidence that God's plan for you and your family is exactly what your family needs in this season and step out in faith that home (with your kids) is exactly where you are supposed to be. WELCOME HOME!

Homeschool Mission Statement





Bible Verse Vision
