

Homeschooling Helps

One thing you really need to remember about homeschooling is that it is challenging. There will be days when everyone obeys and learns their lessons and you finish early. Other times, it will seem like your kids forget everything they learned, don't finish their assignments, or have major attitudes.

Just remember that although some days are hard, homeschooling can be extremely rewarding. You love your child the most and know what's best for them.

1. First things first: Name your school

If you have not done so, you will need to register your homeschool with the state of Kansas as a non-accredited private school:

https://apps.ksde.org/naps_form/default.aspx

You will need to come up with a name for your homeschool. It can simply be based off your last name, for instance, Eldridge Academy. Or it can be something else like Flint Hills Academy. You can change your homeschool name if you decide later on that you don't like it.

If you no longer have children in your homeschool, you will need to go online and mark your school as inactive.

2. Recordkeeping: Grades or a portfolio or both?

Kansas is pretty much out of your business when it comes to homeschooling, but there are some things to keep in mind:

a.) You can keep track of grading if you want to for K-8th grade.

b.) If you don't keep track of grades, definitely keep a portfolio of work. This is an easier route in my opinion and one that I have used for the past 15 years.

Keeping a portfolio is very simple. All you need to do is get a file folder and put in several papers from each subject for each kid per year plus an attendance record.

About the attendance record: Because KS requires that we meet for a certain number of days, I print out a calendar for each school year and mark off the days we meet and the days we miss. And to make it easy on yourself, you can just follow the school district's calendar, meet the days they do and take off the days they do.

3. Which curriculum do I use?

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This is really up to you. There are SO MANY curriculums available that you would think everyone in the US homeschools their kids. You can do a piecemeal approach, a little of this, a little of that. I have done that quite a bit over the years. Or you can purchase a whole curriculum or access to an online curriculum. Here is a list of some that I've either used or heard about:

[K12 Powered Online School](#): This is public school but at home and is tuition free. The materials are either online or can be sent to your home.

www.k12.com/kansas-online-schools.html

[Lawrence Virtual School](#): Similar to the above. You don't have to live in Lawrence to be a part of this school, and again, it is tuition free. However, there is a \$97 material and technology fee: www.usd497.org

[Ambleside Online](#): Free, but you have to pay for the books, although many of them are free online as they use a lot of classics in the public domain. This is an exceptional curriculum, though VERY teacher intensive. At first glance, it looks like it's just a book list. However, this curriculum requires some knowledge of Charlotte Mason's principles (nature studies, short lessons, narration, etc). You can find a lot of information on the website about how to use this curriculum: amblesideonline.org

[My Father's World](#) (highly recommend!): Not overly expensive considering what you get for your money. You can teach multiple grades at the same time, and they also have 7th-8th grade extensions for older kids: mfwbooks.com

[Time 4 Learning](#): Online curriculum. They have video lessons and automated grading. I have heard good things about this. \$19.95/month for elementary kids. If you have more than one child, each subsequent child is \$14.95/month: time4learning.com

[All-In-One Homeschool/All-in-One High School](#): Online curriculum. COMPLETELY FREE! This is was put together by a lady who wanted homeschooling to be accessible and affordable for everyone. It is totally free, but you can donate if you want to. This is a very thorough curriculum. I have used various parts of it over the years, particularly some of her high school classes: allineonehomeschool.com; allinonehighschool.com

[Schoolhouse Teachers](#): Online curriculum. This is a membership site, and they have complete curriculums for PreK-12th. There are LOTS of good classes on here! We have used several over the years. Right now, you can get two years for \$179 for your whole family, which is an excellent price for all you get: schoolhouseteachers.com

[Under the Home](#): FREE! This is a K-5th grade curriculum that uses classics, so you don't have to buy any books. Plus there are free printables that go along with the lessons: underthehome.org

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[The Good and the Beautiful](#): Reasonably priced, plus they have several free digital subjects/units available. I have heard lots of good things about this curriculum and have a few of their units downloaded that I plan on using this year. It looks thorough and enjoyable: goodandbeautiful.com

There are MANY more! Sometimes it takes some trial and error as well. **It is completely okay to stop using a curriculum if it doesn't seem like a good fit for your family, even if you switch to something else mid year.**

4. How do I schedule our day/week/month/year?

Kansas requires you to meet for at least 186 days for at least six hours a day. I know that seems like a lot. Here's what you can do and how you can think about this:

a.) Find the school district calendar online (or sometimes they mail them), and just follow what they do. I did this for several years. That way you know you're meeting for the same number of days they do.

b.) It is hard to have younger kids work at home for six hours a day doing school, especially in kindergarten, first grade, second grade. Think about how much of their day is spent learning outside of formal school hours. They learn so much from just playing and exploring outside. So you can count that time as school hours as well.

Also, things like Bible study, church activities, music lessons, sports activities can be counted as school time. You could even count things like kids helping in the kitchen with cooking/baking as school time.

c.) How you plan your days is pretty subjective. My first year of homeschooling, I planned out the WHOLE year, but quickly found that that just didn't work for me as too many things came up and messed up my schedule. 😊

I have also done daily scheduling, but I didn't like this as sometimes the kids were waiting on me to finish up the schedule so they could start.

Now, I plan out our schedule a week at a time, and that works really well for us. Whatever works for your family is the best method.

5. It's the first day of school. How do I do this?

You might be nervous the first day. Try making it fun. It will be different for everybody and probably won't go exactly as you planned but IT IS OKAY.

I usually make a really special breakfast for our first day and plan for an easy schedule.

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Here is example of a fun, relaxing first day:

- Make a special breakfast.
- Everybody grab a book (including you!) and just read for a while.
- Go outside and explore something in nature, or go on a nature walk.
- Watch a fun nature show (Wild Kratts or something)
- Listen to a composer while you read.
- Learn a new folk song.
- Print out some educational coloring pages and have fun coloring

6. What is a homeschool co-op?

A homeschool co-op is a group of families that meets together regularly where the kids interact with each other, have classes together, do enrichment activities, field trips, etc. Some co-ops are similar in their settings to regular schools in that they teach several subjects a few days a week. Other co-ops focus on enrichment classes such as art, music, PE, cooking, etc.

Co-ops are a great way for kids to meet friends and participate in activities they may not otherwise do.

7. I still have lots of questions. How do I contact you?

Please feel free to reach out to me at: 785.581.0600 or eldridgeorama@gmail.com. I'd be happy to answer any questions!