

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?

Homeschooling Helps

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

Homeschooling Helps

[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.

Homeschooling Helps

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!

Common Myths about Homeschooling

Myth #1: My children won't be socialized well if I homeschool them!

This is probably the single biggest thing I hear as a downfall of homeschooling, and I will tell you this is absolutely *false*. It is so unfortunate that this has been circulating for so many years. While there will always be exceptions and some homeschooled kids won't have great social skills, I think it's fair to say that even some kids in public school don't have great social skills either. So definitely keep that in mind!

Now, the homeschool environment is very different from the public school environment, so your children will have *different* social skills, but they will have social skills, nonetheless. You will have more time to teach them those skills yourself instead of their peers teaching them (which is true of a lot of things, by the way).

Also, there are many, many opportunities for your children to interact with others—church, sporting events, homeschool co-ops, friends, etc. And instead of sitting in a classroom where everyone is the same age, they can learn to interact with people of all ages.

Myth #2: I don't have a teaching degree, so I can't teach my child.

Answer: Wrong! You can most certainly teach your son/daughter regardless of your education. Kansas (and most states I think) doesn't require you to have a teaching degree to homeschool. Plus, one of the great things about homeschooling is that you get to learn alongside your child. I have learned (and re-learned) quite a bit with my kids over the years, and you will likely find the same to be true.

Myth #3: I am so overwhelmed and scared that I will fail my children.

Answer: I get the overwhelm! Don't let that stop you though. If you are consistent, your hard work and theirs will pay off. I have successfully graduated two of my kids from our homeschool, and they have both moved on to college/work and have done great, despite my worry over the years. Besides, if you find, as they get older, that there's a gap in their education, they can still learn it! For instance, say your high school senior needs to write a research paper, but they never learned MLA style. No biggie! It doesn't take long to learn.

Myth #4: I can't teach math (or some other subject), so I can't teach my children.

Answer: I hear you! Math is my weakness too, so what I have done over the years is delegate that subject. There are numerous online/video math curriculums out there to choose from, many which teach the lessons and automatically grade the assignments and tests. It has been a huge relief to offload that subject in our homeschool. I have done the same with chemistry in high school.

Common Myths about Homeschooling

Myth #5: I will have to sit and give formal classroom instruction for 12 years. That's a long time!

Answer: A wonderful benefit to homeschooling is that you don't even need a classroom! Some families have a dedicated schoolroom, but many don't. Often, during our homeschool day, we are on the couch or around the coffee table. And besides, I don't want our homeschool to look a lot like the public school setting anyway.

Also, sometimes instead of taking "snow days" like the school district does, we sometimes take "sun days." We do this especially in the spring when the weather gets nice. That's another benefit to homeschooling—flexibility!

When you are first starting out, especially if your children are young, you will have to actively help them with their lessons and teach them. However, you will find as they get older, they will want to do the lessons themselves.

One of the GREAT benefits to homeschooling is that your children will learn how to teach themselves. Starting around 4th grade is when my older two started doing many of their lessons on their own. I was there to help, offer suggestions, and check their work, but a lot of it they were able to do without me. And having children grow up and be confident that they can learn something new without help is a great life skill.

Myth #6: I am unorganized and can't keep track of grades, so I can't homeschool my kids

Answer: You *will* need to be disciplined enough to have *some* type of organization, especially in high school years, as you will have to keep track of grades for a high school transcript (sounds scary but it's not). But it doesn't have to be anything fancy, and definitely shouldn't keep you from homeschooling your kids.

At the end of the day, just remember WHY you wanted to start homeschooling in the first place! That will help motivate you on the hard days!

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

Teaching Multiple Grades

1. Try to combine subjects where you can. For instance, things like Bible time, music, artist studies, even things like science with the addition of some more challenging assignments for older children.
2. If they are close enough in age, consider putting them in the same grade. I did this with my older children who were 11 ½ months apart with the idea that if my younger child ever seemed like he was falling behind, I would reevaluate. Not all kids can do this, but if you can, it can make your life a bit easier.
3. Choose a curriculum that makes it easier. For example, My Father's World allows you to combine grades and has extension activities for older children.
4. Consider a split schedule. Have older children work independently while you are actively teaching the younger ones and then switch.
5. Consider an online curriculum. This can be a great option for your children to work independently, though may not be ideal if you are concerned about too much screentime.
6. Be flexible. It may take some time to figure things out, and sometimes you may have to switch things up entirely if you find your plan isn't working or isn't working anymore. Needs of your children may change. The needs of your family may change. Just remember not to be too rigid in how you schedule your school days.