



## 10 Most Common Worries of New Homeschoolers

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When considering homeschooling a child who has reached school age or when the decision is made for children to leave a school they attended last year, parents who are homeschooling their children for the first time have a lot of questions, worries and fears. These concerns are very common and as a home educator for the past 17 years, I would like to address them.

### **1. Can I balance home and school? I am worried that my mother duties would suffer when I would be spending a lot of my time teaching.**

More and more you will blend parenting and teaching so that there is not much distinction between the two. You have been a teacher since your child was born and that loving style won't change. Let your passions loose and share them with your child. Let your children share their passions with you. Many parents find the roles of teacher and student reverse because the parents learn too. Think of teaching your child not as a person with a brain that you have to fill with facts, but as a journey in which you and your child will travel and learn together.

### **2. I'm worried that his education will not be recognized later down the road in order to be accepted into a good post secondary institution, so he can have all the same opportunities as traditionally schooled kids.**

First, there are many studies that show that home-schooled children meet grade level achievement and often exceed it. Secondly, in Alberta, all children write the grade 12 diploma exams in the core subjects if they want to go on to

post-secondary education. By high school age, many kids actively seek out courses to pass the exams and move forward with their goals. Many kids don't even start formal coursework until grade 10 and do just fine on the exams - so don't worry - you can't possibly mess them up.

### **3. My kids didn't listen to me when I nagged them about homework last year. How will it be when their whole education is in my hands?**

Homeschooling takes much less time than school. In many cases, it is even less time than children spend on homework! In elementary studies, home schooling might take less than 30 minutes a day not including reading and field trips. In junior high, it might be two hours a day and high school would be 2-3 hours per day. That's it. And no homework to fight over. Children will have a lot of time to pursue their passions.

Kids are born to learn and will continue to seek out knowledge. It's natural that humans, from infants to seniors, want to know about their world and how it works. However, they just might at times have a different learning agenda than you. If you have a bad day (and you will) just give up on teaching, go with the flow and go have some fun- build your relationship and try your agenda again in a few days or weeks.

### **4. I'm worried that I will burn out trying to entertain my kids all day.**

Don't even try to occupy your kids all day. I'm not sure where the notion came that parents must be constant entertainers, but it's a habit you don't want to start. Leave things out like a board game today, craft supplies tomorrow and a costume trunk the next day - they will learn to occupy themselves. You will be amazed at their creativity if you are not directing everything. If you don't get into the habit of occupying them, they will not get into the habit of looking to you to fill their day and you will have free time to yourself. Many homeschoolers use this time to run a home-business, write, or work part-time. The bonus is that children will develop their creativity, decision-making, and problem-solving skills. Be sure to insist that they clean up messes though.

### **5. I'm only homeschooling one sibling. How will the children get along?**

Kids readily accept that their siblings have different education situations. That's okay. They may want to homeschool too or they might not. If you give each child the choice each year, it takes the power struggles out of the inevitable complaints resulting from their choice.

You might want to consider drawing up a contract with two of your non-negotiable stipulations of what you want done this year and get their input of their non-negotiables as well. Each of you sign your name and post it on the

wall. That helps when the whining starts. You can point to what the children signed and agreed to.

You will have bad days when the kids are fighting non-stop and you wonder if they won't be better off in school. But, they would have those days even if they were in school. Most homeschoolers report that their older kids have much better relations because of learning to get along with each other in the early years. For example, my university kids love to still play board games with their 12 year-old brother.

## **6. How can I teach them things that I don't know very much about, such as fractions?**

Your kids are going to learn fractions whether you teach them or not. You can't force a child to learn and you can't stop them from learning. Math concepts are learned from life - baking, money, shopping etc. Language is learned from avid reading. When they get to later grades, they have to start learning fractions on paper rather than in their heads. As kids get into junior and senior high school, there are online teachers that can teach your kids what you don't know or want to. And developmentally, they are mature enough to listen more to an outside teacher than you!

## **7. What if I made the wrong choices this year? Programs? Curriculum? Classes?**

It's only a year! Nothing is written in stone. Your education plan (the worksheet you submit to your facilitator of your year's plan) is a work-in-progress document and you can change anything you wish at any time. Dump curriculum if it doesn't work for you, or change programs or the timing of topics. Most homeschoolers don't finish their goals for the year (we are human and humans procrastinate, or life just gets in the way of our best intentions) and the kids move on to the next grade and do just fine! Enjoy the time you have with your children.

## **8. I worry about what my kids will miss out from not attending school; School portraits, holiday parties, riding the school bus, Christmas pageants, field trips, etc.**

The homeschooling community will provide all those experiences too. In school, the logistics of organizing field trips for a large group only allow for one or two field trips per year. With a family, you can go anywhere, anytime! Join a support group or facebook group (search for "Calgary" and "homeschool" and lots of groups will pop up) that organizes a lot of outings and you could be on a field trip every day. The artists, writers, presenters and special guests that do

programs in schools will also provide them to a group of homeschoolers. It just requires someone to organize it. In our earlier years, the homeschooling community provided school photos, year-end talent concerts (that anyone can perform in, regardless of talent) field trips every week, parent organized holiday parties, music lessons and group discounts on plays, etc. The possibilities are endless.

Some parents love to organize and if you are one of them, pick something your child wants to do, pick a date and advertise it and you will have a group to go with you in no time. It's not homeschooling as much as community schooling!

The only thing missing is the school bus experience and perhaps children will get that in high school!

**9. When I tell relatives what we are going to do, I am met with skepticism, silence and negative comments. How do I handle being judged? It is undermining my confidence.**

Unfortunately, until homeschooling becomes more widely understood, you will be judged! Most people hold stereotypes of the "social" and "academic" aspect, and are misinformed by homeschooling portrayals in the media. Many homeschoolers just smile and say, "It's the best choice for our family." Grow a thick skin and let comments bounce off of you.

**10. My child is so social. How will I provide friends for her?**

Friends are everywhere, not just at school. Some kids love being with other kids. Some kids love being home without a lot of people around. You can provide both in homeschooling where you set the pace for social activities. There is enough going on in Calgary for homeschooling clubs, events, classes and outings that there is something organized for everyone - the outdoor enthusiasts, the sports crowd, writing groups and even the Friday afternoon Minecraft club at my house! Not to mention the usual community organizations such as Boy Scouts, church groups, community classes, and more.

Relax, seek out a mentor for the bad days, and most of all, enjoy your children and learning. It really is a great ride you and your children won't regret!

Be sure to visit APCA's website for homeschooling articles, a sample education plan and a sample parent-child contract.

<http://www.attachmentparenting.ca/HomeEducation.html>

Judy Arnall, BA, is a Certified Canadian Family Life Educator who has just released a new book titled ***Parenting With Patience: Turn frustration into***

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