



Home Schooling: How to Set up Your Home for Success

By Judy Arnall and Laila Maul-Kozlowski

Congratulations, you have chosen to home educate your children this fall! Now you need to plan where in the home you will be studying. Veteran homeschoolers have a few tips to offer in setting up the study area for success:

Bookcases

Some might say you can never have enough bookcases in your home. They're indispensable for organizing the many board games, photo albums, art supplies (stored in bins), science and reference materials, computer/video games and wonderful books that you will use in your homeschooling.

Study Area

You may want to set aside a specific space for a study area. It could be a dining room, den or spare bedroom. It's best to choose an area with a washable floor as this will be the place where you can do art projects, science experiments and other messy activities. Your study area could have a big table, chairs, and room for a bookcase or two. Be sure to include space for a large whiteboard and a big world map. Give each child a bin for storing current work projects, textbooks, and workbooks enabling them to cart projects around the house, whether they are working in the garden, basement or bedroom.

Reading Nook

Set up a corner of the living room, a cozy nook, or family room for reading. Have plenty of bookcases with shelves for beloved favourites and a shelf specifically for library books. Have a set library day each week when you can check what needs renewing online.

Play Space

Have a room or corner for storing toys and building Lego, Knex, and Playmobil projects. Other toys can be stored in bins.

Music Corner

Set up a corner of a room with instruments, and music related items and books.

Documentation Station

A plastic rolling cart with multiple drawers is useful for keeping notices, class registrations, report cards, receipts and education administration papers. Have one drawer for each child and it will be easier to find things.

Sewing Area

A table with a sewing machine and a bookcase full of supplies helps keep sewing projects organized. Small, portable, plastic fold up tables help to provide a temporary work space that can be put away when out of use.

Workshop

This is nice to have if you have the space for tools, supplies and wood scraps.

Video Game Centre

A cozy nook for playing video games and a shelf for storing video/computer games are essential.

Basic Supplies

All that is really required for the first year is a library card and a computer. There are many videos, worksheets and ideas on the internet and many wonderful books at the library. Until you get a sense of how your child learns, avoid buying curriculum that may not be used. Young children in the elementary grades learn best through experiential hands-on learning, so invest in tables and provide spaces to allow them to create and explore.

Classes and Activities

Consider carefully how much time you wish to spend in outside classes and activities. Many fun activities are not scheduled in your neighborhood and often a one hour class turns into a three hour time commitment when driving time is considered. Is the benefit worth the time investment?

Contracts

Start the year with a contract for each child. List what your expectations are and include what your child expects too. Come to an agreement on the points in the contract and both can sign it. Post it in a handy spot.

Have Fun and be Flexible

Be willing to toss anything that is not pleasant or intriguing. Homeschooling should be fun and educational, not a slog to “get through the material.” You want to instill a love of learning within your child and that is the best educational outcome for both of you. You can homeschool successfully in a tiny apartment, a spacious mansion or anywhere in between. The time you invest in setting up your home will help get you off to a smooth start and stay organized throughout the busy year ahead.

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