

# MID-YEAR HOMESCHOOL **TRANSITIONING GUIDE**



Gain a better understanding on how to ensure a smooth mid-year homeschool transition for both new and experienced homeschoolers.

This guide is compiled and provided by: **TIME 4 LEARNING®**

# Contents

---

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Reasons Why People Pull Children from Public School .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>How Homeschooling Can Help.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>New Homeschoolers: Steps to Take Before Homeschooling .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Your Homeschooling Approach .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Homeschooling Based on Worldviews .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Veteran Homeschoolers: Making Changes in Your Homeschool.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>How to Switch from One Curriculum to Another .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Adjusting Your Teaching Methods .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Changing up your schedule.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>29</b>

## Introduction

---



It's the middle of the school year, and things are not quite going as expected. You've gone to parent-teacher conferences and tried to address specific concerns about your child's education, yet your child's needs are still not being met. Although it may not have been on your radar until now, you may be considering homeschooling as an option.

Many people in your position have thought about homeschooling and made the transition. Their reasons may be different than yours, but the goal is the same: making sure your child gets the best education possible. For many families, that is exactly where homeschooling comes in.

## Reasons Why People Pull Children from Public School

---

Coming to the decision to withdraw your child from a traditional school isn't always an easy one. Various surveys show that the main reasons parents pull their children out of school and look for alternatives include:

- Dissatisfaction with academic standards of institution
- Concern with the school environment
- Bullying
- Relocation/Moved
- More control of child's values/ethics/responsibilities
- Religious reasons
- Health issues
- Special needs or gifted child whose educational needs aren't being met
- Improve child social interactions
- Athletes/musicians/performers/ rigorous travel schedule

## How Homeschooling Can Help

---

If you're facing one or more of the issues listed above, homeschooling could be just the answer your family needs. Families who have struggled with traditional schooling for any and all of these reasons have made successful transitions to home education without regret. In fact, many students experience almost immediate improvements in their education. For some, homeschooling

provides a safe zone from bullying and drug prone environments. For others, the flexibility and customizable schedule and curriculum make a vast difference in their ability to learn and retain.

While you may start out as an “[accidental homeschooler](#),” you will quickly find that home education has numerous perks that you might not have considered. :

- You can set your own schedule, depending on whether your child learns best early or late in the day, or needs breaks at specific intervals Spending quality time with your children
- Inspire a love for learning, by showing your kids that learning is fun.
- The ability to learn wherever you are--at home, at the park, on vacation, on field trips, etc.
- Freedom and flexibility to customize your child’s education according to their specific interests and abilities. The option to provide exactly as much structure or freedom as your child needs
- Choosing a curriculum that fits your child’s [learning style](#)
- Becoming a role model and leader for your children
- The ability to fine-tune your teaching methods at any time
- Providing a safer environment, therefore sheltering them from school violence, drugs or other negative behaviors around them.
- Enjoying multiple activities outside the home by joining other homeschooling groups
- One-on-one learning environment. Your child is not competing with dozens of other students for time with the teacher.
- Independent learning. Homeschooling provides the perfect environment for children to learn to think for themselves.
- There is no “teaching to the test.” Standardized tests are used as tools rather than as an end game.
- Providing personalized accommodations for a child’s special needs and learning differences
- Instilling your own worldview into your child’s education
- Being able to travel during low season, when everyone else is in school.

The greatest benefit of homeschooling, though, is the empowerment it gives to students. Homeschoolers begin to quickly recognize that learning is not something you “receive” but something that you can participate in anytime and anywhere.



## Discuss Homeschooling with the Family

Now that you know homeschooling is a viable option for solving the issues that have interfered with your child's education, it's time to bring your family on board with you. This starts with an open and honest discussion where you can address their concerns, share the benefits of homeschooling, and take their ideas into consideration.

*Here are a few things you may want to discuss:*

1. [Why homeschooling is a good idea](#). Start by addressing the issue that brought you to consider homeschooling in the first place. Then explain how you think it will be a solution to the issues your student is facing.
2. Go over the added bonuses of homeschooling such as more field trips, no early wake-ups, and no bus commutes.
3. Explain to your children how they will still be able to see their friends and make new ones.
4. Be sure your children understand that they will have input on their own schooling. Having a say in the structure and content of your own education is extremely empowering!
5. Lay ideas on the table of how homeschooling may or should happen. While your approach will evolve over time, getting an idea of what your family thinks will make the process more fluid.
6. Talk about the different [styles of homeschooling](#) and ask your family's input on which ones might be worth trying.

7. Ask how everyone feels about this new adventure – it's okay to share your fears *and* your excitement.

Lori, a second-year homeschooler of two children, remembers when she and her family sat down and talked about homeschooling for the first time.

*"I was really nervous. My two children were getting ready to go back to school after the Christmas holiday. They had both really struggled with their studies during the previous semester but as kids, they didn't really understand the danger of falling farther and farther behind. So, my husband and I called a family meeting to tell them about our homeschooling idea and to present our preliminary plans. My oldest son was resistant at first but as we all talked, he became more comfortable. It's not easy for children--especially mid-year--but kids adapt quickly."*

## New Homeschoolers: Steps to Take Before Homeschooling

---

Ready to go? Don't withdraw your child from school just yet! Make sure you go over these preliminary steps before you take the plunge.

### Know your state requirements

Every state has a different set of requirements for homeschooling. Some states like Georgia and Texas have few rules related to home education, while others, like Pennsylvania and Washington are more heavily regulated.

Depending on the state you homeschool in, you might have homeschool laws for any of the following:

- Withdrawal from current school
- Homeschool notification
- Age requirements
- Annual assessment requirements
- Required subjects
- Required hours of instruction
- Record keeping
- Graduation
- Parent requirements

To [review the home education in your state visit this page](#).

**A. Withdrawal from current school**

Your state may or may not have a timetable for starting homeschooling. In some states you can simply decide to begin homeschooling, then begin your adventure. Other states will require that you follow a specific process for notifying your state or local board of education before withdrawing a student. While formally withdrawing a student from school isn't usually necessary, it is a good idea in order to prevent any possible truancy complications.

**B. Homeschool Notification**

States that regulate homeschool more heavily may require that families notify their state or local board of education of their decision to home educate. This notification is often submitted in the form of a letter or an online form called a "notice of intent." Items asked for on a notification can be as simple as the age of the student being homeschooled or as complex as an outline of what you plan to teach for the coming year.

**C. Age Requirements**

Many states have regulations regarding the age when students can begin homeschooling and the age when they are no longer eligible. Certainly, you can homeschool students who are younger or older than this prescribed range, but your homeschooling efforts won't be officially recognized.

**D. Annual assessment requirements**

Whether or not your child needs to have an assessment of academic progress also varies from state to state. For states that require annual assessments, some will require your child to participate in state standardized tests, others will only require a teacher evaluation or a homeschool portfolio showcasing your student's work. Also, some states may recommend annual assessments, but may not require that you submit the results.

**E. Required subjects**

Another guideline some states lay out is regarding the required subjects a parent should teach in their homeschool. In states with this requirement, the list of essential courses ranges from the core subjects of math, reading, science, and history to specific subjects like state history and physical education.

**F. Required Hours of Instruction**

No state mandates exactly when a family should conduct their homeschooling, but many states do have a specific number of days and/or hours of instruction that are required. For example, a state may require that homeschooling take place at least 180 days of the calendar year or that at least four dedicated hours of instruction take place in a homeschool day.

## G. Record keeping

Certain states keep homeschoolers accountable by requiring that they maintain specific records for each of their children. While keeping records may or may not be required, depending on your state laws, keeping a [portfolio of your child's progress](#) and work makes sense for homeschoolers. It is evidence that your child is successfully advancing in their education. A portfolio or "log" might include attendance records, lists of curricula used, assessment results, as well as samples of any writings, worksheets, workbooks, quizzes, and creative materials your child has completed.

Some online curriculum products make dealing with the administrative side of homeschooling easier. For example, the best online tools provide automated grading systems, track your child's progress and keeps reports for your personal homeschool portfolio. It makes things so much easier and efficient.

If the administration side of homeschooling intimidates you like many other new homeschoolers, then using a product like Time4Learning will take the pressure off. As a result, you'll have additional time to spend with your children -- and focus on what homeschooling is really about.

## H. Graduation

This applies to those parents who plan to homeschool through the high school years. You might be surprised to learn that very few states have actual [graduation requirements for homeschoolers](#). That's because when a student graduates from homeschool, they won't receive a state-sponsored diploma. Instead, they will receive a diploma from their individual homeschool (or sometimes from the distance education program they are enrolled with.)

Instead of focusing on state requirements, high school homeschoolers generally look to their plans for after graduation to decide how to structure their studies. Whether your students are interested in college, trade school or something else, knowing what those types of institutions require can guide the subjects and focus of your high school program.

## I. Parent requirements

As a first-time homeschooler you might be wondering if you'll need a teacher's certificate or some other "official" qualification. That's not the case. Eleven states: Georgia, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia, require only a high school diploma or GED. Washington state requires some college credits or the completion of a course in home-based study.

As noted above, every state's requirements are different. You can easily find your



states requirements by doing a quick online search or by visiting Time4Learning's [state-by-state homeschool requirements page](#) to research info for your specific state.

## Explore homeschool curriculum options

There are so many homeschool curriculum options out there, you might find it overwhelming at first. Let's look at the primary curriculum types so you can begin to narrow down the right program (or mix of programs) for your homeschool.

- **Online curricula** - since most children enjoy video games and interacting on phones and tablets, an online curriculum makes perfect sense. Time4Learning is an online educational system that provides web-based multimedia lessons, automatic grading, interactive activities, printable worksheets, online assessments, answer keys, teacher guides, and progress reports for home education.
- **Traditional textbooks** - teaching from textbooks is a style of education that many of us are familiar with. Textbook packages often include resource materials such as a scope and sequence, an educators' manual with teaching strategies, a student book with content explanations and examples, and a practice workbook.
- **Literature-based curricula** - another type of program that homeschoolers use incorporates fiction books (both classic and contemporary) into the teaching of individual subjects.
- **Unit studies** - although often used for single subjects, some families create their whole curriculum program using short-term studies of individual themes. Usually, a unit study outline is provided and parents are responsible for gathering the books and materials to implement it.
- **Video curricula** - one style of distance learning is watching videos of teacher-led courses in order to replicate the instruction a child might receive in a traditional classroom.

To help you decide which type of program or mix of programs is right for your homeschool, ask yourself and your child some questions. For example,

- Does your child prefer independent learning or a teacher-led method?
- Do they prefer traditional textbooks or a more dynamic approach with an online learning tool?
- Will you be comfortable developing lessons or do you prefer ready-made [lesson plans](#)?
- How much flexibility do you want in what you accomplish day to day?
- Does your child thrive with structure or does he/she need variety to stay engaged?
- What is your child's [main learning style](#)?

Here's a money-saving tip: Try before you buy! When shopping for curriculum tools, inquire about free trial periods and money back guarantees. For example, Time4Learning offers a 14-day money back guarantee period. If the curriculum does not satisfy your family's needs within the first 14 days of membership, your refund will be applied directly to the credit or debit card used to pay for your membership.

Explore this [curriculum comparison checklist](#) to help you narrow down the choices you'd like to try.

## Set up your classroom

For those of us schooled in a traditional classroom, we have a picture in our heads of what learning looks like. It's time to pull out that old chalkboard eraser and scrub that image out entirely. Certainly you can have a dedicated "classroom" in your house if it works for you, but as experienced homeschoolers will tell you, learning takes place everywhere and anywhere you happen to be!

And that's precisely the beauty of homeschooling. You can set it up however you like, and change things up as needed. Homeschooling could look like:

- Designated room/space in the house
- Learning stations with all the tools and supplies you need for lessons around the house
- Teaching certain subjects in certain places. i.e. kitchen for life-lessons. Garage or yard for science experiments.
- Each child working independently on their own computer or tablet for certain subjects and then coming together in a central room for others



Wendy, a mother who homeschools two children uses a web-based curriculum combined with workbooks.

*"When I first started homeschooling, my children would often lose or switch their supplies and then get aggravated with one another. Then I color-coded everything. Supply boxes, scissors, pens, juice containers, I mean everything is either in a specific color or are marked with a specific color that corresponds with each child. This helps them locate their own stuff. I also recently started using an online curriculum after I found two refurbished laptops for cheap. Now, each kiddo works quietly online with these interactive courses. What's cool about that is, I don't have to color-code or do any additional work, they just log in and start working. Sometimes I let them work while hanging on the couch. They aren't always confined in the classroom area. They enjoy that and so far it's working great for us."*

## Scheduling Your Day

As with setting up your homeschool area, it can be tempting to fall back on the traditional school experience when deciding how to lay out your daily agenda. But now that you are a homeschooler, you can embrace the flexibility of a schedule that works for your specific student and family. For example, some children learn better in the morning while others prefer the afternoon. Some students want to complete everything early and have free time later and others need frequent breaks throughout the day. By customizing your homeschool timeline your children can learn at their own pace – not the pace designated for a whole classroom.



Will you be working while homeschooling? Parents with tight schedules often use online teaching tools. This allows their students to learn on their own with an interactive learning method. It may take a few weeks or even months before you perfect your scheduling. That's okay. Find your own rhythm.

[Download This Free Daily Planner to Get Started!](#)

## Creating a support network

Homeschool support groups are made up of families that have joined together to share the ups and downs of this unique educational option. They usually share the same or similar homeschooling philosophies or worldview. Finding a [support group in your state](#) is the easy part; choosing one that you're comfortable with can get tricky. Many parents attend a few different groups before joining one that fits their needs.

Participating in a support group has advantages for both parents and students, such as:

- Getting advice from people who are experienced homeschoolers.
- The ability to bounce ideas off other homeschoolers regarding teaching techniques, curriculum ideas, classroom setup, and more.
- Enjoying the company of like-minded parents who share your viewpoints and ideas.
- Opportunities for group activities such as physical education, clubs, holiday celebrations and field trips.
- The chance to make friends with other homeschoolers.

Homeschool cooperatives (also called "co-ops") are another type of group. They often begin as an outgrowth of an established group for the purpose of providing scheduled group learning opportunities for homeschoolers. As its name implies, parents usually cooperate to share the teaching responsibilities or to lead the activities that students are participating in. This can be a great addition to a homeschool program, particularly for classes that benefit from group participation such as physical education and lab science.

## Plan and Set Goals

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the poet and the author of *The Little Prince*, said, “A goal without a plan is just a wish.” And since your new homeschooling endeavor is seriously important to you and your child, creating a plan should not be just a “wish.”

First off, evaluate your child’s education up to this point. Write down their strengths and weaknesses. Note the subjects they thrive in and the subjects that give them trouble. Have a meeting with your children and discuss what they enjoy about learning and what styles of learning they prefer. Some children like a more visual learning style, others thrive with hands-on activities.

Once you have a plan, start [setting some goals](#). Just make sure your goals are reasonable, attainable, and specific. Many people use the SMART method for goal planning. It stands for:

- **Specific:** Know exactly what you want to accomplish. If your goals aren’t well-defined, how will you ever know if you reach them?
- **Measurable:** Be able to clearly evaluate progress. This helps you gauge your child’s growth and development in their subjects.
- **Attainable:** Don’t set unreasonable goals. If your goals are not realistic you and your children will only get frustrated.
- **Relevant:** Make sure the goal fits within your homeschooling process. Why waste time on goals that are unrelated to your homeschooling framework?
- **Time-bound:** Create a specific time-frame so you can accurately track your progress.

If you must modify your goals throughout the school year, don’t sweat it. You have the flexibility to customize your homeschooling education. The only limitations you face are the ones you create. Also, try to review your goals each week. If you don’t feel that you are making progress on certain goals, adjust them accordingly, or alter your teaching methods or curriculum. You have the freedom to do what you think is best for your children.

## Deschooling

[Deschooling](#) is the process of shedding the traditional schooling methods and culture that your children have experienced in public school. In other words, you are not bringing the classroom home with you. There are no hard or fast rules for [how long it takes for previously public or private schooled children to adjust](#) to a more flexible, customized, and wholly different approach to education. However, the longer your child was previously in school, the longer it may take them (and you!) to embrace learning for learning's sake.

Taking this time to reimagine what learning should look like may not be easy. You may start feeling guilty or anxious. Some parents believe that they're doing their children a disservice by not starting "school" right away. But sometimes, by jumping right into homeschooling after withdrawing from school, you can fall into the public-school habit. The classroom may look different, but the method is the same – you're not focusing on how your child really learns best.

There's really no pressure when you're deschooling. You are discovering your children's learning styles and interests. So, put the guilt and stress aside, enjoy yourself, and observe. The things you learn about your child and how they learn will enhance your whole homeschooling experience going forward.



# Your Homeschooling Approach

---

Unlike most traditional schools, home education offers families the chance to truly customize each child's education. While classrooms are, out of necessity, designed with the "average" student in mind, as parents, we know that there really aren't any average children. Each learner is unique, and has specific methods, materials, and considerations that will best meet his or her learning potential.

When planning your homeschool, you'll want to think about how you can tailor your child's education through:

- Traditional
- Classical
- Charlotte Mason
- Montessori
- Roadschooling
- World Schooling
- Unschooling
- Eclectic

## Let's take a closer look:

### [Traditional homeschooling](#)

Utilizes the same methods that public schools use. Parents mimic what their children were doing and learning when they were part of the classroom setting. The only difference is they are now at home.

### [Classical schooling](#)

Is based on what's called the "trivium" -- grammar, logic, and rhetoric. It's a three-part process based in the traditions of Western culture, with a focus on education as understood and taught in Classical antiquity and the Middle Ages.

### [Charlotte Mason](#)

Is based on educating the whole child not just the mind. In Charlotte Mason's words, "Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a life." The "atmosphere" stands for the home environment where the child grows up, the "discipline" refers to good habits, especially character habits, and the "life" applies to academics.

### [Montessori schooling](#)

Is defined by the American Montessori Society as “a view of the child as one who is naturally eager for knowledge and capable of initiating learning in a supportive, thoughtfully prepared learning environment. It is an approach that values the human spirit and the development of the whole child—physical, social, emotional, cognitive.”

### [Road schooling](#)

Is exactly what it implies--homeschooling while traveling on the road. Road schooling families usually choose curricula that travel well. Many homeschoolers take advantage of online curriculum programs because they're interactive, encourage independent learning, and they can be accessed anywhere there is an internet connection.

### [World Schooling](#)

Combines travel with education. And although there isn't an “official” definition for world schooling, many parents who world school integrate traveling, real-life experiences, culture, the history of different regions, and nature into their children's educational experience. They don't rely solely on the core subjects that traditional schools follow, but instead mix formal education lessons with hands-on learning wherever they may be..

### [Unschooling](#)

This means different things to different people, but generally it puts the responsibility for a child's education into his or her own hands. Unschoolers believe children are capable learners and will choose the subjects and topics that they value. Learning is based more on a child's innate interests and less on what a specific curriculum or core knowledge outline recommends.

### [Eclectic schooling](#)

This homeschooling style mixes and matches multiple approaches. Each family picks and chooses the homeschooling materials and tools that work for their children, their family, and their educational goals.

For more information on choosing your homeschool approach, look over this summary on the [different types of homeschooling](#).

## **Homeschooling Based on Worldviews**

---

### **Secular/Christian Homeschooling**

[Secular homeschooling](#) does not include a specific religious worldview.

It relates to the physical world and is not related to religion. Some curriculum options are standards-based and some may follow the usual public school curriculum.



**Christian homeschooling** is based on biblical studies and what is referred to as “a biblical vision for life where the world is created and sustained by God.” Some homeschoolers who prefer using a biblical worldview when homeschooling their children also mix in curriculum tools that are secular. For instance, Dorothy homeschools two children and they mostly use biblically-centered materials, but she also utilizes secular tools.

*“My children are just becoming teenagers and I think it’s important for them to see a world viewpoint as well as a Biblical one. That doesn’t mean we don’t teach a Biblical viewpoint. I just think it’s important for them to see all sides because one day they’ll be out in the world and confronted by all kinds of people and beliefs. We compare the viewpoints with the scripture and find the flaws. It’s a great education and reinforces the Bible.”*

Whatever your decision may be, just keep in mind that tools such as Time4Learning, which is secular, can easily be incorporated into your daily lessons without interfering with your beliefs.

**[Start Homeschooling with Time4Learning Today](#)**

\*Free 14 day trial applied at checkout when using this link



# Veteran Homeschoolers: Making Changes in Your Homeschool

---



## Is Your Curriculum Not Living Up to the Hype?

It's the middle of the homeschool year and your child is bored or struggling in one or more subjects. What now? You've invested time and money in researching and choosing your curriculum with high hopes it would work wonders with your student. Instead, it might not be the best fit after all.

You aren't alone. There are many reasons why this happens, and almost all homeschoolers experience this at some point in their homeschool adventure. Some of the reasons why your curriculum may not be working include:

- The curriculum is too rigid
- It is outdated
- It doesn't challenge your student enough
- It doesn't keep your child's interest
- It doesn't meet your goals
- Your child's preferred [learning style](#) doesn't match with the curriculum
- Your teaching method changed
- The curriculum does not allow enough time for extracurricular activities, such as field trips, outside classes, athletics, etc

Maybe you've already tried to tweak the curriculum--adding additional breaks, supplementing with other programs, or changing the delivery method--but still feel that it's not meeting your needs. If this is true, it's likely time for a curriculum change, and that's nothing to feel guilty about. It's really hard to know for sure that a program is the right fit for your family and your student(s).

# How to Switch from One Curriculum to Another

---

While a curriculum switch may be overdue, there are several steps you should take before you go out and buy another curriculum.

1. Stop using the old curriculum. It's no use having your child struggle and feel frustrated.
2. Start researching other curricula. Find out what is out there and begin exploring those that include the features missing from your current program. This [comparison checklist](#) will help you narrow down your options.
3. Once you've gotten a short list from the comparison you just did, start reading reviews from other homeschoolers to see how that particular curriculum has worked for them.
4. Don't hesitate to call the curriculum provider in advance with any questions you may have about their curriculum.
5. Message your homeschool support group to see if anyone has used the curriculum and might be willing to let you preview it before you buy or subscribe.
6. Try to find free trials, coupons, or other savings tools to lower the cost.
7. Recoup some money by selling the curriculum that's no longer working for your family, if possible
8. If you don't want to sell the old curriculum, maybe you can modify it or use it as a supplement

## 1. There's no one perfect curriculum

If you don't already know this, here's an important truth to note: There is no one perfect curriculum. New homeschoolers and frustrated veterans alike often forget this fact. However creating a curriculum package that works nearly perfectly for you and your children is possible.

But maybe you're saying, "I already had a curriculum package that worked for me, and now it doesn't." Unfortunately, that happens sometimes, but there are ways you can find a new formula that will get you back on track.

## 2. Textbooks or Online Learning?

It's obvious that today's students are geared towards technology. If you've been using textbooks because this is how you learned, you shouldn't hesitate to move over to an online environment.

Not only are children naturally drawn to web-enabled devices, but the jobs of the future will likely all require that workers be computer literate. Online curricula help prepare students for situations where technology is required.

For those looking to make the switch from a heavy textbook curriculum to online, Time4Learning is a great online curriculum that provides:

- Fun, interactive lessons for students in grades PreK-12
- Automated grading and reporting which frees parents to focus on other areas of homeschooling
- Parental support through our Parent Forum, live chat and customer service center.

### 3. Who says you have to choose?

If your child seems to enjoy using a textbook for history, and an online program for math, there's no reason you can't embrace both! When using a mix of curriculum options-- often referred to as "[eclectic homeschooling](#)"--you have the freedom to pick and choose whatever programs, methods, and approaches meet your overall educational needs. A recent study called "Parent Perspectives: Curriculum and Homeschooling Approaches", found that 68 percent of responders used an "eclectic" approach.

Using technology will certainly help prepare your children for higher education endeavors and the job market, but if your children also like other curricula options, use them. The options are nearly limitless, and creating a personalized program may help your child learn more efficiently. And for families homeschooling more than one child, mixing and matching curricula is almost always necessary. Not all children learn the same. What works for your older daughter may not work for your younger son.



# Adjusting Your Teaching Methods

---

Before you completely ditch your current curriculum, it's wise to determine whether the program is the issue or your approach to it. For example, if you're using a literature-based curriculum and your child seems bored with it, could you add in videos that tie to the books for variety? Or could you [supplement with interactive lessons](#) that approach the subjects from new angles?

The midpoint of the homeschool year is the ideal time to take stock of what has been working and what hasn't. Evaluating your successes and failures can lead you toward a much more satisfying experience during the second half of the year.

## Some Questions to Ask Yourself

Find a quiet space and take some time to jot down notes on how the first part of the homeschool year has gone--both from your perspective and your student's. To help you with your evaluation, ask yourself these questions:

### **a. Does the curriculum fit your teaching style?**

There are times when the curriculum a parent chooses doesn't agree with their teaching style. For example, if you're a "hands-on" teacher and the curriculum promotes independent learning, then you're bound for difficulties. Or, maybe you prefer to facilitate learning rather than teach, and you need a program that gives you more flexibility and room for experimentation. Analyze your teaching style and choose a curriculum that matches it--or, at the very least, can adapt to it.

### **b. Does your teaching style match your child's learning style?**

One of the most frustrating experiences for parents and children is teaching in a style that your child can't relate to. If a parent pushes a child toward textbooks, but that child is a hands-on learner, it's unlikely he or she will retain the material. Similarly, if a child naturally gravitates toward technology, but a parent insists on a literature-based program, the child will never meet his or her full learning potential. It's vital to identify your child's individual learning style and adapt your teaching method to it.

**c. Have your child's interests changed?**

Just because a program seemed fascinating to your child several months ago doesn't mean that it will hold his interest indefinitely. Maybe your second grader was completely happy with her Montessori program at the beginning of the year, but as her reading skills have improved, she is gravitating toward more and more literature. Or maybe your middle schooler has become more independent and wants a program that will let him go at his own pace. Have a frank discussion with your child to get feedback on the type of materials and approach that appeals to them most. You may discover it's time to modify your teaching methods, and at times, change the curriculum you're using.

**d. Can you make the old curriculum work?**

Some parents persevere through the curriculum and then change it the next year. No one can tell you to do this, it's your decision. But keep in mind your child's frustration levels. If they are stressed and angry about not doing well because the curriculum is uninspiring or doesn't fit their learning style, or your teaching style, their overall performance may suffer.

**e. Are you taking advantage of all the homeschooling resources?**

What's great about homeschooling is that there is no shortage of resources available for new and veteran homeschoolers. Think about it; you have co-ops, support groups, conferences (both online and in-person), online forums for parents, Facebook and more. On the Time4Learning Parent Forum, you'll find an archive of thousands of conversations between parents who have been where you are. When things aren't working, the advice from other homeschoolers who've faced similar issues can be invaluable.

# Changing up your schedule

---

Switching up your curriculum doesn't necessarily mean your schedule has to change as well, but it could be refreshing, especially if you've been locked into a set schedule for a while. You've heard adults in the workforce talk about the 9-5 drag (probably more hours than that these days). The same old routine--getting up in the morning, doing your job, and making the commute home--wears on people. Kids are no different. Sure, some structure is needed, but loosening the reins may help your situation. Then again, if your schedule has been too unstructured, your student may actually be craving more predictability. It all depends on your children and what works best for them.

## 1. Call a family meeting

Before you make any decisions about your schedule, sit down with your kids and discuss the details. Here are some things you can chat about:

- Will your days be the same everyday or will they vary?
- Will the schedule be planned far in advance, monthly, or weekly?
- What time will you start school and stop school?
- What are the best times to teach the core subjects? For example: Math in the morning or afternoon?
- How much time will you spend on each subject?
- Will you incorporate more outings or group learning?

Depending upon your children's ages, letting them be involved in how and when they homeschool empowers them by giving them a stake in their own learning. And honestly, if things don't work out with your initial schedule change, then it won't fall completely on your shoulders because it was a team effort. Everyone shares in the failures and successes until you get things right. Pam, a mother of two homeschooled children says:

*"I honestly didn't know that my son was frustrated with math because he felt so sluggish in the mornings. Once we discussed it and moved his math coursework to the late afternoons, he had a complete turnaround."*

When it comes to scheduling your homeschool, the only limitations you have are the ones that you and your family agree upon.

## 2. Take advantage of the flexibility

Oh, the joys of homeschool flexibility! Wait. Have you forgotten how much flexibility homeschooling provides? Say it's not so. Well, if that's the case, or if you're not taking advantage of the freedom at your fingertips, then it's time to start enjoying this incredible perk!

Homeschoolers aren't anchored down by any of the limitations of a traditional classroom. Just think, flexibility allows you to:

- Change your schedule and curriculum
- Incorporate unorthodox learning methods such as building model cars or climbing trees to search for insects
- Take breaks when, and as often, as your child needs
- Adjust your teaching methods
- Introduce spontaneity into the classroom or outside the classroom
- Enjoy more field trips
- Learn about things that really interest and motivate your children

Seriously, the opportunities are nearly endless. If it's a beautiful day, homeschool can happen at the local park. Is there a local volunteer event happening? Turn it into a learning opportunity for your whole family. You have the whole wide world at your disposal.

### 3. Structured vs. unstructured

Every child and every family is unique. There are learners who thrive with standardized curriculum and predictable schedules. Other students would feel constrained by the rigidity of that approach and need variety and an eclectic mix of curriculum to learn best. While some families prefer steady and pre-planned days, others want to let life and individual interests guide how each day unfolds.

#### **What a structured homeschool might look like:**

Families following a more structured approach likely have specific times of the day or week when they tackle specific subjects. They may have classes and extracurricular activities planned, but they are usually part of an overall schedule that is known in advance. The amount of homeschool material covered each day is usually also calculated into the plan.





**What an unstructured homeschool might look like:**

Interest-led learning (often called “[unschooling](#)”) can certainly still include curricula and dedicated learning materials, but when and how to use them would likely vary depending on each child’s current focus. The curiosities of individual students would also drive the daily activities. If a child is interested in goats at the moment, for example, then a documentary about ruminants and a visit to the local farm might be on the schedule.

Time4Learning will work for either schedule desired. Parents can structure a schedule around the Time4Learning curriculum. Our detailed planner, will allow both the parent/student to see what needs to be accomplished daily, weekly, or monthly to finish the curriculum. For those who have more of an unstructured schedule, may review the lesson plans and pick and choose lessons that resonate with your student. If they are interested in learning about something specific, maybe you find a couple lessons you can tie into that theme. That’s what’s beautiful about web-based products such as Time4Learning, it fits into any schedule and you don’t have to shell out hundreds of dollars up front for the curriculum. You pay on a monthly basis and start and stop your lessons when you decide.

If you are currently on a structured or mostly structured schedule, loosen the reins a bit and see what happens. Experimentation with scheduling, curriculum, and teaching styles may lead to unexpected successes.

## 4. Year-round school schedule

Many traditional schools throughout the U.S. have moved from a nine-month school schedule to what is called “year-round” schooling. Research has shown that this form of education benefits both students and teachers. Not surprisingly, many homeschool families have adopted a year-round approach as well.

What does a year round schedule look like? In traditional schools, it usually consists of periods of nine weeks of schooling followed by a three-week break, with a slightly longer interval during the summer. Of course, as a homeschooler, you have the flexibility to organize a year round schedule that fits your particular family’s needs.

If you have never tried it and are having difficulty motivating your children and keeping yourself inspired, maybe this is the time. Parents who use this schedule often describe year-round schooling as much less stressful.

***Other benefits from year-round schooling include:***

- **Working at a more relaxed pace:** Once you get your rhythm down, you can easily work at your child’s learning pace, even if it’s slow. That’s okay. If you prefer a faster pace, that’s fine too.

- **A four-day school week:** Many parents who school year-round cut their school week down to four days. The fifth day is often dedicated to outside classes, activities, extracurriculars, and field trips. Most kids and teens really enjoy the variety of this approach.
- **More time to experience life:** The educational experience does not orbit around a strict calendar. Parents call this “lifestyle of learning.” The relaxed schooling experience meshes with your lifestyle and you can enjoy more real-life experiences.
- **Travel flexibility:** Instead of being limited to the summer months, you can pack up and travel at any time. And if you’re using a curriculum like Time-4Learning, your children will enjoy “mobile learning.” All they need is a laptop and an internet connection.
- **No after-summertime slump:** Some parents halt or nearly halt all schooling during summer vacation. Not only can students experience “[summer slide](#)” during a long break, but it can take a few weeks before your children get in the school groove again when the new year begins.
- **More extracurricular activities:** A year-round schedule adds breathing room to your homeschool day. It leaves plenty of time for socializing, exercise, field trips, and focusing on things your children love.
- **No cramming subjects:** You don’t have to do every subject each day. For example, you might focus on math on Tuesday and Thursday, and language arts on Wednesday and Friday. You might even dedicate an entire day to science or history. Find what works best for you.
- **Establish your own routine:** Now that you have freed yourself from the parameters of the calendar, you can establish your own routine, choose your own vacations, days off, and school hours.

## 5. Custom scheduling

Do you work nights, weekends or have shift work that changes on a weekly basis? Is your student is training for the Olympics or some other competitive pursuit? Does your child have a health issue that often prevents focused schooling? Certainly, many families just don’t fit the mold of a traditional schedule. If you have found yourself struggling during the first half of the homeschool year, it’s possible that you simply need a more customized framework.

If you can’t teach school on two or three weekdays because you’re working, give the kids those days off and homeschool over the weekend. When your child has an upcoming competition and needs practice hours, condense your homeschool plan until the event is complete. Adapt your homeschool schedule to make the most of the times when your family life is less hectic and more amenable to focused learning.

## 6. Plan Activities

If your first semester was a bust, is it possible that your children or teens didn't have enough variety in their schedule? Fun activities inject enthusiasm and excitement into the homeschooling day. And many don't cost much money. Use your imagination and find out what interests your children. Activities that can break up the homeschool day include:

- Outside classes and clubs
- Activities with your local support group
- Fishing, hiking, or nature journaling
- Playdates with other homeschoolers
- Reading/drawing
- Crafting
- Cleaning up the classroom area
- Chess
- Dancing
- Learning a musical instrument
- Joining a sports team

The activities are nearly limitless. Homeschool is about so much more than just curriculum. Find out what your children enjoy and start having fun.

## 7. Field Trips

Who doesn't enjoy [field trips](#)? You probably have fond memories of visiting a local farm, an apple orchard, a shelling expedition by the ocean or bay, or maybe visiting a planetarium. You could take your children yourself or join a homeschooling group that coordinates different field trip adventures. That may cost a few bucks, but for the most part, field trips are an inexpensive way to combine real-life situations with an unforgettable educational experience. And they're fun! Ideas include:

- Visiting a local bakery or other business
- Spending the day at a working farm
- Volunteering to help at a local animal shelter
- Museums
- Local attractions
- Visiting a radio or TV station
- Educational walking tours
- Visiting a zoo or aquarium

Before you go, have your children do some research on the place. Talk about what you might see or experience while on the trip. Think about ways to integrate what you learn there with your current curriculum. This will make your field trip experience more interactive and productive.

## 8. Extracurricular Activities

Including [extracurricular activities](#) in your schedule is another way to liven up the homeschool year. Choosing the right ones can be tricky, though. First off, many aren't free, so you must make sure they fit your budget. Secondly, it's not always certain that your child will even enjoy the activity, which can sometimes mean wasted money and time.

To keep cost and frustration to a minimum, answer the following questions before committing to a specific extracurricular:

- Did your child initiate interest in the activity?
- How much time will you and your child invest in the activity?
- How far will you need to travel to participate?
- How much will it cost?
- How will it benefit your child?
- Does your child prefer team activities or solo?



## Conclusion

---

For new and veteran homeschoolers, starting a new educational path mid-year may feel overwhelming. But you're up to the task because you recognize that this is the best educational option for your children. Just remember, there is no hurry. Change takes time, but once you start the process and let your children adapt, things will fall into place.

Follow the advice you've found here and make goals for the next part of your year. Look at them frequently to see how you're progressing. And remember, goals change; this is a dynamic process. Stay focused but flexible.

Most of all, for beginners and veteran homeschoolers alike, enjoy this adventure. You will experience the ups and downs, but you have the flexibility and freedom to work things out as needed. So, take advantage of the freedom you have to customize your child's education and see this mid-year transition as an opportunity to create the best possible learning environment for your child or teen.

[Switch to Time4Learning Today](#)

\*Free 14 day trial applied at checkout when using this link

