

10 TIPS TO BECOMING A GREAT HOME SCHOOL PARENT

1. Know your approach or philosophy

Why do you want to teach your kids at home? Is it for safety, academic, philosophical, or religious reasons? You have to have a clear answer before you can design your own homeschool program and properly educate your children.

2. Find out the local regulations

Education laws vary by state and by town. Talk to your local school district to find out what is required of homeschool programs in your area. Some require a strict curriculum, others stipulate that particular milestones be met by a certain age.

3. Be organized, patient, and flexible

You will have to be teacher as well as parent, and the two may not always agree. Where Mom or Dad may be a pushover, the teacher needs to demand and expect excellence because a rich education is the goal.

4. Develop a working relationship with your child

What works for others may not work for you. The two of you need to be a team, with teacher and student each dedicated to the goals you have worked out together.

5. Find other homeschool parents

The Internet or local community groups are a good way to find other parents and kids for field trips, science projects, advice, and support. But remember, there are almost as many philosophies as there are homeschooling families. Before you join forces, discuss your particular schooling approaches.

6. Set aside a time and place for academic work

Most people with home offices find it's important to have a defined area that sets work life apart from home life. It's just as important for homeschooling. You and your child need a comfortable work space in a well-lighted spot, free from distractions and the obligations of the household.

7. Be willing to "graduate" your child to school if and when he's ready to go

As parent, you are the ultimate decision-maker, but as in other areas of life, listening to the needs and desires of your child helps you make the best choices. As your child grows, he may wish to join a regular school while you still want him at home. If you talk about it together, you can come to a more informed decision.

8. Have a method of evaluation for your child

Most locales require some sort of yearly or more frequent evaluation of the home student's progress, such as a test, oral report, project, etc. If you have clear goals at the outset, and communicate them to your child, you'll both be working under the same expectations.

9. Have a plan

Some parents find that following a strict curriculum is the best way to teach their kids. Others are much less structured. Whether your local district requires it or not, having a homeschooling plan gives both you and your child a sense of direction. When school is somewhat defined, the rest of life can fill in around it. Teaching is hard work. You can learn a lot from the teachers who came before you.

10. Don't forget the social realm

A pet peeve of one homeschooling parent is how many times she's asked, "Doesn't your child miss having friends?" A homeschooler can have all the friends in the world. Scouting, sports, neighbors, children of friends--all the ways schooled kids find friends are open to your child as well.