



Homeschooling is a lifestyle. Are you ready?

Most families take their children out of school because their child is unhappy and/or not doing well. But this is a decision only you and your family can make. While there are some trade-offs, such as making financial sacrifices, there's also your child's educational freedom.

As a homeschool parent, you can determine your school day, your school calendar, your curriculum, and most importantly—you can make the school life fit into your family life.

But with this tremendous freedom also comes some questions that you have to ask yourself upfront.

1. Can I afford to homeschool?

While there are programs like GA Cyber Academy, or Connections Academy that offer free curriculum, these are not homeschool programs. In Georgia, these are called Charter Schools and they must meet the same requirements as the public school. Some parents have wonderful success stories with these programs; but, these programs aren't for every family.

2. Do I want a free charter school program or do I want to create my own homeschool program?

If you decide to create your own homeschool program, you have to consider that you will need to make a yearly investment for curriculum. The yearly cost can vary. One thing that helped me early in my homeschool journey was I set a per child curriculum limit in March of the current year for the upcoming year. In our family, I have an academic curriculum budget of \$4,800 for the year or about \$500 per month. This includes the monthly tutoring costs and the homeschool cooperative fees as well as the curriculum. In Georgia, it is legal for parents to hire a tutor for their homeschool student. Just because you are homeschooling doesn't mean you have to forge the path alone. For me, I know there are certain subjects that I simply don't want to teach so I hire tutors for those subjects. I also wanted my children to have the classroom experience so budgeting for participation in our local weekly homeschool cooperative was important to our family. But I also know other parents who have a yearly curriculum budget of less than \$500 per year.

3. What do I need to know about curriculum?

A curriculum is simply an outline of topics that a class covers during the school year. There's nothing complicated or mysterious about it. Many homeschool families don't follow one single curriculum—they mix and match. You can create your own or purchase from a curriculum provider like Tiers Free Academy.

4. Is my family ready to become a homeschool family? Before you decide to homeschool, you also need to address the following questions:

- Is your partner in agreement with your education standards?
- Have you read enough to understand what homeschooling is and why you're doing it?
- What are your expectations both of yourself and of your child for the upcoming year?

The whole family needs to talk about these issues together because homeschooling will affect the entire family.

5. How do I talk to my child about homeschool?

For elementary and middle school: If the school routine is all your child has ever known, sudden changes in lifestyle may be scary. Carefully research every aspect of homeschooling first, then talk about it with your child and explore your options together slowly.

For high school: Start the conversation with the end goal in mind. Ask your child what he or she wants to do after graduation; and, then truly listen to the answer. If you get an “I don't know” that's a normal response. Probe deeper. Ask “If you could design your own school day, what would it look like?” A good book for this age group is *The Teenage Liberation Handbook* by Grace Llewellyn. This amazing book speaks to the soul of teens. It offers suggestions to help teenagers find their way to a real-life education. This book will change your perspective (maybe even your life!) and your teen's, too. Read it together.

6. What about the homeschool high school diploma? Doesn't it need accreditation?

Diplomas are necessary for college admission, military acceptance, and usually employment. Homeschool diplomas are accepted at most colleges and universities. With few exceptions, colleges require that students take an admissions test such as the ACT, SAT, or Compass. Those test scores, along with a transcript of a student's high school courses, will meet the entrance requirements for most schools.

Accreditation only applies to public and private schools. Since homeschool doesn't need accreditation, most homeschool parents choose to issue their own diplomas. For parents who are transitioning their students from a public or

private school, it is strongly encouraged to partner with a curriculum provider program like Tiers Free Academy. Tiers Free Academy also provides homeschool graduates with a full graduation ceremony on the 3rd Saturday of May each year. Tiers Free graduates receive transcript preparation assistance as well as their cap, gown, and diploma.

Parts of this tip sheet were taken from the following articles:

The Pre-Homeschooling Checklist: <https://www.familyeducation.com/school/how-homeschool/pre-homeschooling-checklist>

Homeschool Supply Checklist:

<https://teachbesideme.com/homeschool-supply-checklist/>

Homeschooling in Georgia by HSLDA (I also strongly encourage all homeschool parents to join the HSLDA)

<https://hsllda.org/content/hs/state/ga/>

Prepare to Homeschool High School Checklist

<https://donnayoung.org/forms/help/high-school-list.htm>