

# GETTING STARTED

A Simple Guide  
for Your  
First Year of  
Homeschooling

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**Congratulations** on your decision to homeschool! You are about to embark on an exciting but sometimes daunting adventure. Since there are so many websites and other resources that are dedicated to helping homeschoolers get started, I've put together a simple, condensed guide that consolidates a lot of the information that you will find out there. Here are some key steps to your success with homeschooling...

To make it simple, here are the 4 P's to get you started: **Prepare, Prioritize, Plan, and Pray.** This will be your framework...

**Step 1: Prepare your mind!** Remember to give yourself flexibility and keep the goal and purpose for homeschooling at the forefront of your mind. Begin your journey with the end in mind so that any negative emotions or frustrations that could surface will be minimized or eliminated all together. Before you prioritize and plan, it would be best to mentally solidify the fact that nurturing, training, and educating our children was the natural course for parents before government schools ever existed. Even if people think you're abnormal for home educating, just review the history and socialization of American education. Then, you'll be convinced of what's really abnormal.

**Step 2: Prioritize.** The next step is to establish what your daily priorities would be in your new homeschooling schedule. Whether you are taking your children out of public school or beginning with your toddlers, this is an important step.

**SIDE NOTE**

- A highly recommended read
- on the history of American
- Education is John Taylor
- Gatto's book called "The
- Underground History of
- American Education." You can
- order it on Amazon or visit
- [www.johntaylorgatto.com](http://www.johntaylorgatto.com)
- for more information about
- his book.



I want to share something that helped me prioritize my day correctly:

I once saw a demonstration performed where the presenter was trying to teach people how to prioritize their days so that they can accomplish the goals that were most important to them in any given day. He used large rocks, small rocks, and a bucket to make his point. The large rocks represented your most important things you need to accomplish in one day; the small rocks represented the multitude of non-important daily tasks; and the bucket represented one day. He had a volunteer fill the bucket with small rocks first. Then he had her try to fit in the big rocks

that represented the volunteer's most important goals for the day. The point of the demonstration was to show the audience that there is not enough room for the big rocks if you fill the bucket with the small rocks first.

**SIDE NOTE** : You can view this demonstration online by going to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLGeEjUpCxY> or by typing "Stephen Covey- Big Rocks" in your search engine.

It seemed like such a simple concept, but it was an eye-opener for me. I realized that I needed to prioritize my life so that I could focus on filling my bucket with the large rocks first. I wasn't doing this, and that is why I would encounter daily frustrations. I was so busy with all the small rocks that I wasn't accomplishing what I needed to accomplish that day. Has this ever happened to you?

Again, as we look to the Word of God as our guide, the Lord tells us what our first priority needs to be -seek first the kingdom of God. How does this play out when scheduling the day?

In my early days of educating my 5 children, I would easily get distracted and caught up with daily tasks (the small rocks). Consequently, I wouldn't get to prayer time and Bible study (big rocks) with the children until the end of the day. Once I realized that I wasn't putting this special time (seeking the kingdom of God) as a priority, I switched my schedule. What a difference it made! I was now setting a new example for my children by establishing what the most important goals were for the day. I then based all the rest of the priorities and goals (big rocks) on those activities that would help prepare my children to be useful in the kingdom of God physically, mentally, and spiritually. For example, exercise and proper nutrition were also big rocks/priorities for getting our day started on the right foot. So, I called these "big rocks" our morning POWER PACKAGE. It's a powerful morning regimen (having Bible study, having fresh juice and nutritional supplements, and exercising for 30 minutes for physical health) that would set us up for daily success. Our next priorities were chores and schoolwork. Whether we were doing important or non-important goals, seeking the kingdom of God/the Word of God has been the foundation for every aspect our daily activities.



Once priorities are established, then the rest of the day will be easy to schedule. The small rocks can fill the rest of the day. Taking the time to set your priorities in advance will save you so much time and frustration in the long run.

**Step 3: Plan.** There's an oft-repeated quote by Benjamin Franklin that says, "If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail." So, our next step will include planning for the year.

After you have prepared your mind and established daily priorities, then you can plan your year with confidence. Now, you can write out a daily schedule or course of action. Some mothers like to manage their day with a time schedule. (For more help with developing a time schedule, you can read "Managers of Their Homes" by Steven and Terry Maxwell. Their website is <http://www.titus2.com>.) Other mothers may prefer just writing out a simple plan for the day. For example, you may want your mornings to include Bible Study, exercise, getting ready for the day, chores and schoolwork while your afternoons are set aside for reading, hobbies, etc.

Next, you'll want to join the Home School Legal Defense Association. It will be one of the most important things that you do especially if you live in a state with strict homeschooling laws. HSLDA's mission is to "defend and advance the constitutional rights of parents to direct the education of their children." They are advocates for home schooling not only in the courtroom, but also Capitol Hill, the state legislatures, and in the media. Becoming a member opens the door to many benefits for the home educator. For more information or to apply online, go to [www.hsllda.org](http://www.hsllda.org).

Another important thing to do is to find out dates for homeschooling conventions in your area. Attending a convention will give you access to a wide variety of curriculum and give you the opportunity to meet other homeschooling parents. In addition, these conventions also have booths that provide free resources.



Establishing priorities and having a daily course of action ahead of time will help you when you are choosing learning resources at a convention. Attending your first one can be somewhat overwhelming. Any preparation made in advance will help you to focus and better utilize your time there.

Deciding which curriculum to use for Math, English, etc. can be challenging, but this will be your next step. Once you see what's available at the conventions, you can buy them there or come home and buy online. Depending on where you live, you may have a local homeschool supply store that you can purchase your resources and supplies. Where I live, there's a store called

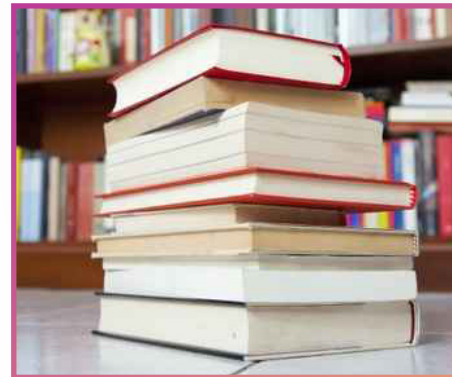
SIDE NOTE

• *Whatever course you take, you'll want to be flexible and allow room for trial and error. Situations and circumstances will change during the year, and you might have to switch around your schedule. No worries. As each day passes, you'll be able to refine your schedule to help make your days run smoother. However, in the beginning, you'll have a general idea of what daily goals you want to meet.*



Curriculum Cottage in Meridian, Idaho. We love shopping there because we don't have to wait for the next homeschool convention to get what we need nor do we have to order online.

You will become more acquainted with your child's learning style once you begin your home educating. You may find that a certain style or curriculum is not working for him, and you may need to switch to a new one. No worries. This is just part of helping your child learn more efficiently. You'll be able to tune into your child's learning style in the first year.



The next task on the list is joining a homeschool support group if you feel you would like extra support from other homeschoolers in your area. If you live in the state of Idaho, you can visit <http://www.chois.org/support-groups/> to find support groups throughout the state as well as links for more homeschooling information regarding "learning styles" and "choosing curriculum". Also, you can get support from co-ops, online message boards, and friends and neighbors with expertise in any given area to enhance your experience.

Lastly, developing and applying a Biblical worldview will be the most important part of your planning. How do you do that? Well, using the Word of God as the foundation for every aspect of learning and living will bring success. Whether your child is learning math or learning how to handle a dispute with a sibling, the Word of God (Biblical principles) can and should be incorporated into daily lessons. Planning to structure your day and your curriculum on biblical principles is setting yourself up for success! When we teach our children to view the world through the lens of the Bible, then they will think like Christians and live like ones-our ultimate goal!

As a final note... Remember that home education doesn't have to be rigid and boring. It can be the most rewarding and exciting educational adventure for the whole family if that's what you desire. Now, you're ready to go! Relax...and enjoy your family journey!

Here's a simple checklist with helpful things to do in your planning stage:

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|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Join the HSLDA. (Homeschool Legal Defense Association) | <input type="checkbox"/> Choose curriculum and/or various resources |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attend a Homeschool conference.                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Join a local homeschool support group.     |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Develop and apply a Biblical worldview.    |

**Step 4-Pray.** Last, but not least, we must be prayerful about our endeavors. Homeschooling is no exception. Even though prayer is listed in Step 4, it's really just a reminder that we must seek guidance and strength for each day. It keeps us grounded. Educating, disciplining, and nurturing our gifts from God is a HUGE responsibility with eternal ramifications. Our role as a wise and godly mother is so important to the success of our homeschooling journey, so we will need to take prayer along with us.



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