

Homeschooling Road Map

Part 2: Find Your Homeschool Path

Leaving the Classroom

- If removing your child out of a classroom setting, learn about **deschooling** [here](#) and [here](#).
- If removing your child out of school midyear, read about that [here](#) and [here](#).

Learn [Washington's legal requirements](#).

To **qualify** to home educate your child, you must meet **one** of these requirements.

- Be supervised by a certificated person, such as a teacher.
- Have at least 45 quarter college credits (or 30 semester credits).
- Take a qualifying course.
 - [Able to Teach](#) by Family Academy
 - [Start to Finish](#) by Christian Heritage
 - [Parent Qualifying Courses](#) by WHO (secular)
- Be “deemed sufficiently qualified to provide home-based instruction by the superintendent of the local school district.”

File a [Declaration of Intent](#) (DOI) by September 15 each year, or within two weeks of the start of any public school quarter, trimester, or semester. Send it to the office of your local superintendent.

The declaration must include your child’s name and age, and you must specify whether you are being supervised by a certificated person. You don’t have to file until your child is eight years old (compulsory education ages in Washington are from ages 8 to 17).

Warning, some school districts have created DOIs that ask for more information than what the law requires. Don’t give them that information. Use the [form](#) created by CHN. *Make a copy of this form for your own records before sending it in.*

Teach for 180 days a year or about a thousand hours. One high school credit equals 150 hours of work. Completing a one-credit textbook or curriculum also equals one high school credit regardless of the time it takes the student to complete it.

Cover the required subjects: occupational education, science, math, language, social studies, history, health, reading, writing, spelling, and appreciation of art and music. You don’t need to cover all of these in a given year. For high school, check college entrance requirements, or if your child doesn’t plan to college, set your own requirements.

Have your child [assessed](#) (some of the test providers listed also provide assessment services) or have him take a [standardized test](#) each year. Many support groups offer testing each spring. Keep these results as part of your records.

Keep records of your children's work. For suggestions, click [here](#) and [here](#).

Set Goals for Your Child

First, remember that homeschooling includes more than academics. Not only are you training your child's mind, but his body, soul, and spirit as well. A well-educated person without good character is worse off than an uneducated person with good character traits. Establish measurable goals in these areas: intellectual, physical, spiritual, and social.

Next, focus on meeting *your* goals for *your* child, not on the goals from someones else's list. Everyone has gaps in his education. Teach your child to learn. If he needs or wants to know about something you didn't cover in school, he can teach it to himself when he wants to.

Include life skills goals as well, especially if your child has special needs.

- [15 Important Life Skills](#)
- [Life Skills Checklist](#) by Focus on the Family

Research Learning Styles

People learn in different ways. Your child may learn differently than you. Keep this in mind when selecting curricula and working with your child. Here are some resources on learning styles.

- [The Way They Learn](#) by Cynthia Tobias—a classic on learning styles.
- [“What Is My Child’s Learning Style?”](#) at HSLDA
- [Discover Your Child’s Learning Style](#) at Cathy Duffy Reviews
- [Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences](#) by Howard Gardner

Explore Teaching Methods to Develop Your Educational Philosophy

When considering a teaching method, decide how involved you want to be in your child's education.

- Do you want an online school program that does all the work for you?
- Do you want textbooks or workbooks that your child can work through independently, and you only have to grade the assignments and tests?
- Do you want a curriculum with teacher's guides that help you instruct and interact with your child?
- Do you want to be more involved by reading aloud to them or taking nature walks and field trips and completing hands-on projects?

Develop your educational philosophy and select a teaching style. Some people mix styles. For instance, many use the traditional textbook method to teach math. Then, they may follow the classical style for history and an unschooling style for science. Here's a [quiz](#) to help you figure out what teaching method fits your family. Learn about the [pros and cons](#) of several learning methods.

See this list of brief descriptions of [educational philosophies](#) for more information.

Write Your Goals and Personal Educational Philosophy

After researching, jot down some educational goals for your child and consider which educational philosophy or a combination of philosophies will guide you in reaching those goals.

- What knowledge, skills, and character traits do you want your child to have by the time he graduates from high school?
- What type of learning environment do you want in your home? Structured, child-led, or something in between?
- What worldview do you wish your child to embrace?

Writing these ideas down will help you clarify what path you should take. They will also serve as guidelines as you explore curricula and other educational resources. Over time, you will find that you may need to adjust your method.

When I began homeschooling, I fell in love with the classical method. This method, in its pure form, however, didn't suit my son. So, I had to change gears and moved to an eclectic, living books method. For the high school years, we primarily used the traditional textbook method. See my [educational mission statement, philosophy, and goals](#).

Ways to Fulfill Your Homeschooling Goals

The beauty of homeschooling is its flexibility. You can choose a complete curriculum to set your course or bring together multiple sources to make a custom-fit educational path for your child. Each year may take a different direction depending on the age of your child, the availability of resources, and life's circumstances.

A few roads people can take on their homeschooling journey include:

Totally independent: The parent is 100 percent in control.

- Select your educational style and all your own resources.
- Use a complete homeschool curriculum package and shape it to meet your needs.

Parents delegate some of their responsibility to other teachers.

- **Cooperatives (aka co-ops)**
 - **A small, informal co-op:** A small group of friends with children around the same age often form these around a subject such as science. Others meet together once a week for multiple subjects taught by the parents. Some groups plan field trips together. For instance, three of my friends and I coordinated trips to the children's theater each year.
 - **[Classical Conversations](#):** A group of families work together to teach their children with this curriculum.
 - **Formal learning centers:** These organizations frequently offer social activities and field trip opportunities in addition to classes. In my area, three large co-ops service over a

hundred families each, and each offers around a hundred classes for preschool through high school. See my article on the [pros and cons of using co-ops](#) for more information.

- **Community Resources**

- Local pools, sports teams, and athletic clubs
- Local parks ‘n rec classes
- Children’s programs at museums
- Music, drama, or art lessons
- Tutors, mentors, and apprenticeships

- **Private School Oversight:** Some private schools provide various levels of assistance to homeschoolers.

- **Hybrid Homeschooling:** private schools that blend traditional school instruction with homeschooling. See my [post](#) that describes how hybrid homeschooling works. Washington [law](#) calls these “private school extension programs.”

- **Part-time enrollment** at [public school](#).

Beware of the Trojan Horse—Public School at Home

[Alternative Learning Experience \(ALE\) Programs](#), Parent Partnership Programs, or Washington Virtual Academies (WAVA) provided by school districts are often called “homeschool” programs. Enrolling in such programs makes your child a public school student. Only registering part-time to maintain your homeschool status is permissible by law. Still, many of these programs don’t comply with that law and enroll their students as full-time to get more money from the state. As full-time student, your child must follow all public school requirements and testing. See the *Exposing a Trojan Horse* [trailer](#) for more information. My copy of the 30-minute DVD is available to borrow.

For personal help, please [contact me](#).