

Homeschooling Road Map

Part 3: Gather Your Resources for the Journey

Map Your Subjects

For each K-8 school year, I [listed](#) all the subjects I planned to cover, including the curriculum and/or resources. Then I wrote down the goals for each course. After printing the goal pages for each subject, I'd file the page under the appropriate subject divider in a ring binder. In this notebook, I also included notes and ideas for that subject. This served as my master teaching manual. In front of the binder, I placed my educational philosophy for reference.

For high school, I used a different [form](#) as I worked with my [Academy Northwest](#) Teacher Consultant.

In addition to academics, you may also want to include instruction time for Bible, character development, time management, and/or housekeeping skills.

Scope and Sequence

At times, homeschoolers wonder whether they are covering everything that their children need to learn, especially if they aren't using a complete curriculum package. If you want to know what a child is expected to know at a certain age, you can get this information from various resources. Here are a few.

- *Home Learning Year by Year* by Rebecca Rupp
- *What Your ____ Grader Needs to Know* edited by E. D. Hirsch (The Core Knowledge Series, not related to the Common Core)
- World Book [Typical Course of Study](#) for each grade

Just remember, everyone has gaps in his education. Don't worry if your child missed something outside of reading, writing, and mathematics.

Research School Resources

Ask a Homeschooler

Once you determined your child's learning style, have developed your philosophy, and set goals, you're ready to select your educational resources.

It's easy to become overwhelmed by the abundance of options. Start by asking other homeschoolers, who have a philosophy similar to yours, what they use. Their input is invaluable. However, remember what works great for one family may not work for another. Keep your learning goals in mind as you explore different curricula.

Keep in mind that if you have children close in age, you can use a multi-age curriculum to cover subjects such as history or science or unit studies.

For a list of curricula organized by educational method, click [here](#). For a list of recommended curricula by subject, click [here](#).

Websites

- [Rainbow Resource Center](#): This company has excellent descriptions/reviews for most of their products. They carry a mixture of Christian and secular items.
- [Christianbook](#): Some of their curricula are secular.
- [Cathy Duffy Reviews](#): reliable reviews since 1984.

Homeschool Conferences and Curriculum Fairs

These provide you with a hands-on look at curriculum. The vendors' salespeople can help you decide whether their product will work for you. Remember, though, that their main goal is to make a sale. I've found some gems at these venues, but I've also paid too much for materials that didn't work.

If you spend a long time talking with the salesperson, out of courtesy, you should purchase the product from them. That way, you honor their time spent with you.

Educational Businesses

In Seattle, [Math 'n Stuff](#) stocks many educational—and fun—resources for homeschoolers or families who want to supplement classroom instruction.

[Homeschool Potpourri](#) in Kirkland is one of the oldest homeschool consignment shops in the nation. They have organized their store by subject, and their knowledgeable staff can provide advice as well.

Explore Community Resources

You don't have to do all the teaching. Research what homeschool opportunities are available in your community or online. [See Part 2](#) under "Community Resources" for more details.

Purchase or Borrow Your Materials

Once you've decided on your courses and the curricula you'd like to use, it's time to go shopping.

Keep in mind, *you don't need to buy your materials brand new*. Many homeschoolers sell their resources when they finish using them. They may sell them at an in-person co-op sale or online via a homeschool Facebook group. Some families will lend out their books and tools as well. I lend out books from my large home library.

Also, don't forget to use your **public library**, especially for literature. If you would like to use a book longer than a typical checkout period, ask your librarian if you can have the book on an extended loan. Some will do that for homeschoolers.

Whenever I complete my curricula shopping list, I always search for used products first. Some families find it easier and less time consuming to buy new materials directly from a publisher. However, I actually enjoy hunting down deals online. My favorite site is [Bookfinder.com](#). This site simultaneously

searches numerous book dealers online, such as Amazon, eBay, and Abebooks. Unfortunately, the website isn't mobile-friendly.

In addition, I've bought (and sold!) many items at [Homeschool Potpourri](#). In addition to books, they have games, videos, and science equipment. If you don't live nearby, call or email them with your list. They will let you know what they have in stock, and they can ship products to you.

Set Up Your School

Storage and Supplies

Storage: Because not all families can dedicate one room as a "schoolroom," dedicate a bookcase, a closet, a filing cabinet, or other storage units to keep your school supplies in one place. Storing each child's individual materials in a large basket keeps his stuff organized and portable.

I kept pens, pencils, erasers, bookmarks, scissors, and other materials in a small plastic tote so we could move it to wherever we were working, the dining room, living room or a doctor's waiting room. When my children became teens, I let them work in their rooms.

Reference Works: Although we can easily find much information on the internet, I prefer to have hard copy reference works available.

- Dictionaries appropriate for the child's age. I highly recommend [Noah Webster's 1828](#) dictionary. It has excellent information on word origins. See it [online](#) as well.
- Thesaurus
- A globe, maps, world and US atlases, and historical atlases. (I'm an atlas collector.)

Other supplies to have on hand:

- A library card
- A whiteboard with pens or a chalkboard with chalk. I knew one family that used their sliding glass door as a whiteboard.
- Writing and computer paper, file folders, and notebooks
- Calculator
- Art supplies
- Science lab supplies
- PE/sports equipment

Location for Learning

Many families do school at the dining room table. Others use their basement, living room, or family room. Many do school all over the house or even in the yard, weather permitting. When she was young, my daughter enjoyed reading on the trampoline.

Your Schedule

School Year

Some homeschoolers do school all year round. Most families roughly follow their local public school's schedule. If you join a co-op or another outside learning program, that organization's calendar will dictate your school schedule. Most importantly, select a plan that works with your family.

Most states, such as Washington, require 180 days of attendance. However, in Washington, you don't turn timesheets. So the number of days doesn't need to be exact. Schedule enough days for your students to complete their work with some cushion for sick days or unexpected events. Don't forget to include vacations and holidays.

Academic Terms and Daily Schedule

Once you plan your school year, you can divide it into quarters, semesters, or any terms you like. Next, you can create a daily schedule. But be flexible. Life happens, and your schedule *will* get messed up at times.

Families differ as to what time they do school. Daily schedules also vary by the age of the children. Many start in the morning with the three Rs and do history, science, or field trips in the afternoon. Some families need to work around the nap times of younger siblings. Due to a parent's work schedule, they might also do "night school." My husband taught our kids math after dinner.

Because I used co-ops and other community resources as part of my children's learning plan, each day of the week often had a different [schedule](#).

Lesson Plans

Recording lessons: You need find a system for recording your lesson plans. Your options include a basic calendar, a teacher's lesson planning book, or software. I used a software program. When my children reached high school, I let them plan their workweek from their courses' individual syllabi. Many student calendars, print or software, are available.

My son liked using [iStudiez](#) to track his high school assignments. The app is designed for college, but that makes it work well for homeschoolers with outside classes. He refuses to use a smartphone, so I had to find one that worked on Windows. iStudiez works on all standard platforms.

Scheduling assignments: Some curricula will come with a ready-made lesson plans that tell you what to do each day. For others, you will need to develop your own schedule. For a math curriculum, you can count the number of lessons, quizzes, and tests and divide that number by 36 weeks. Then you will know how many assignments your child will need to do each week to complete the text in one year. A writing curriculum, on the other hand, may require more planning on your part.

Log Your Journey: Recordkeeping

Washington State Requirements

- A copy of your Declaration of Intent (DOI)
- Annual test scores or assessment reports
- Immunization records
- Other records relating to instructional and educational activities

Your Own Documentation

Why should you keep more records than what the state requires? If you need to place your child into a school setting, having samples of your child's work will give a teacher an idea of your child's skills. But more importantly, they provide you an overview of your child's progress and will give both of you a sense of accomplishment.

You can document your child's work with

- A diary, calendar, or teacher's recordbook
- Digital records
- Paper file folders or in a 3-ring binder
- Create a portfolio. Include samples of your child's best work from each course, photos of projects or activities, examples of art, and documentation of any field trips or special events.
- [*The Checklist*](#) (2005) is a comprehensive PDF book of checklists by topic, not grade level. This works well for families that mix and match curricula, use unit studies, follow the Charlotte Mason or the Montessori methods, or are unschoolers.

Managing Schoolwork

Turning in Assignments

When your children are young, you are usually nearby overseeing their work or teaching them directly. So, you can easily collect their work for grading and recording. As they get older, they will do more work on their own. At this point, you will need to devise a way for them to turn in their work.

This is an area I have struggled with. Both my kids would forget to bring me their finished work, and I would have to track it down. Sometimes I'd forget to do that regularly.

Train your kids to turn in their work early on, and you can avoid my headaches of getting assignments and tests graded promptly.

Student Organization Skills

Teach your children how to maintain a notebook or whatever method you want them to use to organize their work. Children must learn how to manage paper assignments or components of a project, so they don't get lost in a pile in their room or scattered around the house. Start out simply with young children. As they mature, they should take more responsibility for managing their schoolwork paper flow.

When using the computer for schoolwork, teach your children how to create folders for each grade with subject folders inside that grade folder. I organize my electronic homeschool documents this way: Documents/child/grade/subject. The key is to discover a method that works for the child and you.

Happy Trails

May your homeschool journey end with success!

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