

IS HOME EDUCATION FOR YOU?

Quoted From “A Brief Guide to Homeschooling”

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Many Muslim parents are not aware of homeschooling as an alternative educational option for their children. They may have questions or misconceptions about homeschooling that need to be addressed. Therefore, we would like to focus on the challenges you will face as a homeschooler and the resources that you will need to homeschool successfully. Knowing this information ahead of time will help you to decide if homeschooling is right for you, and Allah knows best.

14 Things to Keep in Mind when Deciding to Homeschool

1. **Seek Guidance:** If you feel in your own heart that homeschool is what you intend to pursue for the love of your child(ren), it is important to make Istikhaarah (i.e. special prayer asking for Allah’s help and guidance in a matter). Seeking the guidance of Allah(swt) is the foundation on which all future successes depends on. This process of seeking guidance should continue to be a regular part of your daily routine. In the morning after Fajr prayer, as you start the lessons, and in the evening before bed, and particularly at night when you get up to make Tahajjood (recommended nightly prayers performed after you have slept for a while, but before the time of Fajr). These du’as, made by the parent for his/her child, are those that are answered by Allah. So make them often and sincerely, seeking Allah’s help and guidance, and you will see Allah’s soothing mercy in every aspect of your life.
2. **Scheduling:** Homeschooling requires a significant time commitment by at least one parent. Families should plan on setting aside time everyday for planning, preparing, and implementing their chosen educational program. This process will take a minimum of 3-5 hours a day for children in elementary levels (including actual class and planning time). For children in middle and high school, lessons will most likely be completed by the student on their own, however the parents’ efforts to plan and procure their child’s lesson materials and activities could take from 5-8 hours a day. If you are schooling multiple children you can assume a commitment of 5-8 hours a day regardless of the grade level or number of children being taught. Talk together as a family to decide if this is the appropriate choice for you. Some families find the demands and intensity of homeschooling to be too stressful; others love the freedom and challenge.
3. **Personal Time:** The homeschool parent usually has little or no personal time since the kids are with you 24/7. Although most parents find that can be one of the most joyful parts of homeschooling (i.e. time with your children and watching them grow), everyone needs downtime in order to avoid burnout. You will need to arrange with your spouse, or other family members, time to relax and take a break from your hectic schedule. This can be as simple as watching the kids so the home teacher has time to take a relaxing bath or go do a little shopping.

4. **Financial Commitment:** Homeschooling can be accomplished in a variety of ways to fit your individual budget. The cost all depends on the choices you make regarding the resources and accessories needed for the school year. However, because homeschooling requires that at least one parent be home to supervise the children's education, you will need to be able to meet your financial needs through the income of one parent rather than two. Certain aspects of your family lifestyle may need to change and you will need to consider the total costs involved in home schooling that may include the following: curriculum guides, online subscriptions, tutoring, private & group lessons, books, kits, educational games, magazines, school supplies, etc. Although many excellent homeschool resources can be obtained for free (or at a minimal cost) through the library, homeschool groups, off the internet, or through book exchange programs, you will still need to make some financial commitment to your child's education.
5. **Socialization:** Attention will need to be given to getting your children together with others. The beauty of homeschooling is being able to have more control of the social contacts your child makes. Many parents may feel concerned about the social life and potential isolation of homeschooled children. Although much has been written about how homeschooling can be socially detrimental, and about how homeschooling can be socially uplifting, the truth is that homeschooled students tend to have a broader age-range of friends than their public or privately schooled peers, which encourages maturity. Homeschoolers meet and socialize with peers in their neighborhood and at community classes and activities. With networking and little effort by families, most homeschoolers find avenues for social and intellectual interaction that provide a much better quality of socialization than that found in the group schooling environment.
6. **Household Organization:** Organization and scheduling are often the keys to greater efficiency and productivity around the house and in the home school. Housework and laundry still have to be done, but it probably won't get done first thing in the morning. Talk to other homeschoolers about their schedule, look at your personal preferences (i.e. like to have a clean house in the morning or don't mind waiting till the afternoon to do the chores) and then work out a schedule that works for you. Once you actually start homeschooling you may find that the schedule needs to be adjusted. This is a natural part of the adjustment process and should be seen as positive feedback rather than failure to plan properly. The first year will be the hardest but once you find what works for you and your family it all gets much easier.
7. **Parental Unity:** Ideally, both parents should be fully behind the idea of homeschooling. Although homeschooling can work when one parent is not completely convinced of the benefits, it all goes much smoother when both parents (especially the parent who will be teaching the children) are supportive of each other. If your spouse is not totally supportive you may want to take time to do more research, talk to more families, and find out about more options until their concerns or dealt with.
8. **Cooperative Child/ren:** A willing student is always helpful. Ultimately, the decision is the parents to make, but if your child is against it, homeschooling can become very

unpleasant for all parties involved. Parents often underestimate the reaction of their children to the choice to homeschool. In order to avoid problems keep the following points in mind.

For young children it is best to start them in homeschooling from the very beginning in order to avoid resistance. Parents may reason that it is better for the child to go to public/private school in the beginning (so that they get all the basics). However, the reality is that students who have been schooled in a group setting from the beginning and then are pulled out for homeschooling often have the most difficult time adjusting. They have never known anything other than group schooling, and the change to homeschool can be extremely frustrating and lonely for them.

For older students they may fear that they will lose friends or not be able to engage in the activities they are used to. However, they can often be won over to homeschooling by focusing on the significant benefits it has for students of their age. Some points to remind them of are the following: homeschool students can...

- make their own schedule
- work ahead of schedule if they are able to
- take it slower if needed
- become more independent and self-motivated
- more time to pursue interests/hobbies/sports
- less peer pressure
- no exposure to drugs, alcohol, dating, and school violence
- time to study/memorize the Qur'aan
- ability to travel without falling behind
- possibly finish high school ahead of their peers
- better preparation for college

9. **One Year at a Time:** Homeschooling is not a lifetime commitment - most families take one year at a time. However, keep in mind that homeschooling **is** a commitment, and those who are successful at it, did so because they did not give up. It is very detrimental to students to pull them in and out of public, private, Islamic and homeschool programs each year as you try to find what works best. Before you choose to homeschool, do your research and make sure (to the best of your ability) that this is the right option for you. Once you start you will face challenges. When these challenges come network with other homeschoolers to solve the issue and seek Allah's guidance. Also keep in mind that all forms of schooling have their challenges, so no matter where you place your child, you will always have problems to solve.

10. **Intimidated by Teaching:** If the home teacher can read, write and speak in English fluently, he/she should be able to teach his/her children. As long as you do your research and obtain quality curriculum and teacher materials that guide you through lesson planning and teaching methods, you should do fine. Get help from others if you need to and feel free to hire tutors for subjects that you are not comfortable teaching. There are many methods of homeschooling; no single method is best.

Success often comes through experience, confidence, dedication, and willingness to experiment. Many parents prefer the structure of a purchased curriculum and switch to their own tailored program once they feel more confident. Some parents opt to teach all subject areas to their children; others seek out classes or tutorials for some or all of the subjects. There are plenty of curricula and distance learning programs available to homeschoolers. You will need to have a very good idea of your child's abilities and your own educational philosophy in order to successfully integrate your chosen curriculum into your home school. There are several styles or methodologies homeschooling families embrace, these are just a few: Curriculum Packages (i.e. Calvert, Keystone, etc.), Un-schooling, Eclectic, Classical, Montessori, Waldorf, Charlotte Mason and more. Research as many methodologies as possible to find the one that best meets your needs. Also keep in mind that some children will go through the materials quicker than others; this is normal and as you work with your child you will learn to adjust the program to their needs.

11. **Academic Considerations:** Homeschooling can offer increased flexibility and academic challenge. Flexibility is particularly important for students who are accelerated (i.e. gifted) who need additional challenges and opportunities for enrichment, as well as students with learning disabilities who may need more time to grasp key concepts. The beauty of homeschooling is that parents can adjust their learning program to suit the needs of their children so that they can make the best academic progress possible.
12. **Criticism:** Many will have had to deal with the questions and "concerns" of close family relatives, friends, in-laws, even strangers in the grocery store. Homeschooling life can be a stark contrast to the cultural norm. By learning and appreciating the benefits of this endeavor, you will be able to defend your choices and help others understand what you see as beneficial in homeschooling.
13. **Marital Stress:** Mom is home all day trying to keep up with babies, toddlers, and teens. Dad is out working one, even two jobs. Grumpy husbands, exhausted moms - home-education can be stressful on a marriage. Both dad and mom will have to find some peace amidst the struggles and challenges. You will need to set aside time in the evenings after the kids have gone to bed or on weekends to spend quality time with each other. It can be just half an hour of tea and conversation, reading Qur'an and Tafseer together after Isha, or a special night to go out to dinner alone. The point is to keep your personal relationship healthily while meeting the demands of home, work and school.
14. **Why Others Began:** It is always helpful to hear why other families chose homeschooling. Maybe you will find something to relate to in their stories. There is always a personal family story why the family chose to homeschool - and it is not always for the same reasons - yet majority of the time, the ultimate goals are the same.