

Hello everyone. Today's article focuses on whether homeschool is right for you.

One of the most critical aspects for assessing the reality of homeschooling in your life is to determine whether homeschooling fits into your own personality and lifestyle. Now, I'm not going to pre-judge and say just because you have not met any of our factors on homeschooling that you are not a candidate and should summarily dismiss yourself from this community. On the contrary, homeschooling can be done successfully even if you fall short of these traits below IF your desire to teach your child outweighs any of the other traits below (just in case you're searching for a real life example of such an exception, look no further because I am one).

Top Traits for Parents to Successfully Teach Homeschool

The top traits for the parent to successfully teach homeschool are:

1. **Motivation.** This one factor trumps all others below – if you have enough of it, stop here and read my next article, “Is Homeschooling Right for Your Child?” If you question your motivation about homeschooling your child, take a serious moment to reconsider. The concept of homeschool may seem nice, studying in pajamas and getting to go on vacation with your kids during non-peak seasons, but it also requires tremendous effort and support from parents. You need to plan your lessons in advance (which can take more time than actually implementing the lessons) as well as implement the lessons. These drain valuable time away from things that you want to do. In effect, homeschooling isn't just a job; it's a new lifestyle that you need to accept. That said, nothing is more rewarding than watching Ryan's face light up when he learns something new...
2. **Patience.** Every child learns at a different pace. If your child does not learn a concept in a time period you deem acceptable, just call a short break and move on – you may be ready to teach your child, but she may not be in the state of mind to learn specifically that topic at that moment. And if you think your child is not “keeping up with the other kids” in the neighborhood, relax – your child probably understands concepts that the other kids don't understand - every child needs to find her own pace to learn. And what if your child just doesn't want to learn that whole day? I say run with it and call it a day for both of you...instead of doing core lessons, try something new and spontaneous that day like visiting a museum and have your child direct her learning for that day.
3. **Flexibility.** Related to the above, your child may not want to learn *that specific lesson* from you at *that specific moment*. When your child does not want to learn a specific lesson, having an alternate “Plan B” lesson is a good way to keep the learning going. Also, you should expect, especially in the beginning of your homeschool experience, that your homeschool schedule itself may change as unexpected appointments may de-rail your teaching time. But as you and your child settle into your new schedule, you will learn that losing a scheduled time to teach doesn't mean that you lost an opportunity for your child to learn later – you could always plan another time to teach your child since you control her lesson schedule anyway. In addition, having financial flexibility is important. Since homeschooling is time consuming, it usually means having a single-family income and having the fortitude to stick to that single-family budget.

4. Organization & Planning. It doesn't matter if you have the best curriculum in the universe, if you don't prepare your lessons by reviewing them before the lesson itself, your lesson will end up in a series of starts-and-stops, only confusing your child. So prepare for your lesson before you actually teach it. I know, it's sort of common sense, but extremely difficult to do in this world when we all have ten million things to do. Also, if you're a clean-freak, you may want to hang that at the "classroom" door. During lessons, I find that the best learning is done without interruption such that the only thing that matters at that point is teaching your child. Stopping during the lesson to clean up the desk will not help your child to better understand the lesson. Consider teaching first, then cleaning up at the end of the lesson.

Top Traits That May Have Crossed Your Mind But That We've Dismissed

So that's our list of traits that would suggest that you are prepared for homeschooling. But consider the traits that I have NOT included above, these are:

1. Minimum Education Requirements/Certification. Barring any certifications from your state, don't feel bad or inadequate if you don't think you know the difference between a factor and a multiple (keep in mind that these were taught to you by certified teachers and you forgot – so much for certifications being required to teach, especially if you can't retain any of it) – that's what planning the lessons are for. You will use this time to refresh your mind with key concepts and you will also have the answer key. Also, when was the last time you heard that you needed certification to raise your child? What really matters is that you are motivated to teach and you can explain the key concepts to your child.
2. Minimum Income Requirements. Some of you may have read that U.S. Senator John Edwards homeschoools his children and that his wife, Elizabeth, takes them to all these exotic places around the world to learn about fascinating spots which we don't think we'll ever get a chance to visit in our lifetimes. Kudos to them in their decision to homeschool and for their support for homeschooling overall. However, I wouldn't say that their multi-million dollars are required to successfully homeschool children. In fact, studies show that the amount of money spent on a homeschool curriculum doesn't seem to significantly affect student achievement scores (see my article, "How Much Does Homeschool Cost?"). Still, I would say that you will most likely have to sacrifice income potential from one spouse to engage in homeschooling. But rest assured, you can (and will) get by on a single family budget if you have proper motivation.

So now that you've had a more complete assessment of traits favorable to homeschooling, is homeschooling right for you? Only you can answer that, but I hope to have given you some key factors to think about before you step into our journey that millions are already involved in.

If you've already made up your mind that you are in fact ready for homeschooling, you have one more critical decision to make before the big jump...and that is, is homeschooling right for your child? We will cover that in my next article!

- Sun