

# ***The Family* CURRENT**

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## **Preparing for the New School Year**

*Susie Wolbe, Ed.D.*

Schools across the country are nearing their “start” date. In preparation for the new school year, families should begin putting a few processes in place that will help the year kick off smoothly. For families, this involves considering a home study area, extracurricular planning, and an open, honest discussion about the expectations for both students and parents. (Parents, take note that many of these same strategies and considerations can be helpful when used, in an adapted format, for the workplace.) A home study area should be created for the students in the family. Questions to ask might include:

*Where will each person realistically complete his/her assignments?* If they are going to be studying in their bedroom, then study areas will be created there. If they are going to be completing homework in a common area, then a container to hold all the study materials needs to be created so all materials can be moved out of the way when the study area turns back into a den or dining table.

*With the goal of never having to get up to look for anything when a student is working (brain research shows each interruption can add 20+ minutes to the time it takes to complete work, and lessens the quality of the finished product), what are the tools necessary to complete all assignments?* This might include a variety of writing utensils and types of paper, index cards, tape/glue, math needs, and, should technology be a part of the study process, an agreement about not corresponding with friends or using social media while studying. If students study with their friends over the phone or computer, using tools such as Skype or Facetime, then discussions need to involve guidelines for that, as well.

*What will be happening in the study area while children are completing schoolwork?* This is an issue that impacts the entire household. Families will need to determine guidelines regarding music, television, movies and phone calls that prove to be distracting when others are completing their work.

Extracurricular activities are also important to discuss before everyone starts signing up for the different teams and lessons that take place after school or on the weekend. It is important that children are not over-scheduled; they need down time, study time and time to receive an adequate amount of sleep. Questions to ask when considering the different extracurriculars may include:

How will the family be impacted financially (fees, uniforms, team travel) as well as with schedules (carpools, overlapping commitments, enough time to accomplish other responsibilities)?

Who wants the child to participate in a particular activity? Is it a parent, or the child? What is the reason for wanting to participate? Is it because the child has a real interest in the activity, or is it to meet a social concern?

Finally, a family may wish to establish a schedule of family meetings. Meeting together once every 2-3 weeks allows opportunities for everyone to check in with each other and voice support or concerns regarding different events. These meetings are also a time to have frank discussions about what each person expects or needs from the others during the coming school year: sharing home duties (vacuuming, taking out the trash, setting or clearing the table, laundry, cleaning rooms) or expectations for school. It could also be a time to express things like gratitude or appreciation for one another, and a time to talk about establishing a habit of self-care. Studies reveal that students who strengthen their social-emotional skills, and have some type of daily meditative practice, even taking a few minutes to unplug and just BE, develop a resilience to perform better in school, have improved relationships, experience a reduction in stress and anxiety, and are less emotionally reactive.

While nothing can guarantee a family a stress-free school year, following a specific, deliberate plan will increase the chances for greater success and happiness. And, remember, parents can use the same strategies whether working in the office or at home! And, I think we'll all agree that these plans and strategies rank high on the list of major goals for us all.

*<http://www.DrSusieWolbe.com>. Susie Wolbe, Ed.D., has spent 30+ years as an educator in public and private schools, in addition to offering private tutoring or therapy beyond the school day. She taught multiple grade levels in elementary and middle school in both public and private schools before serving as K-8 principal in a private school for 14 years. She has a B.S. and M.S. in elementary education, holds an Ed.D., in educational supervision with a concentration in curriculum and instruction, and is certified as an Academic Language Therapist and as a Mindful Schools instructor. Article retrieved from: <http://homebusinessmag.com/lifestyles/education/preparing-new-school-year/>.*

## **The Fruitfulness of Balance**

*Marilyn Rockett*

Balance, balance! You've heard experienced homeschoolers, authors, and speakers say that you have to *balance* your life while homeschooling. You wear multiple hats, keep a busy schedule, and still want to disciple and enjoy your children while you accomplish many tasks. Sounds good, and I've offered that advice as well. But what does "balance" mean and what does it look like?

Did you learn to ride a bicycle when you were young? Perhaps you started with training wheels or maybe you courageously skipped the "sissy wheels." Your parent or older sibling helped by giving you a push and instructing you to "balance" and keep pedaling. You swayed left and right, adjusting your body to stay upright and not crash. You moved, dodged, and felt what to do so you could remain on the seat and enjoy your ride. Soon you learned to swerve to miss obstacles in your path, and after practice, you could confidently sail down the street with the wind in your face and a sense of freedom in your heart.

Just one catch—the only time that bike was perfectly balanced was when you were straddling the bike with your feet on the ground and not riding it at all. You weren't going anywhere!

## **Homeschooling Balance**

Parenting and homeschooling are a lot like riding a bike. You bend, lean, and adjust. You try to balance, but it is impossible to have perfect balance always. In fact, it isn't even necessary to have perfect balance at all moments to ride the bike. An unexpected event happens and you get off track (a swerve) or you use your time unwisely and don't get the results you want (a crash), but you get up, brush yourself off, get back on the bike, and make adjustments for a smoother ride as you go forward. When you crash, you don't say you can't ride a bike; you know that the crash was a temporary setback. We see true balance when we view the complete ride with its constant movement to stay upright and move forward. The total of what you do over the course of raising and teaching your children is what matters.

So relax and enjoy the ride! I'm officially letting you off the hook, Mom, for any moment when you blew it. Look at the big picture. See how to adjust. Change what makes you crash, and when you swerve to miss an obstacle, get back on the path as quickly as possible. The overall balanced ride produces fruitfulness.

### **How Balance Looks**

Balance in each home will look a bit different, but some principles are common to all. Just as one person may own a sleek racing bike, or another a sturdy mountain bike, or another a comfortable touring bike, the package may be different but the basic principles of staying upright on the bike and riding are the same.

Balance is to know your priorities and stick to them. That may mean staying off the computer except for designated times so you can get your housework done or, conversely, leaving a messy house for the day because you and the children have an unexpected opportunity to do something fun and rewarding that perfectly fits what you are studying.

Balance is weighing choices about people against choices about mundane tasks, keeping both in perspective. Either choice (with people or tasks) taken to an extreme will sabotage your ride.

Some love to work in their homes and others run from those duties. Look for ways to simplify in any way you can. Perfectionists, relax! Focus more on people and know that you will get to the mess later. You will; you can't let it go for long. Messies, lean the other direction and get your work done. It won't magically disappear! You both will feel better about your life and the ride will be smoother.

Ask yourself these questions to get a sense of your balance: What makes you feel off balance? Is reality the basis for that feeling? What choices do you need to make to bring any part of your life back into balance (lean, sway, and adjust)?

Is imbalance in your life temporary or is it your way of life? Do you have overall balance when you look at the long term?

Seek God to know the truly important things. He is the perfect scale with which to measure balance. Confess quickly any imbalance He reveals, and seek to change that imbalance. Don't berate yourself; just work on it with His strength.

### **God's Perspective**

Raising your children and teaching them is the most important thing you will do in your lifetime. It "feels" so insignificant at times—wiping noses, doctoring skinned knees, cleaning floors, and answering the same question twenty times. Scripture says, "*Though your beginning was insignificant, yet your end will increase greatly*" (Job 8:7, NASB). *What you do on this ride lasts for generations to come. It does make a difference!*

*Balance brings fruitfulness. The fruit is sweet at harvest time. When we have true balance in our lives, the ride for our children and us is joyous. So keep pedaling!*

*Originally published in Homeschooling Today magazine July/August 2011. Article retrieved from <http://homeschoolingtoday.com/articles/>.*

## **5 Tips for an Amazing Back-to-(Home)School**

*Kris Bales*

Getting back into the swing of a new homeschool year can be an adjustment for the teaching parent and kids alike. Try these tips for a fantastic first day of school!

### **1. Start a first-day-of-school tradition.**

The first day of school for kids in public or private school is usually a big deal. If homeschooling families aren't careful, we can lose that excitement and allow the school routine to become something that we slide back into each fall. Make the first day of school exciting for your kids with a fun back-to-school tradition. If you're short on ideas, try one of these:

- **Have a special back-to-school breakfast** at home or at your favorite restaurant. Chocolate chip pancakes, anyone?
- **Make first-day-of-school photos.** Include simple props, such as a small chalkboard marked with the date and your child's age and grade level. These photos will make a priceless keepsake for parents and grandparents.
- **Take a first day field trip.**
- **Make commemorative shirts.** I know of one family who makes tie-dyed shirts on the first day of every school year.

### **2. Don't start everything at once.**

We homeschooling parents have a tendency to want to jump into the new school year with great enthusiasm. Too much too soon can quickly lead to burnout, however. Our family likes to ease into each new school year. We typically start with several core subjects and at least one fun one (think: art, music, or drama).

Each week, we add a new subject or two until we're at a full course load. This is especially helpful for year round homeschooling families since many of our kids' friends are still on break when we start. A lighter schedule during the first few weeks means we still have time to hang out with friends.

By the time we're back to a full load, most of our friends are back to school as well.

### **3. Make it a point to get outside.**

For most of us, there are still several weeks of gorgeous weather after school starts. Don't keep yourself and your kids cooped up inside! Get outside for a nature walk and start a nature journal.

Spread a blanket in the backyard for a picnic lunch and read-aloud time. Take those potentially messy science labs outside. Do a unit on astronomy for science and give yourselves an excuse to spend some time stargazing.

Plan some play dates with friends at the local playground or pool. Even homeschooled kids need recess with their friends!

#### **4. Get your kids in on the planning.**

Help your kids develop a vested interest in their education by getting them involved in the planning. Find out what topics they'd like to learn more about and what places they'd like to visit for field trips. Discover what hobbies they'd like to pursue and look for ways to incorporate those ideas into your school day as part of their homeschool electives or extracurricular activities.

Ask for your kids' input on the curriculum you're using. Sure, they've got to learn reading, writing, and math, but *how* they learn those subjects can provide space for their personal learning preferences. Some kids may prefer hands-on learning opportunities, while others prefer workbooks.

#### **5. Don't forget the traditional back-to-school fun.**

Sure your kids may like to do school in their PJ's, but that doesn't mean they don't enjoy picking out new clothes. Take your kids back-to-school shopping for a new outfit, a fun lunchbox, or a cool backpack. My kids used to love to take their lunchboxes to the park for play dates and backpacks can be handy for keeping up with each child's schoolbooks and supplies.

The school supplies are on sale, so you might as well stock up. Let your kids pick out a fun binder or stock a basket with new school supplies and a fun surprise to brighten up the school table for the first day.

It is such a privilege to be able to school our kids at home. Let's don't lose sight of that in the busyness of getting back to routine. Try a few of these tips to make the first day of school a memorable one!

*Article retrieved from: <http://homeschooling.about.com/od/parents/fl/5-Tips-for-an-Amazing-Back-to-HomeSchool.htm>*

## **Simplify your homeschool**

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## 8 Steps to Homeschool Success

You've decided that you have the time, temperament, resources, and passion to homeschool your child. Now what? With so many decisions to make, the notion can seem overwhelming. Rest assured, says Linda Dobson, author of *The Homeschooling Book of Answers: The 101 Most Important Questions Answered by Homeschooling's Most Respected Voices*. Nothing is so stringent that you need all your ducks in a row before you start." Take a deep breath and review this step-by-step timeline. It covers everything you need to know and do before taking charge of your child's education.

### 1. Research Your Homeschool Options

Begin any time, no matter whether your child is a toddler or already has several years of elementary school under her belt. Some parents find the end of one school year is a good time to start their research because it gives them enough time to investigate the details and get started by autumn. Subscribe to magazines such as *Homeschooling Today*, visit the library, read books, and talk to people who homeschool — contact or join a local homeschool organization. Educating yourself about the various routes you can take is the best way to define why you are making this decision and what you hope homeschooling will accomplish for your family. Just don't get frustrated if you don't understand everything you read or hear.

### 2. Investigate Your State's Homeschooling Requirements

Homeschooling rules and regulations vary widely from state to state. In New York, for example, parents must file an annual declaration of intent with the local superintendent by July 1 or 14 days before starting to homeschool, as well as an individualized home instruction plan. New York parents must also maintain attendance records, submit quarterly reports, and conduct standardized tests.

### 3. Join a Local Homeschooling Group

Meeting homeschoolers in your area will net you valuable information. Here you'll find other families who can answer questions, let you review their at-home teaching habits, and show you how homeschooling works for them. You can learn about age-appropriate activities your children may want to participate in, such as sports, tutoring, or small clubs that suit your child's interests. During weekly meetings, parents may opt to teach a subject such as a foreign language or a science lab to a group of students.

“The most influential of all educational factors  
is the conversation in a child’s home.”

~ *William Temple*

#### **4. Decide on Homeschool Curriculum**

Curricula can be purchased through mail order catalogues or at online stores, including Scholastic's Teacher Store (you'll need to register in order to buy). They vary from traditional textbooks and workbooks that cover reading, writing, and arithmetic to more individualized approaches that are guided by a child's own interests. State conventions and curriculum fairs, held several times each year, also showcase a variety of homeschooling publications and products.

#### **5. Create Your Homeschooling Space**

Will you be conducting classes at the kitchen table? Do you need a blackboard or a desk? How about empty wall space to post schedules, calendars, and completed work? Is there a computer nearby that's connected to the Internet? Get organized by purchasing storage cabinets and bookshelves for holding textbooks and workbooks. Baskets are also useful for keeping loose supplies under control.

#### **6. Set Specific Homeschooling Goals**

Since homeschoolers proceed at their own pace, it's important, especially in the first year, to consider what you want to accomplish. Academics are important when you set short- and long-term goals, but they are not the only component of a child's education. For example, how will your child get physical activity? When will he socialize with other children? Consider the importance of extracurricular activities such as music classes or Boy Scouts. Network with other parents — homeschooling and not — to find the best activities. Also check local community centers, houses of worship, and newspaper advertisements and listings.

#### **7. Define a Homeschooling Schedule**

Create a plan to meet the goals you've outlined. While a schedule makes some people feel hemmed in, it helps, especially in the beginning, to be organized and have a mission, says Dobson. Purchase a plan book and consider how you want to break up your child's academic schedule and each subject you want to work on. Consider how you want to break up your learning week by week too. Make time for field trips and visits to the library. And remember, flexibility is one of the key appeals of homeschooling. You can always adapt your schedule to your child's changing needs.

#### **8. Watch Out for Common Homeschooling Pitfalls**

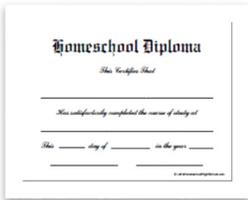
Homeschoolers say there are three issues that often stymie beginners. First: feeling isolated. Make sure you've followed the advice in Step 3 and joined a support group. It's not just for the kids, although socialization is critical for them. Homeschooling parents need to connect with likeminded adults too. Another potential problem is committing to a curriculum too early. Dobson notes that some new homeschoolers purchase an expensive packaged curriculum right away, only to find that it doesn't suit their child's learning style. Experiment for a while before you plunk down a lot of cash. Finally, know that you'll need to learn as you go. Adjusting to the freedom and flexibility of homeschooling is a challenge. There are so many ways to approach your task. Remember that you'll be defining — and constantly redefining — yourself as you go.

*Article retrieved from: <http://www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/more-school-involvement/8-steps-to-homeschool-success>*

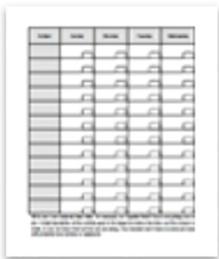


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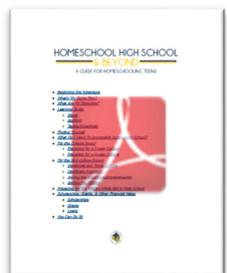
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Need help finding HS curriculum? Check out their Curriculum Directory - the web's most comprehensive directory of high school homeschool curriculum. Searchable and filterable.

## FLO TESTING SERVICE

### STANDARDIZED TESTS

California Achievement (CAT) K-12	\$37.00
CAT Survey (CS) 2-12	\$37.00
Markable CAT (MC) K-3	\$50.00
Basic Achievement Skills Inventory (BASI) 3-12	\$37.00
TerraNova 1st Edition(T) 1-12	\$30.00
TerraNova/CAT6 2nd Edition (TN) K-12	\$40.00
Practice Tests (PT) 1-3	\$3.00
S&H for Test Orders (Cont.US)	\$5.00

### TEST PREP

Spectrum Test Prep (STP) 1-8	\$11.00
Test Prep grade 9 or 10 (TP9 or TPHS)	\$11.00
Test Prep Grade 11/12 (TP11/12)	\$11.00
GED Prep	\$10.00
(No S&H charge on these items)	

*(NOTICE: WA customers pay sales tax on test preps. Tax rates can be found on the WA Dept. of Revenue website: <http://dor.wa.gov>.)*

### ASSESSMENTS\*

Checklist (CSL) K-12	\$30.00
Freestyle (FAF)	\$30.00
(No S&H charge on these items)	

\*These reports are completed by parents and evaluated by a Washington State certified teacher to document the child's academic progress according to state standards.

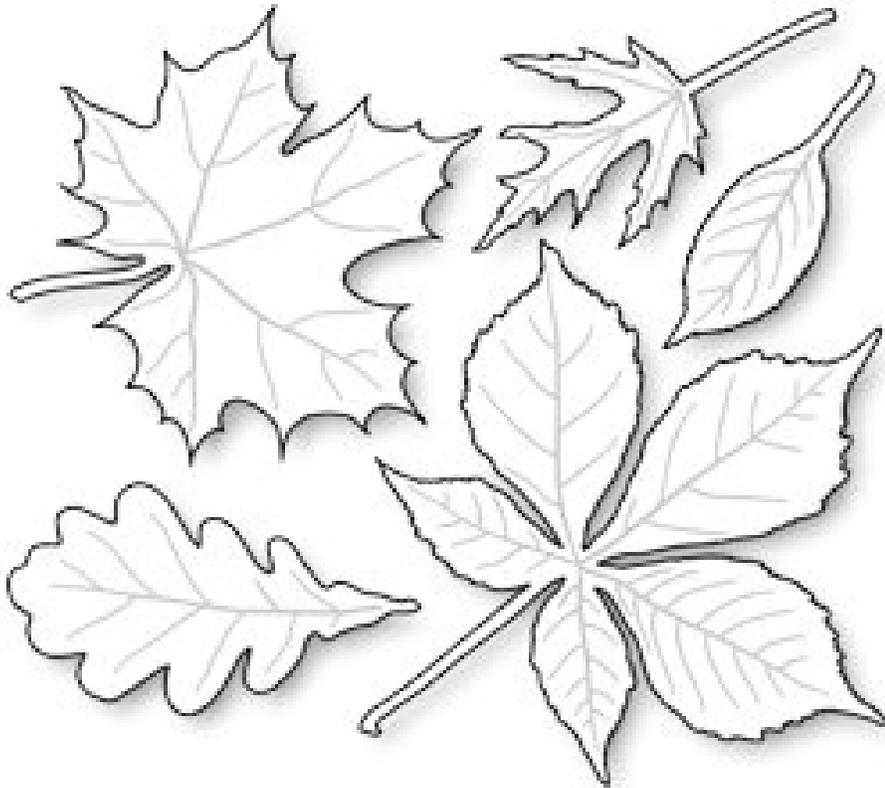
If you are unsure of the homeschooling laws in your state, go to [www.hslda.org](http://www.hslda.org) or [www.homeedmag.com](http://www.homeedmag.com) for specific state information.

“Nine-tenths of education is encouragement.”

~ Anatole France

# KID'S PAGE

Fall idea: Print out leaf templates online, color in and cut out!



## BOOKS

- Academic Homeschooling: How to Give Your Child an Amazing Education  
at Home - Tracy Chatters
- Suddenly Homeschooling: A Quick Start Guide to Legally Homeschool in 2  
Weeks - Marie-Claire Moreau, Ed.D.
- Learning Styles: A Guide for Teachers and Parents - Barbara K Given
- A Child's Garden: Enchanting Outdoor Spaces for Children and Parents -  
Molly Dannenmaier

## ONLINE RESOURCES

- [www.edhelper.com](http://www.edhelper.com) - free downloadable lessons
- [www.time4learning.com](http://www.time4learning.com) - economically-priced curriculum
- [www.kaboose.com](http://www.kaboose.com) - free lessons and craft projects
- [www.mentoringminds.com](http://www.mentoringminds.com) - books & CDs to purchase
- [www.besthomeschooling.org](http://www.besthomeschooling.org) - articles about homeschooling
- [www.homeschoolfacts.com](http://www.homeschoolfacts.com) - state laws and support groups
- [www.schoolexpress.com](http://www.schoolexpress.com) - free lessons and membership for a fee
- [www.lessonplancentral.com](http://www.lessonplancentral.com) - free lessons
- [www.sightwords.com](http://www.sightwords.com) - games, activities, curriculum, lesson plans, and teaching  
tips to prepare children for learning to read
- <http://friendoflearning.com> - over 200 free, online worksheets
- [www.communitycollegereview.com](http://www.communitycollegereview.com) - free, detailed profiles of community  
colleges in the USA

If you have found a particular book or resource to be helpful,  
and it is not on this list, please send it to:  
[martha@familylearning.org](mailto:martha@familylearning.org).

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