

Homeschooling Tips

I am April Thome, on staff at HomeLink Yakima, offering long-time tested ideas for those who are interested in homeschooling their children. These guidelines apply to all ages of students. High School requires additional considerations that will be covered separately in another workshop.

In the state of Washington, there are legal requirements to fulfill.

1. An "Intent To Homeschool" form may be obtained from the administration office located in the school district of your residence. Fill that form out and file it with the district yearly.
2. You "qualify" to home school in three ways:
 - If you have 45 college credits
 - If you have taken a 10-hour home school qualifying course (Go to www.who.com Washington Homeschool Organization)
 - If you work under a certified teacher, meeting together at least once a week.
3. You must keep immunization records.
4. You must provide and keep records of yearly student testing.

Once you qualify, here are HomeLink's 8 essential guidelines for an organized home schooling experience:

1. **Select learning resources** or texts that suit the student's academic level.
 - Know that the core subjects to cover every year are language arts, math, science and history/geography.
 - To accomplish this, you may choose an established program that provides in-person instruction in these subjects such as HomeLink Yakima, Classical Conversations or local co-op groups.
 - There are also comprehensive packaged programs such as Sonlight, Alpha Omega, Abeka or Bob Jones, among others.
 - You may choose from the numerous online options.
 - An alternative to all of this is to select your own texts and resources. Rainbow Resource is a curriculum seller that offers a huge catalog of choices with helpful write-ups about the texts and their appropriate age levels. www.rainbowresource.com
2. When books arrive, study the tables of contents to figure out how to **pace the lessons** in order to finish the books. Math is a good place to start. Your school year may last 30 weeks, or you may choose to spread out the learning over the entire year.
 - If there are 160 lessons in the book, how often should a new lesson be started in order to complete the entire book in your planned school time span? Do the same scheduling with science, then grammar and history. That way, you will have a blue print of the

year's study. If you do this, it will simplify your day-to-day plans immensely. Do not list detailed lesson plans; simply use the chapter titles or basic subject topic.

3. **Prepare a place** in the house that each student can call his own. Books and assignments can be left there and the student can count on them remaining in place for extended periods of time. Plan a **length of time** that the student can count on for studies. During that time, people should not be invited over and errand-running should not be scheduled.
4. Set a **daily start time**. If you can meet with the students to get them started each day, have an engaging activity planned that they will want to join you in. Have a book of brain-teasers, puzzles, mysteries or a Youtube cartoon drawing lesson that invites the students to join you.
5. Allow, and even insist that students **take breaks** during the day, because physical exercise will refresh their oxygen and make learning more efficient. However, make sure they move and not sit. Depending on each student's learning style, some may need moving breaks more frequently. For more information on learning styles and needs, a booklet, called [Who Are You, as a Learner and As a Student](#), can be provided by HomeLink Yakima. See the website for ordering www.homelinkyakima.com
6. **Set an end time** for lessons so students know they have limited time to accomplish their study goals. After the time is up, allow students to enjoy an activity that has been set aside for then and only then – listening to music, computer games, playing with the dog, talking to or seeing friends, watching a show. Having a favorite activity waiting until work is accomplished will provide motivation.
7. Provide **steady feedback** on the quality and accuracy of student's work. For math problems, correct them daily. Have students redo problems soon so that inaccurate learning does not become fixed. Determine if students are answering questions fully or "just getting by".
At the end of each study day, schedule a **visual display** of each student's work. This could be the task of the other parent. The work is shown and compared to the set goals for the day. From what is seen in this meeting, written guidelines could be given for the next day. Make sure the work is given as a visual display. Much student motivation hinges on this.
8. As the days and weeks go by, **save all completed work** in one box for each student. As the work accumulates, it will be layered in the box from old to recent. Do not throw anything away until the end of the year. The older students become, the more important this work-saving habit becomes. Eventually you'll implement more precise procedures, but for beginnings, one box per student is sufficient.

Along with the State Law, these are the 8 essential requirements. Next HomeLink offers 8 tips to help deepen the learning and spice up the homeschool experience.

8 Spicy Tips to Deepen Enjoyment

Regardless of whether you have employed a learning center, a co-op, packaged or online program for homeschooling, these next tips can supplement and enrich any experience.

1. Have students work on memorizing facts and passages as an on-going exercise. Whether these are multiplication tables, poems, the Gettysburg address, play scripts or Bible verses, memorization exercises the brain and is relatively easy for young people. As a later bonus, items memorized in childhood can provide information tools throughout a lifetime.
2. Have each student select a topic that interests them to research over a period of time. Include many different types of resources in the research like books, online study, interviews, museums, and experimentation. Encourage students to keep a notebook, develop projects, design artful displays, build models, write stories or reports about what they are learning.
3. Give a dictation lesson every day. Here are the steps:
Show a passage to the student from the history, science or reading books being used. The passage should be a sentence for younger students but range to a paragraph for older students.
Have the student write out the passage as a copy lesson.
The student should then underline where there are capitals, punctuation and more complicated spellings where they should pay close attention.
Give the student time to study the passage.
The student tells you when he/she is ready for the lesson.
The parent reads the passage and the student writes it from memory.
When done, give the passage to the student to correct.
If you feel it is necessary, repeat the dictation lesson.
4. Give a page of cursive for the student to work on every day. This could include the dictation lesson passage or the memorization project. Why cursive when printing is so prevalent? Students who are familiar with cursive are able to read their grandparents' handwriting, can read primary source information for research, and cursive helps bind the letters together in the mind serving as a mental strengthener.

5. Give math time-tests daily. This will give students practice in quick thinking and recall. It also helps them learn to deal with stress that time limits can cause. Having math facts memorized for quick recall help those facts become tools for higher level math skills.
6. Read classic literature or biographies during a short session each day. These are books that students quite often do not select on their own. With the parent reading these to the students in a warm, inviting setting, students will develop a familiarity with the vocabulary and begin to understand the stream of wisdom being portrayed in the story. But if none of this happens, the little ones will enjoy your company.
7. Have students take music lesson or enjoy music appreciation. Many different types of music can be studied for music appreciation – historical timeline, classical, revival and or church music, patriotic and marching, foreign and culturally-linked music, or civil war spiritual. Studying music from different eras can teach stories about the culture of the times.
8. Keep a calendar notebook for each student in which you can record observations, thoughts, reminders and suggestions for the individuals. Make yourself do this on a weekly basis. Over the weeks and months, you will be encouraged over the growth and changes in your students. Next year, the journals will serve as reference points for guided decisions. But most of all, these will be keepsakes that you will cherish.

This concludes the TIPS portion of the presentation. A script of this workshop can be printed off from the HomeLink Yakima website. The learning styles book “Who Are You as a Learner and As a Student” can be ordered from the website also.

If you have questions about your specific home school experience, you may send questions through the website as well.

For those of you homeschooling a high schooler, addition information is necessary that will be addressed in the workshop “Home Schooling the High Schooler.”

www.homelinkyakima.com

1 (800) 882-2828

Curriculum Consultation Available

Washington Homeschool Organization: <https://washhomeschool.org/>

Rainbow Resource: <https://www.rainbowresource.com/>