



Words of Wisdom

from Home School
Veterans

We recently asked the veteran homeschool parents on our Home School in the Woods Facebook page this question: "If you had a gem of advice to share with new homeschoolers, what would it be?" To our surprise, we received dozens of well-thought-out responses that were too good not to share!

(Compiled August 2020)

"One size doesn't fit all. I have schooled five children and had to tweak for all five. It's okay to not do the curriculum exactly like it is written or is suggested." — Debbie

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"Relax. Enjoy the learning. Learn along with them. Don't do public school at home." — Kimberly

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"You don't have to do all the teaching yourself. There co-ops and other networks you can participate in. These can also provide selective socialization." — Michael

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"If you don't like math, keep your opinion to yourself. If you tell your kids math is hard, it will be. If you don't know how to explain math, find someone who does (or video instruction)." — Holly

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"Replicating a public school doesn't work well. Make sure to add in couch snuggling school too! Unlock your child's learning style and they will bloom." — Tonya

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"Do not put your kids in a 'box', every child learns differently. Don't try to mimic the public school at home (making the kids sit for hours, having a rigid schedule, etc). Take time to try different things until you find what works. Don't be hard on yourself. You can do it! And most of all, have FUN!" — Cheryl

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"Don't compare to others, as in 'what should my child know in __ grade'." — Betsy

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"Meal prep!" — Lori



“There are so many lessons in life alone. Don’t get so caught up in the curriculum that you miss those life lessons. While the curriculum is important it will be those life lessons that help through the hard times.” — Amanda

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“Not everything that works for other families will work for you. If what you are doing is not a good fit it is ok to change it. ...And not everything that works for 1 child will work for the next.” — Terry

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“Relax, you don’t have to do every subject every day. You can focus certain days around certain subjects and no need to be super rigid with the clock either. Tie tasks to certain times in the day rather than times on the clock. For instance, read aloud after breakfast, subject 1 after read aloud, outside for 20 minutes, subject 2, then lunch, etc... If your read aloud is a little longer one day or a subject goes more quickly then you don’t have to rush or change the schedule you just keep moving along and some days you finish a little early and some days you finish a little later.” — Diane

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“Don’t stress about getting the curriculum done—just keep moving forward and meet your kid where they are at.” — Kim

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*“Don’t buy the desk.
Sit at the kitchen table, picnic table, lay across the area rug, sit by the pool, picnic and read on a blanket in the park.
You don’t have to finish the entire curriculum just because you bought it.
If it doesn’t work for your child/family - change it up.
Find joy.” — Monica*

▲ *This! Plus when you are struggling, take a break and bake cookies or go to a playground.*
— Jeannie

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*“Your kids work is as good as you inspect, not what you expect.
When I get lazy with the checking they get lazy with the answering.” — Courtney*

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*“For new homeschoolers this is a very overwhelming time and I suggest you just go slow and try not to cram everything together. Make a schedule, write it out, put it up on a whiteboard. I’ve used whiteboards and chalkboards in the home to teach as well as computer programs... Just go slow.”
— Fawn*

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“De-school first. Take time off to heal from the public or classroom experience. It’s not going to look like public school, and it shouldn’t. Let your kids know that so that they have realistic expectations as well. Begin slowly. Consider beginning with one subject at a time. Add another to your day when you’ve got your feet under you with the first one. This will help protect you from being overwhelmed.” — Dellaina

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“Believe in yourself, don’t doubt your abilities.” — Lisa



“Don't get homeschool legal advice from social media, especially if you are pulling your kids from public school. Look up your state laws on HSLDA or your state's Dpt of Education website. I am seeing so much incorrect information being given to new homeschoolers in my state.” — Jessica

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“Work at developing a love of learning the first year-- field trips, math games, messy science experiments, read aloud while snuggling on the couch, whatever it takes. It will payoff when they get older and the work gets harder.” — Beth

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“Do NOT let family and friends tell you how to teach your kids!!!” — Sherri

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“Schooling at home is different than home schooling. Do what works for you.” — Beth

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“You can do this! You are smart enough!” — Erika

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“Be patient, nothing is the end of the world, don't exasperate, relationships matter most and remember all of the above mentioned while setting boundaries and reasonable expectations.” — Jenny

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“Higher a tutor.” — Kim

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“Life is constantly learning.” — Dotty

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“Relax and enjoy your kiddos..... they will learn. Don't worry.” — Sheila

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“Relax. Live life. Learning happens all around you.” — Elizabeth

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“Crying into your cup of coffee after spending an hour trying to convince a 5 year old why doing their spelling is important to their future career as a velociraptor is completely normal.” — Cynthia

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“Join HSLDA!” — Kassi

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“Read aloud!” — Janna



“ Grade levels are artificial measurements for learning and are useful in a school environment where you are educating the masses. But for schooling at home it is best to look at the levels for reference, then forget measuring your kid that way if it doesn't fit.” ~ Kathy Visser

*Another tidbit for those preparing to homeschool. It is intimidating at first and the internal panic of your child "not falling behind his/her peers" is very, *very* real. However, that is a school-at-home mindset and not a homeschool mindset. You are not teaching the masses and on a deadline for standardized tests. You are teaching an individual and there isn't a deadline. I promise that if/when your kids go back to the classroom, they will be able to keep up with their peers, even if they did a different numbered level than you thought they should. Don't put your kid in a 5th grade curriculum because they would be going into 5th grade in public school. Meet them where they are at and give them Math 3, Reading 7, English 5, History 4, Science 2, etc. They will learn so much more if they aren't struggling to grab foundations they never mastered.*

You can do this! You have so many people cheering you on!

Aside from curriculum choices... these are the best things that took me forever to learn:

- You are homeschooling, not doing school at home.*
- It's a different model and you will have so much more peace if you do not try to duplicate school at home.*
- There is no "behind" in homeschool. Just stay moving forward and doing the best you can. One of the best things about homeschooling is that you can adjust course and adapt the resources to you.*
- Curriculum is a TOOL. It is not in charge. It is ok to edit and adapt it, or even chuck it to the side.*
- Your schedule doesn't have to fit the school year, it needs to fit your family. (For example, we do much better on a Jan-Oct schedule and take Nov/Dec off. It's too hot to do much outside anyway in June/July, so if we are staying in the a/c, might as well knock out some school. Plus the weather is magnificent at the end of the year and we can do all the fun holiday things and enjoy that without worrying about "getting behind" in school).*
- It will take a while to find your groove. Don't be too committed to your first plan or schedule. Give it a good try, but plan to reevaluate and reset periodically (I always try a new system for 6 weeks and then decide if it needs adjusted or tossed or kept). You are not failing if your pretty chart with the laid out color coded schedule just isn't working for your family.*
- Ease into your new routine a little bit at a time. That will help you work out the kinks and figure out routines as you go instead of sitting in a pile of books and tears at 4:30 pm on your first day. It will take a few weeks for the kids to adjust to the difference between teacher-mom and mommy-mom. It can be a rough transition at times, but keep your chin up and don't get discouraged. It WILL get better!*
- You will find you actually have MORE time and opportunities to socialize (well, you know, after the global pandemic thing clears up) and you and your kids will get to develop such rich relationships with friends.*
- Never underestimate the power of grandma days (or a trusted aunt/bestie)!! Some days we need a field trip to grandma's for cooking lessons, gardening, or crafts with grandma. So many great opportunities for time with those most important to us because of homeschooling!"*

— Kristina

