

# Beginners guide to homeschooling

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Association for Homeschooling  
Vereniging vir Tuisonderwys



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## What is home schooling?

In home schooling parents, usually a mother, teach their/her child at the child's home. South African l.a.w. make provision for three kinds of education, viz home schooling, private schools and state schools.

## The Establishment of Home Schooling in South Africa

Since the end of 1996 home schooling is expressly provided for in South African law. The [Association for Home Schooling](#) was established in 1992, when home schooling was still actively repressed by the previous government.

It was incorporated into the SA Schools Act of 1996 only after a heavy battle, also in parliament, and after the [Home School Legal Defense Association](#) of the USA exercised political pressure to have home schooling recognized in South Africa. In 1998 a legal defense fund for home education, the [Pestalozzi Trust](#) legal defense fund for home education was established in South Africa. It guards over the interests of home schoolers in the country, offers home schoolers legal protection, and offers information on the rights and obligations of home schooling parents.

Historically, therefore, legal recognition of home education came against the will of a reluctant government. As a result, education departments and officials persist in placing a wide variety of unlawful stumbling blocks in the path of home schooling families.

## Why a legal defense fund if home schooling is legal?

The new state curriculum was promulgated on the 31st of May, 2002. This curriculum purports to be the curriculum not only for state schools, but also for private schools and home schooling. Officials wrongly suppose that home schooling is also obliged to meet all the purported minimum requirements of Curriculum 2005.

All parents should be aware of the curriculum their children are being taught or will be taught at school. To obtain a copy of the curriculum, call the Education Department at 012 312 5410. Alternatively you can download it from the web page of the [Association for Homeschooling](#).

Parents should also be acquainted with the text books approved for use in schools. If they are, they will soon realise that the educational, ideological, cultural and religious slant of the curriculum does not agree with the ideals most parents have for their children.

To pass the assessment for the new qualifications, Grade 9 or GETC (General Education and Training Certificate) and Grade 12 or the GETC (Further Education and Training Certificate), pupils have to have mastered the curriculum. Parents who do not want to satisfy the illegal demands of officials, will have to appeal to the courts for protection. The task of the Pestalozzi Trust is to help parents fight the battle in court.

In September 2010, the Department of Education requested public comment for a proposed National Curriculum and Assessment policy statement. Comments on this document can be seen on the website of [Association for Homeschooling](#).

## Should I register with the Department of Education?

The SA Schools Act requires parents to register their children for education at home. This registration must be done at the provincial department of education. In practice however, most provincial departments do not have the administrative capability to register children for home education.

Some of the larger provincial departments have limited administrative capabilities to register children for home education. Unfortunately the officials in those departments have a very limited understanding of home education and the law on home education. Due to this limited understanding, these officials often require parents to meet all sorts of requirements that are not stipulated by the law. Due to this situation, more than 90% of homeschooling parents do not register with the department. It is advised that parents that do want to register with the Department of Education read the document named "*Legal issues on homeschooling*" on the website of the [Association for Homeschooling](#) (select "*Legal*" tab) and contact the [Pestalozzi Trust](#).

## Any mother can do home schooling

Mothers have been uniquely created to be able to teach their children. The function of a mother's protective mothering instinct is to protect her children, and a mother almost always knows best what is in the best interest of her children. A mother who can teach her children basic life skills, such as to say "*Please*" and "*Thank you*", can also home school her children.

**A mother does not have to be a teacher or be highly qualified.** According to extensive research done on the topic, the qualifications of the parent in home schooling do not have any influence on the performance of the home learner.

A mom needn't know everything. A mom who knows everything cannot offer her child the very valuable role model of a mother who knows that she doesn't know everything, but who isn't afraid to find out whatever is needed. Children should learn a problem solving attitude, without which they can hardly tackle life.

*"Let us look in the back of the book for the answers. Or perhaps we'll find the solution in the other textbook that we have on the shelf...; or let us give the Maths teacher next doors a call; or maybe the electrician, Oom Boet, will know - he knows his Maths! Or what about the Internet; or..."*

The problem solving ability and attitude will probably become the most important academic tools in your child's life.

## How much time does it take?

It has been found that primary school age children in home schooling on average take more or less 2 to 3 hours per day to complete all their work (homework included) and secondary school age children on average more or less 3 to 4 hours. As a result children have more time to play, read, dream, socializing, hobbies, helping in the house and in the garden, and making music. In short: they have time to live a normal life.

## Learning materials for home

There are ample learning materials available for home schooling in South Africa. Some of it have been developed locally, some imported from abroad. Some are on computer, some are partially computerised, and others make use of textbooks. Others follow a unit studies approach. A wide variety of approaches is therefore available, one for each possible situation.

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The materials available usually are easy to use, for mothers too. Many home schoolers also make use of distance education facilities, which a parent with a child in home education can use almost independently.

On the website of the [Association for Homeschooling](#) there are advertisements of curriculum suppliers as well as notices on curriculum expos in different regions.

## **Any child can benefit from home schooling**

Any child can benefit from home schooling. According to research home learners perform academically much better than their institutionalized peers. The reason seems obvious, since home schooling offers the ideal learning environment, in which there is a ratio of one on one, up till about one on six. The children get infinitely much more attention than even the most caring teacher at school is physically capable of.

## **Education for individual needs**

Home schooling is especially suited to children with special needs, eg children with an exceptionally high or exceptionally low IQ, or children with special talents, eg children who are gifted in music, sport or chess, or children with special learning needs. Most parents organize their home schooling in such a way that they provide for their children's specific needs and abilities. One does not have to do all the subjects at the same level. If a child has an aptitude for Maths, there is nothing to stop him or her to continue with the next grade's work once this grade's work has been finished. Or vice versa: if the children have not mastered this year's Afrikaans, they simply return to the previous year's books and together with their parents start looking for the cause of the difficulty.

## **Life is the curriculum**

Home schooling takes place within life, amongst people of various ages, in actual life situations. One of the most difficult things to accept when starting home schooling, is that home schooling is very different from state schools or private schools.

When you are home schooling, and a pipe suddenly bursts, the plumber's visit becomes a wonderful learning opportunity for the whole family. In home schooling one fits the academics in around Grandma and Granddad's sudden visit, or a lesson is built around the spider that the youngest discovered just outside the kitchen door.

This is because in home schooling the curriculum consists of the whole of life. The child is prepared for life while experiencing life to the full.

## **What about socialization?**

Contrary to the opinion of uninformed outsiders, socialisation in home schooling is not such a pressing problem.

The research done confirms what many home schooling parents instinctively realise, and that is that children in home schooling do not have a substantial problem with socialisation. Home learners on average see the same number of people as their peers in state or private schools. The difference is that they see people from all walks of life and from all age groups. Therefore they get on with all sorts of people, which is an excellent preparation for the modern career world, in which one seldom works

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together with a large group of people who are all precisely the same age as you are. Much rather you might find yourself part of a small group of people, of widely differing ages.

A homeschooling mother once contacted an adventure centre and received the following feedback on socialization from the organizers: *“The problem with homeschool groups is that we find that our team building and conflict resolution programmes simply fall flat as the children don’t fight! Also, the groups are usually mixed-age and the older children automatically help the younger children.”*

### What about sport?

There are many sporting opportunities for home schoolers. Besides sports like swimming, tennis, horseriding, golf and ice-skating, private clubs are increasingly being established where homeschoolers may practice athletics, rugby, netball and cricket for example. Outstanding sportsmen and women often find that they can spend more time on their sports while homeschooling.

There are a number of organizations make it possible for homelearners to take part in sport on a local, provincial, national and even international level. Visit the website of the [Association for Homeschooling](#) and click on the “*Sport*” tab for more information on these organizations.

### What does home schooling cost?

Homeschooling is often described as a very expensive vorm of education, because one of the parents must stop working.

However, if the costs associated with both parents working outside the house are taken into account, home schooling is not necessarily that expensive. These costs include tax, school fees, school uniforms, after school care, transport of the children to and from the school, and pocket money to buy food and snacks at the school, etc. etc. If all these costs are taken into account, it can happen that it costs parents more to work outside the house than they would additionally earn if both parents work.

If families budget carefully, they might find that it is not impossible to survive on one income. For families where just one parents works, home schooling can be significantly less expensive than school education. Specially for families where one parent works, and the parents live in an area where the schools are very expensive.

It is also not strictly true that home schooling families can only have one income. Because home education requires less time than school education, parents can use the additional time to work part time. If both parents work full time, but on different shifts, then it could also be possible to provide home education. Parents can also co-operate with other parents or family to share the home education responsibilities.

Parents that work from home, or run a business from home, can combine home education with work. When parents run a business from home, the children can also help in the business. There they will get a learning experience that no school can offer.

### Support in home schooling

Do not regard your curriculum supplier as your only support group. Curriculum suppliers do what their name says: they supply a curriculum or learning materials.

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Join the full spectrum of support structures. Each structure has its own function. In so doing you will receive comprehensive support as well as security, and you will improve the chances of satisfactory, successful home schooling, which will be sustainable in the long run.

[The Pestalozzi Trust](#) is the legal defense fund for home education in South Africa. It guards over the interests of home schoolers and offers peace of mind to its members. The Trust informs its members on their rights and obligations as home schoolers. We keep our members abreast of educational happenings in the country. Membership is only available to home schoolers who have not been in conflict with the educational authorities regarding their home schooling.

**Association for Homeschooling.** Since its inception in 1992, the Association for Homeschooling has promoted the recognition of the right of parents to educate their children within the family in South Africa, as it is recognised in art. 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Right which states: *“Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.”* Since 2010, the Association also promotes these parental rights in the larger Southern Africa region.

There are also associations in some regions that arrange events. Details on these associations can be found on the website of the [Association for Homeschooling](#).

Join a **local support group** or start one. For the mother it offers a shoulder to cry on, and it usually offers her new perspectives on her children's' behaviour. For children it is important to meet other home schoolers, and to realise that there are many perfectly normal children who are also home schooling!

The **tuisonderwys mailing lists** is an internet discussion group where more than 900 parents can discuss issues related to home schooling. A link to this mailing list can be found on the website of the [Association for Homeschooling](#).

## How to start

**1 Determine your goals.** Pray and reflect together as a family on your ideals for your children. What would you like your child to be like in 10 or 15 years' time? Someone who knows right from wrong? Someone who can think and act independently? Someone who can look after himself and who can work independently?

**2 Obtain information.** Obtain information on home schooling. Read up on home schooling, buy an infopack, attend information days, chat to other home schoolers, and find out what the various curricula are like.

**3 Join the support structures** to keep yourself up to date on the developments on the home schooling front and to stay part of the network of home schoolers in South Africa.

**4 Enjoy it every day,** and be thankful for the privilege to be able to work with your child. Relax, and cut back on your other commitments to ensure a stress-free beginning to your home schooling.

## How to keep it up

Home schooling is one of the most rewarding, meaningful experiences parents will ever have in their lives. For children too, every day in home schooling is a gift.

**Be prepared to change direction.** When parents start out home schooling, they should be prepared for a significant change in their own lives. They will get to know their children and themselves better, and they will learn to enjoy each other's company. They grow individually, and they do things which they never planned to learn and to enjoy. As a family the parents and their children grow much closer to each other, and life-long friendships are often formed this way.

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The role of home schooling families within their extended family and in the community usually changes, since they increasingly have to account for their choice of home schooling. In the process one sometimes makes enemies, but often unexpected friends. Often home schoolers recruit many people for home schooling solely by the example they set in their lives.

**Become involved.** As their home schooling progresses, as they become more and more involved with supportive structures, and make use of information sources, home schoolers become more and more involved in the home schooling community itself. As a result they are able to help others, and they usually also promote good education in society.

Each day in home schooling is a gift from the Lord. It is wonderful way of fulfilling your Biblical responsibilities, and to fulfill the command of the Lord in Deuteronomy 6:6ff: "*And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise...*"