



Homeschooling Do's and Don'ts

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Homeschooling can seem daunting at first, but it doesn't have to be stressful or overwhelming. Here are a few do's and don'ts that could help you along the way on your homeschooling adventure. These are merely my personal opinions from my own experiences as a homeschool mom. I hope you find these few hints helpful.

- **DON'T try to create a public classroom setting.** The only type of school setting that most parents have seen is the public school setting. That type of setting may work for a lot of students, but that is not the only setting in which a student can gain a great education. Create an environment that is best suited to your child. Each child may be different. Students don't have to be sitting at a desk to get their work done, some may need a desk but it's not always a requirement. The key is to make sure they have a quiet place to relax and avoid the stresses that are out in the world so they can focus on their lessons. For example, my son often likes to read in his bedroom or on the living room sofa. He'll find a quiet spot to relax and put his feet up and read. This includes reading his textbook materials. When the weather is nice, he will find a nice spot on the back patio to sit back and read. We don't have a big house so we don't have a specific space designated as a classroom, so when my son needs to write or use the computer, he will sit at the dining room table or at the kitchen breakfast table and do his work. He will make the space his own for the day. So if you don't have the space for a classroom or even a desk, don't worry, your child can still find a space to make their own to learn.

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- **DON'T always stick to a strict schedule.** Some students need a strict schedule, other student's work schedules can be more fluid. Some students may need a list of daily tasks, like what assignments need to be completed in a single day. Some students may need more options on how and when they would like to complete their work. For example, my son will make a list of the work he needs to complete for the week or even for the next two weeks. Then he completes the work on his own schedule, some days he has trouble focusing on school so he will work on his art or practice guitar, and then he will complete his school work in the evenings. You don't have to stick to an 8:00 to 4:00 schedule if it doesn't work. You can be flexible on when and where your child finds it easiest to focus and complete their work. The most important thing is how much your child is learning, absorbing, and understanding, not how much time they spend sitting at a desk working.
 - **DON'T be afraid to try and fail and try again.** Don't feel like you have to get it right on the first try. In our home, we have tried so many different schedules and so many different methods of schooling. If one schedule didn't work, we would tweak it until we found one that did. Don't be afraid to let your child discover the best place and time to comfortably learn. It may take a while before you and your child find your rhythm, so don't be afraid to experiment.
 - **DO give yourself time.** You don't have to jump in all at once. Give yourself time to adjust. Start with your child's favorite subjects. This will help them ease into their new learning environment. If you start with a subject they like, they will want to learn regardless of their new "classroom" setting. If you stay relaxed, your child will stay relaxed. I know it can get stressful, but giving yourself time and flexibility will make the switch to homeschooling much easier.
 - **DO think outside the box.** Be creative. Writing a paper isn't the only way a student can express themselves. Sometimes music or visual art can be a means of learning. For example, my son had to complete a science assignment on how sound waves work. Instead of writing a paper or drawing a diagram, he used a free app on his ipad to create a short animation explaining how soundwaves are amplified through the use of hearing aids. Thinking outside the box can allow your child a new avenue through which they learn new information and in turn may never forget.

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- **DO include physical activity.** Of course, I am not a medical doctor, but including physical activity as a part of your homeschooling schedule can help your child in a number of ways. We all know physical activity and exercise can help us maintain a healthy weight and prevent all sorts of diseases. But regular exercise can also help with learning. Physical activity can boost immunity, can improve mood, can increase energy levels, and can enhance emotional well-being. If you can, include nature in your physical activity. You don't have to go far to find nature. A simple walk in your neighborhood among the trees and birds can count as exposure to nature. Walks in nature can improve memory function and concentration, and can also reduce stress levels.