

Ten Things I've Learned . . . in Ten Years of Homeschooling

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When I first started homeschooling ten years ago, I quickly learned to depend upon the wisdom of experienced homeschooling moms. These ladies provided me with a listening ear and wise advice that proved true time after time. The longer I've homeschooled, the more I've added little nuggets to my own repertoire of wisdom. Here are the top ten things I have learned in my first ten years.

10. Invest in less curriculum and more educational toys. I have rarely regretted buying a good set of pattern blocks or linking cubes or games or puzzles. But I have resold more curriculum than you can shake a stick at! Make it your goal to surround your children with educational resources to create a learning-rich environment. Buy good quality art supplies so they can create whenever the whim strikes them. And fill your home with good books, too!

9. Turn off the TV, the Internet, and all other electronic devices. But leave your stereo plugged in so you can turn up some classical music or silly songs—or whatever puts a little zing in your step and a song in your heart. And don't forget to dance with your kids! Do silly dances and laugh. Dance while you make lunch. Challenge your kids to a dance-off and see who has the best moves. These will be the times they remember. Don't forget to laugh and see the humor in these days. A little laughter adds just the right seasoning to any homeschool day.

8. Don't rush your children to read by a certain age. Just because the neighbor's child is reading in kindergarten doesn't mean that is necessarily a good thing. I read at age 4 and am convinced that is why I became legally blind by the time I was in my early 20s. Raymond and Dorothy Moore's research backs this up. I pushed my oldest to read and he actually read at the same age as the ones I didn't push. For most of my children, the "magic age" for reading was around age 8. I could have saved my oldest son (and myself) many tears had I just trusted my instincts and relaxed with the reading instruction.

7. Any time you can read aloud to your kids is time well spent. Not all read-aloud sessions, however, will be picture perfect - and that is okay. Reading with kids often involves interruptions, disruption, and misbehavior. Reading with toddlers is particularly challenging, I have found! The main thing is to persevere in your commitment to read aloud regularly.

6. Math does matter. When your children are young, use the time when they are still eager to learn to drill the facts with them. Do not skimp in this area, as this is valuable time for instilling facts they will draw on for the rest of their math experience. This is a valuable investment in their education, and it will make things so much easier for them later on as they encounter higher math.

5. Schedule time for the things that fall by the wayside. If there is something that you really want to accomplish in your homeschool - learning memory verses, working on manners, reading poetry, playing more board games, training your kids to work around the house—write it down and schedule it into your day. You have to get intentional about making certain things happen or they never will.

4. A day off will not harm your children’s education forever, and it might just be the one thing the whole family needs. Sometimes a day off to just play will change the whole tone of your home. Don’t be afraid to take a day off now and then, and don’t be so curriculum-driven that you don’t allow yourself this luxury.

3. Homeschooling is hard. It is normal to want to quit, to feel inadequate, or to just not like being with your kids from time to time. Don’t beat yourself up for feeling this way. Allowing guilt to cripple you will not help your kids or the environment of your home. Find ways to beat those blues. Go outside for a walk. Take a day off, or even a week. Use some concentrated time to get organized if you need to do so. I have found that sometimes it helps me to visit our local homeschool store or flip through a catalog. This helps me reconnect with why I do what I do and helps me take my focus off the here and now. Also, seek support through your church or a local support group. Online support is another possibility, and the folks at HomeschoolBlogger.com are a great way to find that!

2. Homeschooling is huge. It takes lots of time and mental energy. Don’t diminish this fact by not giving it the space in your life it deserves. Don’t try to merely fit it into the myriad of things you may have done in the past. If you do this, you are at a higher risk of burnout. Homeschooling is just as much a calling on your life as church work or ministry. Approach this calling with the same amount of respect and reverence you would a calling to the mission field. If this means letting go of social obligations, volunteer positions, or various other duties, so be it. Trust this as God’s call on your life for this season of your life and live accordingly.¹ There is no perfect child, perfect home, perfect mom, or perfect family. I read once that “comparison is the death of contentment” and have tried to live my life accordingly ever since. The reality is we are all just doing the best we can every day - offering our meager efforts up to the Lord and allowing Him to multiply them beyond what we can ask or imagine. When we live life in this fashion, He shows up, takes our hand, and gently leads us down this path He has called us to. Each path will look different, and we all must stay on our own path, following Him every step of the way.

Biographical Information

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