

Starting On Your Homeschool Journey

BEGINNERS' SEMINAR

by Melissa Coombs

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How to Find Out the Laws for Homeschooling in Your State:

One of the best resources is the Homeschool Legal Defense Association.

www.hsllda.org/

Go to the homepage, and under the log in area find "In Your State" and click on it. Then click on the state you live in. On the right hand side of the page, you will see a link that says, "Laws: How to Legally Homeschool in Your State." It will take you to a PDF that will explain the options, laws and requirements for homeschooling in your state. Make sure you are legal!!

A Few Things You Should Know About Homeschooling (Random Thoughts From Melissa)

1. Take a deep breath and relax! You can do this! There is no one more suited to teaching your children than YOU! Heavenly Father wants you to be successful, and with His help, you can and will do an amazing job homeschooling your children! Trust in yourself!

2. Homeschooling will change your family's life. Nothing you will ever do will have a more profound effect on your child and your family's future as homeschooling. You will develop closer bonds with your children, and they will have a friendship with each other that others will envy. You will have more time to play together, laugh together, learn together, read together, and experience life together. You are going to love it!

3. Do not worry too much about what others think about your decision to homeschool (including your mom, mother-in-law, friends, sister, visiting teacher, and your child's current school teacher). You need to do what is best for your family and no one knows that better than you and your spouse! Include Heavenly Father in this process and you will be amazed at the miracles, insights, inspirations, and growth that will happen in your family.

4. Before you start homeschooling, read a good book or two about how to homeschool! There are so many out there to choose from, and you need to pick one that fits with your style and personality. I skimmed through several until I found a few that seemed to fit me. They were full of wise tidbits that

helped me get a mental picture of what homeschooling was like, and how I wanted it to be for my family. Attending a conference is also a must! :) The LDSEHE Home Education Conference has an amazing wealth of resources!

5. There will probably come a day when you are ready to throw in the towel on homeschooling and throw your kids on the school bus! This is normal. There will always be opposition in all things. There are always going to be rough days, and you will have times when you question yourself and the decision to homeschool your children. You will make it through these moments. PRAY, take a day off and just play together, remember why you decided to homeschool, refocus and start again.

6. Your house is going to get messier than usual, you will not have much personal time for yourself, and you will go crazy trying to figure out how to manage everything and keep it clean, straight and organized! It will take time, trial and error, but you'll figure it out...one day, one thing at a time. (Daily chores for the kids should be a part of their routine!)

7. One of the biggest mistakes new homeschooling moms make is creating a strict, tight schedule, with 8 hours of schoolwork planned in every day. This is not reality, and you are setting yourself and your children up for burn out and failure! Remember that you do not have a kitchen staff, a janitorial crew, a yard maintenance team, guidance counselors and a secretary. It is wise to plan to accomplish your curriculum for the year by scheduling it 4 days a week. The 5th day can give you the flex you need for doctor and dentist appointments, house cleaning, lesson planning, field trips, special projects, etc. You'll thank me for this one!

8. At least once, you will feed your family cold cereal for dinner, put your own self in a time out so you can have some personal time to calm down, cry when the school bus drives down your street, spend money on a curriculum that you end up not liking at all, wake up and tell the kids you are having a teacher work day and they can go play all day, have someone at Walmart ask why your children are not in school, and laugh hysterically when someone asks, "What about socialization?"

9. Please know: Your children will not be social misfits...they can still go to a prom...they will have friends...they will be able to be accepted into a college or university and be successful...you do not have to teach

calculus, physics or constitutional studies if you don't want to – there's amazing curriculum out there that can do that for you, and online or community college classes ...some of your most memorable days will be the ones when you threw out the schedule and read a great book all day long together, or stopped everything to serve a friend in need. There is more to learning than what you can read in a book!

10. You will find yourself wondering if you can give (and teach) your children all that they need. You will wonder if what you are doing is enough. Please realize that you are not going to teach them every single thing they need to know in their life before they graduate from your homeschool! Believe it or not, they are actually going to continue to learn even after they turn 18! I can promise you that if you make a good plan and truly do your best (even if you fall a little short of your goal) that one day you will look back on these years and realize that it was even more than you imagined it could be and that your family was blessed by homeschooling in ways that you did not comprehend at the time. The Lord will magnify your efforts, and you will not always see that in the day to day...but you will clearly recognize it one day.

Melissa Coombs and her husband, Shawn, have three sons and two daughters. They have been homeschooling for ten years.