



Home Education with The Centre for Learning@HOME

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Home Education: How Do I Get Started?

Welcome to The Centre for Learning@HOME (CFL). You are receiving this information because you have applied for either the Home Education program or the Shared-Responsibility program. In both programs the parents are responsible for the delivery of the Home Education courses; however, you will be assigned a Visiting Teacher, who will walk with you, encourage you, and provide support throughout the year. To help you get started, we have compiled information from home education teachers and parents with steps and recommendations that can help you to have a successful year.

Read through this document and spend time thinking about your family and children in light of this information. The sooner you begin planning the more prepared you will be for the upcoming year. It is our hope that this document will support your home education experience to be both enjoyable and successful.

Initial Activities:

- **Examine your reasons** for home education and know what your convictions are for your family; this is key! Ask yourself: Why do you want to do home education? What do you want your children to accomplish through their education? Are you flexible about how long you want to do home education?
- **Explore various philosophies** or styles of home education and determine what resonates with you before deciding on the program you follow and before choosing resources. Your philosophy is based on:
 - Content – What do you think is most important for your child to learn?
 - Learning Styles – How does your child learn best?
 - Method – How do you think learning should happen?
 - Approach - Popular approaches include:
 - School at Home (Home education, shared responsibility, or online)
 - Classical Education (based on the three stages of learning)
 - Charlotte Mason (based on “living” books and nature studies)
 - Unit Studies (focusing on one topic at a time and connecting the learning over several subjects)
 - Delight-Directed Studies (following the child’s passions)
 - Eclectic approach (a combination of several approaches)

- **Read** books about home education or listen to podcasts.
- If possible, talk to successful home education families. Keep in mind that no two home education programs are alike; always base your decisions on what is best for your family and don't make quick decisions based on what someone else says.
 - **Understand the non-negotiables**
 - Time:** Dedicated parent time is necessary for successful learning
 - Patience:** Lots of it is required – with yourself and your children
 - A Home Education Program Plan (HEPP):** A requirement of the government and mandatory to access funding.
 - Resources:** Provides focus, directs learning, and results in academic gains
 - Flexibility:** A necessity every minute of every day
- **Confirm your program choice** – Does the program that you chose best suit your philosophy, your child, and your family? If you wish to change or discuss your program, contact the office to talk to your FSC (Family Service Coordinator).
 - Do you want to be consistent with the Alberta Program of Studies?
 - Do you want to be partially consistent with the Alberta Program of Studies but have flexibility to direct some areas? Consider a Shared Responsibility program.

Choosing Resources for Home Education Subjects:

An important first step is to research and decide on the resources you plan to use. There are many excellent resources available. They should be chosen with care, based on the program that you have chosen and the following considerations.

- **Consider Your Child's / Family's Uniqueness:**
 - **Learning and Teaching Styles** - Identify your child's learning style and your teaching style: visual, auditory, kinesthetic? Which resources will enable them to learn and also suit your teaching style? Accept and tailor your teaching approach to your child's learning style where you can and remember there is always more than one way to teach a concept. Various websites or home education books can help you identify your child's learning style.
 - **Specific Passions or Needs** - Identify your child's passions, strengths, and weaknesses and set long term goals in each of these areas: Academic, Behavior, Character, Social, Physical Activity, and the Arts (music, visual art, drama). Balance your program to include the whole child. Write your long-term goals down on your Home Education Program Plan (HEPP).
 - **Early Learner Needs** - Consider the characteristics of early learners (K-2) when choosing resources for that age group: attention span, learning by doing, the need for play, multi-sensory and experiential tasks, and informal/formal skill reinforcement to achieve mastery.

- **Large Families / Multiple Children** - When schooling multiple children, it is helpful to teach some subjects together, including Novel Studies, Social Studies, History, and Science. Some resource choices are well suited for this. These are identified with asterisks on the **Recommended Resource Choices** list at the end of this document.

Research and Choose Resources:

- **Preview Samples** – Preview resources with your program choice in mind, don't impulse buy and don't buy everything that is recommended by others. Take time to discern the best choices for your children and your family. [Cathy Duffy Reviews](#) is a great website that can help you read about and view a variety of resources.
- **Consult with your CFL Visiting Teacher** - Your best resource for helping you through this journey is your Centre for Learning@HOME visiting teacher. Your assigned teacher will partner with you to discern the best choices before you purchase any resources.
- **Beware of Advertised 'Complete' Resources** - Avoid products such as the Complete Canadian Curriculum or the Math/English Smart workbooks. These books provide an overview of concepts only and are designed to supplement the program of a child who is attending public school and are not a thorough or complete educational resource.

Planning Strategies:

The key to a successful home education program involves planning, goal setting, research, and consultation. Planning leads to success.

➤ **Understand the Time Commitment:**

- **Parent Time:** Make it your number one priority! Be prepared to spend a significant part of your day teaching your children; avoid multi-tasking or distractions in the middle of teaching times.
 - **Daily Learning Time:** Be prepared for the time commitment required. Many people use the following guidelines: an hour of focused learning for kindergarten, two hours for grade 1-3, three hours for grade 4-6, and then 4-6 hours and beyond for older students, including direct instruction from the parent and times of independent learning. These guidelines do not include the many hours children spend reading independently, pursuing delight-directed studies, or working on activities/projects.
- **Set Goals** - Begin by setting short term and long-term learning goals, based on your child's needs. Short term goals may follow your chosen resources and could look like this: "I want Susie to be able to add double digits." Long term goals focus on the bigger picture: "I want Susie to have a basic understanding of World History." Check and adjust your short-term goals often, based on areas of ongoing weakness and signs of improvement, to ensure you are not going off track.
- **Understand Your Children's Schedule** - Teach the most difficult subject when your children are fresh and most alert and build in time for breaks from focused learning.
- **Begin Slowly** - In September, **focus on the core subjects** of Reading, Writing, and Math first,

becoming familiar with how your chosen resources are organized, establishing routines, and clearly outlining expectations. Plan to work on these subjects DAILY. When you feel comfortable with your routine, add in other subjects.

- **Create a Schedule** - Children thrive with a schedule. Establish a routine for school that works for you, outlining when each subject is covered, when you are working with each child and when they are working independently, deciding which days you work on unit studies, and when you go to the library or on a field trip. Post it so everyone can see it, and stick to it. Start on time but be flexible when your routine or schedule is interrupted by unforeseen events.
- **Consider Alternatives for Scheduling** - Social Studies and Science can be covered in 2-3 days each week. Consider a unit study approach where the entire family learns together, adjusting expectations based on age and ability. This strengthens family relationships and provides a wonderful opportunity for discussion, group projects, and book studies. Some families find a semester approach works well for these subjects.
- **Check Your Plan Each Week** - Take time each week to outline your plan for the next few days. What do you want each child to accomplish from their chosen resource in the coming week? What concepts require more review in order for mastery to occur? What supplies will you need to complete unit study projects?

Organizational Strategies:

- **Identify a Home Education Space** - Decide where you are going to do home education. De-clutter and organize your school space to allow for easy access to materials.
- **Organize Your Books / Binders / Papers** - Organize your resources, time, and tasks so you can be efficient. Dedicate space for books, papers and other materials. It is recommended to have binders/a filing system for the different subjects for each child, correspondence from the school, receipts from purchases, and assessment records.
- **Stay Organized** - Teach your children to be organized. Utilize some bins, one for each child, and insist that books are returned to their bin when finished with them. Use binders and train your children to place all loose papers and assignments in their binder daily. Have a place for work samples that you want to add to a portfolio.
- **Consider Costs** - Prepare financially. Be aware of the cost of resources, supplies, and setting up a space in your home for a school room. Budget. Get a library membership and use it! Save your receipts (to submit for reimbursement) and sell your used books when you are finished with them!
- **Reimbursements** - Familiarize yourself with the [CFL Home Education Resource page](#), that includes details about reimbursements.

Assessment and Evaluation:

- **Teach and Assess** through formal testing and informal observation, oral questioning, discussion, and demonstration. Testing and evaluating can create exceptionally deep learning experiences.
- **Plan to Mark and Give Timely Feedback** - Aim to mark assignments and lessons DAILY to determine proficiency and progress. Prompt and accurate feedback helps the student to correct areas of weakness and alerts the parent to ongoing struggles, and mastery of a concept.
- **Keep a Portfolio** of learning (a dated collection of work samples). File significant samples of the week's work, printing pictures, jotting down adventures from the past week as you will be prepared for your Visiting Teacher's visit and have a very encouraging and up-to-date record of what you have accomplished. Consistently update your HEPP with new resources used or adventures taken.

Helpful Hints:

- **Give Yourself Grace** - When beginning this home education journey, remember that a learning curve is natural; allow yourself time to settle in to this new way of life.
- **Make it Fun** – Multi-modal learning keeps learning fun. Beware of too much seat work. Try to break up your day with hands-on activities, occasional field trips, videos online that support your studies, read-aloud novels, music, or creative play.
 - Teach a French lesson and then make crepes. Teach a physics/structures lesson. Teach a history lesson and enact a battle or build a castle or watch a period movie. Showing kids that learning is fun and that you love to learn will go a long way. If you have fun, chances are your kids will too.
 - Encourage curiosity! Provide time in your schedule or plan to follow up on your children's questions. Often, a simple question can lead to exciting learning
- **Educate the Whole Child**
 - Provide time in your children's schedules for their interests and strengths. If your child enjoys art, be sure to spend time developing their skills. If your child enjoys building and construction, provide free time to explore that, or find a program that promotes their interest.
 - Socialization is important; what do you want it to look like? Assist your child in developing strong interpersonal skills. Teach him/her how to communicate and interact with others, individually and in groups as these life skills are important for success in personal and professional life. Model, instruct and role play how to interact in various situations. Provide opportunities to engage with their peer group through team sports, church groups, clubs and The Centre for Learning@HOME [events and activities](#) where/when possible.

- Take the time to teach life skills and develop good habits. The habits children develop when they are young are taken with them into adulthood, both good and bad. Manners, time management, household chores, personal hygiene, exercise, health choices, work ethic, interpersonal skills... all these and more can be developed in your home education program. Strategize teaching these life skills; don't leave it to chance.
- Aim to develop independent learners.
- **Read!** Read and read and read and read. Foster a reading culture within your family and read aloud together often. Parents can read to children, the family can enjoy audio books together, or siblings can read to one another. Reading aloud builds comprehension and vocabulary skills, especially for non-readers.
- **Enjoy Your Time Together** - Hug your kids! Laugh! Delight in the uniqueness of each child!

Possible Pitfalls:

- **Comparing Yourself or Your Child to Others.** Resist the urge to judge and compare yourself, your children and your home education program with others. Avoid the perfectly curated school rooms on Pinterest and avoid those who say their way is the best and only way to successfully educate at home. There is no ONE right way to educate at home. There are as many ways to home educate as there are families. Trust your research, your kids, and home education families you know well and admire!
- **Committing to Resources without Adequate Research** - Don't commit to a resource without adequate research or before talking with your Visiting Teacher. Ask around and discern what works for your kids!
- **Creating School-at-Home** – School at home may take many forms. Allow for a period of adjustment as you all settle into a new way of learning. It will take time to discover what works best for your family, so be flexible. Teaching your children that learning is fun is important to becoming life-long learners.
- **Overscheduling** - Try not to overschedule your children's lives with academic work and/or extra-curricular activities or you may be heading for some major overwhelm and even burnout. Schedule downtime and breaks, time at home and time out and about...that's real life!
- **Focusing Too Much Time on Areas of Weakness** – We are often tempted to spend more time on our children's weaknesses but be sure to balance their program. Do include time to focus on their strengths. Phonics and learning-to-read programs are important for late readers, but so are their strengths and interests. Don't overschedule time on their weak areas. Remember to educate the whole child.

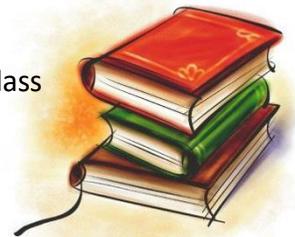
- **Feeling isolated.** Home education parents need to connect with like-minded adults too. Try connecting with other home education parents, groups, co-ops or social media to foster community for you and your family. Socialization is critical for both parents and children. Often Home Education Support Groups can provide a forum for debriefing and sharing ideas or hook up with 2-3 other families and schedule fun activities, Mom time, and even group lessons.

Home Education Program Plan (HEPP):

A Home Education Program Plan (HEPP) is a legal document required by the Alberta Government for all Home Education students and is required to be completed by September 30th of the school year. You will list all topics and resources, goals, activities, as well as teaching and assessment methods (checklist). Information about the HEPP and instructions for completing the HEPP can be found on the [CFL Home Education Resource page](#). Should you need assistance completing your HEPP, please contact your Visiting Teacher.

Suggested Resources and Books for Parents:

- Cathy Duffy www.cathyduffyreviews.com
- *Educating the Whole-Hearted Child* by Clay and Sally Clarkson
- *The Well-Trained Mind* by Susan Wise Bauer
- *Teaching from Rest* by Sarah Mackenzie
- *Consider This: Charlotte Mason and the Classical Tradition* by Karen Glass
- *A Charlotte Mason Companion* by Karen Andreola
- *Things We Wish We'd Known* by Diana Waring
- *For the Children's Sake* by Susan Schaeffer McAuley
- *Teaching Tips and Techniques Revised* by Kathryn Stout
- *The Way They Learn* by Cynthia Ulrich Tobias



Recommended Resource Choices

This is not an exhaustive list but includes some strong resource choices that will help you provide a well-rounded education for your children. Take the time to research the following suggestions before purchasing any resources to ensure that they fit with your family, your philosophy, and your child. Resource choices to consider for group teaching (more than one child) have an asterisk. Read about and view samples at [Cathy Duffy Reviews](#) or specific resource websites.

Language Arts (Reading, Comprehension, Phonics, Writing, Spelling, Grammar, Vocabulary)

- Complete programs:
 - The Good and the Beautiful www.goodandbeautiful.com
 - Bob Jones University Press (BJU) www.bjupresshomeschool.com
 - Abeka www.abeka.com
 - Sonlight www.sonlight.com

- Learning to Read and Phonics:
 - All About Reading – grades 1-4 www.allaboutlearningpress.com
 - Ordinary Parent’s Guide to Teaching Reading – K-1
 - Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons – K-1
 - Explode the Code Phonics (workbook or online version)
 - Phonetic Zoo (IEW)

- Reading and Novel Studies:
 - Teaching the Classics*, Moving Beyond the Page*, Memoria Press*, Progeny Press*, Veritas Press*, Total Language Plus*
 - Essentials in Literature (Junior High) www.essentialsinwriting.com

- Vocabulary:
 - Wordly Wise 3000 (includes comprehension, available online)
 - Vocabulary from Classical Roots (workbook)
 - English from the Roots Up*

- Writing:
 - Essentials in Writing – grades 1-8 www.essentialsinwriting.com
 - Excellence in Writing* – grades 1-8 www.excellentresources.com
 - Empowering Writers* (Mariconda) www.empoweringwriters.com
 - Writing With Ease* – gr 1-5, and Writing with Skill – gr 6-9 www.welltrainedmind.com
 - Write Shop 1 and 2* www.writeshop.com
 - Winning With Writing, Soaring With Spelling, Growing With Grammar Series

- Grammar/Spelling
 - First Language Lessons (Levels 1-4) www.welltrainedmind.com
 - Fix-It Grammar* www.excellentresources.com
 - All About Spelling (Levels 1-7) www.allaboutlearningpress.com
 - Phonetic Zoo (IEW)
 - Building Spelling Skills (Evan Moor)

Math

- JUMP Math – aligned grades 1-8 www.jumpmath.org
- Saxon Math – almost aligned grades 1-8
- Singapore Standards Edition – advanced, partial alignment grades 1-4 www.singaporemath.com
- BJU Math – almost aligned 1-8 www.bjupresshomeschool.com
- Teaching Textbooks – computer based, about ½ year behind AB Math www.teachingtextbooks.com
- Abeka Math, Horizons Math, Math Mammoth, Beast Academy – strong in Number Sense, partially aligned

Social Studies and Science

- Consider “Unit Studies” for the entire family when teaching Social Studies and Science, and “Chunks” of focused time rather than individual grade level units for each child. All of the following resources can be used or adapted for group studies.
 - The Great Canadian Adventure* (SS and Science concepts included) <https://www.bravescholar.ca/>
 - Gather Round* (SS and Science) www.gatherroundhomeschool.com
- Social Studies* (history, geography, government)
 - Story of the World, Mystery of History, A Child’s First History, Sonlight History
 - Tapestry of Grace – literature and history www.tapestryofgrace.com
 - Canada – Donna Ward resources, On a Canadian Day www.donnaward.ca
 - Geography – Passport to the World, Little Passports
- Science* (Life, Earth, Physical Sciences)
 - Exploring Creation with.... (grades 1-12) www.apologia.com
 - God’s Design series www.masterbooks.com
 - Great Science Adventures www.commonensepress.com
 - The Good and the Beautiful units www.goodandbeautiful.com
 - Real Science 4 Kids www.gravitaspublications.com

Options:

- Art - ARTistic Pursuits, How to Teach Art to Children, You ARE (videos), Art Works for Kids. How Great Thou ART
- Music - Simply Piano, Music Play (online Music programs), Yousician
- Bible - What We Believe series (Apologia)*, Faith and Life series, Catholic Catechism, The Long Short Bible Program*
- Second Languages - Duolingo, The Learnables, Mango, Rosetta Stone, Babbel

Home Education Stores and Websites:

Here are three of many reputable online stores for home education resources.

- Canadian Home Education Resources (CHER): www.canadianhomeeducation.com
- The Learning House: www.learninghouse.ca
- Christianbook: <https://www.christianbook.com>



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