

# SO YOU THINK YOU WANT TO **HOMESCHOOL?**



It is so much simpler than you think. Get started in three easy modules:

- \*MOTIVATION**
- \*CONSIDERATION**
- \*MOBILIZATION**

Brought to you by Claire Wood, from **A NOVEL IDEA:**  
Public school teacher turned homeschool mom



# Introduction:

Homeschooling is quickly becoming a viable and attractive educational choice among families. Walk through the exercises here to see what it's all about and how you can have the confidence you need to get going--quickly and painlessly.

Here you will find three easy modules to help get you started. "*Understand Your Motivation for Wanting to Homeschool*," "*Become Aware of Considerations for Your Family & Your Sanity*," and "*Take Steps to Mobilize Your School Adventure*," will thoughtfully and smoothly direct you to determine if homeschooling is indeed a fit for you, your children, and your family.

After nearly *hundreds* of inquires over the past seven years from other skeptical moms who are tip-toeing around the idea of homeschooling, I have taken the time to organize my written responses to their queries and the hours I've spent welcoming fellow moms into my home in order to coach them through the process, and I've put that information (and passion) into one convenient resource. I aim to do that with transparency, humor, efficiency, and honesty.

YES! Deciding to homeschool your children is absolutely a huge and potentially life altering decision, but it doesn't have to be complicated or full of tension, strife, and sleepless nights. By walking through the information and worksheets in these three modules, you will have:

## **a clearly articulated understanding of why you want to homeschool**

including how to prudently tell your friends, public school pals,  
and even yourself the reasons for your well-informed decision

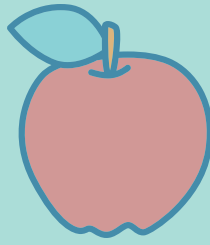
## **a thoroughly organized protocol for establishing new family rhythms**

including how to set boundaries and coordinate your calendar  
to make room for all of your priorities like keeping your house in order,  
appointments on the calendar,  
and time alone to recharge

## **a skeletal outline of first steps to getting your homeschool launched**

including an awareness of your basic homeschool style and methodology,  
and a tool to narrow the field of overwhelming curriculum choices that fit your family

# A Quick Bio:



*An apple a day keeps anyone away if you throw it hard enough.*  
-Homeschool Proverb

## **I'm Claire.**

Look. You don't know me from Adam and you're trying to decide real quick if you can trust me. I'd like to think that you can. I'm no guru but I am an informed mom who wants the very best for her kids--like you. I tend to waffle over big decisions and often times just need the confidence boost from someone else to nudge me in the right direction. That's what I hope to do with this resource--nudge you toward confidence in yourself that you are *totally capable* of successfully homeschooling your kids.

I'm 41. I have a 14, 12, and 10 year old. I have a B.S. in Secondary English Education and a M.A. in English. I was a public school English teacher for four years in a Tennessee high school. I taught the Advanced Placement students in grade 12 as well as ninth and tenth graders. Around the time our oldest was born, I transitioned from the high school classroom to a more part-time teaching role in the freshman composition sequences at my college alma mater. Since 2004 I have taught adjunct English classes to college students at four colleges. In 2011, when my husband commissioned into the Army as a chaplain, I began homeschooling our three kids; I've done this while teaching outside of the home too.

## **I Said I'd \*NEVER\* Homeschool.**

Cue uproarious laughter at life's ironies. This decision didn't come easily. I fought it. I like to say I came to homeschooling kicking and screaming. And to this day, I still kick and scream on occasion. As they say, anything worth doing is worth doing the hard way. Wait. That's not right. But here I am walking this journey daily--still figuring it out--still doing it obediently--still wondering if each year will be our last to do it--but now I'm sharing my lessons and practices I've learned along the way as a reluctant and self-proclaimed homeschooling aficionado. I want you to skip some of the difficult parts and just take advantage of the synthesis of information and experiences I've had and put them into practice for yourself.

## **I Am More Than A Teacher.**

I love my kids and family. I am super proud of their academic achievements and who they are becoming. But my whole world isn't wrapped up in this homeschooling gig. I come at this as a woman who has diverse interests and passions and I have fought hard to keep those things alive alongside homeschooling. It takes patience and perspective, but you can do that too. Homeschooling can be a fruitful addition to your repertoire; I hope you will see it that way for yourself.

# MOTIVATION



"Teach the children so it will not be necessary to teach the adults."

-Abraham Lincoln

There are many reasons for folks to consider homeschooling: a nomadic lifestyle, peer pressures and bullying, school safety, teacher burnout, and burdensome, bureaucratic testing--to name a few. Maybe you just know that there's something better out there than what you have experienced in the traditional school setting thus far.

I grew up attending public schools and I absolutely loved my K-12 school years. They shaped and formed me academically and socially. I loved it *so much*, I went to college to become a teacher myself. I started out at as a high school English teacher and I loved that too. Having a chance to shape young minds and have meaningful discussions about literature and writing was my dream. During that time I finished my Master's degree and as I transitioned to motherhood, I also transitioned away from the K-12 classroom and into the freshman college composition setting at a public state university. Hear this: *I am not anti-public school*. Far from it. I'm grateful for the availability of educational choices.

Around the time my oldest child was ready to enter kindergarten we had to make a decision about his school situation. As products of public school ourselves, my husband and I decided that it would be the best fit for our kids as well. During my son's first year of school I began to feel restless about our choice. We looked into private school at the mid-year break but determined that having three young kids (two more soon to join the school ranks), would be an expensive and costly alternative. I can honestly say that those pangs of uncertainty I had about kindergarten were the first signs that homeschooling our children would be in our future.

My emotions and frustrations about my son's kindergarten year evened out and by the time summer came, we knew he'd start back at the same school in the fall. I vowed to have a little more day-to-day involvement at the school and took on a PTA board position as well as that of a weekly classroom volunteer.

May I just say that walking into that building each week with its waxy floors, its stinky bathrooms, and overall oppression began to stir those same feelings of unease in me that this wasn't the best we could do for our son? As a kid who'd been identified as Gifted and Talented (G&T) we knew that his academic needs were beyond what his classroom teacher had the time or energy to address.

It wasn't her fault. As a fellow teacher I could empathize with her exhaustion. Overfull and under-resourced classrooms + building, district, and state testing and evaluation demands made for an impossible situation for any human to meet. Our son's teacher was completely overwhelmed and I didn't blame her. At the end of that year we moved across the country and decided that this was a good a time as any to dive head first in to home education.

Maybe your child is in a similar situation with a school or teacher that just can't keep up with all of the demands. Maybe your child isn't being challenged enough or his/her teacher doesn't have the time to devote to remediation or skill-building. Maybe it feels like your child is being overlooked for being too much or not enough in the eyes of his teacher or peers. Maybe you move around a lot.

Whatever the reason--you, too, are being stirred. Something isn't settled inside you that the current school choice you have made is the right one. You know there is something better out there--a better fit--a better way.

# MOTIVATION

**What are your top three frustrations with your current school situation? Be as specific as possible.**

1.

2.

3.

**What steps have you already taken to remedy some of the problems you have encountered?**

1.

2.

3.

**What solutions would make it possible for you to continue on in your current situation?**

1.

2.

3.



Okay. Now that you have identified some of your major issues and frustrations with your current situation, the action steps you have already taken, and ideal solutions that would appease you, now it's time to decide if you could live with those solutions long term.

*As an example, say that your fourth grader is needing an additional challenge in her math curriculum--the problem is that your district doesn't have the structure in place to move her to the academically appropriate course (FRUSTRATION). You have spoken with her teacher, the guidance counselor, and even the school principal about allowing your daughter to participate in the fifth grade math class but your requests have been denied (ACTION). The only alternative is for your daughter's classroom teacher to send her home with some extra homework problems to challenge her (SOLUTION).*

Here is where you take these three targeted issues you have written out and you take into account whether or not you can live with these solutions. If you can--GREAT. Maybe the issues aren't significant enough to push you to make a permanent school change. Maybe they aren't serious enough for you to consider homeschooling. If that's you--YOU ARE FINISHED HERE. ABANDON THIS RESOURCE AND GO BACK TO WATCHING NETFLIX.

However, if these three (or more) targeted issues have continued to stir in you and you don't believe that the current solutions are adequate, you might want to think about making a change. If these issues are significant and serious, maybe homeschooling is a viable option for you and your family to continue exploring.

While the list of potential issues could range from life-threatening and dire all the way to purely preferential--it is vital to have an understanding of what has motivated you to make this decision to homeschool. Your decision--by no means-- has to be permanent, but it is so valuable to **KNOW YOUR WHY**.

Having a concrete awareness that has been thought out and articulated is a VITAL early step in this process. Here are a few reasons why:

**There will be days you will think "what in the world was I thinking" when you decided to homeschool.** *Knowing your why* will re-direct you back to your true north. **There will be days where your sweet little kids will be nitwits.** *Knowing your why* will remind you that his/her best interest is at stake. **There will be days your friends and family members will make remarks about your decision.** *Knowing your why* will give you a few astute and concise answers as a rebuttal. **There will be days when you long for a mid-day nap/a lunch out with friends/your old job/ a little peace and quiet.** *Knowing your why* will remind you that while the days are long, the years are short and YES you can do this!

For so many people I meet who have decided to homeschool, they look at the choice and what they are WALKING AWAY FROM. Their reasons are compelling and genuine. However, I don't want you to purely see homeschooling as the vehicle or outlet that helps you WALK AWAY from something. After all, there may come a day when for whatever reasons, you decide to return to traditional school. Don't light a match and torch it all--even if just in your head. Instead, I encourage you to look at homeschooling as a vehicle or outlet that allows you to **WALK TOWARD** something fresh and new.

# MOTIVATION

**Can you make a list of TEN positive statements that encapsulate your main motivations for considering homeschooling?**

YES: By homeschooling I will allow my daughter to work to her full potential and at her own pace.

NO: I'm gonna homeschool so we don't have to spend an hour a day in that dumb car-rider line.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

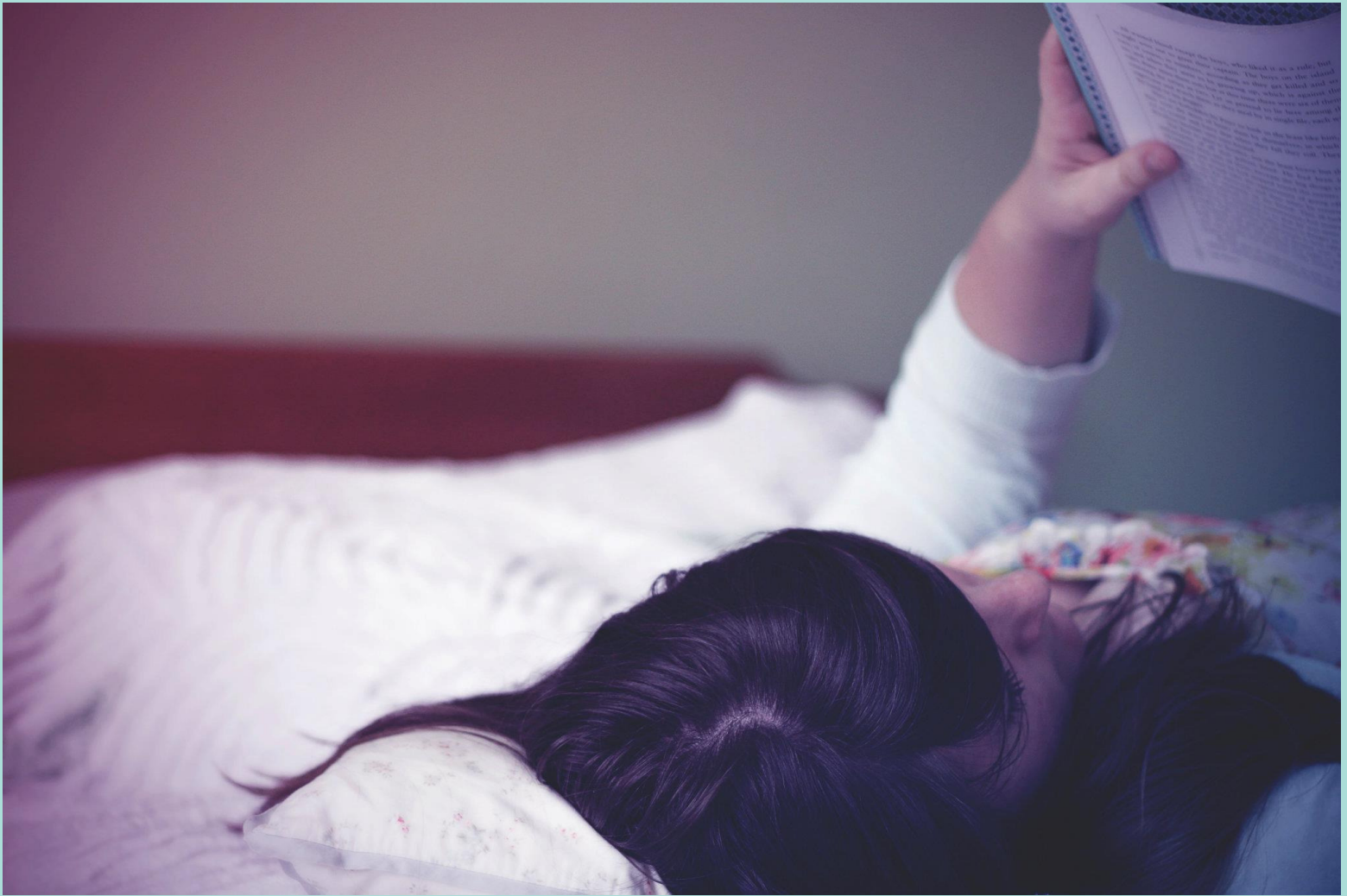
8.

9.

10.



# CONSIDERATION



"Either run the day or the  
day runs you."

-Jim Rohn

Here's the deal.

If you decide to homeschool—in the words of the wise philosopher, the Fresh Prince of Bel Air, “*Now, this is a story all about how [your] life [gets] flipped-turned upside down.*”

But seriously—going from the rhythms and routines of traditional school to homeschool is going to be a fairly significant transition for each person inside your house. Obviously considerations like working outside the home, your spouse's level of involvement, making meals, transportation of people to and from various activities and appointments, and how you fill those 8:00 am-3:00 pm hours will be affected in a big way.

You are going from having a team of professionals inside a school who help to meet the needs of your kids roughly 40 hours a week, 180 days a year to having your kids at home with you during that time *plus the time they are already in your care*—which is now 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Deep breath—I promise you will grow to love it. If you are starting with a pre-school aged child you will be building homeschooling into your day more gradually.

There are a variety of ways to consider the implications of homeschooling on your entire family. After much trial and error, I have realized that the easiest, least intimidating, most gentle and peaceful way to deal with this issue is to call it what it is—TIME and EXPECTATION MANAGEMENT.

You need to think through the **PEOPLE** in your house, the **PRODUCT** (or end result) of what you want to accomplish with your homeschooling, and the **PROCESS** by which you want to make that happen. Let us look at each of these three elements in detail.

## PEOPLE:

Another of your first steps in this exercise is to invite your spouse and children into this conversation. Your spouse may not be involved in the day-to-day operations of your homeschooling, but having his/her complete moral support is integral. Your children may not get a say or even the last word on the decision to homeschool, but having a way to express the details of this change for them will go a long way in making your transition to homeschooling much smoother and more harmonious.

In addition to the basic support and understanding of this decision by your nuclear family, it should be stated that this point in the conversation is **a good time to address expectations and re-affirm or assert your role as teacher/principal/superintendent/headmaster/administrator of this operation.** Even if you aren't feeling fully confident and convinced in your role just yet—fake it until you make it.

My husband and I are a team. I want his approval. I want his assurance. I want his financial blessing to buy as many books and go on as many field trips as I desire. I want him to tell me to keep going when I want to quit. I want him to assemble bookshelves from IKEA. I want him to give me the Teacher of the Year award at our end-of-school celebration.

But due to the fact that he isn't home or around much during our school day, I do NOT want to be micro-managed when it comes to what we are doing and how I am implementing our school activities. I like to let him skim over or at least let me tell him about our major curriculum purchases—just so he is tracking, but I don't want him second-guessing or offering an opinion my every choice.

Accountability to ensure that our curriculum helps us meet our goals and objectives is a good thing. Having to answer to every tiny detail—not so much. I see my role as the head of our homeschool as a job that I am fully capable of executing. I don't go to his place of employment and assess his decisions and remark on how he does his job there—it wouldn't be right.

I see my role in homeschooling much the same way. **This is a good time to lovingly and respectfully address expectations and re-affirm or assert your role as teacher/principal/superintendent/headmaster/administrator of this operation.**

I am the mother of my children. I am not their friend—at least not yet anyway—that comes later—years from now when my role as guide, teacher, and custodian has lovingly helped my kids reach maturity.

I'll be honest. *Any kinks you have in your parenting surrounding discipline are going to be magnified and exposed should you choose to homeschool.* You are with your children all day long and their issues and your issues will surface and demand to be dealt with. I believe that when you set the tone and expectations of your relationship properly, you can avoid many pitfalls and tears, much frustration and angst.

This advice isn't just about homeschooling—it's about parenting in general. I want my kids to grow and develop into kind adult human beings who show independence, compassion to others, and a strong sense of commitment, competence, and passion in all they do. Everything we do as parents hopefully points to that outcome.

I don't see myself as their boss or warden—I don't enjoy being heavy-handed or harsh. I love those kids more than life itself. *Truly* loving them means having a firmly established hierarchy, pecking order, and benevolent boundaries in our home.

As the grown-up—I set that in motion. **This is a good time to lovingly and respectfully address expectations and re-affirm or assert your role as teacher/principal/superintendent/headmaster/administrator of this operation.**

We have discussed spouses and kids—but if you have anyone else living in your home like a grandparent or a relative or even a pet—as simplistic and silly as it sounds—when you decide to homeschool, it will affect everything and everyone. Might as well put them on alert too.



# CONSIDERATION

Think about the people in your home. What specific potential relational pitfalls do you envision needing to plan for?

*Spouse:*

*Child(ren):*

Summarize (in one sentence) a positive statement that encapsulates your boundaries you plan to have in place as the head of your homeschool.

*Spouse:*

*Child(ren):*

Having a title helps you to compartmentalize your roles at home. Give yourself an official title as the head of your potential homeschool. It can be practical, serious, or fun. Get creative.

## PRODUCT:

Now that we have taken a serious look at the PEOPLE in our home and considered how homeschooling might impact them and our relationships with them, it is time to narrow our focus and explore the PRODUCT or end result you wish to achieve with homeschooling.

One fabulous goal-setting catch phrase I live by is to *“begin with the end in mind.”* This is essentially the idea of working backwards. Once you know where you want to end up, then you can break down the steps to get there into small, manageable goals. You will see how this crucial component will affect other decisions and choices later, but for now let us focus on looking at some big picture outcomes we hope to attain.

Whether you are considering homeschooling your kids for one year or for all of their K-12 academic lives or something in between, it is wise to take time to envision what their “success” (and yours) looks like.

Is it literal, physical survival of this experience for you and them—like no one kills anyone?

Is it to simply get through a rough patch during seventh grade where the bullying has been brutal? Are you looking to check the boxes and say you completed seventh grade work and send that boy right back to school after a break?

Is it to completely flip the switch and see your child’s education as a major paradigm shift from the way it has been done in traditional schools? You’re fed up with standardized tests! Let them learn about the real world!

I can sum up the PRODUCT or outcome I wish for with my own three kids in one phrase: *“I want to instill a life-long love of learning, discovery, and a spirit of inquiry in their hearts and minds.”*

The way I see our homeschool life playing into that is by choosing to approach this endeavor by educating the “whole child,” as educator Charlotte Mason’s methodology encourages: *“Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a life.”*

Because I know what my desired PRODUCT or desired end result is, I can begin to shape the choices in how we prioritize our time, our methods or approach, and our curriculum in such a way that will get me to my destination with the fewest detours.

I always say you don’t take a road trip somewhere unfamiliar without consulting a map. You don’t set out to hike a new trail without a compass. You must set your sights at a target on which to aim or else all of your arrows are flying in the wrong direction. Whew! That was a lot of metaphors!

# CONSIDERATION

Create (in one sentence) a definition of what a successful product or end result would be at the end of your established timeline for homeschooling?

Name three hallmarks or objectives that support the product or outcome you wish to see come to fruition in your child(ren).

1.

2.

3.

Name three distractions or detours that might threaten to take you off course. (Having them in writing helps you to be on the lookout for them so that you can successfully navigate around them and avoid them.)

1.

2.

3.



## PROCESS:

As a Type-A-give-me-all-the-pens-and-planners kind of gal, this is my favorite part of this module. We have considered our PEOPLE and the desired eventual PRODUCT of our homeschooling efforts and now is the time to get down to the practical business of our PROCESS.

I find that the most realistic way to break down organizing our process is to look at four main time frames: our year, our month, our week, and our day. I usually spend about an hour a few times each year working through this myself to accommodate the seasons and changing rhythms of life. I find that not only does it help me achieve many of my goals (both homeschool related and otherwise), but also this system allows me to utilize my time efficiently and effectively on a daily basis.

I'm famous for saying, "*Don't let your day happen to you—you happen to your day.*" You do that by long-range planning. Since you are here to determine whether or not you may want to homeschool, let us keep that our focus for the purposes of this exercise. We all want homeschooling to be a positive experience for all involved and taking time to sketch out some plans and ideas can go a long way in making that come to pass.

Most states require homeschooled students to spend 180 days doing school for a minimum of four hours each school day. That's right at 720 hours of school per academic year if you are aiming for a bare-bones school day. (And, *ahem*, there is absolutely no shame in that!)

In the grand scheme of ALL of the hours your kids are in your care for a given year, 720 hours really isn't that much time. Knowing that number gives us a framework for looking at the entire year and breaking it down into its component parts.

You've probably seen the viral video of the teacher filling a jar with a variety of large and small pebbles--proving the point that if you fill up the jar with tiny particles of sand first--you will never fit in the large stones at the end. While this is meant to illustrate the importance of priorities in life, I find that the metaphor can also be utilized to illustrate time management.

If you start with the biggest of the rocks and place them carefully and strategically--then all of the smaller components will find their spot and you will have room for the pebbles and the grains of sand too.

I see the calendar and time management much the same way. The year is symbolized by the jar--the large stones are the months--the smaller rocks are your weeks--the tiny pebbles are your days--and the sand is your hours and minutes.

**Time is finite. Spend it wisely and use it to your advantage.**

# CONSIDERATION

LOOK AT YOUR PROPOSED YEAR:

Think about your school year as a whole. Are there any major trips or events you would like to plan for? Will you take longer breaks during the spring and work through the summer? What are your goals for each of your children? What activities or classes or hobbies would you like to see them develop? Where are the top five places you typically spend the greatest portion of your time? What are some personal goals and priorities you have set for YOU? What fills you up during your free time? Are there a set number of hours each week you are obligated outside of the home? Go ahead and write in some big-picture priorities for the year. **Time is finite. Spend it wisely and use it to your advantage.**

# CONSIDERATION

LOOK AT YOUR TYPICAL SCHOOL MONTH:

Think about your school year in terms of months. Do you have any recurring monthly obligations? Is there a cool class or group that plans field trips you want to attend? Are there day-time sports or music lessons you want your kids to attend? How many times each month do you plan to cook dinner at home? What nights do you have sports, church, or scouts? Do you have any can't-miss television shows you watch as a family? Is there a fun Friday night tradition you would like to start or maintain? How many minutes each month do you hope to log running or attending book club? **Time is finite. Spend it wisely and use it to your advantage.**



# CONSIDERATION

LOOK AT YOUR POTENTIAL SCHOOL WEEK:

Visualize Friday. How do you want to feel by the end of the school week?

Accomplished? Exhausted and frazzled? While official school time is around four to six hours each day, there is still a lot of white space to fill...*or not fill*. How busy or slow do you want your week to fill? Will you join a weekly co-op or plan a day for field trips, library visits, or a P.E. class? Will you work long days four days a week in exchange for a day off? What besides school are you obligated to during your mornings? Afternoons? Evenings? How important is a tidy house or home-cooked meals? What about non-school-aged siblings? What pockets of time might they be napping or in the care of someone else? **Time is finite. Spend it wisely and use it to your advantage.**

# CONSIDERATION

LOOK AT YOUR IDEAL SCHOOL DAY:

I prefer to use the term "rhythm" over "schedule." A schedule implies rigidity, while a rhythm makes space for real life and interruptions. Do you need alone time first thing in the morning for coffee and a devotion? Do you have a baby that is up early? What time do you aim to start each day? Is it too hot in the afternoons where you live so you let the kids have outdoor time early and do school after lunch? Are there pockets where your kids can work independently and times where you are needed for more hands-on teaching? What are your freshest hours? Do you want to be at home or away from home for periods of time? Do you have any daily obligations that must be met in addition to your school hours? **Time is finite. Spend it wisely and use it to your advantage.**

# MOBILIZATION



"Education is not  
the filling of a pail,  
but the lighting of a fire."

-William Butler Yeats



So maybe that little *yearly-monthly-weekly-daily* exercise scared you to death. Maybe now you're like, "*Nah—girl—that's a lot to manage and consider.*" If that's you--YOU ARE FINISHED HERE. ABANDON THIS RESOURCE AND GO BACK TO WATCHING NETFLIX.

However, if understanding your motivations for homeschooling, and considering your people, product, and process didn't completely overwhelm you—let me give it another go with helping you wrap your mind around the various styles and methodologies of homeschooling and corresponding curriculum.

Just kidding.

My hope here is to walk you through the process of answering the question, "*So you think you want to homeschool?*" and to successfully *encourage you* to either abandon the idea altogether because of the reality of what that entails OR better still--to *embolden you* to believe that you can homeschool and that both YOU and your child(ren) will flourish.

At the same time, I don't want to paint a picture that it's all twirling denim jumpers and kids sketching quietly in their nature journals just before you prepare tea and crumpets for an afternoon of highbrow laughter where you and your children discuss the literary stylings of Shakespeare, the irony found in T. S. Eliot's poems, or the finer points of Newton's laws.

While those beautiful, idyllic moments can and do happen—most days you are reminding your kids to make sure they finish their vocabulary lessons, helping to correct their missed math problems, mediating a sibling argument because one kid is tapping his pencil too loudly for his sister—all while simultaneously cleaning up the paint and brushes from a botched lesson on the color wheel, making grilled cheese sandwiches, and on hold with the pediatrician to schedule appointments for well-visits. (*Serenity now!*)

I'll blame it on our military lifestyle, but I purposely and very intentionally used the word MOBILIZE to organize this final module. To mobilize means "*to assemble or marshal into readiness for active service; to organize or adapt; bring together, prepare for action, especially of a vigorous nature; to increase or bring to a full stage of development.*"

I promise homeschooling isn't the same as fighting a war or battle, but it never hurts to over-prepare. *Am I right?*

In order to get this thing launched and off the ground effectively you must consider your APPROACH, the CURRICULUM, and the COST.

Let us look together at each of these areas separately and in closer detail.

## APPROACH

When you think about the approach you want to take homeschooling, I always suggest putting yourself in the shoes (or chair) of your child. While it's true sometimes you have to just drudge through the drudgery--thinking through your approach in the eyes of your child will save you (and your children) a lot of heartache down the road. This will also factor into what types of curriculum you will use. As you read the descriptions below ruminate on your child's age, ability, personality, and inclinations.

A few generally accepted and popular styles or methods of homeschooling are as follows:

### **Traditional:**

Think of this as "school at home." A traditional approach means you will utilize a similar time frame (usually 6-8 hours per day) and a similar delivery style (computer or textbook heavy). This is the method of most "virtual" public schools that are state sponsored. There are many people who love this approach because it feels the closest to what your child would be doing at a traditional school. Some parents feel like this is the safest choice because largely they can order curriculum and the planning, delivery, and even some grading is done for them.

### **Classical:**

Classical homeschoolers learn certain subjects in certain delivery methods at certain times prescribed by the "trivium." There is a grammar stage, a logic or dialectic, and finally, rhetoric stage. This method is tried and true and has been around for a long time. There are many solid curriculum choices for the classical method and some would argue that traditions, culture, and knowledge of bygone eras are best preserved by this method. Another tenet of the classical approach is that it not only teaches kids *\*what\** to learn, but it also teaches them *\*how\** to learn.

### **Unschooling:**

This tends to be the approach that is student-interest led or delight-directed. There is no set curriculum and you simply let your child's imagination and the world around her be your classroom.

### **Unit Studies:**

The unit study approach is loved by families that like to group their kids together for multiple subjects. The unit study approach is thematic and the whole family would study a topic together and then develop all of their academic subjects around that topic.

### **Charlotte Mason:**

The Charlotte Mason approach is one that focuses on educating the whole child by giving him/her a very broad education. The focus is on exposing kids to living books and rich literature. This approach involves lots of outdoor time with nature study, a deeper look at art, music, handicrafts, and seeks to develop good habits in the child as well.

### **Eclectic:**

This is the approach many homeschoolers take. The eclectic approach takes pieces and styles from all of the approaches and marries them together, thus personalizing their own experience.

# MOBILIZATION

In thinking about your approach, ponder these questions. What are the ages of your kids? Maturity levels? Independence levels? How is their focus? Ability to sit for long periods of time? Level of technology use? Think of yourself. What is your level of patience? How much "hands on" time do you want to devote each day? How creative are you? What is your level of comfort with technology?

(Back to module 1, "Motivation," What is your 'why' as it relates to your child?)

(Back to module 2, "Consideration," What family or logistical concerns should be accounted for in terms of your approach?) After reading the descriptions of the six approaches above, answer these questions and jot down some ideas for which method or approach seems like the most realistic and the best fit for your family.

# MOBILIZATION

Or if you'd like to come at it from another angle, list some pros and cons of each approach as they pertain to your family's unique situation.

**Traditional:**  
**pros/cons**

**Classical:**  
**pros/cons**

**Unschooling:**  
**pros/cons**

**Charlotte Mason:**  
**pros/cons**

**Eclectic:**  
**pros/cons**

## CURRICULUM

Once you begin to narrow your ideas about which homeschooling approach most aligns with the reality of your family situation, you can begin to consider the curriculum or tools you will use to educate your kids. While I won't offer any specific products or brands here, I will warn you that there are many wonderful options out there. And those options can feel endless and intimidating.

There is no one size fits all program or product and if you aren't careful you can fall prey to the dizzying cycle of buying products and trying them out in hopes that each one will be the right fit. Let me be clear: *there is no perfect curriculum out there*. Don't be led to believe that changing from one to the next is going to be the magic little pill that makes homeschooling easy and fun. I've often heard it said that the best homeschool curriculum is the one you actually use.

These days your options for information delivery are limitless: there are books, workbooks, flashcards, lap books, kits, CD roms, internet courses, apps, you name it--you can find it. Each has its place and yet, no one curricular component is better or worse than another. **It's all about what YOU need and how YOU will utilize it in your unique setting.**

I know homeschool moms who run very successful homeschooling operations whose kids do 100% of their work online, some whose kids are up to their eyeballs in worksheets and workbooks, some whose kids' stacks of textbooks to read are taller than the kids themselves, some who have created a killer curriculum using only free library resources and online downloads--and some who use a little bit of each of these options.

Some curriculum is bundled as a grade-level set. Some comes to you brand new and shrink wrapped. Some curriculum is purchased second-hand. Some can be bought from a variety of online or brick and mortar stores. Some curriculum is purely digital. Some curriculum requires prep work on the part of the teacher and others are completely open-the-book and go. Some require the teacher to read the instructions or model the task while others are solely student directed, led, and implemented. Some curriculum requires grading and some does not. Some curriculum requires a teacher's edition, a textbook, and student workbook too. Some curriculum is large and cumbersome and some is sleek and minimal. Some curriculum is messy and dangerous (I'm thinking of the time I accidentally ingested some crystals from a chemistry experiment my daughter left on the kitchen counter in a drinking cup JUST LIKE the one I'd been drinking out of all day--*How you doin' Poison Control?*)

You get the point! There are lots of choices when it comes to curriculum. Your best bet is to simply Google the homeschooling method or approach you like and the word "curriculum" into your search bar and start browsing and reading. Look up consumer and product reviews for what you find and don't forget the power of social media. Ask people you know to give you their recommendations too. You may not hit the bullseye this way, but you will at least be pointed in the right direction.



# MOBILIZATION

Now that you are gaining clarity on your approach, it is time to begin narrowing your ideas about what curriculum will best support your homeschooling goals and endeavors. Use this space to record some of your notes about specific curricula you are interested in investigating.

## COST

We have looked at various homeschool approaches and made the connections between style and curriculum and our homeschooling goals and objectives. Now, finally it is time to consider the cost of homeschooling.

Guys, homeschooling is **EXPENSIVE**.

Let me explain. As far as actual money--you can spend a whole lot or very little depending upon your budget. There are entire websites devoted to homeschooling completely for FREE and there are products that will cost you the birthright of your first born son. ***What you value will determine what you are able and willing to pay to mobilize and operate your homeschool.***

As an example, in our homeschool, I am willing to invest substantial cost into our math curriculum because it enables me to be completely hands-off in that one subject. I am also able to use the basic program with subsequent children and only need to replace the consumable workbook as each kid reaches a new level. On the other hand, I do a lot of supplementing with library books for read-alouds and literature. It all comes down to your own personal analysis of time vs. money or opportunity/sanity cost.

When you homeschool there are other financial factors to consider. Will the teacher-parent no longer bring in income from outside professional work? Will there be fees to join co-ops or participate in athletic activities, music lessons, or field trips? Will you pay for subscriptions to media or memberships to zoos or museums? Will there be tutors? Coaches? Excessive library fines? A once a month house keeper? Extra takeout to ease your cooking burdens? It all adds up...

...and that's just the dollars and cents of homeschooling. ***The real COST to consider is that of what you, the homeschooling parent, will be both giving up and gaining.*** In some ways you may be giving up your free time, some of your discretionary income, your professional pursuits, or your margin for hobbies and passions. *I'm not trying to talk you out of homeschooling, I promise.*

However, for all that it may seem that you give up--you are also GAINING a great deal. You are gaining time with those kids you love and cherish. You are gaining an opportunity to instill in them a love of learning and passion about the world around them. You are gaining flexibility for your family. You are gaining the chance to train and shape their young minds and hearts. You are gaining an immeasurable amount of positive influence in their lives and setting them on a path for success academically, socially, and maybe even spiritually.

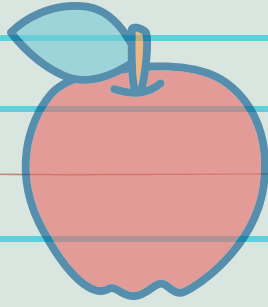
Each day I find that *I don't always LOVE homeschooling* in the moment--but I always LOVE *having homeschooled* our three kids these past seven years and counting. It is a decision I continue to choose and one that I am grateful to have made again and again.

*"Nothing that's worthwhile is ever easy. Remember that!"* (Nicholas Sparks)

# MOBILIZATION

I'm going to leave this sheet for your own personal notes and ramblings about what it will cost *you* to homeschool your kids. Think of counting the cost both financially and personally.

## Notes for the Teacher:



## FINAL WORDS & RESOURCES

I said I wasn't gonna cry-- but here I am tearing up at the very thought of this idea of deciding to jump into homeschooling whole-heartedly now seven years ago. I'm the one that is teaching my kids--but man--if *they* aren't teaching *me* too.

There are many valuable lessons homeschooling has taught me about history I missed in school, cool artists and musicians I never studied until I was an adult, about my own kids' capacity to grow and adapt, and about myself as a teacher, mom, wife, and woman.

Mostly I have learned that this world is our classroom and no matter where we live, no matter what opportunities are available to us outside of the house, no matter what kind of mood everyone is in-- EDUCATION IS EVERYWHERE AND IN EVERYTHING. ***SEMPER DISCENTES-- ever learning***. A few years back, my husband commemorated this phrase by having it engraved on a pendant for a necklace for me. It's true-- we are all ALWAYS LEARNING.

I do hope these exercises have been helpful and valuable to you in helping to make your decision about homeschooling. It isn't always easy--but it has proven to be so worthwhile for us. Each day as we plod along in our studies and habits each act feels small and inconsequential--like those tiny grains of sand. However, when I look back at the cumulative effect--the big picture--the product of our efforts--I see something remarkable and precious. When I look back on these past few years I am filled with gratitude for who our children are each becoming because of (*or in spite of*) me wearing the hat of teacher.

One last word: don't get too interested, involved, or invested in how someone else chooses to homeschool. There is no right or wrong way to do it; no one-size-fits-all *motivation, consideration, or mobilization* for homeschooling. **Trust your instincts. You know yourself and your kids best. Do what works for you the way you intuitively know to do it. You have SO got this.**

There are a million things you can Google on the web when it comes to homeschooling but I'll leave you with some of my own personal favorite sites to check out to help you in your planning.

Simply Charlotte Mason  
<https://simplycharlottemason.com>

Cathy Duffy Reviews  
<https://cathyduffyreviews.com>

Homeschool.com  
<https://www.homeschool.com>

"So You Think You Want to Homeschool" is copyrighted by Claire Wood, 2018.