

# Five Homeschooling Tips From a Successful Pioneer

Although we didn't know it then, my family was what is now referred to as a pioneer of the modern homeschool movement. I still remember being stopped at the grocery store—several years after we began our homeschool journey—being asked why I wasn't in school, inwardly wincing at the alarmed or confused look I was sure to get upon announcing my homeschool status, and then being shocked when my questioner had actually heard of such a thing.

Homeschooling is now mainstream, thanks especially to COVID-19. The 3 percent pre-COVID homeschool population exploded to 11 percent by fall 2020, the [Census Bureau reports](#). That momentum promises to continue as parents tire of school mask mandates and curriculum focused on critical race theory.

But just because homeschooling has gone mainstream doesn't mean the road will be easy for those sacrificing to give their children a solid education at home. There will be hard days where you just want to send your children back to sit in a classroom with a mask on. Don't give in to that temptation. Instead, think of homeschooling as a "TREAT," and be encouraged by these five small things that I learned from homeschooling:

## **T-Time**

When my family reflects on our homeschool memories, the many hours spent on math problems and (often failed) science experiments aren't what we remember. Instead, it's the time we occasionally took to do out-of-the-ordinary things, such as field trips to the potato chip factory and the old-fashioned radio museum, or the fancy dinner to practice the etiquette we learned. Taking a picnic lunch and a library book to the

nearby hillside and reading there for the entire day, just because the book couldn't be renewed, is one of our simplest, most favorite memories of homeschooling.

### **R--Read**

The more I research, the more I believe that parents will set their children on the path to success if they simply teach them to love reading. The reason is simple: Reading is the key to all education, and those who love reading often become lifelong learners whose education doesn't stop with high school or college. One of the easiest ways to build this love is to spend time reading out loud as a family.

### **E--Education Holes**

In recent years, it seems to have become trendy for adults who were homeschooled to scorn their schooling, saying that it wasn't effective because they "have holes in their education." I have news for those people: Everyone has holes in their education.

Your child--whether in public, private, or home school--will never know everything there is to know. But if you, as a homeschool parent, can teach him to love learning, then he will have tools to fill those holes as he heads into the world. That fact should free you as a parent from worrying over whether you are choosing the right curriculum or covering enough material--just do your best!

### **A--Advantage**

Take advantage of the flexibility homeschooling offers. It won't kill you to readjust your schedule to do school in the evening now and then or for a week in the summertime in order to take time off in the fall. My family used our flexibility to help grandparents with yard work and do service projects at church. And while it took until the latter years of our homeschooling career to figure this out, the week after Labor Day is an excellent time to plan a family vacation, as the weather is still summerlike and tourist traps are empty

because everyone else is back in school.

### **T–Teacher Care**

I'd be lying if I told you that parents aren't adding to their load when they homeschool—teaching plus parenting is hard work! Which is why it's important to avoid burnout when you see signs cropping up. One of the simplest ways to do this is to get everyone out of the house for a brisk walk whenever you feel stress rising.

Above all, don't be too hard on yourself. Chances are, you—with your love and concern for your children—are liable to do far better educating them than the public schools ever would. If you doubt this, just compare your children's annual test scores to those on the Nation's Report Card for a boost of confidence.

Lest one think that the above advice is too biased given my homeschool background, let me point you to similar advice from John Taylor Gatto, a former New York teacher of the year. In his book [\*Dumbing Us Down\*](#), Gatto wrote:

After an adult lifetime spent teaching school, I believe the method of mass schooling is its only real content. Don't be fooled into thinking that good curriculum or good equipment or good teachers are the critical determinants of your son's or daughter's education. All the pathologies we've considered come about in large measure because the lessons of school prevent children from keeping important appointments with themselves and with their families to learn lessons in self-motivation, perseverance, self-reliance, courage, dignity, and love—and lessons in service to others, too, which are among the key lessons of home and community life.

So here's to a great school year for you and yours! A few more of these, engineered by diligent parents and grandparents across the country, and we may begin to see our nation turn back to traditional values and clear thinking.

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