



GET
STARTED!

HOMESCHOOLING CHEAT SHEET

Your Quick Guide to Kick
Start Your Homeschool

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A Note From Me to You

Welcome to the adventure of homeschooling! I'm not sure what led you to this decision to educate your child at home, but I am pretty sure of one thing – you want to do you best. You want to give this thing your all...and provide your child with the best possible learning experience. Homeschooling is not for the faint of heart – there will be challenges that arise and you will need some guidance to get you started. That's why I developed this guide.

You will hear lots of advice upon starting this journey and it is easy to get distracted. My advice to you is that you settle on some sort of core principles before you begin. Why are you homeschooling? What is the purpose of education? When you have these questions answered, you will find much joy in your homeschool.

I'll help you answer those questions as well as develop a simple homeschooling mission statement. In this guide you'll choose your homeschool method, pick your learning space, create your routine, decide which subjects to teach and choose your curriculum. We'll talk about organizing your space and planning your year/term/week/day. I'll also remind you to make sure you and your spouse are on the same page, check your state laws, join a support group and pray.

If you get tripped up along the way, feel free to contact me at cindyrinna@cindyrinna.com. Be sure to subscribe to the blog, www.cindyrinna.com, for weekly emails to encourage and equip you on your homeschool journey.

Now let's...Get Started!

-Cindy

Get Started Homeschooling Cheat Sheet Checklist

- _____ Pray about it
- _____ Get on the same page with your spouse
- _____ Check state laws
- _____ Join homeschool support system
- _____ Develop a simple homeschooling mission statement
- _____ Choose your method
- _____ Pick your space
- _____ Create your routine
- _____ Decide what subjects to teach
- _____ Choose your curriculum
- _____ Organize your space
- _____ Plan your year/term/week/day

You're ready to begin!

Get Started Homeschooling Cheat Sheet

Pray about it

This one sounds a little obvious if you are a believer but it can be very easy to overlook this step. Pause for just a moment and pray over your decision to homeschool. Pray for specific help in the next steps. Involve Him in every little detail of this process.

Get on the same page with your spouse

What does your husband expect your homeschool to look like? Discuss expectations, changes around the home and the budget. Involve him in as many parts of this process as he would like to be involved with. Remember homeschool is a *lifestyle change* that will affect the whole family. We have found this to be a really great benefit but it's still something that needs to be discussed out in the open first. Most fights stem from having different expectations. Make sure you're on the same page with all the biggies and run some of the smaller choices by him to see what he thinks. It's a blessing to have dad involved in homeschooling and he has much value and perspective to add to your day!

Check state laws

Do you have to report to your local district? Have a cover school? Teach certain subjects? Be sure if your children are currently in the school system that you properly withdrawal them. Go to the Homeschool Legal Defense Association's website to find out the laws in your state: <https://hsllda.org/content/laws/>

Join a homeschool support system

I highly recommend joining the HSLDA *as well as* a local support group. Facebook can be a good place to start in looking for a local group. Check with friends who homeschool and see where they connect. Consider a co-op if you want help teaching your children or stick with a social group if you just want to hang out with other homeschool families regularly. Also be sure to join a homeschool curriculum sale group to save money on your curriculum.

Remember that this step is both for you AND your children. You need support and your children need to socialize. How much of each is certainly dependent on your family but every mom needs other moms to encourage and equip her and every child needs a group of kids to share experiences with. We were designed for relationship and a good local homeschool group will provide ample opportunities for you to do life with other like-minded families and develop true and lasting friendships.

Develop a simple homeschool mission statement

This does not have to be elaborate but it does have to be specific. Why are you doing this? Answer the question – what is the goal? Fill in this sentence:

“If my children _____ I will consider our homeschooling a success.”

Keep this page handy. This will be an invaluable motivator on tough days because yes, homeschoolers have them, too 😊.

Choose your method

Research different homeschool methods and choose to focus on the one that makes the most sense for your family. Take time to jot down each child’s strengths and challenges, as well as your own. Remember it’s okay to make small changes to accommodate what works best for your family but don’t choose a method that does not blend with the values and personalities *you already have*.

Some common methods are:

1. **Traditional:** This is pretty much school at home. Think textbooks, schedules, and tests.
2. **Classical:** A revival of medieval teaching based on the three developmental stages of the trivium: grammar, dialectic and rhetoric.
3. **Unschooling:** Also called child-led learning or delight-directed. You respond to your child’s interests by basing the curriculum around what he is passionate about.
4. **Unit Studies:** All subjects are taught through a topical or themed study.
5. **Charlotte Mason:** Literature-based, rich and vast education on all subjects.
6. **DVD/Video/Internet Schooling:** Digitally based learning.
7. **Waldorf:** Focus on educating the whole child and emphasis on the arts in early years.
8. **Montessori:** Focus on life skills and children learning at their own pace.
9. **Eclectic:** A combination of all.

Though our homeschool aligns most closely with the Charlotte Mason method, I’ve dabbled in many of these at one time or another. In fact, I’d even say some subjects are better executed with different styles. For instance, it’s pretty standard to learn math from a textbook but how cool is it to be able to take piano lessons from a virtual instructor?

Pick your space

Where will you teach? One room? Multiple rooms? In your dining room? In a spare room or office space? On the living room couch? On your back porch? At a desk? A table? All of these spaces at some point?

Evaluate what you will need – furniture, bookshelves, chairs, etc. What do you have that you can repurpose?

Remember your set up needs to fit the tone of your method. If you chose Charlotte Mason, you'll most be spending a lot of time outdoors exploring as well as snuggled up reading great books together. If you chose Internet Schooling, each child may need their own laptop and a workspace with a Wi-Fi connection.

When you envision your best day of homeschool, what are you and your children doing? What setting do you see? Now weigh this against your reality – is this practical? Possible? Does this fit the personalities of you and your children? Does this fit the reality of your home and budget? If you do not have a spare room to renovate into a schoolroom, don't feel restricted by your circumstances – just get creative and design a space that works for your family!

Create your routine

Start with what is already working. Focus on attaching homeschooling to existing pillars or putting it in between those pillars. Can you do devotionals at breakfast? Can you read aloud at lunchtime? Remember, this is an *average* day. Don't worry about specifics yet; we'll get into that when we plan the year/term/week/day. Look at your day in seven chunks and simply put a check mark where you decide your homeschool will fit:

1. Morning _____
2. Breakfast _____
3. Mid-day _____
4. Lunch _____
5. Afternoon _____
6. Dinner _____
7. Bedtime _____

Decide what subjects to teach

Does your state have any requirements? Consider the ages of your children and the homeschool method that you chose. Are there suggestions on when to teach what? If your children are in middle school, check graduation requirements and college entrance requirements in your area. A Google search should get you to the information you need.

Once you know what you *must* do, decide what you *want* to do. As I mentioned, we adhere to Charlotte Mason’s method, which encourages a vast curriculum, providing the children with a “feast” of subjects taught in short lessons. I’ve included an extensive list of Charlotte Mason inspired subjects. Do not feel compelled to include these every term or even every year. To simplify things, I’ve put them in groups. Check the subjects you’d like to include in your homeschool:

Group Work

These subjects are not dependent on skill sets and can be taught to all of your children at once

- | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| Bible _____ | Hymn Study _____ | Physical Education _____ |
| Family Devotional _____ | Literature _____ | Picture Study _____ |
| Geography _____ | Memory Work _____ | Poetry _____ |
| Habits _____ | Music Study _____ | Science - lower grades _____ |
| History _____ | Nature Study _____ | Shakespeare _____ |

Individual Work

These subjects are dependent on skill sets and require individual consideration

The Arts of Language

Listening

(Literature Read-Aloud, including audiobooks)

Speaking

(Oral Narration)

Speech/Debate _____

Reading

Early/Independent _____

Writing

Handwriting/Copywork/Commonplace Book__

Written Narration _____

Formal Writing _____

Grammar _____

Spelling/Dictation _____

Foreign Language

Latin _____

Foreign Language _____

STEM-L

Science – upper grades _____

Technology _____

Engineering _____

Math _____

Logic _____

Personal Development

Sport _____

Performing Arts _____

Handicraft/Art _____

Devotional _____

Citizenship _____

Zone Work _____

Other/Therapy:

Choose your curriculum

Now for the really fun part...choosing curriculum for the subjects you selected.

Do you want an open and go curriculum? Or do you love choosing all of your own books?

Pick the best curriculum to fit *your* family. Reference the homeschool method you chose for suggestions but remember: don’t ever be more devoted to a philosophy or a curriculum

than the person you are educating. Commit to the curriculum you choose for the entire term and be prepared to re-evaluate at the end of those three months.

Don't forget to consider what supplies will you need. Graph paper? Handwriting paper? Scissors? Art supplies? Science experiment supplies?

Organize your space

Now that you've purchased all of your books and supplies, set up your space(s) and think about your routine. Do a physical walk-through of your day and see if it makes sense. Should you move certain books to a more convenient room? Are the supplies easy for your child to reach? How will you organize your child's work? Will each child have his own shelf? Will you use workboxes or magazine folders? What makes the most sense in your home?

Plan your year/term/week/day

A good planner can be very helpful in this process but make sure you cover...

1. Your year: What subjects will you teach as a group? What subjects will each child need?
2. Your term: There are three terms in a year or four if you decide to homeschool year round. I find the simplest way to do this is by season. Fall term – or term 1 – is September, October, and November. Winter term – or term 2 – would be December, January, and February. Spring term – or term 3 – March, April, and May and finally, summer term – or term 4 – would be June, July and August. You can add or drop subjects each term – maybe you'll teach music study term 1, picture study term 2, hymn study term 3 and Shakespeare term 4. Or you could keep the subject - history, for example - but teach a different focus. For instance, you could teach ancient history all year but in term 1 focus on Ancient Egypt, term 2, Ancient Greece, term 3 Ancient Rome, and take term 4 off.
3. Your week: Will you go to the library every Monday? Do a social activity every Friday? Teach math four days or five? Write in any commitments that you already have and work around them.
4. Your day: Consider the routine you did and fill in the details of your day. What will you teach during morning time? If it's group work, which specific subjects will you teach? When is a good read-aloud time for your family? Remember if you have younger children that the core of their day should be done by lunch. Leave afternoons free for outings or activities that take more time like handicrafts.