

# Homeschooling

**Homeschooling or homeschool** (also called home education or home based learning or individual learning) is the education of children at home, typically by parents or by tutors, rather than in other formal settings of public or private school. Although prior to the introduction of compulsory school attendance laws, most childhood education occurred within the family or community, homeschooling in the modern sense is an alternative in developed countries to attending public or private schools. Homeschooling is a legal option for parents in many countries, allowing them to provide their children with a learning environment as an alternative to public or private schools outside the individual's home.

Parents cite numerous reasons as motivations to homeschool their children. The three reasons that are selected by the majority of homeschooling parents in the United States are concern about the school environment, to provide religious or moral instruction, and dissatisfaction with academic instruction at public and private schools. Homeschooling may also be a factor in the choice of parenting style. Homeschooling can be an option for families living in isolated rural locations, living temporarily abroad, to allow for more traveling, while many young athletes and actors are taught at home. Homeschooling can be about mentorship and apprenticeship, where a tutor or teacher is with the child for many years and then knows the child very well.

*Homeschooling* can be used as a form of supplementary education, a way of helping children learn, in specific circumstances. For instance, children that attend downgraded schools can greatly benefit from homeschooling ways of learning, using the immediacy and low cost of the Internet. As a synonym to *e-learning*, homeschooling can be combined with traditional education and lead to better and more complete results. *Homeschooling* may also refer to instruction in the home under the supervision of correspondence schools or umbrella schools. In some places, an approved curriculum is legally required if children are to be home-schooled. A curriculum-free philosophy of homeschooling may be called *unschooling*, a term coined in 1977 by American educator and author John Holt in his magazine *Growing Without Schooling*. In some cases, a liberal arts education is provided using the trivium and quadrivium as the main model.

## History





Frontispiece to *Fireside Education*, Samuel Griswold (Goodrich).

For much of history and in many cultures, enlisting professional teachers (whether as tutors or in a formal academic setting) was an option available only to a small elite. Thus, until relatively recently, the vast majority of people were educated by family members (especially during early childhood), family friends or any one with useful knowledge.

The earliest public schools in the modern West began in the early 16th century in the German states of Gotha and Thuringia. However, even in the 18th century, the vast majority of people in Europe lacked formal schooling, which means they were homeschooled, tutored or received no education at all. The same was also true for colonial America and for the United States until the 1850s. Formal schooling in a classroom setting has been the most common means of schooling throughout the world, especially in developed countries, since the early and mid 19th century. Native Americans, who traditionally used homeschooling and apprenticeship, vigorously resisted compulsory education in the United States.

In the 1960s, Rousas John Rushdoony began to advocate homeschooling, which he saw as a way to combat the intentionally secular nature of the U.S. public school system. He vigorously attacked progressive school reformers such as Horace Mann and John Dewey and argued for the dismantling of the state's influence in education in three works: *Intellectual Schizophrenia* (a general and concise study of education), *The Messianic Character of American Education* (a history and castigation of public education in the U.S.), and *The Philosophy of the Christian Curriculum* (a parent-oriented pedagogical statement). Rushdoony was frequently called as an expert witness by the HSLDA (Home School Legal Defense Association) in court cases.

During this time, the American educational professionals Raymond and Dorothy Moore began to research the academic validity of the rapidly growing Early Childhood Education movement. This research included independent studies by other researchers and a review of over 8,000 studies bearing on Early Childhood Education and the physical and mental development of children.

They asserted that formal schooling before ages 8–12 not only lacked the anticipated effectiveness, but was actually harmful to children. The Moores began to publish their view that formal schooling was damaging young children academically, socially, mentally, and even physiologically. They presented evidence that childhood problems such as juvenile delinquency, nearsightedness, increased enrollment of students in special education classes, and behavioral problems were the result of increasingly earlier enrollment of students. The Moores cited studies demonstrating that orphans who were given surrogate mothers were measurably more intelligent, with superior long term effects – even though the mothers were "mentally retarded teenagers" – and that illiterate tribal mothers in Africa produced children who were socially and emotionally more advanced than typical western children, "by western standards of measurement."

Their primary assertion was that the bonds and emotional development made at home with parents during these years produced critical long term results that were cut short by enrollment in schools, and could neither be replaced nor afterward corrected in an institutional setting. Recognizing a necessity for early out-of-home care for some children – particularly special needs and starkly impoverished children, and children from exceptionally inferior

homes— they maintained that the vast majority of children are far better situated at home, even with mediocre parents, than with the most gifted and motivated teachers in a school setting (assuming that the child has a gifted and motivated teacher). They described the difference as follows: "This is like saying, if you can help a child by taking him off the cold street and housing him in a warm tent, then warm tents should be provided for *all* children – when obviously most children already have even more secure housing."

Similar to Holt, the Moores embraced homeschooling after the publication of their first work, *Better Late Than Early*, 1975, and went on to become important homeschool advocates and consultants with the publication of books like *Home Grown Kids*, 1981, *Homeschool Burnout*, and others.

At the time, other authors published books questioning the premises and efficacy of compulsory schooling, including *Deschooling Society* by Ivan Illich, 1970 and *No More Public School* by Harold Bennet, 1972.

In 1976, Holt published *Instead of Education; Ways to Help People Do Things Better*. In its conclusion, he called for a "Children's Underground Railroad" to help children escape compulsory schooling. In response, Holt was contacted by families from around the U.S. to tell him that they were educating their children at home. In 1977, after corresponding with a number of these families, Holt began producing *Growing Without Schooling*, a newsletter dedicated to home education.

In 1980, Holt said, "I want to make it clear that I don't see homeschooling as some kind of answer to badness of schools. I think that the home is the proper base for the exploration of the world which we call learning or education. Home would be the best base no matter how good the schools were."

Holt later wrote a book about homeschooling, *Teach Your Own*, in 1981.

One common theme in the homeschool philosophies of both Holt and the Moores is that home education should not be an attempt to bring the school construct into the home, or a view of education as an academic preliminary to life. They viewed it as a natural, experiential aspect of life that occurs as the members of the family are involved with one another in daily living.

## Methodology

Homeschools use a wide variety of methods and materials. There are different paradigms, or educational philosophies, that families adopt including unit studies, Classical education (including Trivium, Quadrivium), Charlotte Mason education, Montessori method, Theory of multiple intelligences, Unschooling, Radical Unschooling, Waldorf education, School-at-home, A Thomas Jefferson Education, and many others. Some of these approaches, particularly unit studies, Montessori, and Waldorf, are also available in private or public school settings.

It is not uncommon for the student to experience more than one approach as the family discovers what works best for them. Many families do choose an **eclectic approach**. For sources of curricula and books, "Homeschooling in the United States: 2003" found that 78 percent utilized "a public library"; 77 percent used "a homeschooling catalog, publisher, or individual specialist"; 68 percent used "retail bookstore or other store"; 60 percent used "an

education publisher that was not affiliated with homeschooling." "Approximately half" used curriculum or books from "a homeschooling organization", 37 percent from a "church, synagogue or other religious institution" and 23 percent from "their local public school or district." 41 percent in 2003 utilized some sort of distance learning, approximately 20 percent by "television, video or radio"; 19 percent via "Internet, e-mail, or the World Wide Web"; and 15 percent taking a "correspondence course by mail designed specifically for homeschoolers."

Individual governmental units, e. g. states and local districts, vary in official curriculum and attendance requirements.

## **Unit studies**

The **unit study approach** incorporates several subjects, such as art, history, math, science, geography and other curriculum subjects, around the context of one topical theme, like water, animals, American slavery, or ancient Rome. For example, a unit study of Native Americans could combine age-appropriate lessons in: social studies, how different tribes lived prior to colonization vs. today; art, making patterns or artifacts influenced by Native American decorative crafts; history (of Native Americans in the U.S.); reading from a special reading list; and the science of plants used by Native Americans.

Unit studies are particularly helpful for teaching multiple grade levels simultaneously, as the topic can easily be adjusted (i.e. from an 8th grader detailing and labeling a spider's anatomy to an elementary student drawing a picture of a spider on its web). As it is generally the case that in a given "homeschool" very few students are spread out among the grade levels, the unit study approach is an attractive option.

## **All-in-one curricula**

**All-in-one homeschooling curricula** (variously known as "school-at-home", "The Traditional Approach", "school-in-a-box" or "The Structured Approach"), are methods of homeschooling in which the curriculum and homework of the student are similar or identical to what would be taught in a public or private school; as one example, the same textbooks used in conventional schools are often used. These are comprehensive packages that contain all of the needed books and materials for the whole year. These materials are based on the same subject-area expectations as publicly run schools which allows for easy transition back into the school system. These are among the more expensive options for homeschooling, but they require minimal preparation and are easy to use. Step-by-step instructions and extensive teaching guides are provided. Some include tests or access information for remote testing. Many of these programs allow students to obtain an accredited high school diploma.

## **Unschooling and natural learning**

Some people use the terms "unschooling" or "radical unschooling" to describe all methods of education that are not based in a school.

"Natural learning" refers to a type of learning-on-demand where children pursue knowledge based on their interests and parents take an active part in facilitating activities and experiences conducive to learning but do not rely heavily on textbooks or spend much time "teaching", looking instead for "learning moments" throughout their daily activities. Parents see their role

as that of affirming through positive feedback and modeling the necessary skills, and the child's role as being responsible for asking and learning.

The term "unschooling" as coined by John Holt describes an approach in which parents do not authoritatively direct the child's education, but interact with the child following the child's own interests, leaving them free to explore and learn as their interests lead. "Unschooling" does not indicate that the child is not being educated, but that the child is not being "schooled", or educated in a rigid school-type manner. Holt asserted that children learn through the experiences of life, and he encouraged parents to live their lives with their child. Also known as interest-led or child-led learning, unschooling attempts to follow opportunities as they arise in real life, through which a child will learn without coercion. An unschooled child may utilize texts or classroom instruction, but these are not considered central to education. Holt asserted that there is no specific body of knowledge that is, or should be, required of a child.

"Unschooling" should not be confused with "deschooling," which may be used to indicate an anti-"institutional school" philosophy, or a period or form of deprogramming for children or parents who have previously been schooled.

Both unschooling and natural learning advocates believe that children learn best by doing; a child may learn reading to further an interest about history or other cultures, or math skills by operating a small business or sharing in family finances. They may learn animal husbandry keeping dairy goats or meat rabbits, botany tending a kitchen garden, chemistry to understand the operation of firearms or the internal combustion engine, or politics and local history by following a zoning or historical-status dispute. While any type of homeschoolers may also use these methods, the unschooled child initiates these learning activities. The natural learner participates with parents and others in learning together.

## **Autonomous learning**

*Autonomous learning* is a school of education which sees learners as individuals who can and should be autonomous i.e. be responsible for their own learning climate.

Autonomous education helps students develop their self-consciousness, vision, practicality and freedom of discussion. These attributes serve to aid the student in his/her independent learning.

Autonomous learning is very popular with those who home educate their children. The child usually gets to decide what projects they wish to tackle or what interests to pursue. In home education this can be instead of or in addition to regular subjects like doing math or English.

## **Homeschool cooperatives**

A **Homeschool Cooperative** is a cooperative of families who homeschool their children. It provides an opportunity for children to learn from other parents who are more specialized in certain areas or subjects. Co-ops also provide social interaction for homeschooled children. They may take lessons together or go on field trips. Some co-ops also offer events such as prom and graduation for homeschoolers.

Homeschoolers are beginning to utilize Web 2.0 as a way to simulate homeschool cooperatives online. With social networks homeschoolers can chat, discuss threads in forums, share information and tips, and even participate in online classes via blackboard systems similar to those used by colleges.

<b>Reason for homeschooling</b>	<b>Number of homeschooled students</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b><u>s.e.</u></b>
Can give child better education at home	415,000	48.9	3.79
Religious reason	327,000	38.4	4.44
Poor learning environment at school	218,000	25.6	3.44
Family reasons	143,000	16.8	2.79
To develop character/morality	128,000	15.1	3.39
Object to what school teaches	103,000	12.1	2.11
School does not challenge child	98,000	11.6	2.39
Other problems with available schools	76,000	9.0	2.40
Child has special needs/disability	69,000	8.2	1.89
Transportation/convenience	23,000	2.7	1.48
Child not old enough to enter school	15,000	1.8	1.13
Parent's career	12,000	1.5	0.80
Could not get into desired school	12,000	1.5	0.99
Other reasons*	189,000	22.2	2.90

Parents give many different reasons for homeschooling their children. In the 2003 and 2007 NHES, parents were asked whether particular reasons for homeschooling their children applied to them. The three reasons selected by parents of more than two-thirds of students were concern about the school environment, to provide religious or moral instruction, and dissatisfaction with the academic instruction available at other schools. From 2003 to 2007, the percentage of students whose parents reported homeschooling to provide religious or moral instruction increased from 72 percent to 83 percent. In 2007, the most common reason parents gave as the most important was a desire to provide religious or moral instruction (36 percent of students). This reason was followed by a concern about the school environment (such as safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure) (21 percent), dissatisfaction with academic instruction (17 percent), and "other reasons" including family time, finances, travel, and distance (14 percent). Other reasons include more flexibility in educational practices and family core stability for children with learning disabilities or prolonged chronic illnesses, or for children of missionaries, military families, or families who move often, as frequently as every two years.

## **Criticism**

Critics claim the studies that show that homeschooled students do better on standardized tests compare voluntary homeschool testing with mandatory public-school testing.

By contrast, SAT and ACT tests are self-selected by homeschooled and formally schooled students alike. Homeschoolers averaged higher scores on these college entrance tests in South Carolina. Other scores (1999 data) showed mixed results, for example showing higher levels

for homeschoolers in English (homeschooled 23.4 vs national average 20.5) and reading (homeschooled 24.4 vs national average 21.4) on the ACT, but mixed scores in math (homeschooled 20.4 vs national average 20.7 on the ACT as opposed homeschooled 535 vs national average 511 on the 1999 SAT math).

Some advocates of homeschooling and educational choice counter with an input-output theory, pointing out that home educators expend only an average of \$500–\$600 a year on each student, in comparison to \$9,000–\$10,000 for each public school student in the United States, which suggests home-educated students would be especially dominant on tests if afforded access to an equal commitment of tax-funded educational resources.

## **International status and statistics**

Prevalent home education movements include Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Some countries have highly regulated home education programs as an extension of the compulsory school system; others, such as Sweden and Germany, have outlawed it entirely. Brazil has a law project in process. In other countries, while not restricted by law, homeschooling is not socially acceptable or considered undesirable and is virtually non-existent. Czech Republic – possible at primary level, pupils have to pass exams twice a year at their original school.