

Homeschooling Under Quarantine

A Practice Brief for Home Educators

By Dr. Debra Bell & Dr. Avi Kaplan

Homeschooling: Design Principles

- **Why this works:** Supporting people's psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness facilitates motivation, growth, relationships, and wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2000).
- **How to do it:** Create an adjustable weekly structure that considers all household members' needs, involves diverse activities and choice, incorporates both individual and social activities, and is negotiated through collaborative conflict management procedures.

The Homeschooling Task

Whether in normative times, or at a time of pandemic, designing home life that includes homeschooling is challenging. It means and looks different for every household, and the design should change as people grow and circumstances shift.

But, research-based principles can guide the planning and designing of a positive home life with homeschooling:

Collaborate with the household members to support each member's psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

- **Supporting competence** means forming a structure with realistic expectations and with activities that focus on improvement.
- **Supporting autonomy** means incorporating personal interests and providing reasonable and meaningful choice.
- **Supporting relatedness** means active and empathetic listening, considering needs, accepting negative emotions, and providing social and emotional support.



Self-Determination Theory
(Ryan & Deci, 2000)

Emergency Homeschooling

- Under quarantine and conditions of uncertainty, homeschooling has different goals from those during normal times. Prioritize supportive relationships, safety, health, and wellbeing over academics. Kids can catch up later.
- Attend to your own emotional needs so that you can support those of others.
- Validate and empathize with one another's experiences, and focus on managing isolation, boredom, social conflict, and cabin fever.

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No Need to Reinvent the Homeschooling Wheel

The homeschool movement, especially in the United States, is connected, collaborative, and organized. Find support, relationships, and links to local communities and other sources online. Start here:

A2ZHomeschooling: The oldest continuous running website on homeschooling. Timely articles on thousands of topics with links to best resources.

Hip Homeschool Moms: Largest online community of homeschool moms—very welcoming of emergency homeschoolers. Exhaustive list of free education resources organized by grade and subject on their site.

Secular, Eclectic, Academic (SEA) Homeschoolers: “Our diversity is our strength.” Large online community focused on nonreligious/academic motivations for homeschooling, though respectful of faith-oriented families.

Well Trained Mind: The forums at this site are very active and wide-ranging, even though the WTM advocates one form of homeschooling (classical). Their e-letters are chockful of helpful advice and free resources too.

A Few Recommended Resources

- **TED-ED:** Short educational videos, TED talks, and lessons on variety of topics for different levels.
- **The NYT Learning Network:** Lessons plans around NYT articles on a variety of topics.
- **CrashCourse:** Educational videos on a large range of academic topics.
- **San Francisco’s Exploratorium:** Activities and online resources on a range of science topics.
- **Project Gutenberg:** Over 60,000 free classic books online.
- **Khan Academy:** Online recorded lessons and interactive exercises on a very large range of academic topics.
- **Special Needs Homeschooling:** Resources for homeschooling children with special needs.
- **National Geographic Explorer Classroom:** During the COVID-19 outbreak daily (2pm EDT) free live interaction with explorers around the world, and other activities.
- **Google Expeditions:** A range of virtual reality expeditions around the world with minimal equipment required.
- **Lemelson Center at the Smithsonian:** A host of do-it-yourself activities around invention and innovation in variety of domains.

Ten Tips for Designing Your Household for Homeschooling

1. Evaluate your particular circumstances: Your ideology, context, characteristics of household members, different tasks and responsibilities, capacities, and resources.
2. Choose a homeschooling approach that fits your circumstances and goals (see list on the left).
3. Establish a personally meaningful morning practice to support your emotional wellbeing (like self-talk, contemplation, yoga, or meditation). Set boundaries for consuming news. Aim for enough sleep.
4. Prioritize intrinsic goals, such as wellbeing, relationships, and interest over extrinsic goals of task completion and achievement.
5. Collaborate with household members to design a flexible weekly structure and routine to coordinate tasks of different household members, establish reasonable expectations, and support *everyone’s* need for competence.
6. Incorporate diverse activities—private and social; restful and physically active; serious and light; online and offline! Build on household members’ curiosity and interests, and provide meaningful choice to support *everyone’s* need for autonomy.
7. Integrate social interactions, mutual mentoring, collaborative projects, and regular time for sharing and talking about experiences and emotions to support *everyone’s* need for relatedness.
8. Collaboratively establish procedures for resolving conflicts constructively to support competence, autonomy, and relatedness.
9. Go beyond “school;” embrace opportunities that afford household team building.
10. AND: monitor and be ready to adjust as people change and circumstances shift; aim for the good, not for the perfect; be kind to yourself and to your household members.

References

- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68-78.

Reviews of the homeschooling literature:

- Gaither, M. (2017). *The Wiley handbook of home education*. John Wiley and Sons, Ltd.
- Kunzman, R., & Gaither, M. (2013). Homeschooling: A comprehensive survey of the research. *Other Education: The Journal of Educational Alternatives*, 2(1), 4-59.