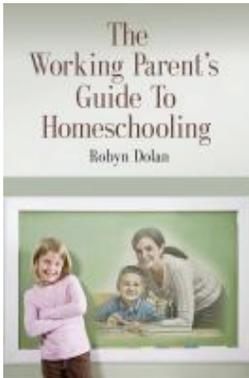


The Working Parent's Guide To Homeschooling

Robyn Dolan





The Working Parent's Guide to Homeschooling will inform and empower working parents with tools and resources to homeschool. Working parents will explore time management, child care arrangements while working, how to teach and more, with real life working parents' solutions to each of these issues. Written specifically for working parents, the author's own experience peppers every chapter and she also draws upon several other families' experiences to illustrate solutions to succeed when combining working and homeschooling.

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Introduction:

Whatever Possessed Me?!

“I noticed that the most successful homeschoolers had a few things in common: scheduling, supervision and consistency.”

This homeschooling adventure all came about because, a few years after my husband and I divorced, my 3 children, then ages 10, 8 and 6, and I moved across town and they began attending the "other" elementary school. Immediately they began coming home with stacks of homework. We began a ritual of sitting down at the kitchen table right after school for two hours, taking a break for dinner, then spending another hour, struggling to finish up homework that seemed never to have been explained to them during class. Finally, I would fall into my old lazy boy rocking chair, in front of the fire, cuddling up with my first grader and his reading assignment. The next thing I knew, he was waking me up with a despairing "MOM!" and anguished eyes. His older brother and sister would be snickering in the background.

It didn't take long for me to decide that if I had to be the teacher anyway, I might as well bring them home and cut out the non-essentials. Non-essentials like having the children at the bus stop at 6:30a.m.; scrounging for lunch money; hundreds of dollars worth of school clothes, backpacks and supplies. Not to mention the parent-teacher conferences, where, after months of the above scenario, I would be informed that my children were not doing as well as they could because I was not "actively participating" at home.

The only problem was I didn't know how to put a homeschooling plan into action. I didn't know any other homeschooling families. I was selling vacation homes and doing property management during the day, and waiting tables at night, but still not making enough money to afford the expensive curriculum packages that seemed to be necessary. Family members enthusiastically pointed out to me that I lacked a college degree and demanded to know who would watch the kids while I was working. What would my ex-husband, the children's father, say? I grew increasingly frustrated and discouraged.

I gave up. The kids and I moved from Southern California to Northern Arizona. I put the older children in what I thought was a "charter" school, but was really a last-ditch effort to corral kids who had gotten expelled from the middle school and high school and keep them off the streets for a few hours a day. My youngest son was ensconced in the local elementary school. In a few weeks, I had discovered my folly with the "charter" school, and my youngest son's teacher was calling me at home, complaining that he was doodling in class. Really?!

I brought the kids home. I purchased a pricey curriculum from a private school, which allowed my children to be legally "enrolled" in school under their "umbrella". These are known as "satellite" schools. In exchange for a hefty tuition, they agreed to provide record-keeping for validation by the state and teacher assistance if we called in long distance.

We were all bursting with anticipation when the lesson plans, textbooks and workbooks came. I spent hours going over everything before we got started. I very nearly needed a translator to interpret the lesson plans for me. I gave each child their textbooks and assignments, sat them around the kitchen table and waited for the joy of learning to begin. What I got were blank stares. I found I had to read nearly all the texts and do almost all their work with them. School was taking up most of the

day. How could we possibly live on child-support alone? Where was I supposed to get the time necessary to pound the pavement and burn up the phone lines to build my fledgling home business? I couldn't keep up with correcting one day's schoolwork and getting the next day's lessons prepared. I was sure the kids could hear my agonized sobbing over the noise of the washer and dryer when I locked myself in the laundry room.

I knew the kids needed a social outlet, and as we were embarking upon a new life of homesteading, "living off the land", I signed them up for 4H, an alternative to scouting and other youth development programs. The 4H program tends to be more common in rural areas, where people still farm, ranch, and/or raise backyard livestock. 4H originated as a way for public universities to introduce new agricultural technology to rural communities through their youth. It was there that I met Kate. Kate was a confident, energetic mother of 5. She was the leader of the local 4H goat and sheep project. Her children were intelligent, friendly and seemingly well-behaved. They lived on fifteen acres way out in the country, as we did, and they were homeschooled. I marveled at this family. I had to get to know them better. What was their secret? How could Kate, who wove beautiful rag rugs on a handmade floor loom in her "spare" time, be so content, living such a frugal, difficult life, and homeschooling all 5 of her children?

After several weeks of getting acquainted and observing each others' families, Kate sat me down and gave me a good talking-to. "Your heart is in the right place, but you have no clue what you're doing. Homeschooling is not about recreating the school environment at home. Homeschooling is about teaching your children to learn how to learn." I gave her a blank stare. I knew she was right. Obviously what I was doing wasn't working. I just didn't know what I was doing wrong.

Over the next several years our families spent quite a bit of time together. We also got to know quite a few other homeschooling families, all of whom did school a little bit differently. We watched them, learned from them, and imitated them. They encouraged us, kept company with us, and patiently shared their successes and failures with us. With Kate's help, and the help of other homeschoolers, I learned that homeschooling methods are as diverse as the families employing them. I noticed that the most successful methods had a few things in common:

Scheduling - not necessarily a rigid schedule, but certainly a fairly consistent routine, in which schoolwork figured prominently.

Supervision - though the most successful homeschooling methods tend to foster independent learning, a parent or other adult was always available for companionship, assistance, and if necessary, teaching students to have self discipline with reminders and reasonable consequences.

Consistency - school is every day, even if bookwork isn't. Life is a learning experience, and the brightest pupils will continue to pursue self education in their "free time", through crafting, experimenting, observing and reading. Hands-on time is important time to fully internalize the subject matter being studied in books. The first half of this book deals with scheduling, child care, paying the bills and working from home.

Once you make the leap into homeschooling, you will find that there is no shortage of suppliers of materials and curriculum. Finding what works for you and your family can be a full-time job and cost a fortune in itself. I learned quite a bit about locating free and affordable resources and integrating them into lesson plans. In the second half of this book, I will address how to locate free and low cost resources, and how to set up a basic lesson plan. I will also describe the various "styles" of homeschooling I am

familiar with, and provide several links to helpful resources for each style.

Eventually, the daily battle of wills subsided into a contented routine of study, work and play. With Kate's helpful guidance, we left behind the rigidity of textbooks and assignment quotas, and set about the wonderful adventure of exploring literature, history, and science through living books and hands on experience. Math, possibly the most challenging subject to teach, became a friend once time constraints were removed and the children were free to proceed at their own pace and to make use of it in their daily activities. Our curriculum no longer cost a fortune. The children could do most of their work on their own, and I had plenty of time to build up my business, in addition to holding down a part time job. The lessons flowed, rather than needing strict planning and implementation. Resources sometimes presented themselves, and I no longer felt overwhelmed and despairing. Rather, I felt more balanced than I had in years. Most important of all, my children were learning, and they knew it. Now, let me introduce you to my family.

Part I

“When I got home in the morning after work, I would lay down for a few hours sleep. I would occasionally awaken to noisy squabbles. For the most part, though, my children worked their way through their assignments.”

Chapter 1:

Where It All Began

“I loved bonding with my children during this time. We laid a foundation of routine where schoolwork came before anything else.”

Ten Acres In Arizona

I moved to a small town in the mountains of Northern Arizona in 1998. My ex-husband had remarried and was starting a new family. He was also busy building a successful Real Estate career. He did not voice any objections to my relocating with our 3 children and the child support was sufficient to cover the bare essentials.

When we moved to Arizona and at the time of this writing, Arizona is a very homeschool friendly state. With a large chunk of its population still ranching and farming, there are thousands of children being raised in its more remote areas. There is no state testing requirement for homeschoolers. Our school district only requires an affidavit of intent for children 6-16 years old. Parents also have the option of delaying formal schooling until the age of 8.

The Homestead

I got my first five acres shortly after I started homeschooling. The kids and I spent the first few weeks reveling in our new expanse of yard, camping out, cooking over an open fire, and bathing in an outdoor shower. When our trailer was finally set, we moved

indoors and began acquiring livestock. Our new lifestyle required us to learn new skills. We all developed a deep appreciation for the technology we had taken for granted for so long. Before our water heater was hooked up, we had to heat all our water for bathing, dishwashing and other needs over the campfire or the camp stove. Laundry was done at the laundromat. We put on extra clothes and wrapped ourselves in blankets as it got colder. We huddled in the camper when it got windy. We put a 400 gallon tank on the back of the pick-up and filled it with water. We took out water by buckets for drinking, washing and cooking. Food storage was limited, so we had to eat whatever was leftover of what we had cooked until it was gone. We had no electricity yet, so in the evenings we would read or play games by flashlight. We didn't even miss the television.

The opportunities for learning were diverse and limitless. My children loved the hands on learning (they called it playing) with the rabbits and goats. When we got horses, life took on a whole new meaning for my daughter, who immediately took charge of caring for and training them. Despite being so remote from everything, or maybe because of it, we were able to adjust our lifestyle so that we could live on far less money. Our biggest expense was gas for the truck. Our closest friends work and activities such as 4H and homeschool group were 30 miles away in the next town. That was a lot of driving back and forth in a 3/4 ton truck. Still, we managed. I tried to encourage my children to meet people closer to home. We got involved in church activities, local baseball, and town events.

Eventually, we also acquired the 5 acres next door to us. We endeavored to learn to enjoy our new home to the fullest. There were miles of open land to ride the horses and hike in. We got up early to enjoy the sunrise and stayed up late to gaze at the stars. When we needed something we didn't have on hand, we learned to think first - do we really need it? Then - what can we use instead? Then - can we make it ourselves? The last option, which

we tried to avoid, was going to the store for it - a 100 mile round trip. If there was just no other way, it still might have to wait for our monthly shopping trek.

The Lifestyle

I loved bonding with my children during this time. We laid a foundation of routine where schoolwork came before anything else. I set up their lessons so that they followed the same schedule every day. As long as I was there to oversee things, it was easy. I would keep them on track and encourage them to work independently.

Eventually I had to go back to work part-time. I worked evenings at a dinner house, so our routine remained fairly the same. It was harder for me to keep up with corrections, but as long as the kids kept doing their daily assignments, I would eventually catch up. The problems would arise when the kids were NOT doing their assignments. Let's face it, kids will be kids, that's their job. Anything is preferable to sitting at a desk doing math problems when you're ten, twelve or fourteen. Especially when you have ten acres of climbing trees, dry creek beds and a couple of horses seducing you away from that desk.

Meet The Family

Bart - The Mischievous One

My oldest son was extremely bright and extremely bored with school. He was in trouble regularly and I suspected he was refusing to pay attention in class. Bart began acting out severely when his dad left, running away, cutting holes in the furniture, stealing money from my purse.

After we moved to Arizona, Bart became the quintessential country boy for a short time. He loved hiking and camping,

swimming and exploring. Unfortunately, he soon found the unsavory element, even in our secluded neighborhood, and was back in trouble again.

Bart was easily my most difficult child.

Velvet - The Horse Lover

My daughter was brilliant, a straight A student, and obsessed with horses. Velvet had a natural way with equines. When she was a toddler, she loved to visit the horses on the ranch across the street from where we lived. When she was three, grandpa put her on a pony ride at the fair and she rode like she was part of the horse. None of the bouncing typical of first time riders like her brothers. She sat her pony with perfect posture. She named her bouncy pony toy "Pie". She collected horses, drew pictures of horses and read books about horses. She could read before she was four years old. I would frequently find her curled up with a book while her brothers were watching cartoons. She would draw and cut out pictures of horses and put them in scrapbooks. She wrote reams of poetry and short stories. She even designed her own web pages about her horses on our primitive WebTV.

Jimmy - The Clown

My youngest, a boy, was a clown, and increasingly in trouble at school for it. He, too, was very intelligent, but unable to sit still for long.

Jimmy was always trying to make us laugh. He fell in love with Jim Carrey in "The Mask" and could imitate his facial antics so closely it was scary. He kept us in stitches. When we got the horses he learned how to do an "Indian mount". He would leap from the ground to the horse's bare back in one smooth movement. He also rode standing up on the horse's back. Of course, he never performed these feats in front of me. Grandma

and grandpa gave us a video camera one year, and his sister obtained the evidence on film.

Jimmy did a lot of the filming when he and Velvet worked with the horses, and for a long time, I thought he might go into something in the film industry. But the novelty wore off.

Jimmy was also "the good child". Somehow he always got his brother or sister to take the blame for whatever he did, either by making a deal with them, or by escaping the scene of the crime and leaving them holding the bag. I am still finding things out years later, which just goes to prove that, no matter how well you think you're supervising your children, they're still going to find some way to get into mischief when you're not looking.

Chapter 2:

Scheduling

When I had to go back to work, I had part-time hours at a dinner house. I started in the late afternoon and got home by the kids' bedtime. We would get up when we were rested, have breakfast, and sit down at the kitchen table. I would get them started on their assignments, and then get to work, stamping Avon books and filling sample bags to hang on doors after lunch. I would make calls, to set up appointments to schedule book shows for Dorling Kindersly books or for Pampered Chef kitchen parties. It was difficult, as we had just moved to the area and I was learning new ropes. I also couldn't afford to do too much driving around scheduling shows, as we were so far from everywhere, and I didn't want to leave the kids alone. They, however, were not particularly interested in coming with me, and I knew this could be a problem. I tried to think of various ways to involve them in my business, but in spite of all, they were still three boisterous, noisy children, and I would not be able to do serious presentations with them along.

After a year I got a job as a night clerk at a local hotel. When I got home in the morning I would get the kids up to do their schoolwork, and then lay down for a few hours sleep. I would occasionally awaken to noisy squabbles and unfinished lessons. For the most part, though they worked their way through their assignments. Yet another year went by and I found an ad for free training for Certified Nursing Assistants at the Veteran's Administration Hospital. The position included paid schooling and paid training. I submitted my application and was accepted. My dad came to stay for a few months. When my training was complete and I started working at the VA Hospital, I was on

graveyard shift. Once again we went into our graveyard shift routine. I would call and wake the kids up on my way home. Now they were at an age where they were expected to prepare simple meals, so they could make their own breakfast and lunch. I gradually taught them more as they became responsible enough to use the stove. I would heat up leftovers for me and start them on their lessons. Then I would lie down for a few hours. After lessons, they would have a few chores to do, and then they were allowed to play with their horses, or use the WebTV. My daughter began designing web pages for her horses at this time. This usually kept them busy for a reasonable amount of time, until I got up, showered and joined them. After a few months of this, my schedule changed yet again. With my previous experience as an Emergency Medical Technician while we were still in California, and my current work as a Certified Nursing Assistant at the VA, I qualified to work at a home health agency. The pay was substantially better, and the hours were finally satisfactory. I was able to cut back to three days a week and was in a position to choose between shifts. This was the best situation so far. I was able to pay the bills AND spend time with my kids. I could keep up with correcting assignments. We could go somewhere midweek when it wasn't crowded.

In this chapter, I will focus on balancing your work and school schedules. Chapter 3 will be devoted to who watches the kids while you're working.

Working Full Time

If you are working outside the home 5 or 6 days a week, 8 hours a day, it is best to get the children's schedule in sync with yours. So if you are working 9-5, with 2 hours before for eating, grooming, getting ready to go and 2 hours for getting home and unwinding after, then your work days are 7am-7pm. You can get your children up early, have them eat, dress, do chores and start their lessons, which you have outlined for them. Then, after work

or after dinner, you can correct their assignments and explain anything that was not understood. If you note a consistent problem in any area, such as math or penmanship, you can adjust the next day's lessons to reflect more practice in that area and less focus on another, less critical subject.

This is probably the most challenging schedule to homeschool around. It is draining and exhausting. You will need sleep. You will need family time.

A sample of this kind of schedule might look like this:

5:00 a.m. - get up; make bed, coffee, morning devotions, stretching or light exercise

6:00 a.m. - shower, dress, start breakfast

6:30 a.m. - get kids up, bathed, dressed, have them make their beds

7:00 a.m. - eat breakfast, discuss plan for day - chores, schoolwork, free time

8:00 a.m. - leave for work

From 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. when you get home, children are to be keeping the house tidy, doing their assignments, and pursuing acceptable activities in their free time. A spouse or other trustworthy caretaker should be available during this time to supervise, direct and provide companionship to the children.

5:00 p.m. - leave work, mentally change gears, and prepare mentally for the imperfections and unfinished tasks you will encounter when you arrive home. Be cheerful for your children.

6:00 p.m. - arrive home, greet children, change into comfortable clothes and do some stretching or light exercise, especially with the kids.

6:30 p.m. - start dinner, unless that is one of the kids' chores that day, inspect children's chores and have children finish them, if necessary.

7:00 p.m. - eat dinner, discuss day, troubleshoot problems, and listen to what the kids have to say.

8:00 p.m. - have kids do dishes while you review their assignments and prepare lessons for the next day.

9:00 p.m. - enjoy a few moments with the kids before bed. Enjoy some quiet time by yourself before bed, go to sleep.

Mom Employed/Dad Self-employed

My friend Angie and her husband homeschool their two youngest boys. Angie works several days a week in towns thirty to fifty miles away. Every 2 weeks her husband, Mike, has to go to California on business. Sometimes he takes the boys with him, but they have learned that they don't get much schoolwork done on these trips. Mike has to focus on collecting rents, doing repairs and maintenance on their properties. So Angie and the boys will sometimes work through the weekend to get ahead or at least to where they should be when they get back from California. On days when Angie has to work, all day and Mike is home, she lays out the day's assignments and Mike supervises and is available to help if the boys run into difficulty. The boys are expected to complete their assignments - part of learning responsibility. Afterwards, they will frequently work on a (small scale) building project with their dad. They have helped construct a greenhouse, dog run, fenced garden and a go cart.

When Angie is home, their routine goes something like this:

7:00 a.m. - boys get up, dress, make beds, start schoolwork.

8:30 a.m. - mom up, dress, make bed, start breakfast.

9:00 a.m. – breakfast

9:30 a.m. – schoolwork

11:00 a.m. - break, chores, playtime

12:00 p.m. – lunch

12:30 p.m. – schoolwork

2:30 p.m. - free time. Boys must finish day's assignments first if not completed already.

6:00 p.m. – dinner

9:00 p.m. – bedtime

Working Dad/Work-at-Home Mom

My youngest son's dad is a professional truck driver. He is home about every 2 weeks. When dad is home for only one or two days, Yak has time off from school. If dad is home for longer, Yak will have school. Dad tends to be rather boisterous when he is home, but since he is mostly gone, I find it works better just to take the day off. My son tends to work ahead some days, and since we go year round, he is usually a bit ahead of his "grade level" anyway, so I do not worry about the time off. Once he gets out into the working world, he most likely will not be getting summers off anyway, nor spring or winter breaks. We take time

off when it suits us. I keep an eye on the scope and sequence to make sure we're "keeping up". I will go into more about Yak's schooling in Part II of this book, but I will share about our schedule here, as it has evolved with the benefit of my experience with my older children, and my changing priorities and work schedule.

These days I work at home as a writer and crafter. I am an early riser and like to have a quiet cup of coffee and some time for prayer and meditation before I face the challenges of the day. Yak is usually up by 7 or 7:30 a.m. We'll eat breakfast, take a walk around the property, and feed the animals. Sometimes he'll help with milking the cow and goats. We used to start lessons at 8a.m., but now he prefers to have some free time in the morning and start at 10a.m. It's fine with me, as long as he focuses his attention on schoolwork and gets it done in a timely manner. I do not like to take the schoolwork into the evening hours when we are supposed to be relaxing and enjoying a book, movie, or game together.

Yak's school hours go something like this:

10:00 -11:00 a.m. – math

11:00 -12:00 p.m. - write essay

12:00 p.m. - lunch

12:30-1:30 p.m. - read book of choice

1:30-3:30 p.m. - assignments and/or reading for language arts, science, social studies, religion and electives.

During these five glorious and wonderful hours, Yak works mostly independently. I write at my desk, pay bills, promote my stores, and study my craft. After 3:30p.m., we run errands or work in the

workshop or on homestead projects. After evening feeding and supper, we relax and play a game, watch a movie or read until bedtime.

Working Part Time

If you work part time or only 3 or 4 days a week, you will have a little more time for relaxing as a family, and getting enough sleep. If your shift starts in the afternoon or evening, school can be completed before you leave, and the children can be put to bed at a consistent time at night. If you work night shift, you may want to do school when you get home in the morning, or late in the afternoon, after you have had some sleep. In this last case, you may have the children go to bed later at night, and sleep later in the morning. Or you may just want to do school on your days off. I have tried this myself, and found that it makes for exhaustion. Keeping the kids on schedule with lessons, five or six days a week, makes for a more consistent routine for them and a less hectic day off for you. Then, too, you can have the flexibility to plan some family fun time for your days off once in awhile without worrying about the children missing a huge chunk of schoolwork.

In this case, your schedule may be changing, but you want to try to keep the children's schedule as consistent as possible.

Their schedule might look something like this:

8:00 a.m. - get up; make bed, shower, and dress.

8:30 a.m. - eat breakfast, wash dishes, morning chores

9:00 a.m. – math

11 a.m. – snack

11:30 a.m. - language arts

12:30 p.m. - lunch, wash dishes, play/exercise

1:30 p.m. - science and other subjects

2:30 p.m. - free reading

3:30 p.m. - snack, afternoon chores, free time

6:00 p.m. - dinner, wash dishes

7:00 p.m. - quiet activities before bed

10:30 p.m. – bedtime

Of course this would be tweaked to accommodate your schedule. You will want to spend some unstructured time with them, as well as time supervising their activities and correcting their work.

Working Dad/Stay-at-Home Mom

Kate, my homeschooling mentor, enjoys the good fortune to be a stay-at-home mom. Her husband works outside the home, as well as running various homestead related side ventures. Kate had her children up and milking the goats by 6a.m. They did farm chores, ate breakfast and were at their lessons by 8a.m. She would have her older children help her younger children with assignments whenever possible. Kate would supervise and step in to teach new concepts, and to help the younger children when the older ones were busy. School would usually be done by noon, and after lunch, the whole family would tend to livestock, their large garden, and homestead maintenance and improvement chores. If there were no 4H meetings, late afternoons and evenings would be spent relaxing, doing handicrafts, or playing games.

Single Parent Co-op

Author Steven David Horwich (Poor Cheated Little Johnny; Connect the Thoughts Curriculum; others) homeschooled his now grown children as a widowed, work-at-home dad. At the time, he schooled during the hours of 9a.m.-3p.m., so that the kids could see their "school friends" after hours. If he were to do it again, he says he might be more inclined to "figure out when the best hours were for each of my kids as far as their ability to study".

Horwich also formed what he termed a homeschooling "co-op", with two other single-parent families. I will tell more about this system in Chapter 3, but as far as scheduling issues, the Horwich group met and worked out a schedule that worked for them. They used Horwich's home, and the two moms took turns supervising the student intensive curriculum, which Horwich wrote. Horwich was freed up to pursue his writing full time, and each mom had a couple days off to pursue her own work or interests. This system involves a good deal of organization, cooperation and trust among the families. For more detailed information, I encourage you to visit Horwich's websites and blogs, detailed in Chapter 11 under "Student intensive curriculum - Connect the Thoughts".

If at all possible, once your children have become proficient at completing and correcting their assignments they should be encouraged to participate in activities that interest them. If you attend church, then you could be active in your church as a family. Community service opportunities are also a good way to teach children to care and work for the good of others, not just themselves. If your child is an athlete, let him play a sport regularly, and encourage him to train consistently and learn everything he can about that sport in his spare time. If she likes to play chess and there is a chess club available, sign her up. Lego Robotics clubs are a great way to encourage budding mathematicians and scientists. Help a musician to find their instrument, and then sign them up for lessons. Let them try out

for community band or orchestra, give recitals, and play for local or church productions. Homeschoolers have far more opportunities to participate in multi-age groups than do public school students.

School On The Road

We are on the road a lot, taking care of parents and grandchildren in two different states, other than the one we live in. This can wreak havoc with routine and schedule. Because we have been doing this for so long, we have actually developed a "travel" routine. First of all, we have streamlined our curriculum and school supplies to fit entirely into one "school" bag, including the computer. The first order of the day, after morning devotions and breakfast, is always math. After that comes penmanship and essay writing or copywork. Finally, my son has reading, vocabulary and grammar and then all other subjects, most of which involve reading. This can occupy quite a bit of driving time. If we are visiting somewhere, we can take the day off school to enjoy our family, friends or other activities. If we are on an extended stay, the school routine kicks in. We always try to take lots of pictures and make extensive journal notes, which can be used to add to the school records.

If you want to take school on the road with you, keep in mind that you are not going to have a lot of space to spread out or store things, and you are going to have to lug all of your supplies around with you. So those elaborate science projects are better left at home. Take the math book, some notebooks and plenty of reading books on the Kindle or iPad and let your student look out the window, explore new environments and study nature close up.

For one homeschooling family we know, travel is a lifestyle. They migrate between summer and winter homes and traverse the entire country visiting older children and grandchildren, friends

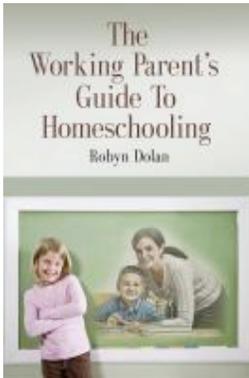
and exploring natural wonders. During this time, they have homeschooled all 8 of their children, taught them how to drive and sent several of them off to college. Sometimes they have stayed 6 months to a year in one spot, sometimes only a week. Some places they return to, year after year, for a period of time. This is how we met and began our friendship with them. With the difficult economy, and so many families having to move around to find work, homeschooling can be a very viable option for keeping the family together. The whole family can relocate to where the working parent's new job is, without the stressors of changing schools and "catching up" or being bored because they're so far ahead. Though a parent may feel they are making a huge sacrifice for the sake of their family by taking a job too far away to come home often, in reality, family time is what is being sacrificed, and you never get those precious growing-up years with your kids back.

School Breaks

Finally, remember to schedule time together as a family. Eat dinner together (or at least one meal a day). Pray and study the Bible together each day if you're Christian. If you are of another faith, practice your faith together. If you are not religious, do something else as a family. Yak plays hockey. I have noticed that many families participate in this sport together. Mom and dad may not play in a league, but will skate with the kids after practice, and rollerblade with them at home. Go camping, hiking or fishing together. Join a chess club or community choir together. The options are limited only by what is available in your area and by your imagination.

So far, I've addressed the day to day issues of scheduling. There is another aspect of scheduling, and that is school "breaks". As a homeschooler, you have more flexibility as to when you take breaks from schooling. You can go year round or stick with the traditional breaks. You can work through the weekend and take

midweek off. You can take a three week vacation mid spring or early fall and stay inside in air-conditioned comfort in the summer. You can work your breaks around your religious or non-religious holidays. Field trips can also be scheduled at times and to locations that suit your schedule and style of teaching. With so much funding being cut from the schools, many children have never been on a field trip. There are also many field trip possibilities for smaller groups that would not be available to a large class of students, such as a visit to a private homestead, where children can interact with the animals, watch goats or cows being milked by hand, and play with baby rabbits. Our homeschool group has toured the Grand Canyon Airport, the local fire station, the Phoenix Ballet, the Ash Fork Museum. You can celebrate your own personal holidays (baptism, birthday, and other special dates). You can take time out for a unique learning experience - does your child want to participate in a historical reenactment? Play in a local community orchestra? Audition for stage or screen productions? You can schedule your school day around that.



The Working Parent's Guide to Homeschooling will inform and empower working parents with tools and resources to homeschool. Working parents will explore time management, child care arrangements while working, how to teach and more, with real life working parents' solutions to each of these issues. Written specifically for working parents, the author's own experience peppers every chapter and she also draws upon several other families' experiences to illustrate solutions to succeed when combining working and homeschooling.

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