

# THE WHEN OF HOMESCHOOLING

## BEGINNERS CONFERENCE

by Lisa Smith

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### How to start

1. “The essence of effective time and life management is to organize and execute around priorities” (Stephen Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*).

- What are your priorities? Make a list of your priorities. Keep in mind that **whatever you value most in life** should become your top priority.
- It is essential to search the scriptures as you evaluate your priorities. Pray about it.
- Ask yourself, “Why do I homeschool?” Make sure the way you spend your time reflects those reasons.

2. “The risk of a wrong decision is preferable to the terror of indecision.” (Maimonides)

- Don’t wait until you know everything to start. Prepare, make a plan, then go with and don’t look back unless it’s obviously not working. Don’t keep revisiting your decisions. Don’t look for the one and only curriculum. Don’t waste time in indecision and uncertainty.
- **HOWEVER:** Never forget that you are in charge. If a curriculum is really not making you happy, or is not working for your family, stop using it.
- Your child’s education does not end at 18. You are not expected to teach him or her everything essential for life. You continue to learn and progress; your child will, too. Relax. Enjoy this way of life.

### How to boldly move forward

3. “We *must* take time to teach...children about the important things of life” Sister Dwan J. Young, “Teach Children the Gospel,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 78.

- Teaching your children important things takes time. Set aside time and mean it.
- What you are doing is important. Don’t apologize for it or minimize it.
- Learn to ignore a ringing phone.
- Pick the time and place to contact your friends.
- **Make yourself less available.**

4. “The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago. The second best time is now.” – Proverb

- Don’t worry about mistakes; every day is a new day. Learn from your mistakes, but don’t define yourself by them.
- You’re not expected to know everything.
- Move forward. Be happy. Love your children. Have confidence in them and in yourself. Ask for the Lord’s help. Have faith. It will be enough.
- Start wherever you are right now.

### How to make the best use of your time

5. “See then that ye walk circumspectly [carefully, discriminatingly], not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time [making the best use of time]...” (**Ephesians 5:15-16**)

### Activities that can be prepared ahead of time:

- Math Challenge Boards
- Random Fact File
- Scavenger Pig
- 12-Square puzzles (math problems, any kind of definitions—parts of speech, vocab, etc.)
- File Folders
- Deliver the Mail
- Self-Correcting Flash Cards cut with fiskers
- Flash card board to be cleared in pairs (set all the flashcards on the home-made pocket chart; have the kids ask a question, the other has to answer and gets to keep the card if correct)
- Everyday Latin
- Pair Spelling Worksheets (can be used with any topic, divide info to be tested in half, each student quizzes one half of info and is quizzed on other half)
- Reading Scavenger Hunts/ Label it! game
- Grammar Dominoes

### Other ideas:

- Kids read a chapter and write 10 questions for me or for another student to answer.

- Let kids use the textbook and other materials and write a quiz.
- Older kids read to younger kids.
- Reading Rotation (include personal choice reading, Thomas Jefferson Library reading, historical fiction or biographies, reading to a sibling, etc.)
- Many topics are not age-specific. You don't have to teach a separate curriculum for each grade-level child.
- Change the format: Treasure Hunt or Secret Agent
- Games can be played together, adjusted to meet varying abilities.
  - Math Scavenger Hunt
  - Math Big/Small/Short/Tall
  - Scattergories

Organizing Schedules: Use white boards—write out all the assignments to be completed for each child on a white board. Each child has some autonomy in deciding **when** to complete the tasks, however, all tasks must be completed.

Chores: Let kids check off each other's chores, but make kids responsible for whatever they check off.

6. "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1).
- Don't necessarily be fixed to a specific learning schedule, academic calendar, school-day schedule.
  - The more closely your home school resembles traditional school, the more difficult it will be for your child to understand why home schooling is any better than going to school.
  - Celebrate being part of your own unique family. Enjoy reading days, movie days, late lazy mornings, birthdays, etc.
  - Find time to fit scriptures and spiritual lessons into the day. Pray for the ability to use your time well.
  - Try out different plans: only do academics on certain days; set aside weekly or bi-weekly field trip days; have days for reading, life skills, necessary errands and appointments, etc.

7. Consistency is the last refuge of the unimaginative. –

Oscar Wilde

From time to time take non-academic field trips. Remove demands or obligations so you can remember why you are a parent and why you home school.

You must have been warned against letting the golden hours slip by; but some of them are golden only because we let them slip by.

~James Matthew Barrie

8. "This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it." – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Sister Belle Stafford said, "*The average woman today, I believe, would do well to appraise her interests, evaluate the activities in which she is engaged, and then take steps to simplify her life, putting things of first importance first, placing emphasis where the rewards will be greatest and most enduring, and ridding herself of the less rewarding activities*" (*Steadfast and Immovable, Ensign 11/01, p. 92*).

The rewards of home schooling and being so thoroughly involved with your children are immense. It can be a beautiful way to live. Enjoy it.

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Lisa Smith grew up in Utah, attended BYU, and earned a Bachelors degree in Secondary education with major in French and minor in Spanish. She studied abroad in Quebec and France, and taught high school French and Spanish in Fairfax, Virginia. She has five children ages 14 to 5, and resides in Northern Virginia. She has been homeschooling for 8 years.