

A close-up photograph of a child's hand holding a thin, brown branch. The branch is adorned with several small, dark blue berries and a few leaves in shades of yellow and orange, suggesting an autumn setting. The child is wearing a white, long-sleeved button-down shirt. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape with green grass and some fallen leaves.

# SHOULD I HOMESCHOOL?

**WILD + FREE**

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The most frequent question we get at Wild & Free is – how do I get started? Unless you were home educated yourself, it's not the first plan that comes to mind as you prepare to raise your children. It's certainly not the most common pathway among families.

But there's another viewpoint emerging – that children were not meant to be cattle-called into learning. There are individual learning styles that cannot be lumped together in one classroom approach. There are values and beliefs that can only be caught in intentional environments. And there is a natural way of growing up that can only be nurtured in free and open surroundings.

We want our children to be wild and free.

It's a big decision to pull your child out of the school system and bring them home. You're probably wondering – should I do this? We can't say whether it's the right approach for your family, but we can address some of the more common objections you might be facing.

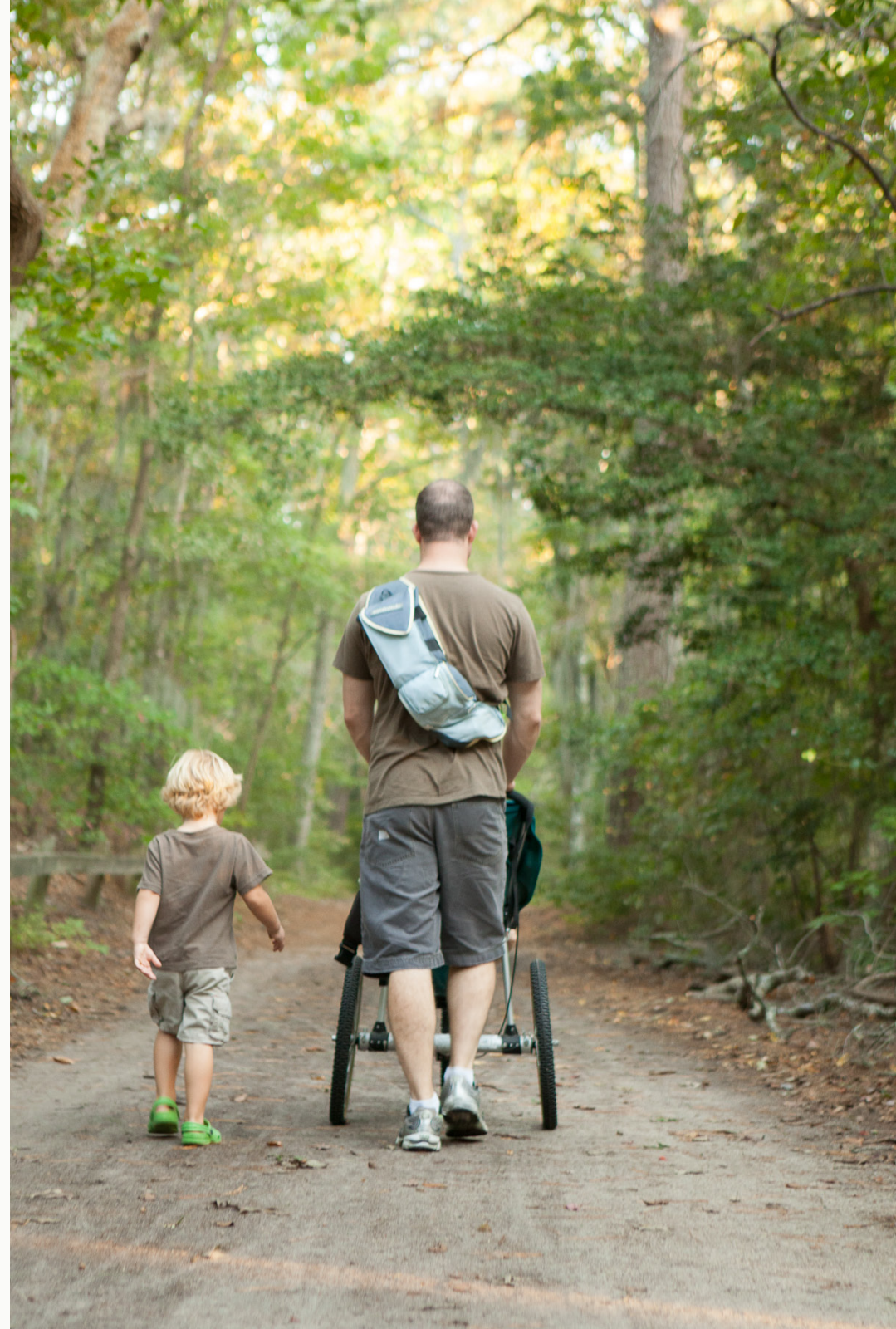




# MY HUSBAND ISN'T ON THE SAME PAGE

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More often than not, we arrive at the conviction to homeschool before our husbands do. We've explored the idea, processed the decision and researched the options before they're even aware of the idea. So it may take a while for them to catch up with our thinking. Remember how impossible it seemed when we first considered it! When this happens, be patient. Show him what you've learned. Pray for your hearts to be united. And don't make a move until you're both on the same page. Home educating requires both of you to be in agreement or it could be a difficult road to travel alone. Trust that God will turn his heart just as he changed yours.











## AM I ALLOWED TO DO THIS?

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There are some countries, such as Germany and Brazil, where homeschooling is illegal, but it is perfectly acceptable in the United States. States vary in the degree of requirements that parents are required to meet. But you can contact the local school district to find out what conditions must be met. It could be as simple as emailing their office to let them know you're doing it. Also, most states have homeschooling associations that help families understand and meet the local requirements. Google search your state association or talk to other homeschooling families in your area to find out what they do.





## WHAT IF I HINDER MY CHILDREN?

One of the biggest fears among homeschooling families is that they'll hinder their children's education. We've been conditioned for so long to think education is classroom-based that we suffer from guilt for approaching it differently. Don't beat yourself up before you even begin. What's important is nurturing your child's heart and giving them the desire to learn on their own. The grown homeschool children we know not only thrive in higher education, but they also come at the world with more poise, confidence and curiosity. What if relegating to the conventional school classroom is what would hinder them? What if educating them at home is what would light their minds on fire and help them reach their potential?

There will be gaps, and you won't be able to give them everything. But that is why communities are so valuable. What you lack may be your friend's strongest point. Lean into community as much as you can. Art classes, language classes, music classes – all of these things can be found in your local community. Ultimately, by leading your children into a lifestyle of perpetual learning, they will seek out the things they need and desire to learn in the proper time.







Maybe you're not a professional teacher. Maybe you can't see yourself homeschooling. But the truth is – you can. God has given you all of the gifts, instincts and abilities you need to instill in your own children the love of learning and the resources to help along their educational journey. Sure, it will stretch you. Some approaches won't work, and you'll have to figure out something else. There will be days when you'll want to throw in the towel. I don't know any homeschooling mother who hasn't threatened to send their kids back to school! But God's grace will be sufficient for you. He'll give you the strength and wisdom to work through the difficult times. If you need to throw in the towel early one day or skip an entire school day (or five) to recover emotionally – then do it. That's the beauty of homeschool. You can make it up the following week. This isn't about holding "classroom hours." It's about a lifestyle.



WHAT IF I CAN'T DO THIS?



A photograph of a woman with long red hair, wearing a red dress, holding the hand of a young boy in a grey shirt. They are standing in a field of tall green grass, with trees and foliage in the background. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. A white rectangular box with a thin border is centered over the lower part of the image, containing the text 'BUT I DIDN'T GO TO COLLEGE' in a serif font.

## BUT I DIDN'T GO TO COLLEGE

It's normal to feel insufficient for the task, but just know that homeschooling your kids is a process of learning alongside them. You don't have to be a trained teacher or have advanced degrees. One of my favorite parts of educating my kids is discovering things along with them. Also, know that you're not alone in this journey. With communities like Wild & Free, tutors, local homeschool co-ops, curriculum, and online communities, you'll find help in the areas you need. In fact, it's pretty common for mamas who are gifted in one subject, such as math or languages, to exchange help with mamas who are gifted in another area, such as art or physical education. You won't know what you're capable of achieving until give it a try. At first, you'll wonder if you're doing enough. But take the pressure off yourself. Find what works for your children, settle into good rhythms, and enjoy this sweet season of life.



# WHAT CURRICULUM DO I USE?

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Before you ask about curriculum, it's better to discover your approach to homeschooling. Every parent and every child come at the world differently. Some kids thrive in a structured environment, whereas some children need less organization to their day. Some parents are better teachers through physical activities, such as hiking and nature journaling; whereas, some parents are better at reading literature and hosting book clubs. There are many approaches to consider – from un-schooling and classical to Waldorf, Montessori and Charlotte Mason. And many families use combined approaches that incorporate a little of each of them. It may take some time to explore and figure out, but by understanding your “style,” you can create the kind of lifestyle that will provide a rich environment of learning for you and your children. When you have an idea of what homeschooling approach would work best for your family, then the curriculum will fall into place.





A close-up photograph of a young child's hand holding a small green plant with a large clump of dark brown soil. The child's face is partially visible in the background, looking towards the camera.

## WHAT IF I HAVE CHILDREN OF DIFFERENT AGES?



Most homeschool moms find homeschooling different ages one of the biggest hurdles to overcome. It doesn't have to be. Things like science and history can become a family affair. There is nothing a fifth grader is learning that a third grader cannot or would not be interested in. If the younger's attention span is shorter, let them draw while the older kids read aloud. Having multiple ages together is a blessing for the homeschool mom and the children alike.

Toddler-aged children are often the most precarious age to keep engaged. Your days will have interruptions. Just get used to it. But there are few things you can do to help the flow:

First, help your older children learn to be self-directed in their studies. If you're working through a curriculum, let them know in advance what assignments they need to complete. This way, if you're tending to the little ones, the older kids know exactly what to do with their time.

Second, find similar activities that can help the younger ones feel like they're participating with the older ones. If the older children are reading, give the younger ones their own age-appropriate books to look through. If the older ones are doing math, help the younger ones count with objects.

Finally, make the most of those concentrated times when you can pour into the older ones without any distractions, like when the little ones are napping or spending time with grandma. And don't forget about weekends when Dad is home. No one said school has to be completed Monday through Friday. This is a short season of life and won't last for long.

A photograph of a man in a brown t-shirt pushing a blue stroller on a dirt path. A young child is walking next to the stroller, and a toddler is sitting inside it. The path is surrounded by green foliage and trees.A photograph of a man in a brown t-shirt pushing a blue stroller on a dirt path. A young child is walking next to the stroller, and a toddler is sitting inside it. The path is surrounded by green foliage and trees.



# WILL MY CHILDREN RESPECT ME AS THEIR TEACHER?

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If you are thinking about homeschooling while your children are still little, before they have “gone to school,” this won’t be an issue for you. Homeschooling from the start is an organic process that grows out of your relationship with your young child. As you begin to introduce nature specimens, time for art, and lots of time for reading together, you will be establishing a basis for your involvement in their learning journey. Sure, you’ll run into struggles, just as in any parent-child relationship, but you’ll work through them as you would with any other issue.

Taking your child out of traditional schooling to bring them home poses a different dynamic and can be intimidating to a lot of parents. Most kids need a period of time called “deschooling.” This is a time to forgo any formal studies and give your child time to rediscover the love of learning, like they did when they were little. Through outdoor adventures, visiting museums, working on art projects, and diving into a good book, together you will discover what passions lie dormant in your child’s heart and mind. Your child will begin to come alive again.

Homeschooling is essentially parenting amplified. It brings out the best in your kids, but it can also bring out the worst. That’s simply the downside to living under the same roof. The good news is kids are highly moldable and will exhibit the fruit of your relationship with them. Every outburst or disobedient act is a teaching moment for you. If you can stay calm, evaluate the situation from a higher perspective, and avoid losing your temper, this is a great opportunity to shepherd their hearts. Oftentimes they’re just looking for how far they can push their limits, and it gives them a sense of security to know there are boundaries.

If you have a time of formal studies, you’ll need an effective system for helping them settle into a routine. Not every tactic works with every kid. Some kids just need some verbal guidance, while others might need a ritual like a song or saying to start the learning time and focus their attention. A timer works wonders for some younger kids to help them stay focused on a task for 10 minute sessions. A lot of times, children of all ages just need a mental time-out. Let them get outside or work on a preferred project for a while and then come back to the problematic subject when they are fresh. Reach out to a fellow homeschooler and ask what works in their house. But with trial and error, you’ll find the right way to guide them.



A young child with blonde hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, is walking away from the camera down a dirt path. The path is covered with fallen brown and yellow leaves. The path is flanked by dense green foliage and trees, creating a natural, wooded setting. The lighting is soft, suggesting an overcast day or a shaded area.

## WON'T IT TAKE TOO MUCH TIME?

Homeschooling is a big commitment to be sure. No matter what method you identify with —Classical, Charlotte Mason, Waldorf, Montessori or Unschooling — homeschooling takes an incredible amount of emotional engagement. But doing regular subject studies doesn't take as long as you might think. A typical day for most kids in the conventional school system is filled with lots of time waiting for the entire class to catch up, bathroom breaks, standing in line and doing busy work that doesn't necessarily contribute to their education.

Many homeschool families finish their “book work” within a half a day and in some cases, they don't necessarily schedule every day of the week. With this extra time, they're able to spend more time exploring, reading and going on exciting field trips. In fact, many mothers in the Wild & Free community work part time and share the homeschooling responsibilities with their husbands.

The most important thing to remember is that homeschooling is not “school at home.” Culturally, we have come to equate schooling with learning. But why would we pull our children out of school only to recreate a school-like atmosphere? No, we are home learners. We are natural learners. We can learn anywhere and anytime. Whether you choose to have formal subject studies or you choose to give your children the freedom to study and explore interests on their own, the heart behind Wild & Free is to shake free the chains of convention and give your children a life of learning and adventure.



