ICHE
ILLINOIS CHRISTIAN HOME EDUCATORS

How to Start Homeschooling in Illinois



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Wondering how to start homeschooling in Illinois?

Why are you wanting to homeschool?

Whether it is unhappiness with your child's current education, bullying, learning difficulties, life circumstances, illness, or just desiring to have a greater influence on your child's education and upbringing, we applaud your decision to homeschool your child. This is a big step. We are here to help you.

In this guide, you will find some basic information to assist you and links to more detailed articles and resources.

We hope your journey to home education provides much joy -- in time spent with your children, opportunities to explore and learn together, and fulfillment -- as you embark on this lifestyle of homeschooling.

If you haven't already, please consider joining our ICHE Discussion Group. Members of our community, some who have been homeschooling for 20 years or more and some who are new to home education, are here to help you.

Feel free to call our office at 847-603-1259 if you need further assistance. Also, sign up for our e-blasts to keep informed of events and receive alerts about legislative issues. Connecting with us on social media is a great way to be part of the community.







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CONNECT WITH HOMESCHOOL FAMILIES

A major factor in the success of your homeschool



ONLINE

Social media allows homeschoolers to share resources, tips, curriculum suggestions, information on methods and learning styles, field trip and event announcements, and much more. **ICHE'S Discussion Group** is a great place to ask questions and get answers.

PERSONAL

Even more important is the opportunity for you to get in-person support from other homeschool parents, and for your children to connect with other students. ICHE has a directory of local groups, many which offer cooperative learning opportunities.

THE ICHE HOMESCHOOL CONFERENCE

ICHE's annual homeschool conference is a great opportunity to be encouraged. We feature a host of workshops on topics including academics, parenting, marriage, special needs, worldview and more. This is a great weekend to bring the entire family for a fun getaway. Our 2023 conference is May 18-21 on the campus of Olivet Nazarene University. Get more information on **our event page**.

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KNOW THE LAW

Illinois law requires that students between the ages of 6 and 17 attend either a public or private school. A homeschool is considered a private school. All private schools, including home schools, are required to teach the branches of education that are taught to children of the same age and grade as in the public schools, and those classes must be taught in the English language. There is room for discussion about what the traditional "branches of education" include, but they are generally accepted as the following: Language Arts, Biological and Physical Sciences, Math, History and Social Sciences (including both U.S. and Illinois Constitutions), Fine Arts, Health and Physical Development. If you are teaching the branches of education taught to children of similar age and grade as public schools, then you are complying with the laws of Illinois concerning education. (For the full article on IL Homeschool law, go here.)

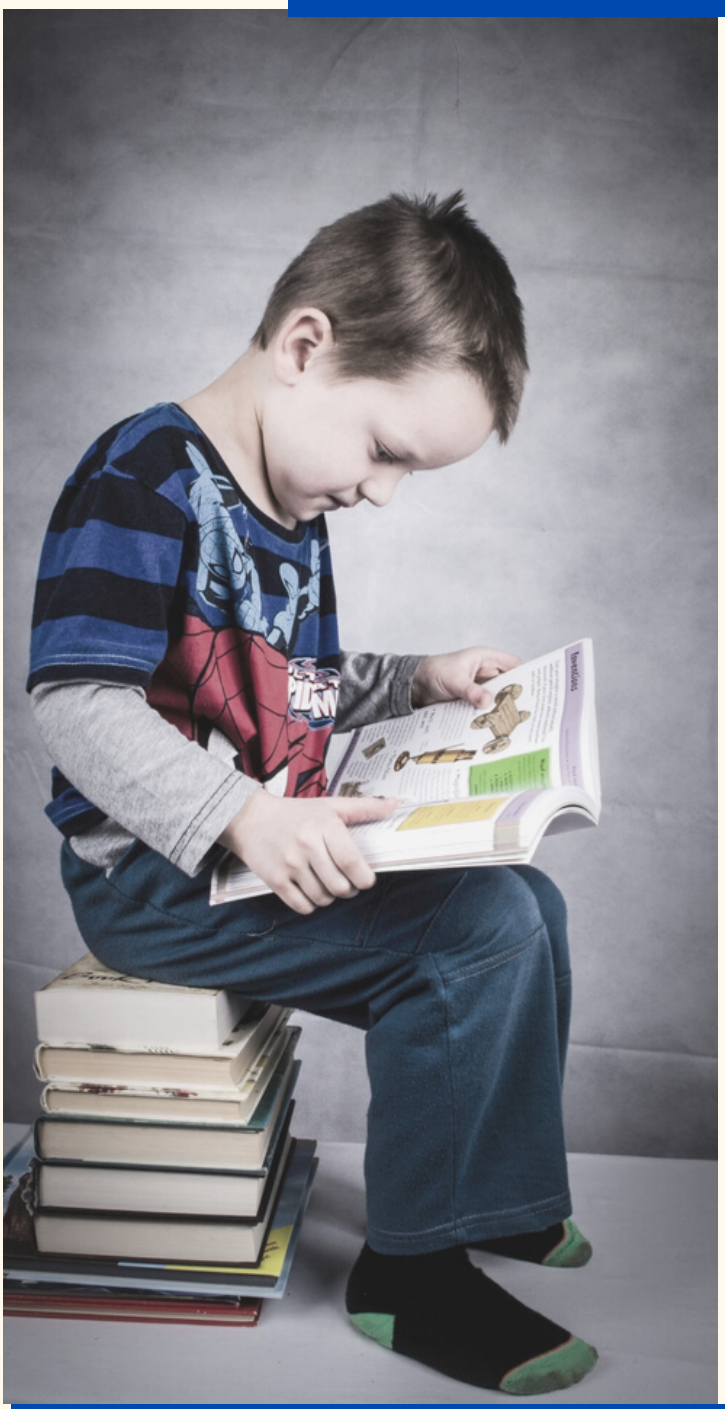
Parents who withdraw their children from public school may do so between academic years (i.e., during summer break), or at anytime during the school year. You are not required to keep your child enrolled in the same school for the entire academic term. If you make the switch to homeschooling between academic years, you may choose not to send any correspondence to your public school. The law does not require it, and you may never be contacted by public school officials. Depending on the size of the community and the population of the school, the school officials may just assume your family moved out of the district or switched to a private school. Our experience has been that children withdrawn after the end of the school year usually are not contacted at all. On the other hand, parents who withdraw their children mid-year or after school has begun, are often contacted; and the public school requests some formal statement of withdrawal. If a student merely stops attending school without explanation, the school is likely to mark the child as absent without an excuse. (For the full article on withdrawing students from public school, go here.)

[NOTE: This information should not be considered legal advice. For specific legal questions, please consult with a licensed attorney. Homeschool families may be eligible for legal assistance by contacting Home School Legal Defense Association.]



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ASSEMBLE YOUR CURRICULUM



ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

Perhaps the best thing about homeschooling is that it allows you to customize an educational plan based on your priorities. Factors that play into your choice of curriculum can include your child's learning style, the number and ages of your children, your family's interests and lifestyle, your educational philosophy, any special circumstances such as unique work schedules or health issues, your budget, and, not least of all, the vision you have for the future adults you are raising.

The following resources can give you guidance as you embark on your curriculum search. Don't forget to talk with experienced homeschool moms in support groups or through ICHE on the internet. Chances are someone has experience with the product you are considering.

In Search of the Perfect Curriculum

HSLDA's Guide to Exploring Homeschooling

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WHAT ABOUT REPORTING AND TESTING?

Illinois does not require you to submit reports or test scores.

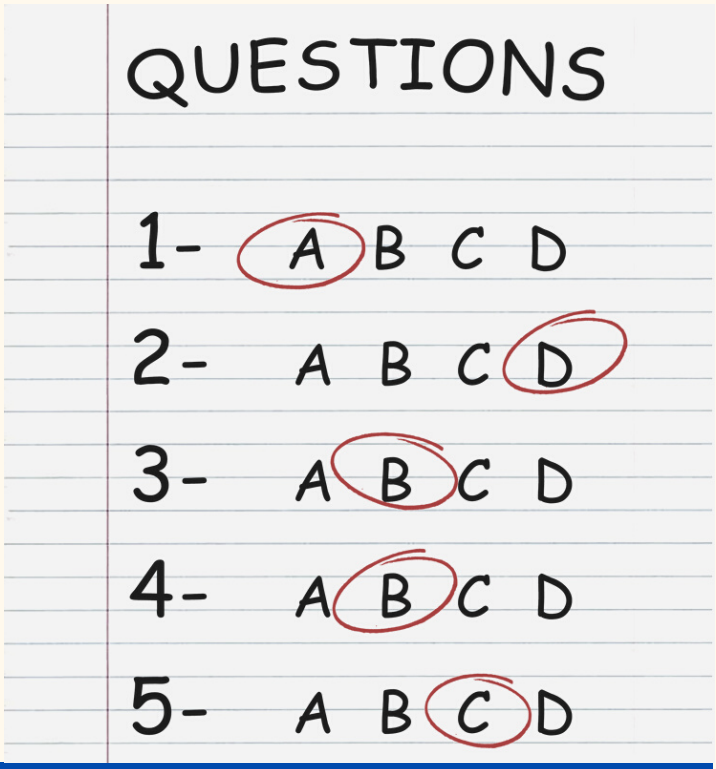
If your children have been in a traditional school, this may be the hardest adjustment for you. But it can also be a relief. No longer do students -- and teachers -- need to spend hours upon hours of classroom time preparing for standardized testing. Children no longer have to learn "just to pass a test" and then forget everything they've learned.

Illinois does not require parents to submit curriculum lists, lesson plans, test scores, or portfolios.

At first, this may make you very uncomfortable. How will you know whether your children are where they need to be? How do you know they are making progress?

As a homeschool parent, you will know through looking at your child's daily work and having dicsussions about what they are learning whether or not they have a sufficient level of understanding. This has added benefit in that your child need not feel pressured to move on to keep up with the rest of the "class," nor hindered from moving on once they have grasped a concept. In fact, many homeschool students may be at a different "grade level" for math, for example, than they are for language arts. This is one of the many benefits of homeschooling.

Should you desire to test, though, there are many resources available to you. This article on "Testing" will be a good place for you to explore this topic.







SPECIAL NEEDS & IEPs

There are many resources available to help you homeschool your struggling or gifted learner.

Do you have a struggling learner? Do you have a gifted learner? Does your student have an IEP? Are you concerned about your ability to provide your student with what they need to be successful? You're not alone. The Illinois homeschool community has many parents who have walked the path you are walking, and they are here to assist.

The following articles will be of help to you as you make plans for your child:

The IEP and the Special Needs Child
Homeschooling Across the Spectrum of Autism
Dyslexia - How Do I Teach This Child
Learning In Spite of Labels
The Neurodevelopmental Approach to Development

Our annual conference provides an entire track of workshops dedicated to special learning situations. We also offer Special Needs Coffee Talks throughout the year on Facebook.

Please don't hesitate to contact the ICHE office (847-603-1259) for further assistance.

RESOURCES

We have put together this special set of resources just for you.

Click HERE to access the following talks - a $28.00 value - for FREE to those who are interested in learning more about homeschooling.

Curriculum That Fits: Key to Freedom for You and Your Child by Marilyn Boyer - Scripture tells us to train up a child in the way 'he' should go – not the way 'they' should go. Every child is a unique creation of God, with his own fascinating blend of talents, interests and yes, weaknesses. To help them fulfill their life calling, we must develop a specific plan for the training of each one. Come and learn how to work 'with' the uniqueness of your child. Escape the bondage of expectations and set your child free to pursue his passions and be the whole person God created him to be.

Exploring Learning Styles by Nancy Bjorkman - Gain a fresh perspective how your children's actions and attitudes can help you to discover their natural bent so that you can plan strategies that will help them to grow into the person they were created to be. This workshop will provide insight into a variety of ways we can effectively teach to various learning styles in our children.

Learning to Delight in Your Children by Marilyn Boyer - If you sometimes feel like homeschooling is drudgery, you can bet your kids feel the same way! It's such a temptation to stress over teaching predicate nominatives or the steps of division that we forget to delight in our children and make time to enjoy being with them. In this session, Marilyn shares how she and Rick have found this to actually be the key to instilling values that stick and building in them a heart for things of the Lord.

Starting Mid-Stream by Vicki Bentley - Maybe you haven't always homeschooled … you're starting a few years in, or even mid-year. Can you really start mid-stream? What does homeschooling look like? Where do you begin? What should you expect? How can you ease the transition for all of you? We'll cover these topics and more. Q&A time included, so bring your questions.

Homeschooling on a Shoestring Budget by Vicki Bentley - Homeschooling doesn't have to cost hundreds of dollars per child. Vicki homeschooled seven at a time while their family was without a full-time income for four years, sometimes spending less than $100 per year.

Homeschooling/Parenting Outside the Box by Marianne Sunderland - As the mother of teen sailors, Zac and Abby Sunderland, Marianne has a unique perspective on what real education is and how to nurture and encourage your child's God-given strengths and talents. God has a plan for all of us, including our children. Marianne will show you simple, practical and often times, overlooked ways to help your child grow into his or her unique purpose.

More resources are available through our web site, www.iche.org.