



*You can homeschool!*

**your preschooler**

# Can I homeschool my preschooler?

Home is the single most important learning environment your child will have, and parents are the single most important teachers.

*Amy James, *Preschool Success: Everything You Need to Know to Help Your Child Learn**



“**N**ow that our son is almost 3, my husband and I have been discussing preschool. Our son seems quite happy at home—loves playing with his toys, reading stories with Mom and Dad, ‘helping out’ in the kitchen. It’s hard to see how even the most kid-friendly classroom could provide the same nurturing environment as our home. But we want to make sure we’re providing our son with a good academic foundation. Is there a preschool option that combines the two?”

**YES, there is!**

**You can homeschool your preschooler!**

By weaving foundational learning experiences into everyday family life, homeschooling honors and enriches your child’s natural development. It helps your child not only to learn successfully, but to enjoy it!

# Why it makes sense

## Can I give my child the tools to learn?

Young children are hardwired to learn. What may seem boring to you—buttoning a coat, turning the pages of a book one at a time, or building a train out of chairs and chugging to an imaginary destination—is full of interest for your preschooler. Along the way, he or she is developing fine motor control, pre-reading skills, and a knowledge of how the world works. A young child's version of having fun actually builds important neurological connections, laying the foundation for strong verbal, thinking, physical, and behavioral skills that will last throughout life.

By recognizing this natural learning process, homeschooling allows children to learn fully and productively. “The learning process can be child-centered as opposed to teacher-centered,” writes author

Barbara Curtis. “Learning isn’t hampered by the traditional school environment with twenty children focused on a teacher. Instead, the parent can tap into the child’s natural potentials to build a positive learning momentum that is not dependent on adults giving constant direction.”<sup>1</sup>

## As a parent, I know my child better than anyone else . . . why not be his teacher, too?

Although a preschool teacher may be an expert in child development, early education, and classroom management, she can never be the expert on your child. As a parent, you know your child’s strengths, weaknesses, and special circumstances. You understand him more than anyone else. And, more than anyone else, you love your child and have his best interests at heart.

1 Barbara Curtis, *Mommy, Teach Me!: Preparing Your Preschool Child for a Lifetime of Learning* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 38.



There's more about  
homeschooling your  
preschooler at  
[hslida.org/preschool](https://hslida.org/preschool).

Homeschooling parents have the knowledge and flexibility to shape their child's preschool experience to his natural aptitudes, while giving special attention to areas in which he is struggling. Achievement gives your child confidence, which leads to the ability and willingness to tackle more challenging concepts. By homeschooling your preschooler, you can pave the way for a lifetime of learning!

### Does my child really need to spend time in a classroom to learn how to get along?

Some parents worry that if they don't put their child in preschool, he or she won't learn how to get along with other children and adults. But socialization can happen anywhere!

In a classroom, socialization occurs within one age group, with only a few adults available to serve as role models. Homeschooling fosters family- and community-based socialization: "the experience of growing up and learning socially in the family and larger community rather than in a classroom or other 'removed' environment."<sup>2</sup> This type of socialization occurs in the context of everyday living—playing with siblings and neighbors, reading with Grandma on the couch, and going to the grocery store or library.

Homeschooling gives parents a greater role in guiding their children's social development. Not only can parents protect their children from inappropriate influences, but they can provide a daily example of how to navigate the complex world of relationships.

<sup>2</sup> Rachel Gathercole, *The Well-Adjusted Child: The Social Benefits of Homeschooling* (Denver, CO: Mapletree Publishing Company, 2007), 44.

# Let's get started

## What should I teach my child?

---

Setting a few clear goals can help focus your efforts during your child's preschool years. Start by identifying your primary purpose in home-schooling your preschooler, and then set supporting goals. Developmentally appropriate learning goals include colors, shapes, and sizes; numbers; listening and motor skills; reading readiness; and social and emotional skills. See "What to Do with Your Preschooler / Early Learner" at [hslda.org/preschool](https://www.hslda.org/preschool).

## What does preschool at home look like?

---

A primary focus of the early years is to help children create "hooks" onto which they will hang future learning. While some pre-kindergartners may be ready for a few minutes of seat-work at a time, most preschoolers will blossom with lots of discovery

learning, hands-on activities, discussion and thinking prompts, and reading aloud.

"A consistent daily routine at home can help children feel more secure as they segue into a bit more structure in those primary years. So read to them a lot," says HSLDA Toddlers to Tweens Consultant Vicki Bentley. "Discuss what you read to help them develop language skills and critical thinking skills. Include books that will . . . build their knowledge base as well. Let young children explore and experiment through play to develop those gross and fine motor skills they'll need in kindergarten. Games such as marching and hopscotch and handclap games encourage hand-eye coordination and brain development that facilitate learning. We want to encourage curiosity, a love for learning."<sup>3</sup>

3 "Five Tips for Homeschooling Your Preschooler: An Interview with Vicki Bentley," by Mike Smith, *Home School Heartbeat*, January 30–February 3, 2017, <https://www.hslda.org/docs/hshb/129/hshbwk11.asp>.

Good, consistent parenting, surrounded by love, security, rich language, books, and real experiences are what children need most.

Karen Miller, *Ages and Stages: Developmental Descriptions and Activities, Birth through Eight Years*

### Do I want to co-op?

In a typical preschool co-op, parents and their preschoolers get together once a week or so to do some guided activities. Your local homeschool group may offer a preschool co-op, or you can search *homeschool preschool co-op* online. Or check out these resources:

- “Tips to Starting a Preschool Homeschool Co-op,” [theunlikelyhomeschool.com/2013/07/tips-to-starting-preschool-homeschool.html](http://theunlikelyhomeschool.com/2013/07/tips-to-starting-preschool-homeschool.html)
- “Starting a Homeschool Preschool Co-op,” [nateandrachael.com/preschool-curriculum-and-homeschool-co-op-schedule](http://nateandrachael.com/preschool-curriculum-and-homeschool-co-op-schedule)

### What about special needs?

Your preschooler may have been diagnosed with special needs, or you may suspect that there is a problem. Can and should you homeschool? Probably! Because homeschooling is child-centered and has a one-on-one student-teacher ratio, it is an especially effective option for children with special needs. Begin by educating yourself on the nature and extent of your child’s needs. (A good starting place is HSLDA’s special needs website, [hsllda.org/strugglinglearner](http://hsllda.org/strugglinglearner).) You know your child best, and you have the right to choose the form of education that will help him or her to learn best.



# Connecting with your community





**W**here does a homeschooling parent go to find ideas and encouragement? Draw from the rich pool of experience in parenting communities all around you—in your neighborhood, at your church, and online.

Playgroups are a great source of socialization for both you and your preschooler. Check with local churches, libraries, and rec or community centers. If your neighborhood or church doesn't have a playgroup in place, websites such as [mops.org](http://mops.org) can help you locate or start one in your area.

You'll also want to plug into the homeschooling community. The internet and your local homeschool support group can help you connect with other homeschooling families; some groups are even geared to families of preschoolers. Your state homeschool associations are another good resource—contact them for information on homeschooling as well as to find local homeschool groups and educational opportunities. For a list of the homeschool organizations in your state, go to [hsllda.org/orgs](http://hsllda.org/orgs).

### What is HSLDA?

Home School Legal Defense Association is a nonprofit advocacy organization that defends and advances the right of parents to homeschool their children. Our team of lawyers provides HSLDA member families with legal advice and representation if their homeschool is ever challenged by a government entity. We believe in homeschooling, so we want to make it easier for you! Our educational consultants answer your questions about homeschooling younger children, high schoolers, and children with special needs. We also keep you connected and informed with our email alerts and quarterly membership magazine. Visit [hsllda.org](http://hsllda.org) to find out more!



HSLDA Toddlers to Tweens Consultants Vicki Bentley and Stacey Wolking bring a wealth of friendly advice to share out of their own experiences as homeschooling mothers. They provide personal consultation by phone and email to HSLDA members who need specific answers about homeschooling their children. To contact them, go to [hsllda.org/contactstaff](http://hsllda.org/contactstaff) or call 540-338-5600. Not yet an HSLDA member? Join today at [hsllda.org](http://hsllda.org). If your oldest child is younger than 5, you can join HSLDA for free!

# Resources

## Finding books and curriculum

Resources abound for teaching your preschooler at home—and many are free. You will find a wealth of information at the library and online, in bookstores and at curriculum fairs. Keep in mind that preschool at home doesn't have to mimic a traditional classroom. Homeschooling's inherent flexibility allows you to create a program that suits both your child and you. An informal, play-based format is fun and effective, and it allows you to introduce guided activities and periods of brief instruction as your child's attention span develops.

Use the following resource lists to get started, or simply search *preschool* in your library catalog or online. Also, check out the resources at [hsllda.org/preschool](https://hsllda.org/preschool). Talk to other homeschooling parents to find out what resources have worked for them; you may even be able to borrow, share, or trade materials. (If you decide to investigate formal preschool curriculum, you'll find that it's available from many homeschool curriculum publishers. Just remember that you're the teacher, and you can adapt the curriculum to meet your child's needs.)

### ***Preschool activity books and resources***

*Before Five in a Row*, Jane C. Lambert, [fiveinarow.com](https://fiveinarow.com)

*Bite-Sized Science: Activities for Children in 15 Minutes or Less*, John H. Falk and Kristi S. Rosenberg

*The Busy Mom's Book of Preschool Activities*, Jamie Kyle McGillian

*Child's Play: Easy Art for Preschoolers*, Leslie Hamilton

*A Child's World*, [leahmcdermott.leadpages.co/theme-catalog](https://leahmcdermott.leadpages.co/theme-catalog)

*Early Education at Home: A Curriculum Guide for Parents of Preschoolers and Kindergartners*, M. Jean Soyke

Heart of Dakota, [heartofdakota.com](https://heartofdakota.com)

*Home Learning Year by Year: How to Design a Homeschool Curriculum from Preschool through High School*, Rebecca Rupp

*Homepreschool and Beyond: A Comprehensive Guide to Early Home Education*, Susan Lemons

*Kitchen Table Play and Learn: Activities and Lessons for Building Your Preschooler's Vital Developmental Skills*, Tara Copley and Andrea Custer

*Making the Most of the Preschool Years: 100 Activities to Encourage Independent Play!*, Valerie Bendt

*Making Toys for Preschool Children: Using Ordinary Stuff for Extraordinary Play*, Linda G. Miller and Mary Jo Gibbs

*Mommy, Teach Me!: Preparing Your Preschool Child for a Lifetime of Learning*, Barbara Curtis

*Mommy, Teach Me to Read!: A Complete and Easy-to-Use Home Reading Program*, Barbara Curtis

*My Father's World*, [mfwbooks.com](http://mfwbooks.com)

*The Preschooler's Busy Book: 365 Fun, Creative, Screen-Free Learning Games and Activities to Stimulate Your 3- to 6-Year-Old Every Day of the Year*, Trish Kuffner

*Preschool Math*, Robert Williams, Debra Cunningham, and Joy Lubawy

*Ready for Reading: A Handbook for Parents of Preschoolers*, Ashley Bishop, Ruth Helen Yopp, and Hallie Kay Yopp

*Science Is Simple: Over 250 Activities for Preschoolers*, Peggy Ashbrook

*Slow and Steady Get Me Ready: The How-to Book That Grows with Your Child*, June R. Oberlander

*Timberdoodle*, [timberdoodle.com](http://timberdoodle.com)

*A Year of Playing Skillfully*, Kathy H. Lee and Lesli M. Richards, [thehomegrownpreschooler.com](http://thehomegrownpreschooler.com)

*Young Scientist Series*, Ingrid Chalufour and Karen Worth

## **Parent helps**

*Ages and Stages: A Parent's Guide to Normal Childhood Development*, Charles E. Schaefer and Theresa Foy DiGeronimo

*Ages and Stages: Developmental Descriptions and Activities, Birth through Eight Years*, Karen Miller

*Baby and Child Care: From Pre-Birth through the Teen Years*, Paul C. Reisser and the Focus on the Family Physicians Resource Council

*The Big WHAT NOW Book of Learning Styles: A Fresh and Demystifying Approach*, Carol Barnier

*The Homegrown Preschooler: Teaching Your Kids in the Places They Live*, Kathy H. Lee and Lesli M. Richards, [thehomegrownpreschooler.com](http://thehomegrownpreschooler.com)

*The Smarter Preschooler: Unlocking Your Child's Intellectual Potential*, Renee and Mike Mosiman

*Talkers, Watchers, and Doers: Unlocking Your Child's Unique Learning Style*, Cheri Fuller

*Through the Learning Glass: A Child's Nine Learning Windows You Don't Want to Miss*, Cheri Fuller

*The Way They Learn: How to Discover and Teach to Your Child's Strengths*, Cynthia Ulrich Tobias

*Your Child's Growing Mind: Brain Development and Learning from Birth to Adolescence*, Jane M. Healy

# PRESCHOOL

*Discover*

[hslida.org/preschool](https://hslida.org/preschool)