



Considering Home Education?

There are a growing number of families in the UK that are choosing to educate their children at home for many reasons, and this is completely legal: all parents have a legal responsibility for ensuring their child is educated, and most parents delegate that responsibility to schools, but it is also an option for parents to educate their children themselves outside of the school environment.

The parent does not have to have any particular qualifications to do this, and many home educating parents explore and learn new things alongside their children rather than 'teaching' in the conventional way. If a child is in a mainstream school then in order to home educate a letter must be sent to the school asking them to deregister the child. As soon as this letter has been received the school has a legal responsibility to deregister the child, and the child can stop attending school immediately. If the child is in a special school then the procedure for de-registering is slightly different – good information can be found here:

<https://www.educationotherwise.org/index.php/he-and-sen#can-i-deregister-my-child-who-is-currently-at-a-special-school>

Most areas have active communities of home educators that meet up for a variety of social and education outings, groups and clubs. Home educators are not required by law to follow the National Curriculum, and do not have to work a set number of hours, take assessments, meet any particular targets, or have 'lessons' in the same way that a school does. Every home educating family has the freedom to choose to organise their education in whatever way works best for them, and there are many different styles of education that people follow.

Some people chose to work in a style that is similar to school, and to follow the curriculum in a structured way using books, online programs and other resources. Many other home educating families organise their activities around their children's interests, aspirations or needs – perhaps by doing projects on topics of interest that incorporate lots of different skills from across the curriculum and beyond, or by spending less time on 'textbook' work and more time learning in alternative ways that better suit their child. These ways could include learning actively by doing and creating, learning through discussion and conversation, or learning visually by watching documentaries or YouTube videos. Many families find that it takes them a lot less time to cover material than it does in school, due to the freedom to focus on the areas that the child particularly needs/wants to work on and to do so in whatever way the child finds most engaging and helpful.

Other families don't do any organised 'teaching' lessons or activities at all, but instead chose to let their children direct their own learning by exploring whatever they're interested in. This is often referred to as 'autonomous home education' or 'unschooling' and works by allowing children's own curiosity to drive their learning and development.



Many people find that when they take their children out of school it can be very helpful to start by having a relaxed period of time to 'de-school' without any pressure to do any formal studying, particular if the child's experience of school has been traumatic. This can allow children to relax and to start to build up their mental health and regain confidence in themselves and enthusiasm for learning.

There are many different resources that home educators can choose to use, some of which are available free and some of which can be paid for. Some of the many free resources include books from libraries, free printable worksheets from online sites like TES, educational videos on YouTube, curriculum-linked study websites like BBC bitesize, and the online organisation Khan Academy which provides free teaching videos and practice questions for a variety of different subjects at different levels. Paid resources that some home educators choose to use include online learning programmes like Conquer Maths and EdPlace, distance learning courses, online classes, and 1:1 or small group tuition.

Taking GCSEs is not compulsory as a home educator, but many home educating families choose to, and can do so by booking to take exams as a private candidate at a local exam centre or a school that accepts private candidates. Home educators who do this are required to pay for exam fees and admin costs, which can vary from centre to centre. It is quite common for home educators to choose to take IGCSEs rather than GCSEs, as these are recognised as equivalent but do not include coursework or practical assessments, which makes the assessment much easier to arrange as a private candidate. It is also common for home educators to decide to study less subjects than are commonly taken in school, and to focus more of their time and energy on the subjects and other activities that are most relevant to them. It is typical for a college course to require no more than 5 GCSEs, so it is very often not necessary to take more GCSEs than that in order to go on to higher education. There are also alternative routes into college that require less or no GCSEs.

There are many ways for home educators to study towards GCSEs – many teens simply work through the relevant textbooks for the subject and exam board that they want to take, either independently or with the help of a parent, and then revise and prepare for exams using past exam papers that are available free online. Other families choose to follow distance learning courses, which involve working through course material that is sent to you and sending assignments to a tutor that provides feedback and can be contacted with questions. Some families choose to use private tuition for help with some subjects, either 1:1 or in small groups of local home educators to split costs.



Further information:

Joining UK-wide and local home education groups on Facebook can be a valuable way to ask questions, seek advice, and get a sense of how home education can work and what's happening in your local home education community. Home Education UK Facebook Forum, UK Home Education and

Education Otherwise are all good UK-wide Facebook groups, and local groups can be found by searching on Facebook or by asking on the UK wide groups.

These websites are good starting points for information on home education.

Educational Freedom: <http://educationalfreedom.org.uk/>

Education Otherwise: <https://www.educationotherwise.org/>

Home Education UK: <http://www.home-education.org.uk/begin.htm>

This blog post, written by a young person who was home educated, explores in depth many of the questions and concerns that people often have when they're considering home education and is a good starting point for anyone wondering if home education would be a possibility for them.

<https://thewindowsareshining.wordpress.com/2018/03/04/home-education-in-depth-answers-to-initial-questions/>

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