

1. Figure out your reason for homeschooling, sort of like your homeschool mission statement. This will keep you going when times are rough.

2. Figure out your homeschool style and your children's learning styles. Use my homeschool style quiz and my learning styles quiz at OrisonOrchards.com

3. Figure out your homeschool budget. Homeschooling doesn't have to cost a lot, trust me! I do it on a shoestring budget, utilizing our wonderful libraries extensively. But the occasional field trip to the zoo or the aquarium, private music lessons, and a co-op class or two (most have minimal costs) will do wonders for your kiddos morale.

4. Create an effective daily routine that includes consistent learning time. I prefer a flexible routine to a rigid schedule, but it's best if you work within whatever you're already doing with your family. Homeschool should fit into your LIFE, rather than your life having to conform to your homeschool.

5. Find a homeschool support group or a co-op. Facebook is a terrific resource to get started. Once you find a human homeschooling friend, you will find the homeschool network to be incredibly efficient about sharing all of the best resources. We homeschool moms are amazing!

6. Sprinkle in some experiential learning. I'm talking field trips, excursions, family travel, hands-on projects and all of those things that make homeschooling so rich.

7. Choose your homeschool curriculum. If you are just leaving the public school system, I suggest giving your children and yourself a good long break. THEY need to detox and so do you. Choose a couple of FANTASTIC read-alouds and spend a good chunk of every day just

cuddling and reading together. Call it your reading time to begin a daily “learning time” habit. Then, when you feel ready to dive into learning together, start with one subject at a time and add more as it feels doable. The last thing you want is to overwhelm yourself or your children right now.

8. Set up your space. The simpler the better, honest. I've had fancy homeschool rooms in two different homes that never got used because I really need to live in my kitchen, where I can change laundry and prep dinner while supervising the learning. When my kids are in a separate room, they tend to sneak off and disappear. Our school works best around the kitchen table. We have a special cabinet in our kitchen for homeschool materials. Your family will be different, but do not feel like you need a separate space or anything fancy.

9. Plan your homeschool year. Keep it simple. Don't plan specific dates for completion of subjects or tests or anything unless you like to feel anxious, haha! What I mean is to plan whether you want to take a month off for the Christmas holidays and a long summer break, or whether you'd rather have more frequent breaks during the year. I promise you that whatever you plan will change, so don't spend a whole lot of time on this step.

10. Evaluate your homeschool periodically and don't compare it to others. My best, most honest evaluations come from my kids.
