

## Organizing Your Homeschooling Day

by Kelly Huckaby

When you decided to homeschool, did your first official day of school leave you feeling really great - and did your second day leave you in tears? Are you so busy with field trips, music lessons, and library runs that you never seem to have time for math? Has clutter become commonplace because you haven't had time for a thorough housecleaning? Do you often find yourself wondering how other homeschooling moms "do it all"? Well, I have two words for you: "routine" and "schedule."



Now, be honest. Did you shudder when you read those words? You may not have a schedule that you follow, but I think if you examine your days closely you'll see that you do have a routine. You wake up around the same time, eat your meals around the same time, and go to bed around the same time each day. Those of you who work outside of the home take breaks, usually at the same time each day.

Routine is comforting. There is security in knowing when things are going to happen. Babies need the routine of sleep and awake times during the day in order to sleep at night. Toddlers and preschoolers who attend day care are much calmer when they know what to expect during the day. (If you have doubts, try this experiment: For one week, give your youngster no warning before switching activities. When it's time to eat, or go somewhere, say "let's go now." Then, for the second week, give your youngster a five minute warning before switching activities. Five minutes before you are ready to eat, or go somewhere, say "we'll be eating in five minutes" or "time to clean up so we can leave in five minutes to go shopping." Take notes and see which week is smoother.)

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Before I began homeschooling I babysat for two children in my home during the week. I had all sorts of ideas for activities to do with the children (I had a toddler and a preschooler of my own at the time.) Some days we had so much fun that lunch would be late and naps would be pushed back later as well. After awhile, I noticed a pattern. Even though these kids couldn't tell time, they would get very cranky and out of control if lunch and naps were late! On some days I was so frazzled that I'd be in tears when my husband came home. My husband suggested that I create a schedule, like the day care centers use. A certain time for art, a certain time for music, a certain time for snack, etc. At first I balked. I didn't need a schedule. I wanted to be spontaneous. Then I realized that with a schedule I could be spontaneous and yet stay in control of the activities.

So, I created a routine. After breakfast we had free time for about half an hour. Then I'd bring out crayons, or Play-Doh, or some other form of craft activity. After half an hour or so they would have more free time while I cleaned up. We'd then have some exercise time, followed by lunch and naps. As they woke up, I'd read stories to them or they would look at books quietly. When everyone was up, we'd have snack and then some music activities until their parents arrived. Although I now had a routine, I didn't have a set schedule. I could still take time to make phone calls while the children played. I could vary the craft activity, or the music activity, or the exercise time. Things started to go more smoothly after that.

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When I began homeschooling, I altered my routine only slightly. I would set aside time for

school and let the children decide which order to do the subjects. I quickly noticed that this freedom to choose was too much for the children and nothing was getting accomplished. I then tried various lesson planners and daily planners to assist me in creating a new routine. They all seemed so perfect - until I put them into action. I've finally created my own system which works best for me and my family. Each year I adapt my routine to accommodate the changing needs of my family. Here are the three points I've found which can help everyone in their homeschooling home:

## **Plan**

Create a schedule of when you'll have school. Many homeschoolers have formal academics four days a week and use the fifth day for "outside" activities and running errands. Use a yearly calendar to keep track of family vacations and holidays when you won't have school. Designate the beginning and the end of your academic year. Decide on the quitting time for your school day. This is more for your benefit (you can plan the rest of your day) but it will also give your children the responsibility of the work --whatever they don't finish during "school" hours gets finished later, on their own time.

## **Prioritize**

Is there a weekly appointment you need to keep? Put this into your schedule first. Would you like to go to the library twice a month? Plan to do this on the same day you have your appointment since you'll already be out and about. Schedule the most important things first and everything else will fall into place. Once your schedule is full, start saying "no" to activities. If you feel the activity is important, drop something else in order to fit it in. Take time to use a rating scale. Divide your activities into categories, with each category having its items listed by priority. Daily time with God would be A1, your spouse A2, your children A3. Housework and school could fall into the B category. Community involvement, extended family and friends could be in the C category. By putting it on paper, you will be able to see where your priorities are and adjust your schedule accordingly.

## **Respond**

If a deer suddenly runs past your window feel free to interrupt whatever you're studying to watch him. Watch him eat an apple off a tree. Watch how alert to danger he is. Talk about things that he may be afraid of, what he eats, where he lives. If your child shows an interest in something go ahead and learn about it. Being flexible is a great asset for homeschoolers. Flexibility keeps things fun and exciting.

All three of these points are key ingredients to assist you in reducing your "frazzled-ness." If you fail to plan, you will leave gaps in your child's education. If you fail to prioritize, you will have conflicts in your schedule and it will constantly need to be adjusted. If you fail to respond, you will miss out on some great teaching moments and school will become rigid and boring.

So, start a routine, but stay flexible!

## **About the Author**

[Kelly Huckaby](#) is the HOMEWriter. This Christian/Wife/Mother/Writer lives in WI with her husband of 13 years and their five always-homeschooled children. She is active in her local homeschooling support group, is the moderator for four homeschooling and two writing e-mail lists, and has a web page that offers support for families using The Weaver Curriculum. Her goal as a writer is to be an encouragement to other mothers. You can visit Kelly at her [Unofficial Weaver Pages](#).

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