

Planning

Why?

As homeschool families, we have much to juggle, and planning is a vital part of success in homeschooling. There are several reasons why you should have a written plan:



Direction for the year.

- A written plan gives you a road map for the year ahead and helps you to organize your days. It will help you to stay on task and know where you are going.
- Many times processes can seem meaningless without a goal in the end. Make sure you know what goals you have for your child.
- Of course, you may need to adjust for life or family situations or you may become aware of different needs your child has. Be ready to change as needed.

Record of your child's success and needs

- A written plan gives you a record of what your child has accomplished. At the end of the year, it is wonderful to go back over your work and see how far he/she has come.
- In addition, you will also clearly see where your child has struggled, and this will help you in preparation for the next year. You will then be able to predict how much study is needed in a certain area for the next school year.

Protection of your children

- A written plan and record could be valuable if you need to defend your child's abilities or achievements. Though we should not live in fear, we should do all we can to protect our children from unneeded stress or scrutiny. In many cases, a written record and/or portfolio quickly dispels questions. So why not do it?



How?

The big question for many homeschoolers is how to keep a record and how to make a plan.. So, let's discuss some different methods.

A Planner

The main method that homeschoolers use is the integration of a planner. These planners can be hard copy, a computer software program, or an online service which allows you to record your daily activities and usually includes a calendar for you to input plans for the days ahead. It is highly suggested that plans are written in pencil in order to give you flexibility to change and adjust. [Click here](#) for links to online services and planners for purchase.



A Journal

For some people, planners are just too much to handle, and they prefer another option. So, you could simply journal at the end of each school day about the work accomplished and the things that still need attention. For planning, you could write out at the beginning a list of goals such as completing a grammar textbook or how many school days you are planning.



A Portfolio

Many colleges are now asking for a student's portfolio on top of transcripts. They want to actually see what a student has done. To keep a portfolio, you could set aside special written projects, keep a record of time spent in a specific area, and keep a journal of specific milestones achieved. [Click here](#) for links to portfolio information.

Making a Plan

To make your plans, simply look at your goals and divide the steps needed between your days required and/or scheduled. For example, I want to go through a history book with 36 chapters. Since I have 36 weeks in my school year, I will make a plan to complete a chapter a week.

Most textbooks and curriculum already list objectives and the lesson plan, so there is really no need to detail that again on the plan. Just list the what and when for each step towards your goal.

What is required?

In Alabama, each church school creates its own requirements for record keeping and planning. You need to make sure you understand their requirements. Here are some of the documents that may be required and brief explanations:

Curriculum List

This is a list of all the teaching materials that you will use for each subject. For example, you might list that you are using Saxon 5/6 for math studies.

Attendance Reports

This is usually a checklist of all the school days completed during a certain term or for the school year. Most of the time you will not record Absent Days, because you will easily “make up” any sick days as needed.

Report Cards

This is a document that assigns a grade for each subject studied, and these usually reflect a certain term of the school year. This is what is normally put in a student’s cumulative file for future reference and will be sent to another school when they withdraw.

Plan Book/ Portfolios

Some church schools want to see that you are making plans and working on them, and they will require a review of your plan book. If you are using another method of record keeping, check to make sure this is acceptable with your school.

As you make your plans, be assured that some things will go as planned, but there will be times of adjustment and change. Try to stay flexible; but, keep the plan before you and keep your focus on your homeschooling “why.”

May He give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed!

Psalm 20:4

• Kristy Trent

Kristy Trent has been officially homeschooling for over 8 years and currently coordinates [Highlands Homeschoolers](#), a homeschool support group in the Birmingham, AL area. This article is an excerpt from discussions at the New to Homeschooling workshops that Highlands Homeschoolers offers each summer.

