

Homeschooling On a Budget

Can I homeschool for free? While you certainly could drop \$1,000 per student on certain homeschool curriculum packages, it is also possible to successfully homeschool for next to nothing and give your student an excellent education too! So if you're on a tight budget and wondering if you can still homeschool, we're here for you! Here are some ways to homeschool for (almost) free...

Shop Used Curriculum!

The Rocky Mountain Homeschool Conference held annually each June offers a huge used curriculum sale on the Bonus Day, where you can find deeply discounted curriculum and books! Plus, you can also sell your curriculum to make some extra money! Learn more at RockyMountainHomeschoolConference.com.

Here are some other resources for used curriculum:

- Used Homeschool Curriculum at TheHomeschoolMom.com
- Colorado Springs Used Curriculum & Swap at BornAgainUsedBooks.com

Curriculum Swaps

Not sure how to afford curriculum? Consider asking around for curriculum "hand-me downs" from other families in your local homeschool group. You could also organize a curriculum swap day, where everyone brings the curriculum they are done with, lay it out on tables, and everyone can "shop." There are also many Facebook Groups dedicated to swapping curriculum.

Swap Talents

Joining a homeschool group or network of homeschool moms allows you to swap areas of expertise to help each other out. So if your background is in English while your friend was a math major, consider taking turns tutoring each other's kids or teaching classes.

Use the Library!

Libraries offer a host of educational resources. Although there is much questionable material these days, if you're willing to put in a little research, you can find many great homeschool materials. The "Living Book" model popular in Charlotte Mason and Classical styles is not only a great way to make learning come alive — it also offers an inexpensive way to homeschool as many of the recommended books can be found at the library. Many Charlotte Mason and Classical curriculum sets come with book lists by grade level, so consider signing up for their catalogs or purchasing their book guides for book lists. For example, Five in a Row is an entirely book-based curriculum for pre-K through early elementary — and almost every single one of their books can be found at your local library!

- 1. Interlibrary loan:** Even if your library district doesn't have the book you're searching for, you can still often find it through interlibrary loan. In Colorado, libraries are part of a network called Prospector, which allows you to request books from across the state. In addition, your librarian may be able to access the larger network of college libraries in the west called MOBIUS, which offers more educational and research books than does a typical library.
- 2. Library perks:** Many libraries in Colorado also offer educational perks like "Adventure Passes" with free tickets to local museums, access to online classes for graphic design, coding, etc., and other resources. You may also be able to sign up for library cards in multiple counties to take full advantage of these perks!
- 3. Hoopla or Libby:** Most Colorado libraries will also give you free access to the Hoopla or Libby apps, from which you can check out free audiobooks. These are great to make car trips educational!

Caution: Since public libraries are secular, parents should supervise their children's selection of books, use of public internet, and safety around other patrons. It is possible to contact your local library with a pre-selected list of books you have found, perhaps online, and arrange for them to be picked up curbside, if this is more convenient for you and your family.

Online Resources

The internet offers a plethora of free homeschool materials, including unit studies, free printables, books lists, and tutorials. If you're using an interest-led approach to homeschooling, this is a great way to delve deeper into your student's topic of interest, whether it be dinosaurs or the speed of light! Of course, keep in mind that not all internet information is correct or Christian in nature! Investing in a good internet filter, such as Covenant Eyes, is so important to protect our children from harmful content.

Khan Academy is also a free online resource with top-notch classes on math, science, SAT prep, and much more. While not necessarily created to replace a high school textbook, it offers explanation videos, practice questions, and even tests. So if you're unsure of how you'll ever teach your high school student advanced math or science, Khan Academy makes that possible by offering easy-to-understand videos from elementary topics to advanced physics and differential equations. [Note: Keep in mind that Khan Academy doesn't come from a Christian perspective, so use discernment.]

Ask Grandparents or Community Members

Consider too that education isn't limited to a text book or curriculum provider. Check the community for things you can teach your children in real life. Do you have a friend with a specific skill? For example, a friend with a farm, an attorney, a mechanic, a doctor, a soldier, a public service worker, a small business owner, or a restaurant owner. The ideas are as endless as there are people. Ask them if they could share a day in their life. Maybe you can offer to help them with a project. It may spark interest and lead to a great internet research project too.

In addition, when loved ones ask what your child, family, or you want for birthday or Christmas gifts, provide them with ideas for art supplies, local venue annual memberships, fees for weekly music lessons (along with an instrument?), special books for your home library, and the like. This involves them as participants in your family's homeschool journey and blesses your students with opportunities you could not otherwise afford. Be sure to have your students write thank you notes as part of their writing assignments!

Being on a budget

doesn't need to stop you from homeschooling. In fact, your success in homeschooling isn't so much about how expensive or fancy your curriculum but about the lifestyle and family culture you create. If you love learning, you'll pass that love onto your kids and find resources to teach them successfully. And, at the end of the day, the single most important thing isn't academics, it's instilling a love for Christ in your children through intentionally discipling them. That doesn't require a fancy curriculum — just a Bible, prayer, and seeking to live out the Gospel everyday in your home.

You can homeschool on a budget!

Christian Home Educators of Colorado (CHEC)

exists to *defend* your family's

freedom and help you
homeschool with confidence.



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