



LEARNING — YOUR WAY

Homeschooling in Alberta:
A Step-by-Step Guide to Getting Started

HOMESCHOOL SUPPORTS

ADLC

Alberta Distance
Learning Centre



9 Steps to Homeschooling

Step 1: Determine Your Role (p. 3)

Step 2: Ask: Will This Work for Us? (p. 6)

Step 3: Find Out About Funding (p. 7)

Step 4: Research Resources (p. 10)

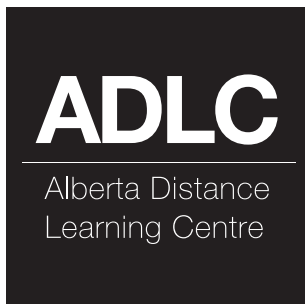
Step 5: Select Your School Board or Private School (p. 12)

Step 6: Develop a Home Education Plan (p. 13)

Step 7: Fill in Your Home Education Notification Form (p. 17)

Step 8: Prepare for Facilitator Visitations (p. 18)

Step 9: Stay Connected (p. 19)



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What's the difference between **homeschooling & home education?**

STEP 1

Determine Your Role

We use specific language to talk about homeschooling. Sometimes we say homeschooling and sometimes we say home education. The distinction comes down to the role parents play in their children's education.

The term *homeschooling* refers to the location where the child's formal education takes place, whereas the term *home education* (as used by Alberta Education) specifies that the education is directed and delivered by the child's caregivers rather than professional teachers.

Homeschooling is directed by a teacher;

home education is directed by a parent.

Parents who homeschool can choose to either direct the education of their child themselves or they may have a professional teacher direct the education of their child for them. Some schools offer both parent-directed and teacher-directed options for homeschool parents.

Directing a child's education includes responsibility for

- establishing learning goals,
- determining learning activities,
- selecting instructional methods and resources,
- delivering lessons, and
- evaluating student progress.

Teacher-directed education still seeks the involvement of parents, so teachers often present choices to parents around activities, resources, and evaluation. But the teacher maintains primary responsibility for the child's learning, and choices are limited to those that meet the Alberta provincial curriculum.





Terms To Know

Homeschooling

The educating of a child in the home environment.

Home Education

Homeschooling that's parent-directed. The parents determine the learning activities, select instructional methods and resources, and evaluate the student's progress. This progress is verified by a home education facilitator.

Alberta Program of Studies

The set of guidelines commonly referred to as the Alberta curriculum.

Alberta Distance Learning Centre | ADLC

ADLC is a distance-learning provider that delivers Student Instruction and Teacher Support for Grades 1 – 12 across the province and around the world. ADLC also supports Alberta families who choose to educate their children in a home environment.

Alberta Education

The ministry of the Government of Alberta dedicated to overseeing public, separate, and private school legislation in Alberta. Alberta Education administers provincial achievement tests, maintains curriculum standards, and regulates the Kindergarten – Grade 12 education industry.

Home Education Facilitator

The professional teacher assigned by a school board to help and evaluate homeschooling parents and students.



How and where to educate your children is **not a decision to be taken lightly.**

STEP 2

Ask: Will This Work for Us?

How and where to educate your children is not a decision to be taken lightly, and conflicting voices and concerns from all sides can make the decision even more difficult. Many families report that homeschooling is of incredible benefit, while others quickly realize it won't work for them.

Regardless of the decision you ultimately make, having reliable information on which to base that decision is critical.

Luckily, we can help with that. There are plenty of great resources available online at **adlc.ca**, so please explore away!



Alberta Education provides **home education funding.**

STEP 3

Find Out About Funding

Alberta Education provides home education program funding to the school board you register with. Regulation states that parents should have access to at least half those funds to pay for costs (such as supplies). The remaining amount is retained by the school board (to pay for home education facilitators, etc.).

To access the funds, you must provide receipts and demonstrate that the expenses support the child's education. For more specific guidelines, it's important to research and discuss funding with your supervising school board (see Step 5, p. 12).

Decision-making Checklist



Gather your information

Resist the urge to make uninformed decisions by allowing yourself ample research time. Keep everything you've read or learned in one place so you can share it with others or review as necessary.



Understand your options

Talk with others about your thoughts and ideas. Do you have ideas about how you might implement homeschooling? Talking about your ideas and what you're envisioning as you conduct your research can help you determine where additional insights or research may be needed. Other perspectives can also help you pinpoint pitfalls and opportunities.



Consider the financial implications

Homeschooling often means that one parent stays at home fulltime; is that realistic for your family? How can you make it work? Having a workable budget and understanding what your future will look like will help you avoid unwelcome surprises (see Step 3 for available funding, p. 7).



Assess the risks and rewards

Identify all the potential benefits and hardships that homeschooling may bring to your family. Are you prepared for all of them? Do you have a plan to deal with both successes and failures?



Identify outside pressures

Be honest with yourself about family and community pressures you may face. Is homeschooling frowned upon by your extended family members? Are you a member of a community where homeschooling is expected? Are you troubled by other people's expectations? Understanding where you're going to meet resistance or find support is important.



Make the decision

Once you've fully researched and considered what homeschooling could mean for your family—in all ways—it's time to take action. (Read on for more advice on how to do that.)



Build a back-up plan

If you decide to homeschool, whether or not that means providing parent-directed home education, you'll always want to have a back-up plan. There's likely a very good reason you considered moving in this direction in the first place, but be sure to research other resources and options that might help if your first choice doesn't work out as well as you hoped.

Go Online

adlc.ca offers up-to-date resources, research links, and plenty of other content related to homeschooling practices in Alberta.



Spend some time learning about the **educational resources available to you.**

STEP 4

Research Resources

Building a plan means knowing your options and choosing the ones that will work best for you and your child(ren). Before building your action plan, spend some time learning about the educational resources available to you.

Homeschooling parents who choose parent-directed home education can self-select text resources, human resources, community resources, and digital resources to educate their child(ren).



Learn more

Visit ADLC online

Alberta Distance Learning Centre maintains a list of recommended resources that can act as a starting point for families not intending to meet the Alberta Program of Studies. But don't expect the list to meet all your needs; it's not possible for a general resource list to do that.

Seek advice

Whether you reach out to friends who homeschool or a local support group, getting advice from veteran homeschoolers is invaluable.

Do your research

Read articles and books written for homeschooling families.

Explore your options

Remember there are resources available for both parent-directed and teacher-directed options.



STEP 5

Select Your School Board or Private School

As a parent, you are responsible for notifying a school board or an accredited private school of your intent to home educate your child(ren). This can be your local school board or any other willing school board. In either case, you must fill out a **Home Education Notification Form** (see Step 7, p. 17).

In Alberta, only specific school boards and private schools accept notifications of home education. Each board handles homeschoolers differently, so it's important to assess your options carefully.

Once you've completed your Home Education Notification Form and Education Plan, you'll submit them to a willing school board or private school of your choosing.



In Alberta, children between 6 and 16 **must attend school.**




STEP 6

Develop Your Home Education Plan

Building a plan for your child(ren)'s education may seem daunting, but taking a structured approach will ensure you meet Alberta Education requirements and have a plan you can confidently carry out.

As a parent you may choose between two different sets of learning outcomes. Either you follow the learning outcomes prescribed in the Alberta Program of Studies or those listed in the Home Education Regulation. You can use one of these sets exclusively, or you can use a blend of the two, selecting one set for some subjects and the other set for the remainder of the subjects. Explore the differences between the two sets of learning outcomes on the following pages.



As a parent you may choose between **two different sets of learning outcomes.**

Option 1

Achieve the learning outcomes prescribed by the Alberta Programs of Study.

This is the curriculum taught in Alberta schools and is an extensive set of outcomes. If you select this option for a particular subject, an education plan is not required for that subject.

Note: Teacher-directed education must follow these outcomes, whereas following them is optional in a parent-directed education.

Tip: It's often easiest to follow the Alberta Programs of Study using resources designed specifically to meet these outcomes.

Example: ADLC has courses and resources that address these specific learning outcomes.

Option 2

Achieve the learning outcomes listed in **Alberta's Home Education Regulations** (see p. 16).

Courses following this option require parents to create and submit a Home Education Plan.

A Home Education Plan must include

- a list of activities that will accomplish the learning outcomes and an explanation of how they meet these outcomes,
- a list of instructional methods and resources to be used, and
- an explanation of how the student's progress will be evaluated.

Template: ADLC has created a template to assist in developing a Home Education Plan. While there is an endless variety of ways to create an education plan, we thought a sample might help. Feel free to modify or repurpose the template as you please. You can also access other helpful resources at **adlc.ca**.

Remember: Your Home Education Plan must be approved by the school authority you've chosen, so be sure to follow their examples or work with your home education facilitator when developing your plan.

Learning Outcomes for Students Receiving Home Education Programs that do not Follow the Alberta Programs of Study

1. A basic education must provide students with a solid core program, including language arts, mathematics, science and social studies.
2. Students are expected to develop the following knowledge, skills and attitudes that will prepare them for life after high school:

- | | |
|-----|---|
| (a) | read for information, understanding and enjoyment, |
| (b) | write and speak clearly, accurately and appropriately for the context, |
| (c) | use mathematics to solve problems in business, science and daily life situations, |
| (d) | understand the physical world, ecology and the diversity of life, |
| (e) | understand the scientific method, the nature of science and technology and their application to daily life, |
| (f) | know the history and geography of Canada and have a general understanding of world history and geography, |
| (g) | understand Canada's political, social and economic systems within a global context, |
| (h) | respect the cultural diversity, the religious diversity and the common values of Canada, |
| (i) | demonstrate desirable personal characteristics such as respect, responsibility, fairness, honesty, caring, loyalty and commitment to democratic ideals, |
| (j) | recognize the importance of personal well-being and appreciate how family and others contribute to that well-being, |
| (k) | know the basic requirements of an active, healthful lifestyle, |
| (l) | understand and appreciate literature, the arts and the creative process, |
| (m) | research an issue thoroughly and evaluate the credibility and reliability of information sources, |
| (n) | demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills in problem solving and decision making, |
| (o) | demonstrate competence in using information technologies, |
| (p) | know how to work independently and as part of a team, |
| (q) | manage time and other resources needed to complete a task, |
| (r) | demonstrate initiative, leadership, flexibility and persistence, |
| (s) | evaluate their own endeavours and continually strive to improve, and |
| (t) | have the desire and realize the need for life-long learning |

— Excerpted from the *Home Education Handbook* published by the Government of Alberta, 2010



STEP 7

Fill in Your Home Education Notification Form

You've done your research, found your school board, and made a plan. Now it's time to let Alberta Education know what you're doing by submitting a Home Education Notification Form. (There's a copy of the form in the supplemental information included with this booklet.)

Note: If you opt to follow the Alberta Programs of Study for all courses, select the first option in part B of the form.

Where do I get a Home Education Notification Form?

These forms, and other homeschooling information can be found at education.alberta.ca/parents/choice/homeeducation.



STEP 8

Prepare for Facilitator Evaluations

You will be assigned a **home education facilitator**.

Your chosen school board will assign a home education facilitator. The facilitator will be responsible for ensuring your notification form and education plan are appropriate and being followed. Some boards may have specific requirements, so meet with your facilitator as necessary to ensure you understand your board's expectations and to prepare and complete evaluations.

In addition to reviewing the goals, resources, and evaluation procedures in your education plan, the facilitator is required by regulation to provide two evaluations per school year to ensure your child(ren) are progressing with their learning objectives.

During these evaluations, expect to provide samples of student learning and allow access to your child(ren) for direct evaluation.



STEP 9

Stay Connected

Consider joining a **local homeschooling support group.**

Homeschooling can sometimes feel isolating and may require additional planning for socializing and extra-curricular activities. One great way to ensure you're maximizing resources and getting all the help you need is to join a local homeschooling support group. There are many of these groups throughout Alberta, and more are forming all the time. Whether you're drawn to a group that shares your educational philosophy or supports your spiritual beliefs, you'll find a like-minded group of people who can help you when you need it.

Don't be afraid to ask questions or to answer questions based on your experience. After all, educating your child(ren) must also be about educating yourself.



Ready?

Our home education professionals are available to answer any other questions you might have about homeschooling.

Set up a meeting with ADLC today:
phone **1-866-774-5333, Ext. 5297** or
email **HomeSchool@adlc.ca.**



CONNECT

to learning — your way.

Homeschooling is a family decision that can't be taken lightly. With conflicting voices and concerns from all sides, deciding which route to take can be difficult. This guide is for parents who want more information on the steps to take before and after deciding to educate your child(ren) in the home.

For additional resources, visit adlc.ca.

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