

Troubleshooting Homeschooling Problems: A Comprehensive Guide to Identifying Common Issues

Most of us begin our homeschool journey excited and optimistic about the possibilities and promise of a home education for our children. We imagine all the educational field trips we will take, the fun projects we will lead, and the gleam in our children's eyes in gratitude for the top-notch educational experience they are receiving from us, for which they will be eternally grateful. Then, *real life* happens.

Reality Isn't Always Idyllic

It turns out that homeschool days can be stressful. Children will fidget and fuss about their work. The hours can slip away. There isn't always enough time to do all the things you planned. The "fun" science project you desired turned out to be too complex and anxiety-inducing. You're worried about your children's writing, comprehension, or any other number of [academic skills](#). And the laundry still needs to be folded!

Having too many of those days can lead to a sense that "homeschooling isn't working" for your family. However, before you throw in the towel, let's see if we can pinpoint some of your problems. Keep reading...

When something "doesn't work," there is always a reason *why*. For example, if we are unhappy with our job, it is because there are particular aspects of the job we find objectionable (too physically demanding, the management doesn't listen, the pay isn't good enough, etc). If we dislike a movie, it is due to specific elements (bad character development, convoluted plot, poor choice of casting, etc.). Likewise, if you feel like homeschooling isn't working, try to identify what *specifically* about your homeschooling experience gives you heartburn.

It may just be something that can be easily fixed!

When Homeschool Issues Appear Insurmountable

Whether the problems you face in your homeschool are big or small, it can feel discouraging. However, when they're BIG problems, we often find ourselves paralyzed, not knowing where to start.

Clearly, addressing significant challenges in your homeschool may require a strategic and patient approach. Start by breaking down the larger problems into manageable, bite-sized steps. Begin by identifying the root causes behind each concern, whether it's a lack of routine, unclear expectations, or specific academic difficulties. Once identified, focus on implementing small, targeted changes to address each issue individually.

Now, let's get to work. To help you identify homeschool problems and solutions, I've put together a list of questions for you to ask yourself, plus a few helpful articles. Bring your spouse into this conversation. You can also bring your children into the conversation. As a family, you can work together to pinpoint problem areas and develop solutions.

*Print this list of questions and check off as you reflect on each one. Write out your answers and solutions.

Schedule

- Am I scheduling demanding assignments at a time of day when my children are low-energy? Alternatively, am I scheduling low-energy schoolwork at times when they are most attentive and engaged?

- Is our daily schedule too rigid? Does it allow enough flexibility for the unexpected disruptions that come with family life?

- Conversely, does my schedule suffer from being too loose? Is there always a sense that my children don't know exactly what is expected of them at any given time?

- Do tasks take longer to complete than planned? Am I consistently underestimating or overestimating how much time is needed?

- Are our meals and snack times at the most efficient times? Does lunchtime interrupt school time? Do the children get distracted from work because they're hungry?

Curriculum

- Am I locked down by an insufficiently flexible curriculum?

- Does our curriculum lack adequate content, or is it too boring? (A good way to judge this is to ask if you yourself are interested in it. Generally, if a text that is boring to an adult will also be boring to a child.)

- Would we be better off taking an ala carte approach, mixing and matching elements from different curricula, or supplementing with my own materials and projects?

- Do the subjects I am teaching cater to the strengths and interests of my children? (See: [How to Create Your Own Scope & Sequence.](#))

- Am I using a curriculum that is too complex, with too many "moving parts" that must be correlated?

- Does what I am doing even require a boxed curriculum? Could I simplify this by simply giving my children living books on the subject?

Organization

- Do I need to have dedicated spaces where education takes place in our household?

- Are my school supplies stored in an orderly fashion? Do children know where to go when they need paper, crayons, etc.?

- Have I accumulated an excess of materials and resources that have not been used?

- Would it help to change up the place we do school now and then? Can I pack up the children and homeschool them at the library, a coffee shop, or the outdoors?

- At the beginning of each day, do I have a fairly well-fleshed-out idea of what that day will look like and what I need to accomplish? Or are we winging it regularly?

- Are my children organized? Do they keep good track of their books and materials?

- Do the children know how to use a student planner?

Academics

- Does my child lack confidence? (See: [Building Academic Confidence in Your Homeschool](#))

- Are my children practicing solid academic habits relating to reading, note-taking, and studying? Do they need some guidance in these areas? (See Homeschool Connections [*How to Be an Excellent Student*](#) course.)

- Do I find that my children consistently find the material too challenging? Conversely, do they often find their studies too easy? Will a simple adjustment help?

- Between my spouse and I, are we sufficiently engaged in reviewing our children's work and keeping abreast of how they are doing in their different subjects? Or do I feel out of the loop with how my child is doing in certain subjects?

- Is my child's academic progress being hampered by difficulty with reading or comprehension? Could he or she use some extra help strengthening his or her reading skills? (See: [*8 Tips: Homeschooling Reading Comprehension*](#).)

- Do I have clear standards for what I expect of my children academically, or are academic standards and expectations vague and non-defined?

Discipline

- Do we begin the day in prayer?

- Are my children respectful of my authority and respectful of one another?

- Is my spouse united with me in the area of discipline? Does my spouse model respect, and vis a versa?

- Do I have my own behavior in check so I am patient yet firm?

- Are the children self-directed enough to be given a checklist to tick off as they complete homeschool tasks? (See: [Accountability Mentoring.](#))

Support

- Is my spouse engaged and supportive of our family's homeschooling? Do I keep my spouse connected and up-to-date on our successes and trials?

- Have I connected to a support community—in person or online—that I can turn to when I need guidance and support?

- Am I plugged into a network of homeschoolers locally? Do my children have opportunities to interact with other homeschooled children and form friendships?

- Can I leverage my older children's assistance to work with my younger children?

- Is there a parish nearby that is supportive of homeschoolers or hosts a homeschool co-op that I can get plugged into?

- Do I find that my faith is a source of nourishment and strength for my homeschool?

- Does my child have academic needs or special learning challenges that require me to bring in outside tutoring, testing, or counseling?

- Would I be helped by hiring a homeschool coach or consultant? (See: [Options for Homeschool Consulting and Support](#).)

Conclusion

Whether your homeschool issues are small or large, identifying them is the first step to finding solutions. Indeed, if you are truly called to homeschool and want to make it work, these questions will help you pinpoint the problems and give you a starting point.

Again, if the problems are extensive, start with a single issue and work on that. Introducing incremental adjustments to your routine or curriculum can gradually transform your overall homeschooling experience. By tackling one problem at a time, you can create a more supportive

learning environment, promoting positive habits and fostering a sense of accomplishment in both your child and you.

Remember, many homeschool problems are still problems when we put our children into a site-based school, including discipline, organization, and academic issues. In fact, sometimes they grow into bigger problems. Therefore, I encourage you to take this to prayer, first and foremost, and then carefully assess your homeschool and possible solutions to difficulties.

Additional Helps

- [Catholic Homeschool Podcast](#). Homeschooling Saints was created just for you! You can also find it on your favorite podcasting app.
- [Catholic Homeschool Blog](#). Large collection of homeschool articles covering all aspects of homeschooling and parenting.
- [Catholic Homeschool Conference](#). This annual conference gives you access to the best curriculum providers and speakers. Provides encouragement and practical assistance.
- [Catholic Homeschool Community](#). Connect with over 9,000 Catholic homeschool families. Led by Paola Ciskanik, the community offers a host of help for parents. You can also find other homeschoolers who live in your neighborhood.

If you'd like to continue this discussion, I invite you to join me and other Catholic homeschooling parents at our [Homeschool Connections Community](#) or our [Facebook group](#).

Lastly, Homeschool Connections offers a wide variety of online courses for 3rd to 12th grade to help you in your homeschooling. See our [Course Finder](#) to learn more.