

# Ten Tips to Improve Your Homeschool Year

by Dr. Jay L. Wile, Ph.D.

## Qualifications

- University Professor From 1990 - 1995
- Helped Develop Indiana's Only Residential High School for Gifted and Talented Students
- NSF-Sponsored Scientist with More Than \$200,000 In Research Grants
- Became Interested in Homeschooling Because of Excellent University Students Who Were Homeschooled
- Currently writes junior high school and high school science courses for homeschooled students

## Introduction

- Became interested in homeschooling because my best university students were homeschooled
- Started writing homeschooling curriculum BEFORE I had any children.
- Adopted our daughter when she was 15.
- Started homeschooling her

### #1. DON'T do school at home!

You can give your child personalized education.

My daughter did best when she could nap during "school." We made the schedule so she could do that.

### Research Indicates This is a Benefit of Homeschooling

Researchers at National Jewish Health in the U.S. studied 2,612 teens, almost 500 of whom were homeschooled.

55% of teens who were homeschooled got the optimal amount of sleep per week, while only 24.5% of publicly- and privately-schooled teens did. 44.5% of publicly- and privately-schooled teens got insufficient sleep, compared to only 16.3% of homeschooled teens

[Michelle Cardel, *et. al*, "Home-schooled children are thinner, leaner, and report better diets relative to traditionally schooled children," *Obesity* [DOI:10.1002/oby.20610](https://doi.org/10.1002/oby.20610), 2013

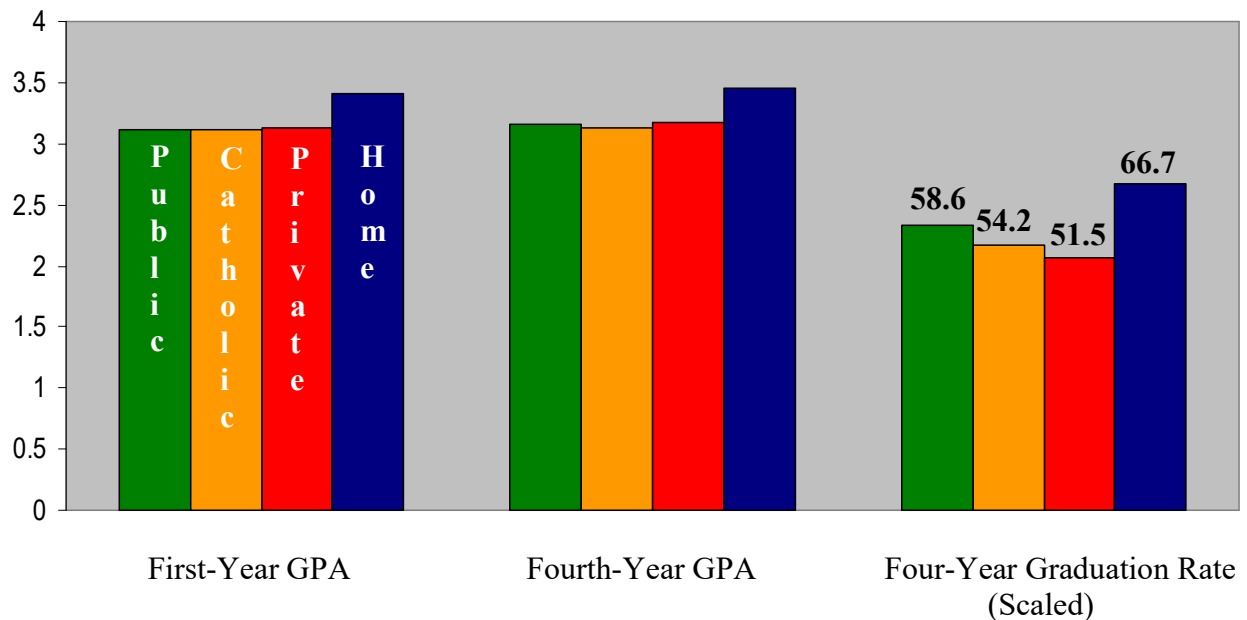
## #2. DON'T worry obsessively over whether or not you are “preparing” your children!

On the *Canadian Test of Basic Skills* and the *Canadian Achievement Test*, high school homeschoolers had the following averages:

- 👉 **Reading: 85%**
- 👉 **Language: 84%**
- 👉 **Mathematics: 67%**
- 👉 **Vocabulary: 87%**
- 👉 **Social Studies: 81%**
- 👉 **Complete Battery: 80%**

*This compares to 50% for government schools!*

### University of St. Thomas Study GPAs and Graduation Rates



[Michael F. Cogan, "Exploring Academic Outcomes of Homeschooled Students," *Journal of College Admission*, Summer 2010]

### University of Toronto

Homeschool graduates registered at the University of Toronto have achieved GPA's ranging from 2.74 to 3.96 out of 4.00.

The university average is 2.2.

### **#3. DON'T compare your children to other children, even your own!**

Every child has his or her unique set of God-given talents.

### **#4. DON'T be a slave to your curriculum!**

Curriculum is a guide, not a dictator!

Your goal is NOT to get through a specified set of topics before your children graduate. Your goal is to teach them to learn!

Here's what one homeschool graduate said about finding out he was behind his university peers in math: "Because homeschooling taught me how to learn independently, I quickly caught up to them."

### **#5. DON'T stick with a curriculum/ topic/ activity when it isn't working!**

Don't worry about "getting behind." If a curriculum isn't working, changing to a new one will be better in the long run.

Your child doesn't have to complete the course/do the activity just because everyone else is doing it!

What works for one of your children isn't guaranteed to work for the others.

### **#6. DO read aloud, even when your children are older!**

"To read aloud to your child is to give him or her three things: the gift of your uninterrupted time, the unspoken—but obvious—message that reading is important, and a shared experience of entering together into the world of a book." -Nancy Pearl

([http://blog.wellreadlife.com/my\\_weblog/2008/09/why-we-are-entering-the-golden-age-of-booksdont-stop-reading-to-your-kids-part-1-of-2.html](http://blog.wellreadlife.com/my_weblog/2008/09/why-we-are-entering-the-golden-age-of-booksdont-stop-reading-to-your-kids-part-1-of-2.html))

### **#7. DO take their feelings into account!**

Sometimes, when frustration is high, it is best just to stop for a while. You might "lose" a little instruction, but it can produce more cooperation in the long run.

My daughter did not want to be homeschooled, so I constantly tried to find ways to make her homeschooling day different from (and better than) school.

As the student gets older, give him or her more control over curriculum and subject

## **#8. DO set aside time for play!**

Play time allows students to process what they have been learning and exercise creativity. Think of play time as “recess.”

This shouldn't end when the children get older. Productive play (fun activities that encourage creativity) is good even for teens.

## **#9. DO take field trips...as many as you can!**

Getting out and experiencing things like live animals, art, and real production facilities not only educate, but can spark lifelong interests.

Advice from a homeschool grad who is now a successful programmer:  
“Do like my parents did and take your kids out!”

How many times have you thought to yourself, “I just need to get out of this house.”

Your children think that, too!

## **#10. DO try to enjoy your children!**

These days are frustrating and exhausting, but they can form lifelong memories for you and your children.

From a homeschool graduate:

“Thinking back, I love that every childhood memory I have is at home with my family...I have lived a homeschooled life; and what a joy it has been! I consider myself very blessed.”

Another homeschool graduate says:

“I remember times when we were doing math, and I was in tears; my mom was in tears. But it was so worth it. I have been given such an amazing gift.”

A mother of homeschool graduates with advanced degrees says:

“At times along the journey I would stumble and doubt myself, especially when other people would criticize what we were doing, but looking back I don't think I would change anything except that I would shut out the negative voices and relax even more.”

## **The Most Important Thing To Remember:**

Homeschooling is NOT primarily about academics.