

## But I'm Not a Teacher, How Can I Teach My Children?

Did you used to be a teacher? You must need special qualifications to homeschool, right? Variations of this question come up frequently when I tell people I homeschool. The truth though is that no, I was not a teacher, and though I do have a graduate degree, I don't have any special training related to homeschooling. And you don't need any either. Most states have no specific qualifications required to homeschool your own children. Many require that you have a high school diploma or GED, but even those generally offer ways to get an exception. Washington State has the most requirements and they offer several different qualification options in which to meet them.

So, we've determined that you can meet any state requirements, but what about actually "feeling" qualified? There is a learning curve of feeling confident about teaching your children. Just like parenting in general, most homeschooling families feel like they're learning as they go. We make mistakes, but we do the best we can on any given day. It's OK, more than OK, it's normal if you feel like you don't know what you're doing. Even veteran homeschooling parents will second guess themselves occasionally. Your confidence in your ability will grow over time as it grows keep this in mind...you know your child better than anyone. You love your child more than anyone. You have a vested interest in your child greater than anyone else. All of these make you uniquely qualified to teach your child.

I know what you're thinking – "fine, I get it, I'm **qualified**, but **how** do I teach my own child?" This is the trickiest part, but doable. Taking on the teacher role can be challenging because often our children behave differently with their parents than with others and may not take instructions well from parents. This can be changed though; it is possible to have your child successfully learn at home. Here are a couple ideas that may work for you:

~ **Create a teacher persona.** When we first started homeschooling, in order to separate my roles as mom and teacher, I asked my son to help me come up with a teacher name. When we sat down to do lessons, I became Mrs. Jac (we used my initials to create the name, but your teacher persona can be whatever you and your child/ren decide). This worked well for us because it was almost like a game. Some older kids may not like this, or need it, but for younger kids it's worth a try.

~ **Engage your child in the process.** Communication is important in all relationships, including with our children. Explain to them what is happening. Obviously, the amount of detail you provide should be age appropriate, but you can be open and honest with them. When we made the switch to homeschooling between Kindergarten and First Grade, I told my son "This coming year we're going to start homeschooling because Mommy and Daddy think it will be a better way for you to learn. We think that we can better meet your needs and you won't get pulled out of class for therapies because we'll do lessons around your therapies" (being pulled out of class was a big issue for him because he HATED missing anything). When I told this to my little 6-year-old, he smiled and gave me a huge hug. Whether you plan to continue with distance

learning through your school, or make the switch to homeschooling, you can say something like “this year we are going to be doing your lessons at home. We’ll need to sure to answer any questions they have and be honest if you don’t know the answer, but since our kids who have PWS often don’t do well with unknowns, reassure them that “we’ll figure it out” if you can’t give them an answer.

~ **Relax and have fun.** Along with communication, it’s important to try not to show your stress. Kids pick up on our anxiety and it makes them anxious too – especially our children who have PWS. We are all stressed out this year – we’ve all been forced into a lot of changes we didn’t want. It’s OK to admit that, but at the same time our children need our reassurance and confidence. The calmer you are, the calmer your children will be. I know, trust me I know, that is easier said than done, but after 10 years of homeschooling I can tell you that when I’m stressed our days are much harder; when I’m relaxed (even if I have to fake it), our days go much smoother. So, relax and try to have some fun – it really is a joy to watch your children learn. In future weeks we’ll explore more specific tips to help you such as...

- How do I get services if I homeschool?
- How to pick curriculum: what to use, where to get, how to implement?
- What does a typical homeschooling day look like?
- How can I work and manage my child’s education?

*Rebranded November 2022*