



Unschooling 101

A Quick Guide to Family, Fun &
Connected Learning

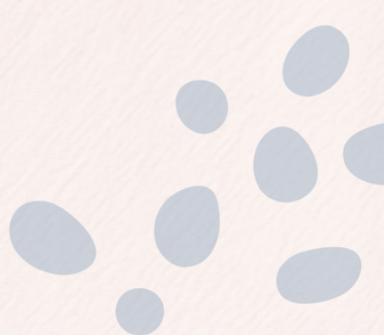


*Discover the world as you
learn to unlearn with your
child*



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Hello and Welcome!

I am so glad you're here because it means you are curious about what life might look like without school.

Unschooling seems like an out-there idea, but really, all it's about is letting your kids take control of their learning. Our world is changing rapidly, and it will be even more different when our kids are older. They will need to be resilient, tenacious, curious, and entrepreneurial. They will need to think creatively about the world and their place in it.

Unschooling is a way of life that embraces these ideas and gives kids the freedom to dream and imagine.

Now, it might not be for your family, and that's okay. One of the gifts of alternative education is there are no hard and fast rules. You can tailor your learning journey to suit your family.

If traditional school is for you, but you find yourself worried about how little time your children get to play and explore, then why not try and implement some unschooling ideas in your home? They center on connectedness and family, making them great ideas for the weekends.

YOU DON'T NEED TO JUMP RIGHT IN, BUT YOU CAN DEFINITELY GET YOUR TOES WET AS YOU EXPLORE WHAT LEARNING COULD BE LIKE.

WHAT IS *Unschooling?*



Unschooling is about finding joy

That might sound basic, but it is rooted in the idea of children following their interests and discovering their passions. **Unschooling is child-led learning.** Twentieth-century educator John Holt believed children are natural learners. He said that children will learn when given the space and freedom they need. This idea led to the homeschooling movement, with unschooling taking it one step further.

Unschooling doesn't require a curriculum or a prescriptive learning method. Instead, it is about collaborating with your child as you figure out what they want to learn, how they want to learn it, and when they are ready to learn it.

There is a **misconception** that unschooling is hands-off and children are left to their own devices. Yes, sometimes parents are not involved, like when they are completely immersed in an imaginary game. But unschooling is more involved than people think.

As parents, we need to help our kids explore the areas they find interesting. This means library visits, YouTube videos, art supplies, classes, clubs, and whatever resources you can make available to them. It requires a deep relationship with your child based on respect and connection.

So many people have told me that unschooling is the "easy way out," but I challenge them to spend a week with us and then let me know what they think.

Why Unschooling?



Families choose home education for many reasons, but for many of us, our decision is based on our kids now and the adults we want them to be.

Unschooling is based on the idea that children are natural learners. It is about learning through life and trusting our children.

The concept of unschooling is rooted in the belief that learning happens best when self-directed.

This means that kids need space, time, and freedom to explore the world and their interests. This looks like hours of unstructured play for young children, preferably outside. It could be anything from gaming, to cooking, to lego for older kids.

Your child might hop from thing to thing, but that just means they know what they aren't interested in so they can discover what does interest them.

Unschooling looks at your child and their learning journey holistically.

A few things that unschoolers do is:

- ✓ Develop a rhythm based on respect
- ✓ Trust that children are always learning
- ✓ Explore many topics
- ✓ Focus on strengths, not weaknesses
- ✓ Focus on connection and relationships
- ✓ Provide autonomy and independence
- ✓ Offer alternatives and creative solutions
- ✓ Model what learning looks like as adults



Deschooling

You went to school, and I'm sure most people you know went to school. You are probably surrounded by school-goers who rush from activity to activity before squeezing in homework and dinner.

This is what life should look like, right? Busy, busy, busy with little to no time for family.

Wrong!

There are definitely other ways to do things, and they won't look anything like the crazy school runs you are used to.

School is a normal part of life, and leaving it behind is terrifying. But that is what deschooling is for.

It is a grace period where you can work through all your should be's, supposed to's, and what-ifs.



DESCHOOLING: THE
ACT OF RELEASING
YOUR PRECONCEIVED
IDEAS ABOUT WHAT
LEARNING SHOULD
LOOK LIKE



Deschooling is the first and most important thing to tackle on your unschooling journey. Having the wrong ideas about learning will cause you stress and heartache so take the time to get rid of them.

LEARNING SHOULD BE:

- JOYFUL
- IN-DEPTH
- MESSY
- CREATIVE
- MULTI-FACETED
- SELF-DIRECTED

LEARNING SHOULDN'T BE:

- PRESCRIPTIVE
- BORING
- TIMED
- LINEAR



If you compare your unschooling journey to school, you will feel **overwhelmed and inadequate**. Even worse is if you compare your children to school-going kids. You can't expect your kids to be at the same level as kids in school if you let them set the level.

Unschooling gives your kids the freedom to set their own pace and follow the interests that ignite their curiosity.

For example, my son might not be reading yet, but he can identify every venomous snake in our area and spew dinosaur facts like no one's business. He also loves to draw and wants to start his own YouTube channel. So you see, he might be "behind" according to a traditional school timeline, but his learning is right on track for where he wants to be.

Letting go of your preconceived ideas about learning opens you up to seeing the world differently. You will get to see the world through the eyes of your child. **A world of wonderment, curiosity, and magic.**

Practical deschooling tips:

- Have a family meeting to discuss concerns
- Throw routine out the window and try a rhythm instead
- Look into sports clubs, co-ops, and groups in your area
- Let your child set up a workspace



Dealing with Criticism

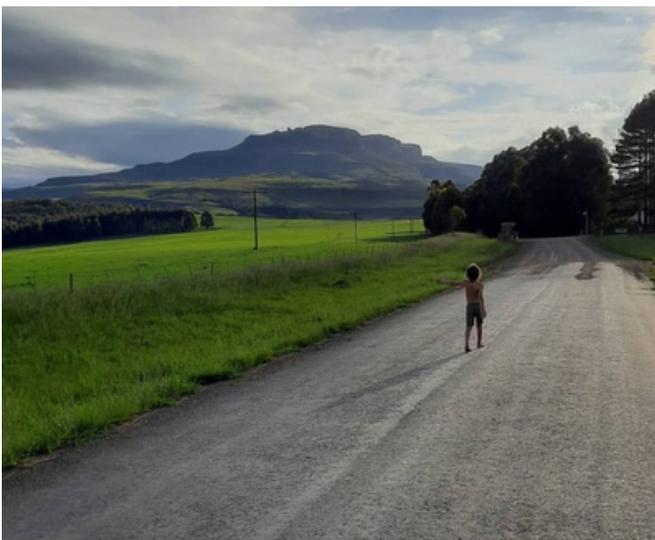
WOW, THIS IS A BIG ONE

No one likes to be criticized, particularly parents. But if you choose a more alternative education route for your family.....**get used to it!**

I'm sorry to say that most people are still pretty small-minded about doing things differently. Even well-meaning friends and family can get it wrong. Questions like "What did you learn today?" or "What is 7x12?" are often directed at homeschooled kids. We certainly don't shoot rapid-fire questions at school-goers, yet unschoolers get it all the time.

You will come up against resistance constantly, whether from family or the lady behind you at the grocery store. **Believe me, I've been there.** We have been unschooling for 6 years, and my kids have never been to school. That means I have heard the arguments and faced disapproval over our education choices.

I'm not going to lie; it's hard. It's hard to have your lifestyle questioned, and it is even more challenging to see people interrogate your kids.



BUT IT DOES GET BETTER

The longer we choose learning freedom, the more confidence we get. My boys will happily tell people that they unschool when questioned about what grade they are in.

I can confidently discuss our learning beliefs with people who are genuinely interested. But I have also learned that **there is power in not engaging** with those who aren't interested in understanding our lives. Our family choices are not up for debate, and I can leave a negative conversation with grace and kindness.

It can be trickier with family, but it is **vital to have boundaries** to protect you and your children. Have open discussions with grandparents and invite them to (**respectfully**) ask questions. But make it clear that your choices are not up for debate, and they need to respect your decision.

OH, BUT WHAT ABOUT SOCIAL INTERACTION?

This is one of the **most irritating questions** for an alternative education family and the most common.

In short, sitting in a room with 30 other same-aged children is not socialization. When you choose to live a life without school, you are free to explore the world and join clubs, nature groups, and co-ops.

Homeschooling doesn't mean staying at home. In fact, unschoolers are typically more social and confident because they are often in environments with a diverse range of people.

The sad reality is that some people will never accept your decision to travel a different path.

In fact, they might see your decision as a commentary on their own school choices. There is no best response for these people. But what you can do, is **let your kids be the proof that different doesn't mean bad.**

LET THEM DAZZLE WITH
THEIR EMPATHY, KINDNESS,
CURIOSITY, CONFIDENCE, AND
UNIQUE PERSONALITY.

Because really, that is what's important, not the opinion
of the Nosy Nelly from aisle 5.

ALSO, HOW OFTEN
WERE YOU TOLD AT
SCHOOL TO "KEEP
QUIET; WE AREN'T
HERE TO SOCIALIZE"?



Personalized Education

Choosing a life without school means you get to design an education that suits your child.

Yes, we are unschoolers, but as my boys are getting older, their needs are changing. They are asking for more structure, so we are leaning into a season of eclectic homeschooling.

Unschooling is not set in stone.

It is a way of life that offers choices to you and your kids. It is about picking the best parts of different homeschool pedagogies and amalgamating them into something that works for your family.

It all boils down to freedom. **Freedom to choose how learning looks in your home.**

KEEPING TRACK OF YOUR LEARNING

Unschooling can seem unstructured and disorganized, but each family has its own learning rhythm.

Unlike a traditional school, your kids won't have tests and worksheets to show for their learning. But that doesn't mean that learning hasn't been happening.

Here are some easy ways to document your learning journey:

- ✓ KEEP A JOURNAL
- ✓ SCRAPBOOKING
- ✓ PHOTOS
- ✓ END-OF-DAY RECORDING
- ✓ BROCHURES
- ✓ EVERNOTE

Resource Guide

BOOKS

Free to Learn by Peter Gray

How Children Learn by John Holt

Raising Free People by Akilah S. Richards

Unschooling: Exploring Learning Beyond the Classroom by
Gina Riley

Changing Our Minds by Naomi Fisher

Call of the Wild+Free by Ainsley Arment



PODCASTS

Honey, I'm Homeschooling the Kids

Raising Wildlings

Wild+Free

Sage Family

Exploring Unschooling

Brave Writer



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You Made It

If you made it to the end without your head exploding, congrats!

I know it can be overwhelming. I've been there.

In fact, I still get anxious and have to remind myself that our journey doesn't need to look like anyone else's.

Finding a community of like-minded families will make the journey so much easier. If like us, you don't have a community close by, there is an amazing online world of unschooling support.

I read somewhere that if you can't find a community, create one.

So, thank you for being here. I hope you feel accepted, supported, and informed as you explore what learning freedom could be like for your family.

~ Caitlin



Did You Find This Helpful?

I WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU SO EMAIL OR DM ME AND
LET'S CHAT ABOUT YOUR LEARNING JOURNEY



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"IF YOU OPEN DOORS FOR THEM TO FREELY EXPLORE, THEY WILL
FIND **THEIR** RIGHT ANSWERS"

~ JOYCE FETTEROL