

How To Manage Homeschooling Costs

Home schooling can be less expensive than sending your child to an educational institution. While a home school education is less costly than a private school, it can be more expensive than a public school if you are not careful.

Starting out

For one thing, if you're just beginning with home schooling (and if you don't have a teaching background), it is recommended that you subscribe to an independent study program or buy a boxed curriculum suited to your child's skill level. While these may cost, these will guide your first few attempts at home schooling and help eliminate the trial-and-error process in finding out how to run your home school just right. These services and products range from a low of \$300 to a high of \$1,500 depending on the program.

Direct costs

However, the costs do not end there. You will need to supplement the program with textbooks as well as workbooks. Up-to-date reference materials are also needed such as an encyclopedia CD-ROM and Internet access. These will require purchases and subscriptions as well.

It will do your child much good to provide proper furniture and fixtures for studying. Getting them a proper study table, a comfortable chair and adequate lighting will show positive results in the child's attitude towards learning. A computer to aid in their research and homework is also essential.

It is also possible that you may have to avail of tutorial services to cover subjects that you may have difficulty in teaching yourself. These can be done on a per course/per subject basis which may help reduce costs, but not by much. For example, a one-on-one advanced history class for high school students can cost about \$300.

To provide a well-rounded education for your child, you will also need to include non-academic activities as well. This may mean music, sport or art lessons and perhaps even planned educational trips to museums and galleries, theaters, and nature parks.

Opportunity costs

These are the direct costs of running a home school program but in calculating the total cost for running a home school, you may also need to consider certain indirect costs.

A study on families on home study programs noted that on average, the parent conducting the home school is the mother, who holds a college degree. It has been calculated that her staying at home, instead of working, costs the family an estimated \$38,000 every year - money that could have possibly been used to address the family's other pending needs.

Helping defray the costs

But before you get fully discouraged with the idea of home schooling, there are ways to reduce the expenses. One way is to participate in support groups for home schooling families.

This affords you a great opportunity to share resources with similar families saving you the need to buy an entire set of materials for your child. Joining groups like these allow you to borrow or swap things like textbooks, boxed curricula or reference materials. An added plus to joining home school family groups in your area is giving your child the opportunity to interact with kids just like him/her who are home schooled as well.

Depending on where you live, some states allow home-schooled children access to public school resources and some local virtual charter schools provide teaching materials for little to no cost. Some will even offer annual stipends to pay for activities like piano lessons. Taking the time to know what assistance you can avail of to help subsidize the costs will more than pay for the effort you made to do so.

Some money-saving tips

It helps to know that if you have other children, the costs of home schooling can be reduced with each child since the materials may be reused or renewed for a much lower cost.

Take the time to explore your public library and use what they have to offer. They'll be more than happy to see you visit as frequently as every week. This greatly reduces the need to buy books every time and on occasion allows you access to newly published ones that would otherwise be expensive.

Visit yard sales, book sales or swap meets whenever you can. You may just find that perfect study table, teaching aids or that hard-to-find textbook for a fraction of the cost of buying it from a store.

When considering the costs of something as important as your child's education, it is best to think of them as investments rather than as mere expenses. When managed properly, the money you spend will go a long way in giving your children a memorable childhood and unique learning experience.

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