

Homeschooling Resources - How To Use Free Community Resources

Homeschoolers involve themselves with various community resources on several different levels. First and most common, is simply making use of services offered - for instance, taking a class at a museum or buying a product from a local business. Next, homeschooling families or support groups might arrange to visit a local factory to see how furniture is made, or take a tour of the local blood bank to learn how it works.

Individual homeschoolers may work as volunteers or apprentices within the community, often finding such opportunities after exploring many options. Finally, some facilities may in turn provide services for homeschoolers after they have had experience with homeschoolers working as volunteers for them.

Don't expect every business or museum to be eager to work with homeschoolers. Some relatively bureaucratic bodies simply haven't any official policy for dealing with homeschoolers and so won't even try. Some will be completely unfamiliar with homeschoolers, and a few will have had a bad previous experience with a rowdy bunch and decided not to have anything to do with homeschoolers ever again. Most who are hesitant are simply used to working with school groups, typically one grade or age at a time, and are a bit puzzled when faced with handling a mixed-age group of homeschoolers.

All homeschoolers use community resources to some extent, but unschoolers are especially interested in finding ways of connecting learning with the everyday details of life. Try looking at your community, not just as the place you live and work and shop, but as a collection of opportunities for learning. Consider a few of the possibilities you may be able to find within a short radius of your home.

Bookstores and Other Retailers

Bookstores run a close second to libraries as homeschoolers' favorite resources. New books, used books, any books on any topic can become a part of a homeschooling curriculum. Trade books are often better information sources than many books specifically intended to be educational. Other retailers similarly useful as "curriculum" suppliers are toy stores, computer software and hardware dealers, hardware stores, nurseries and garden supply stores, and so on.

Any retail operation can be an interesting place to visit, just to see how businesses work: How do employees spend their time? Where does the stock come from? How is inventory tracked? How do the owners decide what their customers will buy? Even the most routine shopping trip can supply bits and pieces of the answers to such questions.

Museums and Other Cultural Institutions

Museums, although overtly educational, are like libraries in that they have no prerequisites for learning from them. You can pick and choose from their offerings, spending all your time in one gallery and ignoring the rest if you like. Many museums offer classes and workshops.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

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