

Homeschooling - what does it all actually mean?

By [Yandiswa Xhakaza](#)

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It would seem that many parents are still very reluctant to send their children back to school. Especially those with children in public schools who do not particularly believe that all the necessary precautions will be taken, or that their children (given how young they are) will be able to follow what seems like complex Covid-19 protocols.



Many parents have been heard saying that they can always catch up on lost time, but they will never be able to live with the consequences of their child being infected by the virus and potentially dying from it. For some parents, this is a life or death situation and they are choosing life.

Whatever their decision, we need to respect the right of parents to choose in this situation. Those who will not be sending their children back to school will have to commit to teaching their children. This is particularly difficult if parents are working from home as there isn't enough time in a day to teach and work!

We also need to acknowledge that there aren't enough devices in households for every child to carry on with online learning as parents may have to share these devices with their children. Navigating this can be hard, sometimes impossible. This is further compounded by internet connectivity. While a lot of learning material is easily accessible online and, some of it is free, it still requires internet access. Plus, there are many South African households that simply don't have devices or internet connectivity at all. Nevertheless, there are some basic prerequisites to homeschooling.

In order to make it work you would ideally need:

- A smart device, ideally a tablet or laptop
- Stable internet access, ideally ADSL, LTE or a fibre connection
- Time (try to negotiate working hours with your employer. You could start your day at 10am to enable teaching from 7.30am or 8am. I strongly recommend mornings for teaching and learning, and not afternoons or evenings.)
- A printer (although not absolutely necessary, it can save you a lot of time, especially with younger children who have to do a lot of actual writing).

Once these are in place, parents need to be structured in terms of what they will teach and they need to have a very good understanding of the outcomes for the specific term, per subject.

The Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is accessible on the Department of Education website and is very detailed in terms of what children should be able to do by the end of each term. This means that parents can link the learning outcomes with the activities that their children need to do, or concepts they need to learn, eg. by end of Term 2 in Grade 1 Maths, a child should be able to describe and order numbers from smallest to greatest and greatest to smallest. There are a number of activities parents can do with a child to make sure they are able to order numbers. Once a parent knows the outcome, it is easier to search for activities to teach your child so that they can reach that outcome.

Of course, this type of schooling arrangement is only going to be practical for the most privileged South Africans, but that should not stop families everywhere from caring for their children and supporting their education from home if that is what they are most comfortable with.

Support guides

A home-learning support guide has been produced by the C-19 People's Coalition with contributions from the Nal'ibali reading-for-enjoyment campaign. The guide shares information about the virus, support and ideas for helping children 0-13 years to learn while at home, as well as guidance on setting daily schedules.

It specifically suggests activities that many South African homes will be able to implement. An abbreviated version will appear in eight different South African languages at the end of June in the Nal'ibali reading-for-enjoyment story supplement.

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My recommendation for parents of primary school children, particularly for those who want to keep their children home but who are pressed for time, is to focus on developing their children's literacy skills. Reading underpins all school learning and so many children struggle with this. Follow the CAPS outcome guidelines and look for activities that support the mechanical skills of learning to read but, most importantly, don't forget that just simply enjoying a good story together will show your children that reading is satisfying and enjoyable. This will prompt them to want to read themselves.

If homeschooling is the best option for you and your family, make sure you register this with the Department of Education, or at least visit their website for details on the portfolio of evidence which you'll need to put together.

I am acutely aware of the fact many South Africans do not have access to the basic prerequisites for enabling a homeschooling environment. There isn't a worse time for us as South Africans to be exposed to the inequalities for our society. But I would urge parents to do what is best for them and their families, and to remember the power they have as their children's first teachers, and the power of stories.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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