

Homeschooling in Pennsylvania:

A Modern Parent's Guide

(Preschool–High School)

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (PA State Law)

General Rules:

- File a **notarized affidavit** by August 1st each year (Starting the year your child turns 6).
- Teach for **180 days OR 900 hours (Grades 1–6) / 990 hours (Grades 7–12)**.
- Maintain a **portfolio** including:
 - A **log of reading materials** and activities
 - **Work samples**
 - An **evaluation letter** from a qualified evaluator by June 30th annually

These rules apply whether you:

- **Unschool**
- Homeschool under a **charter/cyber**
- File **independently/Traditional Homeschooling**
- Use "**Freehand**" homeschooling (though this one may raise red flags if students receive no instruction or guidance)

These rules do NOT apply if you:

- Use an **Umbrella School**
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Preschool & Kindergarten (Ages 3–5)

- **NOT required by state law**
- No affidavit or records needed until your child is 6 years old
- Completely freeform and personalized!
- Helps prep the child for schooling and socialization

Ideas to cover:

- Letters, Sounds, Stories, and Books
- Counting, Patterns, Shapes, and Measuring
- Gross & Fine Motor Play (Dancing, Drawing, Climbing, Cutting)
- Art, Nature Play, Songs, and Social Skills
- Life Skills (Chores, Dressing, Cooking)

***Tip:** Keep a journal or photo log of early learning if you want a record (Optional).*

Grades 1–6 (Elementary)

Subjects You MUST Include (per law):

- English (Spelling, Reading, Writing)
- Arithmetic (Math)
- Science
- Geography
- Social Studies (History, Civics, Government)
- Health
- Physical Education
- Music
- Art
- Fire/Weather/Street Safety

Creative Topics You Can Blend In:

- Mythology and Folklore → Literature + History
 - Herbalism → Science + Health
 - Basic Cultural Studies → Social Studies
 - Animal Behavior → Science
 - Emotional Wellness → Health
 - World Cultures → Geography + Civics
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Grades 7–12 (Middle & High School)

Subjects You MUST Include:

- English (Literature, Composition, Speech)
- Math (General, Algebra, Geometry, ETC.)
- Science (Biology, Chemistry, ETC.)
- Social Studies (World History, U.S. History, PA History, Civics)
- Health
- Physical Education

- Music
- Art
- Safety (Including Driver's Education/Fire Safety/Weather Safety)

Graduation Requirements (minimum):

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of Math
- 3 years of Science
- 3 years of Social Studies
- 2 years of Arts & Humanities

***Tip:** You create your own transcript & diploma unless enrolled in an umbrella or charter/cyber school that issues one. It would also be wise to understand GPA and GPA calculation.*

Custom Curriculum Ideas (for Nontraditional Studies)

Topic	Fulfills These Subjects
Mythology and Folklore	Literature, History, Cultural Studies
Herbalism & Nature Studies	Science, Health, Environmental Studies
Comparative Belief Systems	World Cultures, Civics, Ethics, Literature
Philosophy & Ethics	Humanities, English (essays), Civics

*As long as you **track what subject is being covered**, you have total freedom in approach. The ones stated here are ideas given as an example.*

Types of Homeschooling

Type	Description
Unschooling	Child-led, experience-based learning; requires careful portfolio documentation
Traditional Homeschooling	Parent-directed, often using a structured curriculum
Cyber/Charter Homeschooling	Online programs with public-school funding & oversight

Umbrella Schools

Private institutions that oversee curriculum and reporting

“Freehand” Schooling (note of caution)

Parents do not guide learning at all; in fact, no adult takes part, and it is solely child-driven. Still must meet state documentation and safety expectations—**can raise legal risks if not managed carefully, not to mention safety risks**

Helpful Tips for All Ages

- Create a **flexible planner** or **checklist** by subject
 - Document creatively: photos, field trip logs, art, journals
 - Use **cross-subject projects** (e.g., nature walk = science + PE + writing)
 - Consider an **evaluator who understands alternative or secular education**
 - You can graduate your child with a **parent-issued diploma** and PA Homeschool Affidavit transcript
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Resources & Tools

***Note:** All of these resources and tools are listed to cater to Pennsylvania citizens, specifically those of Evans City, for this document.*

- **Outschool** – Live secular classes by topic <https://outschool.com>
- **Plain and Not So Plain** – Can be quite religious and talks a lot about “gender roles”, but the printables are useful <https://plainandnotsoplain.com>
- **The Wildwood Curriculum** – Nature-based, secular Charlotte Mason style: <https://wildwoodcurriculum.org>
- **SEA Homeschoolers (Secular Eclectic Academic)** – Trying to teach with as little religious aspect as possible <https://seahomeschoolers.com>
- **Starfall: Parent-Teacher Center** – A fine place for all sorts of worksheets and programs <https://teach.starfall.com/>
- **Public libraries** – A great source of information and socialization opportunities
- **Museums** – An incredible source of information historical, inspirational, and scientific.
- **ePermitTest** – A website of free practice tests before taking the real test to earn a learner’s permit to drive (You will want to complete all of these to be ready for the real one) <https://www.epermittest.com/pennsylvania/practice-permit-test>
- **Poetry Foundation** – An archive of poets and poetry, such as works by William Blake <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/>
- **Grammarly** – A website to help correct spelling errors <https://app.grammarly.com/>
- **YouTube** – Plenty of free videos online for guidance and/or entertainment <https://www.youtube.com/>
- **BrainPop** – A useful website that has been around since 1999 and continues to be useful in regards to discovery (At the bottom of the page you will find BrainPop Jr. for

Kindergarten level, BrainPop for Grades 3-8, BrainPop Science for Grades 6-8, and BrainPop ELL for all Grades) <https://www.brainpop.com/discover>

- **BrainPop YouTube Channel** – Want to just watch some of the videos from BrainPop, they have their own channel on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/@brainpop/videos>
- **ScienceBob** – A website dedicated to science and experiments <https://sciencebob.com/>
- **Scratch** – A website dedicated to learning how to code <https://scratch.mit.edu/>
- **FunBrain** – Full of games, videos, and more items suitable to keep your mind engaged <https://www.funbrain.com/>
- **PBS Kids** – Full of engaging activities and games for all ages <https://pbskids.org/>
- **BiteSize** – A UK produced website full of activities and more for various ages <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>
- **HowStuffWorks** – A website catering to various subjects from science, culture, and history <https://www.howstuffworks.com/>
- **FlashMuseum** – A website with an archive of flash games and animations that function (These are all the flash games and animations that once existed on websites such as StickPage and Newgrounds; if you let your children on this site, do be mindful that you will need to watch them) <https://flashmuseum.org/browse/publisher/build-a-bear-workshop/>
- **Numuki** – A website, much like FlashMuseum, that is full of archived games and such. However, on this website you have things beyond only flash <https://www.numuki.com/games/build-a-bear/>
- **Power Kids** – A website full of materials for research for children (You will require a Library Card) <https://kids.powerlibrary.org/>
- **SteveMorse** – A website full of an archive system for documents of immigrants from Ellis Island <https://stevemorse.org/>
- **MyHeritage** – A research website when working on family trees and genealogy (You will need a Library Card to access via this free link) <https://records.myheritagelibraryedition.com/>
- **FamilySearch** – A website managed, maintained, and run by Mormons/The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but is rather useful when looking for genealogy information <https://www.familysearch.org/en/united-states/>
- **Ancestry** – A website many commonly use when studying and researching their family tree <https://www.ancestry.com/>
- **Undetectable** – An AI detection program with 83% accuracy, it is highly recommended <https://undetectable.ai/>
- **Scribbr** – An AI detection program with 75% accuracy, it is recommended to be used for assignments (This website also has a plagiarism checker) <https://www.scribbr.com/ai-detector/>

Laws on Homeschooling in PA

- **Commonwealth** – For information and laws of all things Pennsylvania, this link is to homeschooling in particular though

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/education/programs-and-services/instruction/elementary-and-secondary-education/home-education-and-private-tutoring.html>

- **HSLDA** – A website with information on various things circulating around homeschooling <https://hsllda.org/legal/pennsylvania>
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Physical Resources

Being this document is made for the **Evans City Public Library**, please speak to someone there. The Evans City Public Library's Children Section also has a space of resources dedicated to homeschooling that is steadily growing.

There are also museums of all sorts with Carnegie having free days and discounts. Carnegie has a museum, an art gallery, and a science building, so do check them out too.

Important Statement on Educational Values and AI Use

An educational framework should emphasize a deep respect for nature, the world around us, ethical development, and the mental and emotional well-being of each learner. While being inclusive in spirit, there are some foundational values and boundaries that must be respected by all participating families.

- **Human Thought and Creativity only**
 - You should not permit the use of AI-generated content in any form. This includes but is not limited to AI-written essays, images, lesson plans, or assignments. The heart of philosophy is human creativity, critical thinking, and real-world engagement. Using AI removes the personal growth, effort, and learning that are essential to this process.
- **Ethics and Mental Well-being**
 - One should believe that education should build not only knowledge, but character. Discussions around ethics, empathy, and philosophy are part of the learning journey. You should also advocate for accessible, thoughtful engagement with mental wellness in ways that empower children to better understand themselves and others.
- **Safety and Respect in all practices**
 - Whether in academic work, nature study, or interpersonal interaction, safety and respect are core principles. Children are taught to understand their boundaries and to respect those of others. Any learning that involves practical, hands-on activities is supervised with care and intention.

AI-Generated Content is not welcome

The use of artificial intelligence to generate assignments, creative works, lesson materials, or any educational content undermines the entire purpose of this learning model. AI tools strip away the personal thought process, connection, and hands-on effort that are essential to meaningful learning.

Relying on AI does not support the development of creativity, independent thinking, or problem-solving; it replaces them with algorithmic shortcuts. For students, this sets a harmful precedent that their voice, effort, and imagination are secondary to convenience. For educators, it disconnects teaching from intention and craft.

Why this matters

The goal is to raise individuals who can think deeply, express themselves clearly, and connect with the world around them in real and grounded ways. AI does not teach values, cannot model empathy, and will never replace the insight gained through struggle, curiosity, and discovery.

Encourage:

- Original thought and effort
- Mistakes as learning moments
- Handwritten and handmade work
- Direct interaction with the natural world
- Personal reflection and process over polished results

Discourage and actively warn against:

- AI-generated essays, stories, or images
- Use of chatbots to answer or complete assignments
- Copy/paste mentalities that disengage the learner

This learning environment is built on the principles of real-world engagement, critical thinking, and respect for the natural world. Please, use the AI Checkers provided under Resources as in this modern era it has become common where students will use AI to do the work for them.