Homeschooling in Pennsylvania:

A Modern Parent's Guide

(Preschool–High School)

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (PA State Law)

General Rules:

- File a **notarized affidavit** by August 1 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 30 annually

For All Types of Homeschooling:

These rules apply whether you:

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

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 picture 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)
- Optional spiritual/philosophical introduction (symbols, animals, seasons, etc.)

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
- Science
- Geography
- Social Studies (history, civics, government)
- Health
- Physical Education
- Music
- Art
- Fire/Weather Safety

Creative Topics You Can Blend In:

- Mythology and folklore → Literature + History
- Herbalism → Science + Health
- Basic witchcraft history → Social Studies
- Animal behavior & otherkin discussions → Science
- Emotional wellness & identity → Health
- World cultures → Geography + Civics

You may want to include teaching safety paired with survival for the cases of being lost in nature or what to do in an emergency when in nature (Such as being stung or bit or injured).

Grades 7–12 (Middle & High School)

Subjects You MUST Include:

- English (lit, 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 ed/fire 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/cyber school that issues one.

Custom Curriculum Ideas (for Nontraditional Studies)

Topic	Fulfills These Subjects
Witchcraft & History of Magic	History, Humanities, Literature, Cultural Studies
Herbalism & Nature Studies	Science, Health, Environmental Studies
Therians / Otherkin Studies	Psychology, Sociology, Literature, Self-Discovery
LGBTQIA+ & Gender Identity	Health, Philosophy, Civics, Human Rights
Comparative Religion & Belief Systems	World Cultures, Civics, Ethics, Literature
Philosophy & Ethics	Humanities, English (essays), Civics
Mythology, Folklore & Tarot	Literature, History, Cultural Studies, Symbolism

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

Types of Homeschooling (All Legal in PA)

Type	Description

Unschooling	Child-led, experience-based learning; requires careful portfolio documentation
Traditional Homeschooling	Parent-directed, often using 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 don't guide learning at all; still must meet state documentation and safety expectations—**can raise legal risks if not managed carefully**

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

Resources & Tools

Note: Some of these resources and tools are listed to cater to Pennsylvania citizens in specific for this document.

- **Outschool** – Live secular classes by topic https://outschool.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
- **Big Fat Notebooks Series** – A nonfiction series of books made precisely for schooling of all kinds.
- **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 https://www.youtube.com/
- **BrainPop –** A useful website that has been around since 1999 and continues to be useful https://www.brainpop.com/discover
- **ScienceBob –** A website dedicated to science and experiments https://sciencebob.com/
- **Scratch –** A website dedicated to learning to code https://scratch.mit.edu/
- **FunBrain –** Full of games, videos, and more 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 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/

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.

- **Nature-First Approach**
  - Our program centers learning around the natural world and the interconnectedness of all life. It is important that children engage directly with the world around them through observation, exploration, and personal connection, not through screens or simulations.

- **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.