

One of Australia's largest homeschool providers respond to the move by government to keep schools open by giving away Free Weeks of Homeschooling plus tips for parents

After being flooded with calls from stressed parents, Director of Teaching Ellen Brown provides her advice to parents on how to school their kids from home

Ellen Brown, Director of Learning at Complete Education Australia, one of the largest homeschool providers in Australia says, "We've been in the business for many, many years but we've never seen anything like this. We've spoken to many parents over the last few days who are in tears, they are so stressed and out of their depth."

"The communications they have received has left them confused and uncertain about what is happening. They just don't know what is expected from them and how long this will go on."

"In response, we decided to provide a free week of our Term 2 of our homeschool program to all parents for all grades. It can be accessed from our website. The program covers the full curriculum required by the Education Department in every State."

"We launched it on Monday and we've had an overwhelming response so far."

"Most families feel more comfortable when they realise they have choices, even just in the short term and can then decide what works for them. For some, the Department or School resources will work well, for others a more individualised or flexible approach where their child can work at their own pace will be needed".

"Even before the onset of COVID-19, 1 in 200 Australian children were registered for home-school. One of our parents Nicholas says "My eldest daughter doing year 9 LOVES the electives she didn't have that option when she went to school"

"Just because they are not in school doesn't mean they cannot thrive. We see children learn quickly with one-on-one attention and a loving accepting environment."

Ellen Brown, Director of Teaching has the following advice to the most commonly asked questions she has been getting from parents over the last few days

What should parents do now to start schooling from home?

"Our first goal is to reassure parents not to be worried about their capability to homeschool. They have been homeschooling their children since the kids were born. The only difference is the topics they are teaching. They are well equipped and qualified."

"Getting on the front foot and establishing a routine is really important, so kids understand what is expected. Whether you are using online resources from your school, or homeschooling resources from a company like ours, it is crucial to get into a routine fast and set expectations. Be flexible but also make it a positive experience so they want to complete the work assigned for that day "

What government homeschooling resources are available to me?

It depends on the state, but in NSW the education department have directed parents to get their online schooling resources from the schools directly "Your child's school will communicate with you and provide learning activities for your child to do at home".

How do I plan out each day?

"Have a daily plan on the fridge. This allows everyone to know their plans for the day.

We all do better when we have a plan to wake up to. Spend time with the kids writing a weekly timetable. By covering Maths and English each morning and one other subject each afternoon, the full curriculum can be covered."

"For example: Monday: Start time 8am - Maths, English, Art, Tuesday: Start time 8am - Maths, English, Science and so on"

"One really important thing is to have a start time. Without a start time screens can gobble up the hours. Although this is entertaining, kids soon become irritable without hands on activities"

Do I have to work set hours, like 9am - 3pm?

"I cannot speak for the online programs that the schools are rolling out, but with our program we encourage students to go at their own pace, many of our parents tell us that their kids are really motivated and so they finish early having completed all their work for the day."

"One of our homeschooling parents Karen said "The kids really enjoy the CEA program also as they don't need me hovering over them and feel like they have more independence."

Will my child fall behind?

"Many of the parents I've been speaking to are worried that their kids will fall behind, with everyone in the same boat, I am sure this will not be the case, as schools are working hard to provide the lessons required. Having another choice has really seemed to reassure the people I have been speaking with"

"Not only that, you can actually take advantage of the time. This is an amazing opportunity to give their kids extra revision to catch up, or extension to move ahead. They can spend time working on areas they are passionate about. Spending the afternoon completing an Art or Science project is so satisfying. They can actually return to school with confidence."

How do I keep the kids motivated?

"Get the kids involved and let them have a say. Kids need to feel they are a valuable part of the team".

"Fostering a "one for all and all for one" attitude is wonderful for building a close family in a difficult time. Add cooking lessons to lunchtime. Meals can be part of the fun of the day. Cleaning can be placed on the daily roster."

Do I need to have teaching experience if I decide to use a homeschool provider?

"No need to worry. Parents do not have to be teachers. There are resources available that give you the tools to simply enjoy partnering with your children in the learning and we have teachers and community groups ready if you need help."

How can I get help and advice at home?

"If you use our CEA homeschooling program service, we have teachers ready to help and guide you. If you are using your schools resources, the school will likely organise a teacher to be available online and you can also join your school community groups to get advice from others in this situation"

Relax and try to enjoy the time together.

"Having a lesson focus and plan allows parents to simply become the co-learners, not the teacher."

"Celebrate their wins and completion of work for the day. Just a few celebrations can make the world of difference"

Add in breaks for fun and socialising

"It's hard for kids to be suddenly cooped up and away from their friends. Its important to add in online or phone social breaks so they can contact their friends and feel connected."

"Also try laughing yoga as a planned activity to keep things fun and positive."

Community Support - Help each other

In times like these we need to help each other and to ask for help from those who have done it before and made all the mistakes already.

We've recently launched a Facebook group [Schooling from Home Australia - Curriculum & Parent Support](#) as a resource to parents who need support, resources and tips from teachers, homeschool providers and homeschool parents who are more experienced. We wanted to extend our teacher's knowledge and experience to Australian parents in these crazy times and we've invited all our parents who've been homeschooling for years to help parents thrust into homeschooling for the first time.

Final thought from Ellen for Parents

"At the end of the day the most important thing is that they cover the curriculum and have the evidence to show the department of education. This is the case for both schools and homeschool providers like us, and we make include that in all our programs"

"Try not to put too much pressure on yourself. Kids are all individuals and they all have different ways of learning and sometimes one size does not fit all."

Image - New Compete Education homeschool student completing maths activity for Term 2