



# Homeschooling Versus Virtual School: What's the Difference?

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By now, many states and districts are releasing their reopening plans, and virtually all of them are offering an option that has never been available before in a public-school setting: remote learning. With so much uncertainty regarding the state of the pandemic and whether it's safe to go back to school, many parents are questioning whether it's worth it to withdraw from school and turn towards homeschooling as a safer alternative.

Meanwhile, other parents may be considering virtual learning through their own district, or whether a public or private online education provider may have more experience providing quality lessons with teachers who have spent more time teaching children using internet platforms.

And of course, still others are wondering what exactly the difference is between homeschool vs virtual school. After all, when the kids stay home to learn remotely, don't parents need to act as the primary teachers anyways? Can't we simply consider virtual schooling to be the same as homeschooling?

If you find yourself pondering similar questions, unsure of how to proceed with the important educational decisions you will have to make for your children in the coming weeks, this article is tailor-made for you!

## A Quick Parent's Guide to Homeschooling



While homeschooling may seem a lot like virtual school in that the learning for both options take place at home, and allow students a more individualized and independent experience, there are quite a few differences between the two in practice. Some of the key differences include:

### Parents serve as the instructors

In elementary school, students generally have one homeschool teacher that handles the core curriculum subject matter, while other teachers provide music, art, and physical education instruction. At the middle and high school level, kids begin seeing as many as 8-9 teachers a day, with one acting as a specialist for each subject! In homeschooling, the teacher is none other than the parent administering the curriculum, no matter course content.

### Parents often purchase a ready-made curriculum from a homeschooling vendor

There is a huge selection of curriculum programs that are pre-made and ready for administration. Some parents may be afraid that they would have to create their own lessons just like a teacher might, but these programs will provide unit plans, lessons, and worksheets. Learning aids, such as flash cards, or math manipulatives are completely optional, and caregivers can choose which they wish to use to supplement curriculum.

## Some opt to create their own ala carte classes

Companies may provide options to allow students to work at their own pace. For instance, for children who perform at their current grade level, a curriculum for a specific grade can be purchased that includes all subjects that are appropriate for that age.

However, some program, allow parents to sign up for the program and offer ala carte choices that allow students who are more advanced, or who need more practice, to choose resources from different grade levels depending on where the child is at academically. This allows a much more customized experience.

## Families may choose faith-based programs

Unlike in public classrooms, in homeschooling, parents may choose to purchase a curriculum that includes religious coursework. Be sure to check with the laws in your state, as many require that certain courses, like citizenship, are included to be accepted as proof of school completion for credit and diploma purposes.

## Homeschool support groups and co-ops are available in most areas

One of the biggest myths around is that children who do not attend traditional campuses lack meaningful social networks. This couldn't be farther from the truth! There are a multitude of parent/child groups all around the country that brings together students. These groups organize sports leagues, meet-ups, and more! Co-ops are also locally available depending on your area and allow parents to team up to teach their children in a small group setting. Check for local pages on social media to find more information.

## State standardized exams depend upon state policies

In many states, one big advantage of homeschooling is being able to avoid high stakes testing. Most states do not require students to take state exams, but there are some that do. To check policies in your state, visit [this website](#) to get a better idea of the policies in your area.

[The Talented and Gifted app is an excellent addition to your homeschooling or virtual school curriculum! Sign up with Kids Academy to supplement your child's learning with our new summer camp feature. Subscribe today to get 50% off!](#)

## Online Programs: Is Virtual School Homeschool?



At this point, you may be wondering what makes virtual schooling options different from homeschooling. Students will still take classes from the comfort of home, but what makes it so different? See the below points to find out what makes this option unique:

### Virtual programs provide teachers

Do know that unless you specifically choose a homeschool curriculum that offers remote lessons facilitated by teachers who are able to answer questions, online learning programs are different in that they do provide real teachers that deliver instruction, monitor classwork, and assign grades or progress feedback.

This is very different from homeschooling because the parent, while still needing to be home to encourage students to complete courses and offer support, are not the primary teachers.

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Classroom experiences often provide class discussion and socialization

Remote learning often requires learners to login at prescribed times to participate in live instruction, rather than merely offering recorded lessons that can be completed

whenever the student is able. As a result, kids may have the opportunity to engage in back and forth discussion with peers over the internet platform, allowing them to have social learning experiences.

## Public school districts work with accredited virtual programs approved by the state

The great news here is that many distance programs are completely free of charge! This is due to the fact that state-approved vendors, such as Connections Academy or K-12, partner with your state board of education to provide a free remote education.

Choosing this option, however, will force parents to withdraw their children from their local school district, but because the program partners with a public agency, they can be reassured that students will still receive diplomas or course credit if they transfer back to brick and mortar campuses.

## Standardized exams are usually mandatory

Because public online options partner with school districts, kids will still need to take standardized exams at a local school when that time of the year comes around. If this is a major concern for families, private virtual learning is available at a cost, which may exempt learners from needing to take the test. Once again, check the policies in your state to find out the requirements.

## Private virtual school programs are available

If you are able and willing to pay a tuition price, private virtual school options are available for parents. Likewise, just as parents may choose to send children to a faith-based private campus, online programs may be available to meet your child's religious education needs.

# Points to Consider When Making a Choice



Keep in mind that none of the above made any mention of the online programs that your own local district may make available once the school year begins next month.

For parents who are unsure of the idea of withdrawing kids from their usual school with the hope of returning during the year, signing up to take classes virtually with their usual campus may provide children with the familiarity they need during this tough time. Consider the following before making any educational choices for the upcoming school year:

## The ability to return to campus

As mentioned above, if your child needs stability and continuity, by all means research the online program being offered at your child's campus. Consider how long you would like your children to learn from home, and if you think this may only be a temporary adjustment, it may be better to stick with your district.

## Will a parent or caregiver be home and available?

Any remote or homeschool option comes with the requirement of a guardian to stay with the child. If your household includes a stay-at-home parent, homeschooling may indeed be the best option. However, for parents who work from home, an online program may be more practical because a teacher will be available to connect with your student.

There's no doubt that parents will have some tough choices to make as we draw nearer to the 2020-2021 school year. At Kids Academy, it's our mission to make sure that families have the most up-to-date information to make the best choice for their family.

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