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How to Set Great Goals for Your Homeschool

(And Use Your Strengths to Reach Them)

**A Homeschool TeleSeminar Resource
from Sonlight Curriculum**

Created from research materials provided by

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How to Set Successful Homeschool Goals:

1. Establish a Foundation for Your “Mission”

“And Jesus went on advancing in wisdom, and in stature, and in favor with God and men.” Luke 2:52 (Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible)

This verse is the foundation of the homeschool mission statement for many families. It seems to speak to every aspect of a child’s education. It speaks to growing mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially. You may want to incorporate a verse like this into *your* mission statement.

To begin setting goals for your homeschool, it’s important to consider your purpose. Talk about it with your spouse. Give prayerful thought, and then *written answers*, to these two questions:

- a. Why are we homeschooling our children?
- b. What do we hope to accomplish?

2. Set Specific, Measurable Goals

Someone said that goals are like the rungs of a ladder; if your ladder is leaning against the wrong wall (overall mission), the goals themselves will only lead to the wrong outcome. Using your answers to the questions above, now set 1-2 goals *for each child* in the specific growth areas from Luke 2:52. **Write them down.**

- a. Academic goals (growing in wisdom)
- b. Physical goals (growing in stature)
- c. Spiritual goals (growing in favor with God)
- d. Social goals (growing in favor with men)
- e. What other goals do we have for our family? (such as church activities, housekeeping, and so on)

3. Evaluate and Adjust As Needed...

Next, take time to review what you’ve written down so far. It’s okay to “brainstorm,” and dream big. But to achieve your mission, the actual goals you set must meet several criteria. Go over your rough goals lists (one for each child), and answer these questions:

- a. Is the goal specific and measurable?
- b. Is the goal realistic, reasonable—reachable?

- c. Is the goal compatible with this child's natural bent and abilities?
- d. Is the goal more or less important than other goals?

As you review your goals, adjust and re-write them to be as clear, realistic and "mission-oriented" as possible.

4. Manage Your Time and Priorities

If your goal list gets overwhelming, simplify things with this quick five-point test for each goal. Ask yourself:

- a. Does this goal support or reflect our mission statement?
- b. Is this goal important to work toward now, or can it wait?
- c. Is this goal worth the time it will take to reach it?
- d. Is this goal worth what we may have to give up to reach it?
- e. Is this goal essential—does it really matter in the long run?

Use your answers to make another adjustment to the list of goals, so that only those which you can work on now are on the list (though you can certainly save the others to review again later).

5. Create Your "Action Plan"

Look at what you wrote down as academic goals for your first child. Write down a specific task you can do that will help you reach that goal. Repeat this for each goal, for each child.

For example, your goal might be:

- I want Mary to be able to read 3-letter short vowel words by Christmas

Your tasks might look like these:

- We will do Sonlight Language Arts four days a week
- We will play phonics-based games (like "I Spy" something that starts with a 'B' sound) two days a week

Each goal should include at least one task, but don't add too many.

6. Always Keep Your Plan in Sight!

“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care; serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.”

1 Peter 5:2-4 (NIV)

This is the verse that keeps many homeschoolers going. Peter’s advice to the elders of the scattered early Christian Church can certainly apply to you and me as shepherds of the children whom God has entrusted to us. Put this, or other encouraging verses, where you will see them daily.

Also, put your written goals where you can see them. Make sure each goal has at least one specific task listed which will help keep you moving toward meeting that goal. Re-evaluate your goals at least once or twice a year, and adjust them to keep your homeschool on track for success.

Reaching Your Goals—One School Day at a Time

A model for lower elementary students is shown here...

Aim for at least 5 “units” a day:

Language Arts	2-3 units
Math	1 unit
History or Science	1 unit in either subject
Music/Art/Physical	1 unit in any related subject

Note: Each item at right equals one “unit.” These are suggestions only, to be used as guidelines and tools—not to be your slave-master! Also, they are not to be taken as legal advice; consult your state homeschool regulations with specific questions.

Language Arts/English (2-3 units daily)

Reading (thirty minutes or more, books approved by parent)
One phonics lesson (age appropriate, applies to Pre-K through 2nd grade)
One writing exercise daily (i.e. creative writing, a letter, history paper, etc.)
One handwriting lesson (as needed outside writing exercises)
One spelling lesson

Math (1 unit daily)

One math lesson
One math review session
One math test
Math game or software (thirty minutes)

History (1 unit daily, or substitute 1 unit of Science)

Reading on related topic (thirty minutes or more, parent-approved)
Field trip (may count as two or more units, depending on quality)
History program or video (thirty minutes, parent-approved)

Science (1 unit daily, or substitute 1 unit of History)

Reading on related topic (thirty minutes or more, parent-approved)
Discussion with parent on related topic (thirty minutes or more)
Science program or video (thirty minutes, parent-approved)
One science experiment (including observation and conclusions)

Music/Art (1 unit daily, or substitute 1 unit of Physical Education)

Music listening and discussion with parent (thirty minutes or more)
Field trip (may count as 2 or more units, depending on quality)
One organized rehearsal for a music program
One instrumental lesson
Instrument practice (at least 15 minutes, uninterrupted)
Faithful work on a craft or art project (thirty minutes or more)

Physical Education (1 unit daily, or substitute 1 unit of Music/Art)

Participation in group or team games (15 minutes or more)
Physical activity such as skating, swimming, etc. (one hour or more)
Combination of running, sledding, jumping jacks, etc (parents' discretion)

Use Your Strengths to Reach Your Goals

Discover your personal learning and teaching style

The complex understanding of how we think and behave actually indicates countless possible learning and teaching styles; after all, didn't God make us each wonderfully unique? For the sake of clarity, however, we can talk about our different styles in four major groups. These main types, and some typical characteristics of each, are listed here.

Your learning style naturally has an impact on your teaching style. Use this understanding to adapt your teaching methods to better fit the learning style you see in each of your children.

Type A: Actual Spontaneous Learner

Learns best by doing... a hands-on, creative person

Carefree, impulsive... lives for "the moment"

Prefers variety, freedom of choice in learning methods

Likes games, competition

Enjoys short, dynamic presentations and audiovisual aids

Dislikes planning, organizing, and long-range goal-setting

Can be disruptive in groups

Short attention span, trouble following through

Does not like "deep" thinking

Often difficult to motivate, dislikes paper-and-pencil tasks and workbooks

May have done poorly in school (due to boredom or lack of interest)

Dislikes paperwork, record-keeping

Looks for creative and efficient solutions to tasks

Prefers to teach fine arts, physical education, and activity-oriented classes

Type B: Actual Routine Learner

Responsible, oriented toward duty

Likes things to be clearly structured, planned and organized

Likes to see that everything is done correctly

Follows rules, respects authority

Likes to belong to groups, seeks approval and affirmation

Prefers time to prepare for discussion

Works well with traditional curriculum (workbooks, outlined lectures, etc)

Responsible, oriented toward duty

Type B: Actual Routine Learner *(continued)*

Learns well by repetition and memorization, drill and review
Seldom acts spontaneously, dislikes creative activities
Doesn't like changes in planned schedule or curriculum
Gets upset when children don't cooperate
Worries about meeting requirements
Often prefers to work under an umbrella program for home educators
Prefers to teach a pre-planned curricula
More at ease with "cut and dry" subjects than those with no clear answers

Type C: Conceptual Specific Learner

Likes to be in control of self and surroundings
Likes to analyze and understand things, thinks and acts logically
Self-motivated problem-solver, enjoys solitary activities
Enjoys independent, long-term projects
Values intelligence and wisdom, good at "brainstorming"
Has poor social skills, difficulty relating to peers
Prefers organized lectures, student/teacher discussion and debate
Doesn't like peer group discussion
Dislikes repetition, excessive written work
Often impatient with those who are slow to grasp concepts
Likes to make long-range plans
Prefers to teach math, science, and other logic-related subjects

Type D: Conceptual Global Learner

Social person, warm and responsive, enjoys group activities
Interested in people, ideas, principles, values
Focuses on concepts, not technical details
Likes to be known, desires to please people
Vulnerable to conflict and criticism, worries about what others think
Dislikes competition, prefers cooperation
Gets excited about new projects, but loses interest as novelty wears off
Prefers small group discussion, social interaction
Likes creative writing, role playing
Dislikes independent (isolated) work, being ignored
Often idealistic about expectations and goals
Prefers to teach subjects in language arts, social studies and fine arts

Sonlight helped these homeschoolers reach their goals!

"I love Sonlight's Instructor's Guides—they have taken so much stress out of my life. I have fewer worries about whether we are covering enough, or too much, or the right things. I really stressed 'trying to do it all' while my first child was in pre-K. Since then, we've used Sonlight for K and 1st, and I am so much more relaxed now! My dear husband says that alone is priceless."
—Sandy C, January 2007

"I don't want to spend my life figuring out what to teach the next day. I don't want to teach my children separately by 'grade.' I don't want to write my own schedule. I don't want to worry about finding all the books or deciding when we've done 'enough' for a day (or a week or a year)..."

"I want to learn along with my kids, discover wonderful books I've never read, and travel to distant places and times. That's why I love Sonlight."
—Jeanne H, January 2007

"When I tell my kids it's time for Sonlight, *they actually cheer.*"
—Teresa in LA, February 2007

For expert homeschool help, talk to a Sonlight Advisor today:
Email advisor@sonlight.com or Phone (303) 730-6292

Recommended Resources for More Help:

- *Ordering Your Private World* by Gordon MacDonald
- *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives* by Richard Swenson
- *The Way They Learn* by Cynthia Tobias
- *Help for the Harried Homeschooler* by Christine Field
- *You Can Teach Your Child Successfully* by Dr. Ruth Beechick
- *Christian Home Educators' Curriculum Manual Junior/Senior High* by Cathy Duffy
- *Resource Guide for New Homeschoolers* by Sonlight Curriculum