

Are Online Classes an Option for Your Family?

by Beth Hempton

Note: Please note that I originally published this article as a guest blogger for a fellow home school mom and business woman.

The beauty of home schooling lies in the total versatility of selecting curriculum and classes for our children. As home school parents, we control what knowledge our children receive and best of all, who shares that knowledge with them. As a mom, I love this aspect of schooling my children, but the part that throws me occasionally into a panic attack is the responsibility that accompanies it!

The panic subsides to some extent when I remember that I have options and that a home school network exists if I choose to utilize it. The network contains many opportunities, one of which is online classes. Yet, as a parent, how would I know if that option is best for my child?



As well as being a home school mom, I teach classes online and locally in Charleston, SC. I've spent the last twenty years writing, teaching, and studying under those who historically and currently have expertise in my areas: history, writing, literature, and communication skills. The number of parents who allow me the privilege of teaching their children encourages me greatly, but I also know that I am providing them with a much needed educational option. In fact, most of my students spend more than one year with me, taking multiple classes. Watching them grow into amazing adults blesses me beyond measure.

So, should your children take online courses, even with an experienced and trustworthy teacher? Some reasons that you might consider online classes include:

- You desire or need an educator in a subject area that isn't offered locally.
- You don't have the commute time available for transporting your children to classes.
- You want your child to experience the technology skills related to online courses, in preparation for college.
- You'd like your child to develop self responsibility by being accountable to another teacher.
- You feel it would benefit your child to learn time management skills in a practical and relevant setting.
- You want a class that you can actively follow with your student to assist with accountability and training.
- The courses offer a greater challenge and learning experience than other available options.

No matter how impressive the previous list sounds, it's important to realize that online courses aren't for every student or every family. If you're not willing or able to initially follow up with your child to make sure that assignments are completed, there could be an issue. If your family has limited internet access or unreliable computers, online instruction could prove to be very frustrating! How willing are you to trust outside teachers to influence your child in a positive way? For some parents, it's not worth the risk.

Even the most confident parent can feel challenged when making the important decision of whether to utilize online instruction or not. I recommend serious consideration of the:

- Time the online instruction could save you.
- Experience of your child being accountable to another teacher.
- Value of allowing another teacher to objectively evaluate your child's work.
- Additional learning experiences of time management, organization skills and technological utilization.
- Availability of the course(s) that interest you or your child.
- Credentials of the instructor(s).
- Quality of the courses and required materials.
- Affordability of the course(s).
- Recommendations of other homeschool parents and students who have previously participated in the online courses.

As with all things in life, seeking God's wisdom is the best place to start. So, before you decide whether online courses make sense for your children, make sure you pray!

If you need assistance in planning your child's educational path or more information about online courses, don't hesitate to contact me!