

Fill Out Your Forms! Fill Out Your Forms!

It's hard to believe that it has been almost a year since we sent out the newsletter with the "I'm Homeschooling! Now to Notify the Government..." article. That means that it is that time again. Time to fill out your notification forms and let the government know that you intend to homeschool.

Aside from having a different year on the form, this year's form look exactly the same as last year's form, so if you have done this before, you are probably good to go. If you haven't done it before, or felt that you had problems in previous years with the notification form, read on.

Do I have to notify the government that I intend to homeschool my children?

If your children are 7 or will be turning 7 by the end of this December, and is younger than 18 year of age, and you do not register them at a public or private school, you do need to notify the government of your intent to homeschool them. Children between those ages are of compulsory school age, according to provincial legislation, so they must be offered an education, either through public or private schools, or through homeschooling.

How do I notify the government of my intention to homeschool my children?

For each child that you intend to homeschool, you will need to complete a one page form, which is available at this link:

<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/schools/ind/homeschool/notification.html>

You can complete the form in English or in French and need to submit it to the Homeschooling Office by email (homeschooling@gov.mb.ca), by mail to the address on the form or by fax to 204-948-3470.

The form is due by September 1, 2016 or within 30 days of establishing your homeschool (so if, for instance, your children attended school for the month of September and then you decided you wanted to homeschool them and they stopped attending school in early October, you would have 30 days from their first day of being home from public/private school to send in the notification forms.

What if I am late sending in the notification form?

Fill it out and send it in. Even if it is late. A quick note to explain why would not be amiss but they Department of Education would rather you send it in late than not at all.

Should I fill out the forms even if my child is not of compulsory school age?

You can. You just are not obliged to do so. Depending on the date of birth of your child, that may

mean that you do not need to notify the government until they are beginning what would technically be grade 1 or grade 2 if they were enrolled in public or private school.

Some choose to notify the government beginning when their child is in kindergarten for a variety of reasons. You might want to have written confirmation of your choice to homeschool and have the sense of accountability brought by having to fill out and submit reports on your child's progress. You may wish to have access to the Computers for Schools program which enables you to get computers, laptops and other times free (these are typically older items near the end of their life cycle but can still be useful - see <http://www.cfsl.mb.ca/cim/1500.dhtm> for details). You may wish to be able to use the discounts at a few local stores that are available to homeschoolers once they have received their confirmation letter from the government.

On the other hand, you do not need to fill these out until your child is of compulsory school age, as set out above. Having less paperwork to worry about is a definite bonus. Being able to relax and focus on your child and not on completing whatever programs you listed on your notification form is another plus. Waiting to fill out the forms is perfectly acceptable and in no way an indicator that you are not doing your job as a parent or educator.

What if I am not sure what resources or curricula we will be using for certain, or all, subjects?

Please know that what you write down on the notification form is not necessarily going to be what you end up doing, even if you think you know right now what you will be using. Things change, kids change, not each kid in the same family can use the same curricula. So, if you are not sure then think what are some things we are planning to do and what are we going to use to accomplish this? Online resources, things from the library, things lying around your house, field trips and activities with other families – all these can be considered material for learning and you can include them in your plan.

And keep in mind that if you are unsure about how to plan science, for instance, a google search of 'science for 8 year olds' or 'biology for grade 9' will get you far. You also have access to curriculum that Manitoba schools have to follow, which is here: <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/index.html>

The government's Department of Education has helpful information about planning your program and curriculum options here:

<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/schools/ind/homeschool/notification.html>

Finally, take a look at the samples provided online by the government at the link above. You will see that they are not that detailed – and neither do yours need to be.

What if I am unschooling?

That's fine. You are still homeschooling. The form still needs to be filled out and submitted. In this case, your child will likely be a more active participant in filling out the forms than they might otherwise have been. Sit down and talk to them. Find out what they want to explore and figure out some ways in which you can do so. Maybe they want to use a workbook to cover math but want to do field studies on frogs and snakes for science and follow the U.S. Election for Social Studies and then do some sort of hybrid project involving cats living in a 19th century prairie town that combines some social studies, some science and an attempt to make a period movie about cats in 1889 in Virden, MB. Then they are going to blog their adventures with the proviso that before a blog post is published, they have given it a re-read and once every so often they submit a post to their editor – that might be you, or someone else – for comments. Or they have gotten obsessed with weapons and want to create their own armour and try jousting. Or they want to see how long they can play Pokemon Go for even when it gets to be winter here. Or they want to start a Youtube channel and make money. Or they want to practice baking so they can complete on the Great Canadian Bake-Off when it starts filming. There are lots of opportunities here to practice math (fractions, graphing, engineering) or language arts (creating videos, reading recipes, writing about their Pokemon adventures) or countless other things. Try to pick some of the things that you think your child will really want to pursue and include some information about those goals and the resources you will use on your notification form.

What happens after I have submitted my notification form?

If you submit it by email, you will typically get an acknowledgment of receipt within a day or two from the homeschooling office. You will then receive your official confirmation of enrollment of your child as a homeschooler within 3 to 6 weeks. This confirmation is a one page letter that has your child's name and grade listed on it and confirms that they are being homeschooled for the 2016-2017 year. At the bottom of the page is a card that can be used when you are requesting discounts from stores or when you first go to the Manitoba Education Library to borrow materials (they will need it to provide you with an official library card for that library).

And that's it folks – at least until January rolls around and we have to submit our first of two reports due each school year.

If you do have concerns about filling out the forms, we encourage you to contact the liaisons at the Manitoba Homeschooling Office. They are there to serve as a resource for you and can give you suggestions as to how to fill out your form or develop a plan. You can get in touch with your liaison by calling them from Winnipeg at 204-945-8138, toll free in Manitoba at 1-800-282-8069 ext. 8138 or

by emailing homeschooling@gov.mb.ca The liaisons are organized by geographic location so who you speak to will depend on where you live.

You can also contact MASH for assistance at info@manitobahomeschool.com and we would be happy to try to provide assistance in filling out your notification forms.

