

What Homeschool Records Should You Keep?

A Practical Guide for U.S. Families

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Keep the story, not the pile. Good homeschool records do not preserve everything. They preserve enough to explain what was learned, how it happened and how the learner changed over time.

Important: This guide provides general educational information, not legal advice. Homeschool requirements vary by state and may change. Always check the current official guidance for your state and, where relevant, your local district or supervising organization.

The quick answer

Most homeschool families benefit from keeping four kinds of records: any documents their state requires; representative evidence such as work samples, photographs and projects; brief context explaining what happened and what support was needed; and evidence of progress over time. You usually do not need to save every worksheet. Check your state's official rules first, then build a simple system you can maintain consistently.

Start with two different questions

Question	Meaning
What must I keep?	Documents, logs, portfolio items, assessments or reports required by the law or program that applies to your family.
What is useful to keep?	Evidence and context that help you understand progress, prepare a portfolio or report, support a future transition and remember the learning story.

First principle: Check current official requirements for your state. Then design the smallest useful system you can maintain consistently.

The four-layer homeschool record system

Layer	Purpose	Examples	Question answered
1. Administrative	Shows required participation or formal process	Attendance, hours, notices, required forms, evaluator documents	What did we need to file or retain?
2. Evidence	Shows the learning activity or product	Writing, math, photos, projects, reading logs, recordings, assessments	What can we point to?
3. Context	Explains what happened and what support was used	Date, learning area, goal, parent note, resources, conditions	What does this evidence mean?
4. Progress	Shows change across time	Reflection, observation, early/late comparison, next step, periodic summary	How is the learner changing?

The key distinction: An activity is something the learner did. Evidence is the part worth preserving. A portfolio is the curated selection. A report explains the learning story the evidence supports.

What records are worth keeping?

1. Official and administrative records

Keep records your state, district, umbrella school, program or evaluator requires. Depending on your situation, that may include notices, attendance or hours, education plans, quarterly reports, annual evaluations, standardized test results, district correspondence and high-school records. Keep proof of submission where practical.

2. A simple plan and a record of reality

A plan shows intention. A record shows reality. Keep broad goals, learning periods and weekly priorities - then record what was completed, what changed, missed work, extra practice and unexpected interests.

Record reality: A flexible record should not punish the family because Thursday did not look like the plan written on Sunday.

3. Representative work samples

Keep work that shows something important, not every piece of practice: an early and later writing sample, a math strategy, a science notebook page, a research product, artwork showing a new technique or a corrected task that shows change after feedback.

4. Photographs and short recordings

Photographs can document cooking, gardening, building, field trips, nature study, performances and practical skills. Add three short details: what happened, what it showed and what might come next.

5. Reading and resource records

Track books, audiobooks, articles, documentaries, lectures, podcasts and project sources. Add a note when the learner makes a significant connection or demonstrates comprehension.

6. Parent observations and learner reflections

Record support needed, strategies selected, increasing independence, misconceptions, connections, learner comments and next steps. "Needed one reminder to organize the data table" is more useful than "Good job."

7. Assessments and periodic summaries

Keep required assessment/evaluation documents and anything submitted. Short periodic summaries can explain learning areas, representative evidence, progress and next priorities while the details are fresh.

8. Supports and accommodations

Where relevant, record supports that changed the outcome: shorter sessions, audio text, movement breaks, visual models, assistive technology, reduced writing load or repeated practice.

What you probably do not need to keep

Unless a specific rule says otherwise, you usually do not need every worksheet, several samples that show the same thing, every project photo, unlabeled screenshots, busywork, duplicate paper/digital copies or private notes that do not belong in a shareable record.

The three-question filter: Does this show something important? Does it add new information? Would future-you understand it without relying on memory?

What counts as homeschool learning evidence?

Evidence is broader than worksheets. The useful question is not "Does this look like school?" It is "What does this help us understand about the learner?"

Learning experience	Possible evidence	Useful context
Math lesson	Selected worksheet, whiteboard photo, model or explanation	Strategy, support, misconception or next step
Cooking	Photo, recipe changes, calculations or reflection	Measurement, ratios, sequencing, safety and independence
Museum or field trip	Photo, sketch, ticket plus learner response	Question asked, concept connected and follow-up learning
Reading or audiobook	Reading log, narration or response	Comprehension, vocabulary, stamina and interpretation
Conversation	Parent note or learner quotation	Reasoning, vocabulary, prior knowledge and curiosity
Project or interest-led study	Plan, research notes, drafts, product and reflection	Planning, problem solving, persistence and transfer
Oral presentation	Audio/video clip, rubric, observation or reflection	Fluency, expression, confidence and communication
Practical skill	Photo sequence, checklist or demonstration note	Accuracy, safety, independence and improvement

A 15-minute weekly routine

- During the week: capture only worthwhile moments.
- Friday - 10 minutes: add context; remove duplicates and low-value clutter.
- Friday - 5 minutes: mark possible Portfolio items and one next step.
- Monthly: check that important learning areas are visible.
- Term or quarter: select progress evidence and create a short summary.

How records become a Portfolio and Report

MyLearna learning workflow

Today



Capture



Portfolio



Report

1. Record: capture the activity, evidence and context.
2. Review: decide whether the item adds useful information.
3. Portfolio: select representative evidence that shows breadth, achievement or progress.

4. Report: explain the learning story supported by those records and Portfolio selections.

When records are created gradually, a Portfolio and Report become outputs of learning - not an end-of-year reconstruction project.

[See where the learning goes](#)

Four state examples

These examples are not complete legal summaries. Verify current guidance directly.

- New York: IHIP, quarterly reports, annual assessment and attendance-record expectations.
- Florida: contemporaneous activity log, selected work samples, two-year portfolio retention and annual evaluation.
- Pennsylvania: contemporaneous reading-material log, work samples, specified testing and annual evaluator certification.
- Texas: TEA does not regulate or accredit home schools; receiving districts may review records, curriculum or assessments for placement/credit.

Keeping records for several children

Use one family system and distinct learner records. Share the family calendar, outings and projects; keep each learner's work samples, observations, assessments, Portfolio choices and Reports separate.

If you are already months behind

Start today. Gather anchors such as calendar entries, photos, messages, book lists, projects and assessments. Create broad monthly summaries using only what you can support. Select representative evidence and label uncertainty honestly.

If your child may return to school

Keep annual summaries, curriculum/resource lists, representative work, evaluations, assessments and, for older learners, course and credit information. Ask the receiving school what it uses for placement or credit.

Privacy and record security

Keep records private by default, avoid unnecessary sensitive details in shareable documents, use secure accounts and backups, review public-share settings and choose tools that do not require child learning content to be used for advertising analytics.

What this looks like in practice: Emma Carter

Emma Carter worked example (fictional)

Today -> Capture -> Progress and context -> Portfolio -> Report

The value is the connected story: activity, evidence, date, learning area, observation, progress judgment, Portfolio selection and final report.

The public MyLearna demo uses fictional data. Emma's activity moves through Capture, Portfolio and Report so families can see the complete workflow without creating an account.

[Explore Emma Carter's complete learning story](#)

Frequently asked questions

Do I need to save every worksheet?

Usually no. Keep representative samples and anything specifically required by your state or program.

Can photos count as homeschool records?

Yes. Add a date and a short explanation of what happened, what the learner demonstrated and what might come next.

How long should I keep records?

Follow official retention rules. Keep core high-school transcripts, course information, evaluations and annual summaries much longer.

What if my state requires very little?

Keep a simple annual record for your own planning and future transitions.

Are digital records acceptable?

Many families use them, but formal submission requirements may vary. Keep readable exports and backups.

How often should I update records?

Capture worthwhile evidence as it happens, review weekly and summarize at the end of a reporting period.

Does informal learning count?

It can. Add enough context to explain the knowledge, skill, reasoning or independence involved.

What should I keep if my child may return to school?

Keep annual summaries, resource information, representative work, assessments and older-student course/credit information.

Start with one useful record today

Save one worthwhile learning moment. Add two sentences of context and one sign of progress.

[See Emma's learning go from Today to Report](#)

[Create your family space](#)

Official sources

[New York State Education Department - Home Instruction Questions and Answers](#)

[Florida Department of Education - Parent Home Education Resources](#)

[Florida Senate - Section 1002.41](#)

[Pennsylvania Department of Education - Home Education and Private Tutoring](#)

[Pennsylvania General Assembly - Section 1327.1](#)

[Texas Education Agency - Home Schooling](#)

[Texas Education Agency - Enrollment in Public School](#)