



The Start of Your School Year:

**What should
you expect?**

What should you Expect?

You've had the joy of Box Day. And you might have some sense of calling.

Maybe you've read our catalog and our beautiful testimonials about the wonders of a Sonlight education. And you probably can think of basic "first day of school" ideas.

- Take a photo with each child holding a paper or whiteboard with their grade level or age.
- Or ask basic interview questions of each child, like favorite book, color, interests.
- Or go to a doughnut shop (or the ice cream store) for breakfast before hitting the books. Just because you can!

But even the longest of the special "first day of school" activities lasts only an hour or so. And then you're facing the rest of the year.

What should you expect?

If this is your first year—or even if it's your first year teaching this level, or your first year using Sonlight—**EXPECT TO FEEL DISCOMBOBULATED AT FIRST.**

This doesn't mean you're doing anything wrong. It means . . . you're doing something new!

I don't know how it was for you when you learned to drive. For me, I couldn't turn on the radio. I couldn't even have the

radio playing! All my attention was focused on making the car go and stop without crashing.

If I had quit driving after a week because I wasn't as smooth as my parents . . . that would have been silly. Of course I wasn't as smooth as my parents! I was learning a brand new skill!

And so it is for you, as you face your new year. Have patience with yourself as you figure out what works for you and your family. Don't give up in disgust because the first few weeks were hard. If they are—of course they are! You're learning a new skill set!

So be prepared to feel out of your element. That's normal, even as it's normal to feel discombobulated when you start a new job, have a new baby, move to a new town . . . or start a new school year.

Be at peace.

More to come!

P.S. If you have a specific concern, will you let me know? I bet you're not the only one, and I would love to be able to address your specific concerns, either personally, through staff better equipped than myself, or through a larger email broadcast like this.

What to Expect?

After yesterday's message that starting a new year of school might not be seamless for you, let's consider your children.

Even if they've done school before, they, too, are moving to a new grade. They have new expectations and, perhaps, some new responsibilities.

I have a friend who sent her child to public school kindergarten. For the first several weeks, when he came home, he screamed for two hours or more. He was absolutely wiped out after all that time "being good" in the classroom, and his mother got to deal with the fallout.

This is what tired, stressed children do.

I haven't heard of that specific scenario among homeschooling children—that seems pretty extreme.

But I do know that children, when starting back into a new year, have some tendencies to complain or whine. Maybe drag their feet a little. Maybe pout.

That doesn't mean you're doing a bad job, or that Sonlight isn't working.

That means that your children are human. That they, too, are adjusting to a new skill set, to a new normal. That maybe they need some on the job training on how you expect them to behave.

That's okay. You can do that!

And, really . . . if you had your choice between summer vacation and all its freedom, and doing math workbooks and creative writing (or whatever your children's least favorite subjects may be) . . . wouldn't you wish for summer vacation?

So while you absolutely can and should set behavior expectations, realize that transition is normal, and a little grumbling, though annoying (and naughty), is not a sign that you are not cut out for homeschooling.

Don't be discouraged. There is grace for your children, and there is grace for you.

Or, as Robin D. said: "Don't worry about them hating homeschool . . . do families who send their kids to public school get all in a tizzy if their kids don't absolutely love every minute? Sure it shouldn't be torture but it doesn't have to be perfectly perfect in every way."

Yes.

More to come!

What to Expect?

So you know that you will have to adjust to homeschooling, and your children will have to adjust, too.

What else should you expect?

Sonlight offers an Instructor's Guide so you don't have to write lesson plans, and we offer books and supplies so you don't have to spend time or effort hunting down resources.

Here's what Sonlight doesn't offer:

- A maid service
- A babysitter
- A super nanny for behavior correction
- A food service.

No. You get to be the household manager, child protector, behavior corrector, and food preparer.

If you're in a season where you had been doing all of that already, and felt like life was pretty full . . . now you're adding some hours of homeschooling to each week.

Where will you get those hours?

The last email in this series will give you my favorite tool to help you find the most hours possible.

But first, let's look at how to find some hours in your Sonlight homeschooling.

With Sonlight, you have "table subjects" and "couch subjects."
TM

In the elementary years, the couch subjects — Bible, History, Read-Alouds, Science — mostly require your full attention as you read to your children. I usually prefer to read these aloud, so that I can define words on the fly, discuss any different perspectives that I have, compared to the author, and spot quiz my boys to make sure they are listening.

But by G and H, I bought the audio version of Story of the World and let the boys listen. A Child's History of the World, used in B, C, and W, is also available on audio.

You could buy yourself twenty minutes or so on the days these books are scheduled. Benefit: you get the time. Cost: you lose out on potential discussion. It's a trade-off, either way.

Other ways to buy time for couch subjects include:

- Have a spouse or older sibling do some of the Read-Alouds.
- Do Science on the weekends, or over the summer.
- Watch the Discover and Do experiments, and if you never get to the actual experiments yourself, think, "I'm part of HENSE, Home-Educators Neglecting Science Experiments, and that's okay. I'm in good company."

Overall, though, the couch subjects just are what they are: the delightful parts of a school day, that you get to enjoy, and that take as long as they take.

We'll talk about the table subjects tomorrow.

What to Expect?

What to expect from the start of school?

Hopefully lots of laughter, probably a few tears (or at least grumbles) . . . and fewer hours to do what you're doing now.

Where do you find more hours in the day?

Yesterday we talked about the couch subjects TM. Today, let's talk about the table subjects TM.

The table subjects — Handwriting, Spelling, Readers, Math — usually require an instructor nearby, but not one fully engrossed at all times. For example:

- My boys need me nearby for math questions, but don't (usually) require me to stand over them for every problem.
- I don't need to sit next to my son while he is reading Encyclopedia Brown to know if he is reading well. (But my son reading I Can Read It! does need constant attention.)
- I can dictate spelling words or sentences, but don't need to watch as the boys write each letter.

How might this help you?

This is a place you can multitask the housework.

While your children read to you, you can do these dishes. When you dictate spelling words, you can also fold the laundry.

This can buy you some time.

And lowering expectations can also buy you some time.

At my house, I try to have the whole house picked up one time per week, or when company comes. The rest of the time, if the counters have some maintenance every day, but not all the dishes get done . . . there will be more dishes tomorrow, and I'm okay with that.

There's a lovely Proverb that says, "Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox." Rough translation: if you don't have animals, you don't have to shovel manure, but without animals, the farming won't get done easily.

Think of it this way: if you had no children, your house would probably stay a lot cleaner. But then you wouldn't have the laughter and the tears, the deep love, the interesting challenges and triumphs.

Your house is going to be messier than a family that is only home for dinner and sleep.

That makes sense. That is part of homeschooling.

Be at peace, even if your home is less tidy than before. You are putting effort and time into something more important than newly vacuumed floors — training up the next generation.

What to Expect?

The start of your school year: you're going to feel stretched.

So let me tell you my favorite life hack, that (might) get you more hours than you could believe. Or might at least change your perspective..

A few years back, I read a book that changed my life: 168 Hours: You Have More Time Than You Think. The author, Laura Vanderkam, points out: "If you work a 40 hour week, and sleep 8 hours a night, that's 96 hours out of your week. You then have another 72 hours, almost the equivalent of two full-time jobs, in the rest of your week. What are you doing with that time?"

It's a bit astonishing to consider! That is a LOT of time!

The author recommends keeping a spreadsheet of how you spend your time for a week, in either half hour or hour increments. How much sleep are you getting? How much time are you actually homeschooling? How much time do you spend in the kitchen?

And I know (from having first tried this with babies) that sometimes the categories are messy. "Hmm. That half hour I think I changed a diaper and then all the baby's clothes, called back my scattered children to keep reading, answered the phone, and, um, went to the bathroom?"

But even with the slight hiccoughs, I found this exercise incredibly helpful. I had been in a bit of a funk, feeling like all I did was give and serve, and had no time for me or my interests.

I was shocked to find that I actually had been with people (which I enjoy!) 15 hours that week. I had no idea! It adjusted my perspective.

- I know that some moms are surprised to find just how much time they are on social media.
- Some moms are encouraged by how much time they spend with their children.
- Some realize that the average 6.5 hours of sleep a night explains the constant feeling of exhaustion.

And this can help in your homeschooling, too.

If you know that your 7-year-old just spent over an hour on math every day, that's probably too much, and you can adjust. If you spend two hours on training (or disciplining or discipling or whatever you choose to call it), you can recognize that this is a season of getting your home life in order, and at some point, you will spend minutes a week (if that) dealing with behavioral issues.

Basically, looking at how you spend your week can give you perspective, encouragement, and, possibly, direction for change.

If you're not in a season where this sounds helpful (or if your personality recoils in horror at this idea), feel free to ignore.

But for the rest of you, maybe try it out.

And happy early schooling!

To your homeschooling success,
Warmly,
Amy

P.S. If you haven't had your Box Day yet, and you are wondering what might be best for your family, [call Terri, Sonlight's homeschool specialist.](#)

Or, if you are ready to order, head over to [SmoothCourse now](#) and get started!